

ANCHORED IN THE TRUTH SERIES



“That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting”

~ Eph. 4:14 ~

by Gary H. Patterson

This series was written for all who love the Truth

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Chapter One



The Most Neglected Promise

“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’), (14) that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Gal. 3:13-14).

Redeemed from the Curse

The terms used in the theme passage above must first be defined for the sake of those who do not understand them and to lay the foundation for the whole point of the title of this message.

Two crucial benefits are made available to us in the New Covenant through Christ having redeemed us from the curse of the law: the blessing of Abraham and the promise of the [Holy] Spirit. The word redeemed in the Galatian passage can be safely translated ransomed. Christ has ransomed those who believe. He paid the ransom (purchase) price for us to be released from our captor by substituting himself for us in death. In this case, our captor is the curse pronounced upon all who have broken the law of Moses, generally, the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20).

The importance of the two benefits afforded us through Christ’s death on the cross is best portrayed by defining them. Paul identified what the blessing is in a promise God made to Abraham: “In you shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” More specifically, Paul reveals that it is justification by faith in Christ apart from the works required by the law of Moses. This means a person who places their faith in Christ as their Redeemer is declared by God to be in right standing with Him. He accredits no sin to their account (Rom. 4:1-8). The righteous requirements of the law (of Moses) are now fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit (Rom. 8:1-4). This was defined in New Covenant terms by Jesus and the Apostles as the born again experience (John 3:1-17; 1 Pt. 1:22-25; 1 Jn. 3:9).

The born-again experience is the same as our being justified by faith in Christ. That justification is of life or rather, more clearly, results in (resurrection) life within us (Rom. 5:19-21). Putting it in modern terms, those who have faith in Christ receive God’s life-giving approval. His life-giving approval regenerates our spirit by which we communicate and fellowship with God. Paul defines it for us in Titus 3:5. He describes the born-again experience as the “washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit.” In 1 Cor. 12:13, He states: “By one Spirit we were all baptized into one body. Whether we are Jewish or Greek, slave or free, God gave all of us one Spirit to drink

(GWV). “Washing” and “baptism” can sometimes be interchanged in Scripture and it would be safe to do so in these contexts. Additionally, Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well that He would give her “water” to drink that would spring up within her resulting in eternal life (Jn. 4:13-14). Isaiah 12:3 introduced it: “With joy you will draw life from the well of salvation.”

Hence, the blessing of Abraham is defined in many ways throughout Scripture, all of which are the same. God’s life-giving approval through Christ washes away our sins and regenerates our spirit so that we can commune with and partake of Christ’s life (the reality of who He is; the divine nature – 1 Pt. 1:1-3). We now have a well of salvation (eternal life) within us from which we can always draw the water of life with joy. The Spirit of Christ (the well) dwells within us, thereby, proving that we are Christ’s (Rom. 8:9).

If all of this comprises the blessing of Abraham, then what does the promise of the Spirit entail of which Abraham did not receive because it was not available then?

Now, let’s revisit Titus 3: “But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, (5) not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, (6) whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, (7) that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Here, Paul refers to the [Holy] Spirit as being poured out abundantly upon us. This is different from being born again or receiving the Spirit of Christ within. The born-again experience is a well of water, whereas, the promise of the Spirit is an outflowing river (Jn. 7:38). This indicates that the promise of the Spirit is the completion of being redeemed from the curse of the law in Galatians 3. The Apostle Peter proclaimed that their Pentecostal experience (Acts 2) was the fulfillment of (as in the beginning of) the prophecy from the book of Joel: “And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. (18) And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy.” On the day of Pentecost, they received the promise of the Spirit referred to in Galatians 3. Jesus called it the promise of the Father and the baptism with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5; see also Mt. 3:11). They were already born again—baptized by that same Spirit into Christ’s body, thus, uniting them as mutual and equal partakers of Christ’s divine nature. They already believed and confessed that Jesus is alive from the dead, thereby, securing their spiritual salvation (Rom. 10:6-10). At Pentecost, they were baptized with the Holy Spirit unto power for witnessing and not by Him into the body of Christ.

Do you see the difference?

Upon being born again, the Holy Spirit places (immerses) us into Christ. At Pentecost, they were immersed (clothed) with (not by) the Holy Spirit to overflowing. Jesus described it in Acts 1:8 this way: “You shall receive power after the Holy Spirit comes upon you.” He again describes it another way in Luke 24:49: “Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued [clothed; enveloped] with power from on high.”

So, is this enduing with the Holy Spirit the same as the promise of the Spirit referred to in Galatians 3? Yes, it is the promise of the Father and His promise is the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Not convinced yet?

Listen to this: “Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, (15) who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. (16) For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. (17) Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit” (Acts 8:14-17).

These Samaritans were already believers in Christ (born again; partakers of the blessing of Abraham), having been water baptized in His name, but had not yet received the promise of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Peter had preached right after their Pentecostal experience in Acts 2: “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” This was the way God usually blessed people: heart repentance first, then water baptism, and last but not least, the gift of the Holy Spirit. This clearly distinguishes the born again experience from the gift (or promise) of the Spirit. The Samaritans had already believed and repented, were water baptized, but had not received the gift of the Spirit. As Scripture states, “He had fallen upon none of them” although they had experienced Him as eternal life—the presence of Christ’s divine nature within them.

More proof?

Acts 19:1-6: “And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples (2) he said to them, ‘Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?’ So they said to him, ‘We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.’ (3) And he said to them, ‘Into what then were you baptized?’ So they said, ‘Into John’s baptism.’ (4) Then Paul said, ‘John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.’ (5) When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. (6) And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.”

These believers in Ephesus had only heard a partial gospel of Christ. They did not know about water baptism in Jesus’ name or about the gift of the Holy Spirit. Although their eternal destiny was secured, they would have been cheated out of their inheritance in this life because of ignorance if someone had not shown them otherwise.

Having now accurately and undeniably proven the promise of the Spirit is a separate experience received after our being born again, we are obligated to ask ourselves this crucial and climactic question:

How many of God’s people today have been erroneously taught and believe they received the promise of the Spirit when they were born again?

Receiving the promise of the Holy Spirit was commanded by our Lord as a requirement for New Covenant ministry. We must be endued with power from on High before we can be effective witnesses (Acts 1). Jesus received the promise of the Spirit after being baptized by John in the Jordan River. He did not need to be born again because of being

sinless. He received power for ministry, thereby, setting the example for us. He stated after being baptized with the Holy Spirit concerning Himself:

“The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; (19) to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD” (Lk. 4:18-19).

Can you say the same about yourself? Have you received the Spirit since you believed? Did you by the Spirit of God speak with (the gift of) tongues and prophecy as an outward sign that you had received it? The Prophet Joel declared that those upon whom the Spirit of God is poured out would prophesy, have dreams, and see visions. Based on the experience of those at Pentecost (Acts 2+) and the later experiences of other believers, the prophetic gift of tongues, along with prophecy spoken in their native language, was the outward sign that a person had received the Holy Spirit. Dreams and visions usually followed later. In other words, there are always signs and wonders that accompany and follow receiving the Holy Spirit. Signs and wonders are manifestations in this natural sense realm that Jesus is alive from the dead and is Lord of all.

So, how important is it that we receive the promise of the Spirit? The late Dr. A. W. Tozer, author and pastor, wrote: “If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the church today, 95 percent of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference. If the Holy Spirit had been withdrawn from the New Testament church, 95 percent of what they did would stop, and everybody would know the difference.” If we neglect it or do not receive it, we will always find replacements for it. Those replacements will ultimately be destructive.

God is limited in what He can do for and through any of His people who have not received the promise of the Spirit and through any who have neglected it. God is limited in a similar way as He was in the Old Covenant. I have often heard New Covenant believers attempt to compare themselves or their dilemma to that of Job’s (i.e. the Old Testament book of Job). While we can, in this New Covenant era, draw inspiration and comfort from the revelation of God’s mercy and compassion to Job as revealed in the book, other things must be taken into consideration. Here are the three main differences between Job’s experience and ours:

- (1) No blood covenant was established by God with Job as proven in his complaint that there was no mediator to go between him and God (Job 9:32-33). He practiced Noah’s legacy. Jesus, our Great High Priest, is now our mediator. Everything needed that pertains to life and godliness is now secured by the power of His endless life (2 Pt. 1:1-4; Heb. 7:14-28).
- (2) The book of Job served as an example of the need for blood covenant. Abraham, a likely contemporary of Job, experienced protection from, because of blood covenant, the very things that happened to Job. In fact, he defeated similar nations that posed a threat to His own.
- (3) We can now, because of what Jesus has accomplished in our behalf, become Holy Spirit empowered sons of God. We can and must overcome the accuser of the brethren now by the blood of the Lamb, the word of our testimony, and by not loving our lives, even unto death (Rev. 12). These three essentials must be the trademark of our daily life as it was with Christ unto knowing the fullness of the

promise of the Spirit. Dying to ourselves or not loving our lives unto death cannot be understood by itself. The flipside of it is that we instead love to walk in and live by the fullness of the supernatural Spirit of God. Dying to oneself is nothing more than an exercise in futility if we do not understand and have the promise of the Spirit and the treasures included with it. To not love our lives unto death means we love life in the Holy Spirit realm instead. It is not difficult to live in. Only the way of the transgressor is hard (Pro. 13:15).

The story of the healing of the man at the pool of Bethesda symbolizes the difference between Old and New Covenant experience (Jn. 5). An angel would come down at certain times and stir the water and the first one in the pool would be healed. This was typical of the Old Covenant's limitations. Normally, the covenant blessing was only to the first-born and the Spirit of God only came upon prophets, kings, priests, and judges. In other words, the working of the Spirit of God was as limited as the Old Covenant's ability to redeem from sin. Jesus came up to the man at the pool of Bethesda and asked him, "Do you want to be made well?" He was saying, "I am the replacement for the pool and all that the Old Covenant represents. Look to Me now because My power to heal is always available."

Oh, if God's people only understood how much Jesus desires for us to move out of the Old Covenant and into New Covenant faith. All things are possible to them that believe.

The Apostle Paul stated: "Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. (9) For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; (10) and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power" (Col. 2:9-10).

Have you been cheated out of the promise of the Spirit because of ignorance, the traditions of men, or wrong doctrine?

The Remarkable Benefits of Receiving the Spirit

Much can be said of the benefits of receiving the Spirit, but I will only say a little and leave the rest for you to search out. The Lord taught us that the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid, and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field (Mt. 13:44). I would encourage you to closely and regularly observe how Jesus, His apostles, and the early Church benefited from the gift (treasure) of the Spirit as defined in the New Testament.

Jesus painted an ornate word picture of the benefits of receiving the "Comforter" (the Spirit of truth) in John 14-16. After telling them of His departure from the world (Jn. 14), He assures His disciples that He would not leave them as orphans but would come to them in the person of another Comforter who is the Spirit of truth. Concisely, Jesus was telling them that this Comforter would do in and through them exactly what He would do if He were present with them. This was confirmed by this statement Jesus made to them: "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. (13) And whatever

you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. (14) If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.”

How incredible...by receiving the promise of the Spirit, Jesus' disciples would be enabled to walk with the Father as He and accomplish the same things in a greater measure. This will happen only when we consistently surrender our souls to the river of God's Spirit.

Lord Jesus, we put you on like an overcoat, and make no provision for the flesh to give in to what it wants! May you rest upon us in your fullness now until rivers of living water flow freely from us (Ro. 13:14; Jn. 7:38).

Almost every unresolved problem within the life of a Christian can be traced back to this: they have not received the promise of the Spirit or have neglected the already received gift. They have not received or have not regularly kept themselves filled with the Holy Spirit. We cannot be filled with Him if we are being regularly filled (preoccupied) with the things of this life. This would include not just sinful things but also the “good” things that are a distraction or potential idols.

Holy Spirit, we ask forgiveness for neglecting You and for frustrating Your longing to be a part of every aspect of our lives.

“Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. (5) Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, “The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously”? (6) But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” (7) Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. (8) Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. (9) Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. (10) Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up” (Jas. 4:4-10).

May Your jealous yearning for us, Holy Spirit, be satisfied beyond measure. Even as the springtime warmth and rains awaken and satisfy sleeping creation, unveil Yourself to us in full splendor. As Jesus promised, take what is of Christ's and show it to us. Make us your continual home. Use us to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, confirming the Word with signs, wonders, and various miracles. Come, Spirit of truth, and set up Your throne of truth within our hearts, expose and dethrone every belief and mindset that do not honor Christ as He is honored in Heaven. Thank you for being our closest friend. I receive You with no reluctance right now. I am not ashamed of You or any of Your gifts. I will speak in tongues and prophesy. I will dream dreams and see visions.

Be baptized with the Holy Spirit and fire in Jesus wonderful name! Amen.

Chapter Two



The Baptism with the Holy Spirit

The purpose for this article is to give to you, the reader, a clear and precise Biblical understanding of the dimension of the Holy Spirit received by Jesus in the Jordan River and by the early Church on the day of Pentecost. Jesus' experience served as the precursor to the early Church's. This power from on High is required and most necessary for effective New Covenant ministry today. While they did speak with tongues and prophesy on the day of Pentecost, and that gift is valid today, God's ultimate purpose was to empower them to be witnesses for Christ. Speaking in (unknown) tongues was the most common sign that a person had received the baptism with the Holy Spirit. This sign was not that baptism in and of itself. The importance, validity, and benefits of this gift will not be covered in this article.

The Cornerstone of Ministry

“Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, (21) in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, (22) in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.” (Eph. 2:20-22).

What was Paul indicating by portraying Jesus as the Chief Cornerstone?

I used to work in masonry helping a friend lay cinder block. The first block that we laid on a foundation or footer always started in a corner. The placing of the first block was crucial to the outcome of the finished product. If it is not properly placed, then everything else will be out of alignment and pose a serious threat to the integrity of the entire building.

Jesus is the standard, the foundation, and the first block by which all things are judged. All New Covenant ministries must, therefore, be aligned with His. Anything out of alignment with His model of ministry will pose a threat to the security of the entire structure.

The Two Foundational Principles of Ministry

There were two life-giving principles by which Jesus operated in His public ministry. The first is found in John 5:19:

“Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.”

Jesus worked hand-in-hand with His Father. This was necessary for Him to do what He saw His Father do. Without this close communion, He would not have been able to complete His mission of reconciling the world to God through His death. Apart from His deity, Jesus would have been no different than any other Old Testament prophet who performed signs and wonders but did not know the reality of the indwelling Spirit of God. As Jesus told His disciples, “He dwells with you and shall be in you” (Jn. 4:17).

Can we walk with the Father as Jesus did? Well, the answer to the question is yes, as long as we realize that such a relationship is not based upon anything that originates from us. It depends solely upon the finished work of the cross (Christ’s suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension). Through faith in that finished work, Jesus becomes our righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21). This includes justification (forgiveness of sins or right standing with God) and the fruit produced by the work of righteousness in us. We can have a similar relationship with the Father, if our faith is in the blood of Christ alone. It is possible for us to declare, along with Jesus, that we do only what we see our Father do.

The second principle is found in Luke 4:18-19: “The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; (19) to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.”

It was necessary that Jesus not only have the Spirit dwelling in Him, but the Spirit had to be upon Him so that He could destroy the works of the devil. This power to destroy the works of the devil is referred to in the above passage as the *anointing*.

All New Covenant ministries must align themselves with these two principles. They are the mortar that solidified the ministry of the Chief Cornerstone. To leave either out of the equation will greatly hinder our ability to be used as extensions of Christ’s ministry in the earth.

The Holy Spirit Upon Us

If Jesus needed the Spirit to come upon and anoint Him (He could do nothing of Himself), how much more do we? If He is the Chief Cornerstone, we have no other option. Jesus’ “power” ministry did not begin until after the Spirit came upon Him in the Jordan River and after He overcame the tempter in the wilderness (Lk. 4:14). Likewise, the early Church did not have a “power” ministry, after Jesus’ resurrection, until they obeyed Christ’s command to tarry in Jerusalem. They had to wait on the promise of the Holy Spirit for forty days in a place of complete consecration to God.

Israel was tested in wilderness so that they would know that man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Deut. 8:1-5). Jesus was tested in a similar manner (Mt 4:1-11). In order for us to be fully entrusted with the power of the Holy Spirit, we too must pass the test as did Jesus. The baptism with the Holy Spirit is for everyone who values and desires it. In fact, it is not an option but a command of Jesus. How much of our life are we willing to yield to Him? (See the chapter entitled, *Possessing Your Soul*)

The early Church had the same experience on the day of Pentecost that Jesus did at the Jordan River.

“When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. (2) And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. (3) Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. (4) And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:1-4).

Notice, it states here that the Spirit appeared as cloven tongues of fire that sat *upon* each of them. Jesus told His disciples that they would be *endued* with power from on high in Luke 24:49 and referred to this event as the *baptism* with the Holy Spirit in Acts 1:4-5.

Endued and *baptized* define the dimension in which they received the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. According to Strong's Concordance, *to be endued with* means *to be clothed*, and *to be baptized* indicates a total immersion.

This is what happened to Jesus, and, after the Pentecost experience, the early Church could say along with Jesus, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, and He has anointed me to...” We can say that today also only if we have received the baptism with the Holy Spirit. There is as much need today for power to destroy the works of the devil as there was during the time of Jesus and the apostles. God has not changed and neither has the devil. God is still as good as ever and the devil is still as bad as ever. (See the chapter entitled, *Are the Gifts of the Spirit for Today?*).

Endued, baptized, and anointed are all referring to the enabling power of the Holy Spirit needed by Jesus and the Church for ministering to the people. Through this baptism, the nine gifts (graces) of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12) will function in the believer as they did with Jesus.

The Spirit Within and Upon Contrasted

Was the one hundred and twenty born again on the day of Pentecost or did the Spirit already dwell within them? Is the baptism with the Holy Spirit the same as the born again experience? I will answer these with a question. What happened when Jesus breathed upon the disciples and said, “Receive the Holy Ghost” (Jn. 20:22)? They already had met the conditions to be saved as presented in Romans 10. They believed in their heart that God had raised Christ from the dead. What Jesus did in breathing on them parallels the Lord breathing into Adam in the book of Genesis. The creation of man was

completed at that point. The new (spiritual) creation was completed in His disciples when Jesus breathed resurrection life into them (1 Cor. 5:17).

Jesus did not need to be born again, yet He was baptized (immersed) with the Holy Spirit.

Well then, what about 1 Corinthians 12:13? Does that not state that the baptism with the Holy Spirit is how we are placed into the body of Christ? Let us take a close look at it. “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we are Jews or Gentiles, whether we are bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” The wording here is very important. The Spirit is the one who baptizes us into the body. “By” indicates the Spirit as the baptizer and not what we are baptized into or with. Baptism indicates a washing or cleansing. We are placed into the body of Christ through the washing (baptism) of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit (Tit. 3:5). This was what the Holy Spirit was indicating through Paul. This is the born-again experience and not what was experienced on the day of Pentecost. This is quite distinct from the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the baptizer and the Holy Spirit is the substance we are baptized with as stated in Matthew 3:11-12. The former brings an initial transformation *within* (a new regenerated spirit), while the latter is focused *upon* us and, consequently, intensifies and increases the well of salvation (Jn. 4:14; Isa. 1:3) into a river that flows out of our heart (Jn. 7:37-39).

We “...have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” This also points to the born again experience. We draw water from the well of salvation (Isa. 12:3) for the sake of our relationship with God and it corresponds with the indwelling Holy Spirit. The river gives power for service—for incredibly effective prayer and proclamation of the word of God. The river is necessary for reigning in life and world evangelism.

We can never know the fullness of God in the river of ministry, unless we find Him daily in the well of communion. Those who do not draw from the well daily will become spiritually unstable, tossed back and forth by every wind of circumstance and adversity.

Anyone can see that a river is greater in volume and intensity than a well. This indicates that our love for Christ and the spiritual senses needed to be overcomers in this life will increase in volume and intensity through the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Herein is the reason why the Church is powerless today and why we have little impact on society. The majority of church people have been taught false doctrine. False doctrine and ignorance are two of the worst enemies of the cause of Christ. We have powerless preaching from pulpits falling on the soil of cheated hearts. We are to let no man cheat us as Paul told the Colossian church (Col. 2:8 & 18).

Isaiah the prophet foresaw the need for the baptism with the Holy Spirit when he declared: “For Zion’s sake I will not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burns. (2) The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory. You shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD will name. (3) You shall also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God (62:1-3). *He saw that just being saved or righteous was not enough. It had to be intensified to the degree that other people (nations) would see it upon us, desire it, and be transformed by it.*

Did you know that the well of love that is in your heart could become a river that when combined with those of other Christians can change a nation?

The New Testament teaches three baptisms that bear triune witness in the earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood (1 Jn. 5:8). These translate into experience as the baptism with the Holy Spirit, water baptism, and the baptism into Christ's body (saved or born again). We are not complete in Christ unless we have allowed God to bear witness concerning us with all three baptisms.

The Life, the Walk, the Ministry

The born again experience brings us resurrection *life* within. We know Christ in His death and resurrection through this experience. Through water baptism, we are initiated into a new *walk*. Through one act of obedience, we totally give our body to "walk in newness of life" (see Ro. 6:3). The life of God within us is thus translated into a walk. It is easier to believe that Christ died for us than it is to believe that we died with Him. Therefore, water baptism helps our faith "see" ourselves dead to or set free from sin and not just forgiven of it.

Now what about Pentecost or the baptism with the Holy Spirit? At Pentecost, Jesus was revealed as the glorified King of kings, the head of all principality and power and over all things to the Church, and the One to Whom all authority is given in heaven and in earth. It was after Christ was glorified that the Holy Spirit was sent in the dimension of the baptism with the Holy Spirit. The result? What had already been deposited within them was also glorified or intensified. The well became a river.

The well became a river when a man named Peter, who could not witness to one woman, stood up on the day of Pentecost and spoke with such authority and power, that at least three thousand people were converted to Christ (Acts 2). That is powerful ministry! There is an experience of such dimension available to us today. What are we going to do about it?

If the Church is going to fulfill her purpose in the earth, this experience is absolutely necessary. As Jesus told His disciples, "Tarry in Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high." Have you been to the upper room?

Many people are out trying to fulfill ministry callings without having been there. They are in disobedience. Possibly, their "fear" of God is taught by the tradition of men. They are more devoted to tradition than they are to Christ in this matter. If the baptism with the Holy Spirit is God's requirement for all true New Covenant ministry, then we must obey. If you say you have received it then it will be evident in your works. As Jesus proclaimed, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father" (Jn. 14:12). Signs, wonders, and miracles of the Holy Spirit will be evident in our ministries and churches. Jesus ascension to the Father was what made the "greater" works possible today.

I exhort you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, "Receive the power from on high, and then keep on being filled." You will receive it when you desire it above all things.

Chapter Three



Are the Gifts of the Spirit for Today?

This is one of the most controversial subjects in the Body of Christ. How would you answer the question? In answering the question, can you give a Scriptural basis for it? There are different viewpoints on the subject, however, the true issue is not who is or is not doctrinally correct. God's character is at stake. His doctrines reveal different aspects of His character. To misinterpret the following passage of Scripture would be a misrepresentation of God's character.

“Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. (9) For we know in part and we prophesy in part. (10) But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. (11) When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. (12) For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. (13) And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

This passage in I Corinthians 13 is what some use to validate their belief that the nine gifts of the Spirit listed in I Corinthians 12 are not for today. They equate the coming of *that which is perfect* (v.10) with the establishment of the New Testament books as the *canon* or rule of faith possessing divine authority. (The “canon” of Scripture was ratified around 300 A.D by the Nicean Council.) Is this what Paul had in mind when he wrote the above passage? It must be interpreted in its context, as with any other passage, in order to rightly understand it.

In verse 8 of our text, Paul contrasts prophecy, tongues, and knowledge with love. Love will never end but the gifts of the Spirit will. Verses 9 and 10 contrast *that which is in part* with *that which is perfect* or complete. Paul was saying then that the time would come when *that which is in part* would no longer be necessary, because of *that which is perfect* or complete would come. *That which is in part* could be likened unto a glass of water that is $\frac{1}{4}$ of the way full, and then filling it up would make it perfect or complete.

Paul continues in verse 11 and sums up allegorically what he just said. He speaks of being a child in contrast to being a man. When you are a child, you act like one. The same applies to manhood. He also pointed out that childhood must eventually give way to manhood. In this verse, Paul was alluding to two distinct stages in the fulfillment of God's redemptive purposes in the earth.

The characteristics of the child-stage are:

- 1) Knowledge is in part (vs. 9, 12),
- 2) Prophesying is in part (v. 9),
- 3) Tongues are necessary (including the rest of gifts) because of knowledge being in part (v. 8), and
- 4) We see through a glass darkly (v. 12).

In the man-stage:

- 1) Partial knowledge gives way to our knowing as we are known (v. 12),
- 2) Our seeing through a glass darkly gives way to our seeing face to face (v. 12),
- 3) That which is in part is done away with, for that which is perfect or complete has come (v. 10), and
- 4) There is no need for the gifts of the Spirit (vs. 9, 12).

We could all agree together here that when the man-stage comes, the child-stage and all it consists of will be completed or no longer needed. Is that sound Holy Ghost logic?

In other words, if we are in the man-stage, we have perfect knowledge and know as we are known. We no longer see the Lord through a glass darkly, but as if we were face to face with Him. We no longer have need for the gifts of the Spirit.

Do you see now that Paul could not have been equating the establishment of the New Testament *canon* with the coming of *that which is perfect*? When *that which is perfect* has come, it will cause an immediate and permanent transformation to take place in our lives. *The central focus here was not on that which is perfect, but on the impact it would have when it comes.* The establishment of the New Testament *canon* has had no such impact for close to seventeen hundred years!

In the man-stage, we would be given a full measure of the Spirit as opposed to an earnest (down payment) as Paul states we have received now (2 Cor. 1: 22, 5:5, & Eph. 1:14). Our having the earnest of the Spirit would concur with our knowing and prophesying in part—necessitating all the gifts of the Spirit. It would be like the glass of water $\frac{1}{4}$ of the way full as mentioned earlier.

Only one event portrayed in Scripture could initiate the man-stage—the Second Coming of Christ. We shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye when He comes. We will no longer have just a down payment, but will have the total amount.

Further proof? How many of you can honestly say that you have perfect knowledge, you see God face to face, and you have no need for the gifts of the Spirit? If so, you need to repent of your pride and for allowing yourself to be deceived. Listen carefully. *If that which is perfect has already come, then why did the early Church have a greater impact on society than we have?* They were in the child-stage, and we are presently in the man-stage according to many of the teachings coming from fundamental Christianity. *In line with such thinking, that would mean that we have a greater measure of the Spirit than the early Church did and are producing far less results.*

What is the real reason why some churches do not have the gifts of the Spirit in operation in their meetings today? If you believe that they are not for today, then you will not have them for today. As they have believed, so they have received. They teach for doctrines the commandments of men and, thus, make void the word of God. They are allowing themselves to be cheated through philosophy, empty deceit, and the traditions of men (see 1 Cor. 1:17, Mt. 15:9, & Col. 2:8-9). The devil uses such teaching to keep God's people in bondage and powerless against his works in the earth.

What necessitated the gifts of the Spirit in the first place?

The answer: man's need for redemption from sin and all its effects. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil (I Jn. 3:8). The works of the devil are obvious. Everything that Jesus delivered and healed people of in the Gospels are the works of the devil. Do we no longer need redemption from them?

Acts 10:38 declares that "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and power: who went about doing good, and healing *all* that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him." The manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit is God's goodness in action. It is the power of God's Kingdom on display for the benefit of His people and the forceful advancement of His Kingdom in the earth. He also uses the gifts as an effective sign to draw people to Himself.

So, Jesus is no longer going about doing good as described above? I mentioned earlier that this is not a matter of who is doctrinally right or wrong. God's character is at stake here!

Let me make it easier for you. If the gifts are not for today, then God is not as good to us and every generation since the early apostles or 300 A.D., whichever applies. That means He loves us less than He loved them. *Can the love and goodness of God be exempted?*

The answer: Hebrews 13:8, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever."

I came in to the Kingdom through a denominational church and believed their teaching that the operation of the gifts ended with the last of Jesus twelve apostles. Yet I had a hunger for God that would not turn loose of me. My desire for more of God surpassed my devotion to the traditions and doctrines of my church (I am speaking of traditions and doctrines that make the Word of God of no effect). That hunger drove me to my knees

often in search for more of God and it still does today. I found more—much more. I was clothed with power from on high. I spoke with tongues as the Spirit gave utterance. God has used me in all the gifts of the Spirit since then many times. I lost friends and associates because of it though. Oh well.

All this evidence demands a verdict. Shall we believe Scripture or our traditions?

If you are convinced that you have believed and, if applicable, taught a lie, then ask God to forgive you (also include any sin you have not repented of). Express your spiritual hunger to Him. After you have done this with your whole heart, soul, mind and strength, then prepare yourself to receive. *“I say unto you be filled with the Holy Spirit of God. Be clothed with power from on High—having all the gifts of the Spirit operating in your life as He wills. Receive it! In the mighty name of Jesus.*

Chapter Four



The Sovereignty of God & Christian Responsibility

There is a great need in this hour for God’s people to understand what His sovereignty is and how it functionally applies to them in the New Covenant. Webster’s dictionary defines sovereignty as *supremacy of authority and power*. A Bible believing Christian would have no problem with defining God as supreme over all. He transcends all knowledge, wisdom, authority, power, goodness, and justice. Of Him, through Him, and to Him are all things (Ro. 11:36). He created all things, and by Him all things continue to exist (Col. 1:15-17). He had the first word (Genesis) and has already had the last word (the Revelation). He also works all things to the counsel of His will in between (including evil; Eph. 1:11).

Misconceptions of God’s sovereignty can cause us to fall short of fulfilling our New Covenant responsibilities. Most of us have either said it or had someone say it to us at some point in our lives: “God is in control.” Well, if that is entirely true, He is doing a poor job based on the state of things in the world. There are two other things that also play a role in determining this: 1) the free will of people 2) the influence of the powers of darkness. “We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one” (1 Jn. 5:19). The epic battle of this age is portrayed in God’s truth verses the devil’s lies. It is over which one has the greatest influence over the hearts and minds of men. Thankfully, the outcome in the end will be based on God’s judgment.

Although, they can be inspirational, superhero movies have done us a great injustice because they are far from reality. While these super beings may unconditionally come swooping in at the right moment and save the damsel in distress or the world from

obliteration, that is *not* how it works with God. God's commitment and faithfulness is mainly to those with whom He is in covenant. Only to them does He fulfill the terms of covenant. At least in this age, apart from the limitations He has set in place, the greatest counter-sway God has in the earth to keep the wicked one in check are the Holy Spirit-empowered people of the covenant. They must do their part in proclaiming the truth or the lies of the wicked one will prevail within a society. When his lies prevail, so does his works. What are his works? They include everything that Jesus delivered, healed, and saved people from while on earth and everything He carried to the cross in our behalf. The one catch is that we have to believe it without doubting and doing that is not difficult.

Along with the influence toward pacifism that worldliness and sin has in the church, there are doctrines that contribute to the problem also. According to Webster's dictionary, a pacifist is *one who opposes war or violence as a means to settle disputes*. The word "passive" is similar in definition: *not active but acted upon*. If either of these words define our spiritual stance or beliefs toward the devil, he will be having us for lunch every day.

God has given us all that we need in Christ to defensively and offensively oppose the powers of darkness (Eph. 6:11-18). The spirit of a Christian must be well armed and continually active in this manner or be acted upon by them. Listen to this exhortation from the Lord: "Be sober [Spirit-controlled], be vigilant [watchful, stay awake]; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world" (1 Pt. 5:8-9). So, it is the devil who is going about inflicting pain and suffering in the world and we are commanded to be alert, watchful, and always resistant toward him. Does this sound like doctrine that the mainstream church is teaching today?

Our spirit should always be alert to the moving of the Holy Spirit within. He is always flowing like a river. This is why we can pray without ceasing and continually offer up praise and thanksgiving to God as commanded by the apostles (1 Thes. 5:17, 2 Tim. 1:3, & Heb. 13:15). In addition, one must stay alert to the appeals made to our sinful flesh from outside influences. We must make every emotion, thought, sensation, desire, or inclination obey Christ (2 Cor. 10:4-5). This is accomplished by our putting to death the deeds of the body by the indwelling Holy Spirit who reveals and enforces the power of the Cross (Ro. 8:13). This is the only way to overcome the power that our past may still have over us.

Our resisting the devil steadfast in the faith not only involves direct confrontation, but also involves a continual flow of worship from us to God. This is how we come to know the power of Christ's sacrificial death on the Cross within. As we offer the sacrifice of praise continually because of His sacrifice (Heb. 13:5), the power of that sacrifice becomes a reality. The devil's priority is to hinder or stop all true worship offered to God and draw attention to himself or at least to something else. The highest level of spiritual warfare is being able to worship God while not allowing the devil to distract us from it. Worship is the rule and confronting the devil is the exception. If the true worship of God is the rule in the life of a believer, then their anointing to deal with the devil and his works will never be lacking. This is abiding in Christ and will take us from glory to glory (2 Cor. 3:18).

Possessing the Land

Christians have suffered many things for which the sovereignty of God was blamed. It has become the scapegoat for many people who were actually suffering at the hands of the adversary because of false doctrine and their ignorance of God's will. It is much easier to blame everything on the "mysterious" will of God than for us to seek out His will and carry out the responsibilities necessary for victory (Ro. 12:2). There are certain things in the New Covenant that Christians must know about or they could be cheated out of some or all of their Kingdom inheritance and even die before they finish their course.

Knowing the will of God for every aspect of our lives is an absolute necessity for overcoming the world. A person cannot specifically believe without the understanding of what is the specific will of God. Specific prayer equals specific answers from God.

How can we know His will? By His Spirit and by His written Word. Faith comes by hearing...the word of God (Ro. 10:17). The Word of God is the sword (instrument of war) of the Spirit. The Spirit will wield His sword in our behalf to bring us to victory over all the works of the devil but we must learn to correctly *hear* what He is saying to have victorious faith. This "hearing" involves our responding in a manner that pleases God in agreement with His New Covenant promises. We please Him by faith. True faith is proven by obedience to God, and He will confirm our proven faith by giving us what we asked for. Hearing God is important for knowing the difference between when we should be patiently asking and seeking Him for something or when we need to take action ourselves. Jesus' times of prayer were spent mostly in communion with His Father, discussing His life's mission and *travailing* for present and future disciples. This is proven in the statement He made to Peter, indicating that although Satan desired to sift him as wheat, He had prayed that His faith would not fail. Most of His time in relation to people was spent teaching them and releasing the initiatives necessary for their deliverance and healing. He rarely *openly* prayed for people or things as it is clearly portrayed in the Gospels. He often openly exposed, rebuked, and destroyed the works of the devil.

The Bible clearly reveals that there are things that God has already given to us in Christ (1 Cor. 2:12, Eph. 1:3, & 2 Pt. 1:3-4). These things constitute everything that Jesus did for people in the Gospels and the book of Acts. He paid for them by His blood (Isa. 53). They are ours to possess. The indwelling Holy Spirit also reveals them to us (1 Cor. 2:12). To boldly pursue them would not be presuming upon God's sovereignty. This would correspond with God telling the children of Israel to possess the land of Canaan because He had given it to them. The Lord told Joshua: "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses" (Jos. 1:3). If God has already given us something, it is ours for the taking. Did He withhold the land of Canaan from Israel? No, they disqualified themselves through unbelief. They had to *dispossess* (tread upon) the giants in the land in order to possess it. Tragically, the first generation believed the wrong report. They could not, therefore, enter into God's rest. Do you see how importance it was for the children of Israel to believe that the rest was already given to them in Abraham?

Ignorance, false doctrine, and the traditions of men can keep us from our inheritance in this life. These produce unbelief and disbelief in our hearts. If we do not possess what God has already given to us, it is entirely our fault. We must violently take our inheritance by dispossessing the intimidating “giants” of resistance in the battlefield of our mind.

Suppose the children of Israel said, “Lord, if it be thy will, give us the land of Canaan,” after God had told them it was theirs. Would not that have been very foolish and unbelieving? Unfortunately, many of God’s people are doing that today. They are allowing themselves to be cheated by the persuasive teachings of men (doctrines of demons in disguise) that make them spiritually passive. The Lord does not giveth and then taketh away our inheritance. Blessed be His name. There is *no* variation or shadow of turning with Him (Jas. 1:17).

Jesus came to deliver us from the direct assaults of the devil (Acts 10:38). This includes sickness, disease, and demonic oppression. There is a difference between a direct assault by the devil and the assaults that come through oppressive individuals, religious leaders, and governments who hate God. God may not remove suffering in the form of the latter from us immediately even if we ask Him. However, we are *commanded* by God to resist the direct assault of the devil after first submitting to Him. We can do it successfully and without exception (Jas. 4:7).

New Covenant “Jobs”

We cannot have the same mentality toward tribulation and suffering as Job did during his time. If we do, Satan will be having us over for lunch quite often. There must be correct understanding concerning the purpose for the book of Job that will make it applicable for our day. Luke 16:16 states, “The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presses into it.” The revelation of the Kingdom of God had not come in Job’s day. What would have happened if he had the understanding that we have now? In this era, the “accuser of the brethren” has to deal with New Covenant “Jobs.”

Jesus began His ministry as the King proclaiming the Gospel of His Kingdom and challenging the present ruler of the world system. His Kingdom began to displace the kingdom of darkness. We must interpret the book of Job in light of that. There was very little understanding concerning spiritual warfare and demonology in that day.

The Kingdom of God is revealed now and we are told to resist the devil ourselves. Authority and power have been given to us to reign over him in every arena of life (Ro. 5:17). Jesus commanded us to cast out demons in His name. We can bind everything that stands in our way of our fulfilling God’s purposes (Lk. 10:19; Mt 16:18-19). These truths had not been revealed in Job’s day. Man had not yet been redeemed from sin. Job only experienced the symbolic means of redemption from sin (the blood of animals) that pointed to Christ. This understanding was probably passed down from Noah.

It is probable that Job was a contemporary of Abraham and, in studying the book, there is no evidence that he was in covenant with God. Before anything, the Bible is the record of God’s covenants with mankind. The events in Job’s life were used by God to prove

the need for covenant. In contrast, Abraham's life proved the blessings of being in covenant with God. Possibly, the events that took place in Job's life preceded God's covenant with Abraham. This would have provided a backdrop to reinforce the need for covenant. After all, the book of Job is considered to be the oldest book in the Bible.

The covenant promises of the Old Testament made to Israel assured protection to those who obey God from the very things that happened to Job (Deut. 28). Job obviously did not know any such covenant benefits yet he worshiped Him with the light that he had. The sacrifices he offered had no power to make him perfect in regards to his conscience any more than they could for Israel through the Old Covenant. Every year he was reminded of his sin and the sins of his sons and daughters for whom he offered sacrifices also (Heb. 9:9, 10:1-4, & Job 1:4-5). He was obedient in all that he knew concerning God's will *as it was revealed*. Because of this, God considered him to be blameless, upright, and one who fears God and shuns evil (Job 1:8). Notice that He never said that Job was without sin.

We can conclude from this that the devil as the "accuser of the brethren" had legal right to do what he did to Job. The seed of the woman, Christ, had not yet bruised his (the serpents) head (Gen. 3:15). He had not yet been stripped of his right to rule over mankind. That right was given to him because of the transgression of Adam.

There was no one to mediate Job's cause before the Lord, so he complained. "For He [God] is not a man, as I am, that I may answer Him, and that we should go to court together. (33) Nor is there any mediator between us, who may lay his hand on us both. (34) Let Him take His rod away from me, and do not let dread of Him terrify me. (35) Then I would speak and not fear Him, but it is not so with me (Job 9:32-35). Job had a reason to be terrified by God because he had no human mediator (advocate, defense attorney) to plead his cause in the context of a covenant of protection. God had not promised him what He promised to Abraham through blood covenant. There was none to testify in his behalf but God intervened and revealed His purposes anyway to prove that He honors those who honor Him.

Job's trial ended when the Lord appeared to him (42:5-6). He responded, "I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear: but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Job had knowledge about God but he had not really seen or experienced Him. The Lord's revelation of Himself to him brought the necessary submission and humility from him in order to cause the devil to flee. This was the way God had to deal with Job, because of there being no covenant of protection in place. This was also how God had to deal with the "accuser of the brethren" because he still had legal right. Now, the "accuser" has no legal right over the lives of those who make Christ their refuge. God can deal with the devil's works in the earth through us. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1 Jn. 3:8). "As He [Christ] is, so are we in this world" (1 Jn. 4:17).

Jesus chose to humble himself and submit to the Father's will in everything. If we suffer let it not be because of ignorance, false doctrine, or a lack of humility and, consequently, receive opposition from God (1 Pt. 5:5). May we suffer only according to Christ's example. He beat the devil on every level.

Job endured in spite of all that he did not know. How much more should we then be able to endure, to whom the Kingdom of God has come? To whom has been given a joint

inheritance with the King of kings and Lord of lords (Ro. 8:17). If Christ has called us His brethren, then can the devil do to us any more than he could do to Him (Heb. 2:11-12)? Of course, he will if *you* let him.

In this New Covenant in Christ, the Lord is revealed in and through us. We no longer have to suffer because of the devil's accusations. We have overcome him (Rev. 12:10-11). Now, the testimony of Jesus' blood in our hearts gives us right of access before God's throne (Heb. 10:19-23; 1 Jn. 3:16-24). Through this access we can know the "mysterious" will of God and cause it to be done on earth as it is in Heaven. God's sovereignty over the works of the devil on earth is revealed through frail humanity that has been baptized with the Holy Spirit and fire. "Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you" (Lk. 10:17).

Chapter Five



Did Jesus Die for Our Healing?

[Recommended reading: *The Real Faith for Healing*, written by Charles S. Price in 1940 but edited and rewritten by Harold J. Chadwick in 1997, and published by Bridge-Logos Publishers. I highly recommend this book because it answers many questions as to why some Christians are never healed.]

Have you had experiences that seem to indicate that the answer to the title question is "no?" Listen to this passage.

"He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. (4) Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. (5) But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. (6) All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:3-6).

Does this passage reveal that Jesus took, not only our sins, but also our sicknesses and diseases to the cross? Matthew 8:16-17 will help settle the matter:

"When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, (17) that it might be

fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: ‘He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.’”

Matthew reveals that Isaiah 53:4 is referring to infirmities and sicknesses (other translations use the words “pain” and “diseases” instead.). Isaiah the prophet concludes his point with (v.5) “...and by His stripes we are healed.” Note the following points concerning the passages:

“Our” and “we” define who Jesus suffered for, indicating the entire human race, and further indicating that all people are subject to what Jesus vicariously took upon Himself.

The use of the words “borne” and “carried” refers to Christ’s atoning and redeeming work on the cross. This is proven by the fact that the same words are used to describe Christ’s bearing our sins in verse 11 and 1 Peter 2:24.

The “healing” referred to is from what Isaiah had previously mentioned. This list consists of sickness, disease, pain, infirmity (v.4), transgressions, and iniquities (v.5).

The words “stricken,” “smitten,” and “afflicted” in verse 4 all point to the stripes that Jesus suffered. The Holy Spirit was indicating in this verse that people would misconstrue Jesus’ suffering by attributing it to being deserved punishment from God. Jesus was actually taking our physical maladies on Himself.

The sting of death is sin (1 Cor. 15:56). In this passage, death is depicted as a scorpion that stings its victims before devouring them. Sickness, disease, infirmity, and pain are incipient death—death in its beginning stages. These things did not enter the human race until after Adam sinned and are the result of sin in the earth. Of course, this does not mean that all sickness is caused by a sin that the sick person committed. On the other hand, there can be things in our hearts that can hinder our receiving healing from the Lord. More on this later.

Someone may respond: “But Matthew reveals that Isaiah 53:4 was fulfilled before the cross. It happened during Jesus’ public ministry.” Jesus also forgave people before His death on the cross (Mt. 9:1-8; Jn. 8:3-11). Does that mean that forgiveness of sin is not one of the reasons He died? *In a sense*, Jesus fulfilled that part of Isaiah’s prophecy portraying Christ as having also taken our sins on Himself by forgiving people of their sins during His public ministry. However, He was yet to be wounded and bruised for our sin (v.5). Likewise, Isaiah 53:4 was only partially fulfilled through Christ’s public ministry because He had not yet received the stripes that would forever secure our healing. *Everything that Jesus did for humanity in His public ministry, in reference to destroying the works of the devil, was secured and made even surer through His death on the cross and resurrection from the dead.*

“...For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil” (1 Jn. 3:8).

The works of the devil are summed up in one word: sin. If you cut the roots to a tree, it will die. Likewise, the seed of sin has grown within the human race, producing its destructive harvest but Jesus came to destroy sin and what it produces. His disposition toward sin is quite clear, knowing that sickness, disease, and such things are products of the seed of sin entering the human race.

Acts 10:38 identifies sickness, disease, and such as oppression of the devil. Jesus went about healing all that were oppressed by him. The Spirit of God came upon Jesus to do what according to Luke 4:18? He came to proclaim the Good News and deliverance, and to heal, bind up, restore, and set at liberty. These all reveal Christ's disposition toward suffering humanity and the works of the devil.

Jesus' greatest defeat of the kingdom of darkness was when He died. He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Heb. 9:26). The root cause of all sickness and disease has been condemned through His death. Whether our sickness or infirmity is generational or the result of our having sinned, Jesus has secured and made our deliverance from it even surer through His death—by His stripes we *were* healed (1Pt. 2:24). While this verse in its context is referring to sin, if you do away with sin you also do away with its byproducts as previously stated. The verb tense changed from “are” in the Old Testament (Isa. 53:5) to “were” in the New Testament. In other words, the use of the past tense verb indicates it is an accomplished fact. That is why 1 Corinthians 2:12 declares: “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that *have been* freely given to us by God.”

There is a difference between believing for something that has already been given to us and something that is still in the future. For example, the Lord has promised some of you a future marriage partner. You will live in expectation or hope until the time comes for the fulfillment of that promise. Even though the promise is sure, it is still something for which you patiently wait in hope. Hope is always future tense until faith becomes its substance or evidence (Heb. 11:1).

When it comes to the forgiveness of our sins, we would never look at it as something that will happen sometime in the future. We expect it to happen now, and it does *the moment we meet the requirements*. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 Jn. 1:9). The reason forgiveness of sin is continually available and immediately accessible is because Jesus has paid for it. It is one of those things that *has been* freely given to us by God.

If we come before the Lord reluctantly, as if such things are not already given to us, then we will come away empty-handed. Like the first generation of Israelites who came out of Egypt, the “giants” will easily intimidate us. The Lord commanded them to possess a land that He *had already given* to Abraham and to them, his descendants, close to four hundred years before. *If we do not boldly approach the Lord, as if they are already ours, the things Jesus purchased for us, then we are cheapening and dishonoring His blood.*

Because of the blood of Christ and what it has already provided for us, we are commanded to:

“...Draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb. 10:22).

So complete was Christ's sacrifice that His blood now provides a full assurance of faith in the hearts of those who would dare to draw near into the Presence behind the veil—the unapproachable Light (1 Tim 6:16). In drawing near to Him, not in seeking out forgiveness, healing, deliverance, as an end in and of themselves, will we find these treasures of Christ's sacrifice. In His presence is fullness of joy and at His right hand are pleasures forevermore (Ps. 16:11). Do we long for Him more than the things He gives?

Only by the blood of the Lamb will we overcome the “giants” that stand in our way of experiencing the blessings of the Presence behind the veil—those things God has already given to us in Christ. Into that Presence, we must go if we are to experience the full blessings of the New Covenant. All the blessings of God, including physical healing, that Israel experienced in the Old Testament were the result of the presence of God that dwelled in the earthly Holy of Holies. As long as they honored and blessed God’s presence as He commanded, He honored and blessed them.

We can take advantage of all the biblical principles of prosperity and success and even become blessed abundantly as the result, but what will be our end if we do all of this but dishonor God’s presence? His presence must be our priority and all consuming passion and focus. The blood of Christ has made a way for us to draw near into the place of superabundance, and we must determine not to have His blessings apart from His presence. Moses told the Lord on Mt. Sinai, after leading the children of Israel out of Egypt, “If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here. (16) For how then will it be known that Your people and I have found grace in Your sight, except You go with us? So we shall be separate, Your people and I, from all the people who are upon the face of the earth” (Ex. 33:15-16). Even if they possessed the land “flowing with milk and honey,” obtaining all of its riches, Moses knew that, apart from God’s presence, they would be no different than the Canaanites.

When the Spirit of God reveals in us those things that have been freely given to us, the things Jesus has already purchased by His blood, it causes a full assurance of faith to arise in our heart. If something is already given then it is much easier to believe for. We can be fully assured of them. Jesus has become the surety of a better covenant based on better promises (Heb. 7:22; 8:6). We now have a better faith based on what is already purchased by Christ’s blood and secured to us by the Holy Spirit. *It is a faith that looks back to what already is instead of a faith that looks to what was to come as they did in the Old Testament.*

“And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely” (the Rev. 22:17).

The water of life is for healing on every level and can be partaken of freely by whosoever will draw near by the blood of Christ. This great liberty of faith was only foreshadowed before Christ’s sacrifice and is necessary for all believers to draw near to the Presence from which their healing comes. In the Old Testament, only the high priest could enter the earthly Holy of Holies and that was limited to one time per year. Now, we are the Holy of Holies, and we must surrender our heart, mind, will, and emotions to the influence of His presence. This is how we draw near.

Overcoming Obstacles

A demon of skepticism seeks to sway or hinder our faith for healing by getting us to focus on the exceptions instead of the rule. Such skepticism is rooted in our focusing on subjective (biased, personal) experiences that various believers or we have had that seem to contradict the truth. These things are the exceptions, and the *rule* is found in Christ’s determination to heal and deliver, and His having died to make it even surer as revealed in Scripture. All Church doctrine must be rooted in objective (impartial, revealed) truth

and not subjective experience. When we have established doctrine objectively, then we are to work to bring peoples experience up to its level.

One of the main reasons that the people of God do not experience healing in their bodies is because their spiritual leaders have failed to proclaim, without compromise, physical healing as being emphatically so and already accomplished through Christ death. We must remove the stumblingblocks that keep people from entering the Presence behind the veil, from knowing what is available there and receiving what is needed. Every hindrance to the necessary full assurance of faith must be identified. Failure to do so will result in the fellowship of the believers becoming a breeding ground for skepticism. When God's people have hands laid on them or are anointed with oil, it will be to no avail, thus providing more fuel for skepticism to breed. As the result, we come to conclusions that God does not heal all the time, when in fact "...by His stripes we were healed."

How many of God's people have died without having some of their sins forgiven? How many are suffering because of unresolved guilt in their lives? Does it mean that Jesus did not die for their sins just because they have not for various reasons taken advantage of the benefits of the cross? The same would apply to physical healing.

If we find ourselves entertaining thoughts similar to the following, then it is likely that we are under the influence of a skeptical spirit: "Why did Paul tell Timothy to take a little wine for His stomachs sake and for frequent infirmities (1 Tim. 5:23)? Why did he not tell him to just believe for his healing if healing is ours through Christ's death?"

The answer?

Why did God tell the children of Israel that He would bless their bread and water, take sickness and disease away from their midst, and then, on the other hand, give them health laws to follow (Ex. 23:25; Lev. 7)? Obviously, His strategy for fulfilling this promise to them partly involved their following certain health guidelines. *Faith also involves our trusting and obeying God's wisdom concerning what we eat and how we live.* One reason this nation does not have plagues that some other nations are susceptible to is because of strict adherence to government enforced guidelines for the treatment and disposal of raw sewage and waste and other health laws that are enforced in the food industry. There is some truth to the statement that "you are what we eat."

Some of us have learned to live with our physical problem, and are not serious enough about receiving our healing from the Lord. If we will get serious with God, then He will take us seriously. "And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:13). Usually, if the problem is not life threatening or debilitating, we learn to cope or at least find some sort of medicine to suppress the symptoms or ease the pain. We have no problem believing that it is a doctor's will to heal the sick, yet when it comes to the Lord, we have doubts. *It would be more convenient to go to a doctor than to deal with the things in us that hinder our receiving what is needed from the Lord.*

In some cases, Christians believe the lie that it is God's will for them to be sick, but then go to a doctor for a cure. Is this not hypocritical? If God has willed us to be sick then why should we *rebel* against His will and go to a doctor for a cure? Should we not patiently endure it? I am *not* against going to a doctor, but only pointing out the devices

that the devil uses to deceive us. If our sickness is the result of disobedience, the doctor will have no cure for us anyway. The only cure would be repentance.

I went to the doctor once in order to get a prescription because of the severe allergy problems that I was having. I was so physically drained because of it that I needed something to help relieve the symptoms and thus help clear my mind and regain my strength. The drug prescription helped, in a sense, “jump start” my already weakened faith. As the result, by faith, I overcame the allergy problem. Because of the weakness of our flesh, we may at times need outside help until our faith gains the strength to overcome the illness. However, we must always remember that Scripture teaches that the just shall live by faith—faith is our victory. It does not say that the just shall live by faith plus something. Such outside aid should be only supplemental to our faith, the exception and not the rule. Whatever we do, it must be an act of faith in God.

In some cases, people are receiving disability pensions, and if they were healed, they would have to give it up. They would have to be willing to face the fear and insecurities of living without the pension and give up the “they owe me mentality.”

For some, self-pity, coping methods, and dependency on human sympathy would all have to be replaced with a heart for Jesus. Being healed could mean the beginning of an entirely new way of life, and they may not be willing to give up their present way of life. We must be entirely convinced that Jesus is everything we need. He is our life.

Money is the most common false security in the world and has more influence over people than any other inanimate thing. This is why the love of it is the root of all evil. For example, politicians who base most of their campaign on appealing to the pocket book of the masses usually gets the majority vote if they are persuasive enough. The love of money can also be a hindrance to healing. It hindered the rich young ruler from receiving eternal life (Lk. 18:18-25).

Scripture proclaims that the kindness (or goodness) of the Lord leads people to repentance (Ro. 2:4). This indicates that there are times when the Lord will heal someone who does not know Him, requiring little of them, to win their heart, however, He requires more of His people. To whom much is given, much is required (Lk. 12:48). We have an inheritance to possess, given to us close to two thousand years ago, where intimidating giants live. These giants stand between us and the Presence behind the veil. The battleground in which we must face and defeat them is our mind.

1 Corinthians 11:27-34 reveals that we can become sick and even die before our time if we do not heed God’s warnings. This is something that we bring on ourselves, having stepped outside of the boundary of God’s blessings by dishonoring His presence and wisdom. To further prove my point, in the Revelation 2:20, Jesus rebukes the church in Thyatira for tolerating “that woman Jezebel” to teach and seduce them to sin. His proclamation against her was that she would be cast into a *sickbed* and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation unless they repent (v.21). While the woman was teaching them to commit sexual sin, her influence over the people obviously did not begin there. Initially, the woman used her place of influence over the church to control, manipulate, and seduce them into an “adulterous” dependency on her as indicated in verse 21. The Lord was clear as to the only cure for the consequent sickness that she had brought on herself.

This in no way contradicts the reality of our physical healing already having been secured by Christ's death. It reveals our need to fear the Lord. "In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence, and His children will have a place of refuge" (Pro. 14:26). We must fear the Lord to have a place of refuge from sickness, disease, and such.

We must have the fear of the Lord in dealing with the forces of darkness in the heavenly places. If we step outside of our God-given boundaries of spiritual authority, we could become sick or even die before our time. John Paul Jackson in his book entitled *Needless Casualties of War* does an excellent job in emphasizing this point. I would encourage you to read it and heed it.

Those of God's people who, by failing to fear the Lord, do not drink from the water of life will gravitate toward other "fountains." They will be left to drink from the cesspool of skepticism and ideologies of deceived leaders. Ministers of God, step aside and let the people drink from Christ and be healed.

According to the Revelation 22:17, the cry of the Spirit and the bride (the Church) should be one: "Come!" Come to what? Come and partake of the water of life freely. Come by the blood of the Lamb with a full assurance of faith.

How many stumblingblocks have we placed in the way of people receiving what Jesus has already purchased by His blood? Have we made physical healing less accessible by our skepticism and conclusions that are the result of leaning to our understanding?

The Greatest Hindrance

It would be safe to say that the majority of physical maladies among God's people are linked to spiritual problems. Unforgiveness, skepticism, failure to love others by our actions or withholding love, failure to keep ourselves in the love of God, believing false doctrine, and overemphasis on false concepts concerning the sovereignty of God all work to undermine true faith in God. Our spiritual ability to perceive or comprehend God becomes dull as the result. "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God" (Mt. 5:8). The Apostle John explains:

"By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. (17) But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? (18) My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. (19) And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. (20) For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. (21) Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. (22) And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. (23) And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment. (24) Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us" (1 Jn. 3:16-24).

Failure on our part to secure a good conscience toward God and all people will result in our having a lack of confidence in the Lord. This is the greatest hindrance to our receiving anything from Him. Only when our conscience (conscience is a function of the heart) does not condemn us are we able to have confidence in God. To keep our conscience from condemning us, we must always walk in love. This will give us assurance before the Lord that we walk in the truth. If we fail to walk in love, then we can confess our sins to God for He is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 Jn. 1:9). This will restore our confidence in Him. However, we must make sure that we are cleansed *thoroughly* from *all* unrighteousness. The least defilement from sin can hinder the greatest of godly resolve and determination and leave us disappointed or disillusioned.

Let us ask ourselves these sobering questions:

- ‡ Have I been completely cleansed from *all* unrighteousness, just as if I had never sinned?
- ‡ Is there anything from my past that I fear will eventually catch up with me?

If our heart condemns us to any degree, then we cannot pray the prayer of faith. Only the pure heart can confidently face the Lord in the Presence behind the veil and receive from Him what is needed.

The Church's failure to keep herself unspotted from the world is probably the greatest attributer to the existence of sickness, disease, and such within her ranks. We cannot draw near to the Presence behind the veil apart from having a pure heart. In a defiled state, we have concocted doctrines that only work to seal us in our unbelief and make us settle for something less than God's New Covenant best.

“Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; (13) but exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. (14) For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end” (Heb. 3:12-14).

This “partaking of Christ” referred to here includes physical healing. People partook of Christ when He was on earth. They received forgiveness for their sins, deliverance from demons, physical healing, and spiritual revival. Now He dwells in us and our partaking of Him is, for the most part, from within. There are other means to partake of Him including, but not limited to, the laying on of hands, the application of anointing oil, water baptism, and the articles of the Lord's Supper.

Physical healing is first received by faith from our hearts. It first registers in our hearts and then our bodies. Since the condition of our heart will determine our ability to receive anything from the Lord, we may first need to be thoroughly cleansed from sins defilement and any demonic oppression before healing can be effected in our bodies.

God has provided the gifts of healings and miracles for us and the world (1 Cor. 12:1-11). These gifts are commonly released to us through:

- ‡ Instructions (or commands) given by God for us to follow. Examples: the man at the pool of Bethesda (Jn. 5:1-9); the lame man at the temple (Acts 3:1-10); Naaman, the Syrian (2 Ki. 5).

- ⚓ The laying on of hands. Examples: the children (Mt. 19:13-15); healing various sicknesses (Mk. 6:5 & 8:23-25).
- ⚓ The anointing with oil (Jas. 5:14-16). The elders of the church can use this as a point of contact through which the sick person can be physically healed and forgiven of sin. This was also used in the Old Testament. When God sent someone to anoint another with oil it was always followed by a corresponding action of the Holy Spirit. This is what the New Covenant elders should expect when anointing people with oil.
- ⚓ Commands given by the Holy Spirit through a minister. The centurion's servant (Mt. 8:5-13); the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mk. 7:25-30).
- ⚓ Our faith in Christ as the faithful healer. Jesus told the woman with the issue of blood that her faith had made her whole (Mk. 5:24-34); the blind man (Mk. 10:46-52).

Thank God, He has made the way easy for us. Be healed in the mighty name of Jesus!

Chapter Six



The Power of Righteousness

Jesus' righteousness is our sure deliverance from and safeguard against the works of the devil. Listen to this prophecy over Israel:

“He has not observed iniquity in Jacob, nor has He seen wickedness in Israel. The LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a King is among them. (22) God brings them out of Egypt; He has strength like a wild ox. (23) For there is no sorcery against Jacob, nor any divination against Israel. It now must be said of Jacob and of Israel, ‘Oh, what God has done!’ (24) Look, a people rises like a lioness, and lifts itself up like a lion; it shall not lie down until it devours the prey, and drinks the blood of the slain” (Nu. 23:21-24).

The children of Israel were the dread and the envy of the nations during the time of the giving of the above prophecy. As Balaam looked out over the encampment of Israel in the valley below, he caught a glimpse of a people upon whom God's favor completely rested. The Spirit of God came upon him and he spoke forth this revelation as it filled his heart. He understood that no nation on earth could withstand Israel and no curse could vex them. They had the shout (authority) of the King of kings among them. (King David also spoke of the blessed state of those to whom God does not accredit sin (Ps. 32:1-2). The Apostle Paul reemphasized its importance in Romans 3-4.)

Oh, but this story has a dark side. While such insight could have served as an invitation from God for Balaam to become one of His people, he instead used it against them. He understood that the above was only true as long as God did not observe or see iniquity and wickedness in their camp. So, Balaam, in his greed and wickedness, used this knowledge against Israel and taught Balak, king of Moab, to seduce them to step outside of God's favor and blessing. He taught this desperate, wicked king how to turn God against Israel in judgment. The children of Israel, in their naivety, were seduced into compromising their high position in the Lord *through unholy conduct*. Their shout no longer had clout with God. It took the zeal and godly fear of Phinehas to restore God's authority, favor, and blessing back to Israel. God used him to restore the importance of holiness among the people of God.

There are no people in the earth who can compare to those who are righteous before God—people to whom God does not accredit sin. Absolutely nothing can harm them. No army can defeat them. No one can (including the devil) successfully (or legally) bring a charge (accusation) against them. If God is for them, then who can be against them? If He has blessed them, then who can curse them? If He is protecting them, who can even come near them with evil intent? Anything that would bring sickness, disease, harm, or calamity into their lives is held back because of the righteousness that is of faith. However, *if they compromise holiness, take up offense, begin to strive in their flesh, lean*

to their own understanding, and not entirely depend on the righteousness that is of faith, then this will give the devil a habitation or a vantage point of oppression in their lives. Listen to Solomon:

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; (6) in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. (7) Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and depart from evil. (8) *It will be health to your flesh, and strength to your bones*” (Pro. 3:5-8).

Otherwise, you will not have health to your flesh and strength to your bones.

When we look away from the Author and Finisher of our faith, our great vantage point over the powers of darkness will slip away from us. What is this vantage point?

“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, (5) even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), (6) and raised us up together, and *made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus*, (7) that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:4-7).

We *are* seated with Christ in the heavenly places *now*. This is not a future event. This great vantage point is a place of immunity that can only be realized and experienced by our surrendering to grace and walking by faith. Only by grace through faith will we enjoy the benefits thereof.

Listen to the psalmist:

“Truly my soul silently waits for God; from Him comes my salvation. (2) He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defense; *I shall not be greatly moved* [to totter, shake, slip]. (3) How long will you attack a man? You shall be slain, all of you, like a leaning wall and a tottering fence. (4) *They only consult to cast him down from his high position*; they delight in lies; they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly. Selah” (Ps. 62:1-4).

Notice he said in verse two that he would not be *greatly* moved. For some reason, he did not have complete confidence in the Lord or else he would have stated that he would not be moved, period. Something had taken place that left his faith in God in a weakened state. Then he turns and addresses his enemies (vs. 3-4), having received a revelation from God. He realized there was an attempt by his enemies to “cast him down from his high position.” After he regained his focus on the Lord, the psalmist was then able to see his enemies for what they really were and not what they appeared to be. The psalmist turns to his enemies, addresses them accordingly, and then afterward worships God and declares, “I shall not be moved!”

On a National Geographic television presentation entitled *The Great Barrier Reef*, a big fish of some kind came up to a much smaller one, inhales, and the smaller fish disappears. But wait, within a matter of seconds, the big fish spit out the smaller one. Why? Because the small fish had the ability to inflate at least twice its size—the Puffer Fish. This ability serves as its main defense, thus making it impossible for some bigger fish to swallow. The whole point here is that the smaller fish was able to appear much bigger than it really was. Likewise, the powers of darkness can appear to be more

powerful, intimidating, threatening, and oppressive than they really are. How do you think that the devil went from being a serpent in the book of Genesis to a dragon in the book of the Revelation? It is not a case of, “Honey, I blew up the devil.” No, the devil is able to inflate himself through the fleshly pride of men who are trying to be like God apart from God. Scripture testifies that such wickedness would increase in the last days. Even so, the serpent’s appearance has bloated to deceive the masses of people.

The archenemy of our soul seeks to undermine our faith so that we will slip, totter, or be shaken from our high position in Christ, thus making him in appearance to be as a dragon that flies overhead instead of a serpent that is under our feet. All of his attacks against God’s people are ultimately designed to accomplish this. This is why we are to always have a resistant, sober, and watchful attitude towards the devil and his direct assaults against us (1 Pt. 5:8-9; Jas. 4:7-8). If we stay submitted to God, He will cause us know deeply that the devil is an already judged and defeated foe. We can then triumph over him and his works in every sphere of life from a position of resting in Christ’s finished work and victory (the heavenly places in Christ). In submitting to God, He will give us a strategy on how to deal with the devil. The devil will flee as the result, taking his destructive works with him without exception. If we meet God’s conditions and follow His instructions, He *will* fulfill His promises.

“For if by the one man’s offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ” (Ro. 5:17).

Over what are we to reign in this life? Well, what did Jesus reign over? His flesh and the works of the devil, of course.

We must obtain an abundance of grace (to maintain personal holiness) and keep a firm grasp on the gift of righteousness in order to walk in continual victory as Jesus did. *Since God only gives grace to the humble, then only those who walk humbly with God are qualified to reign in this life over everything contrary to His perfect will—everything Jesus came to destroy.* His will toward us was proven through Christ’s ministry on earth and made surer through His death and resurrection.

Abundant grace enables or empowers us to reign, and the gift of righteousness gives us the right to reign.

We must, therefore, make sure that we are not treating others contrary to the testimony of Christ’s blood in Heaven. Through His blood alone are we made righteous before God. It always speaks in our behalf and never against us. Consequently, our lives must bear the aroma of His sacrifice, displaying His redeeming love. Anything less is self-righteous, and we will, as the result, forfeit our right to reign in life through Christ.

Our high position in Christ corresponds with our becoming the least or most lowly in the earth—servants of all. We must take on the mind of Christ, “...Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, (7) but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. (8) And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. (9) Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, (10) that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the

earth, (11) and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Php. 2:6-11).

Our high position in Christ has nothing to do with showing disrespect toward the powers of darkness, calling them degrading names, or having a haughty attitude. Even Michael the archangel, who is far more powerful than us, does not bring reviling accusations against the devil (Jude 1:9). No, if we will remain in the place of brokenness (softness of heart), the love of God will become our immunity against anything the devil can throw at us. When God’s love flows out of us, nothing can swim upstream and we will walk in an authority to which all Hell will bow the knee. That love cannot flow if our peace with God is undone within us (Rom. 5:1-2). If we are caught up with how messed up or good we are, then we have lost sight of that blessed state accredited to those who believe that Jesus is alive from the grave.

We must remain in the shadow of the cross, God’s love revealed, if we are going to love in the same way. Those who lay down their lives out of love for others, even as Jesus did for His enemies, will experience the full blessing of their high place in Christ. Otherwise, our confidence in the Lord will totter. Jesus’ greatest defeat over the powers of darkness was not by direct confrontation but by His death. That death was love revealed in its greatest splendor. Perfect love defeated supreme wickedness. Likewise, our co-death with Christ, the laying down of our lives, will be the catalyst used by God to destroy the works of darkness. “Be excellent in what is good, innocent of evil, and the God of peace will soon crush Satan underneath your feet” (Ro. 16:19-20; paraphrased).

This is why we must have an abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness in order to reign in this life. Notice, and this is important, we do not *achieve* an abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness. We *receive it* instead! Yes, we have to rightly position ourselves to receive it but we must first be convinced of its availability and accessibility. It takes an abundance of grace in order for us to walk in love toward all, laying down our lives, and thus maintain our confidence, and our high position in Christ. If our heart condemns us, because of our not remaining in Christ’s love, our confidence will falter (see 1 Jn. 3:16-24). We must, therefore, default to the finished work of the cross to retain peace with God, *with ourselves, and our fellowman*.

Have you become weary in maintaining your high position in Christ? Do you feel comparable to a “leaning wall and tottering fence?” Has the devil been trying to wear you out and cast you down? Be encouraged this day for greater is He that is in you than he who is in the world. Look unto the Author and Finisher of your faith, and then, as did the psalmist, you will see that all your enemies are like leaning walls and tottering fences. Spending a “season” in prayer and fasting may be necessary to see and experience the victory but it will come. You will reap in due season if you faint not and will know without doubt that the prince of this world is judged (Jn. 16:7-11). Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, He alone is your righteousness, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts (Ro. 13:14).

Began now to praise Him for His gift of righteousness, and you will come into an abundance of grace. Give thanks for the Lamb who has taken away your sins. By so doing, your enemies will totter and fall! You will be able to say with full assurance and finality as the psalmist, “I shall not be moved!” Roarrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr! The shout of the King will be restored to you.

Chapter Seven



The Altar of Brokenness

Introduction

In the Old Testament, the sacrificial altar was located inside the entrance to the Tabernacle of Moses (see Ex. 27-29). It was the first item of protocol that had to be observed in order to approach the presence of God behind the veil (the Most Holy Place) from the Outer Court.

One time every year the high priest had to take the blood of an animal, slain at the sacrificial altar, into the Most Holy Place and make atonement for the sins of the people. By this, God was indicating that, apart from the shedding of blood, there is no remission (forgiveness and cleansing) of sin. Apart from blood sacrifice, the presence of God would only be a terrifying and destructive experience for sinful people (see Heb. 9).

The means of dealing with sin in the Old Covenant was ineffective in removing the guilt of sin and the fear of death (Heb. 2:13-14 & 9:26). Some people in the Old Testament testified to its ineffectiveness and looked by faith for something much better. As the psalmist revealed: "In sacrifice and offerings you had no pleasure, but a broken heart and contrite spirit" (Ps. 51:16-17). God knew beforehand that only one thing would be powerful enough to break the sin-hardened hearts of the sons of Adam. That one thing would be His great love fully revealed through the sacrificial death of His Son.

“In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. (10) In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation (God's mercy revealed) for our sins” (1 Jn. 4:9-10).

“In this the love of God was manifested” and “In this is love” indicate that all former revelations of God's love to humanity was incomplete. God determined beforehand that only in His Son would His fullness be revealed. All prior revelations were only intended to point to Christ—the One who is full of grace and truth.

Because the means of dealing with sin in the Old Covenant was faulty, there had to be a better covenant established through a better blood sacrifice. Officially, God's intention for the Old Covenant was to "tutor" the people in preparation for the New (Gal. 4). It never was intended to perfect anyone. Today, in the New Covenant, we are commanded to draw near to the Holy of Holies (the Most Holy Place) by the blood of Christ (Heb. 10:19-23).

An Altar of a Different Design

As stated earlier, the blood taken into the Most Holy Place once a year by the high priest was first shed at the sacrificial altar. In appropriately following the Old Covenant pattern, at what altar was Christ sacrificed before He took His blood into the Most Holy Place in Heaven?

Hebrews 13:10-14 sheds light on what that altar is:

“We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. (11) For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. (12) Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. (13) Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach. (14) For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come.”

On what instrument of death did Jesus suffer and die? Long before His death, He revealed the altar on which He was to be sacrificed.

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, (15) that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life” (Jn. 3:14-15).

“Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself” (Jn. 12:31-32).

This New Covenant altar was not overlaid with bronze as prescribed by God to Moses concerning the altar of the Old Covenant. It originated from a completely different design. Its design was fired in the hearts of wicked and cruel men. Just the sight of it could cause the most hardened of criminals to cringe. For this cause, it was intended. It was used as an ensign to all would-be criminals and anti-government proponents that such would not be tolerated. This instrument of merciless death was the dreadful Roman cross. As horrible as it was, this was the altar chosen by God upon which He would take away the sin of the whole world.

How horrible, how heart-rending, how grievous it was for onlookers to have to watch, for at least three days, their loved ones die such an unmerciful death. It was a sight that would never be forgotten. An indelible mark was left upon anyone who just caught a glance at such suffering. Possibly, it was the most gruesome death surmised by the evil hearts of men during that time.

Amazingly, God in His great wisdom took the most unthinkable evil, used by evil men to convey a warning message, and accomplished the most profound good. Even as the cross was used by the Romans to send a warning message to all nations, God used it to reveal His love in its greatest splendor to all nations. By it, as Jesus proclaimed, many people of all nations would be gathered to Him.

While the sacrificial altar in Moses' tabernacle was overlaid with bronze, it is also interesting to note of what material the serpent was made of that Moses lifted up on the

pole. “Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live’” (Nu. 21:8). Verse 9 reveals that the serpent was also made of bronze. Why bronze? Because it represents God's judgment against sin. As quoted earlier, Jesus indicated that His death on the cross would parallel Moses' lifting up the serpent in the wilderness.

Why did Moses lift up the serpent anyway? The story, as recorded in the book of Numbers, reveals that the Lord sent serpents among the children of Israel because they complained against Him. Most likely, the serpents were described as "fiery" because of the burning sensation produced by the venom. After the people confessed they had sinned against the Lord and after Moses prayed for them, the Lord told Moses to make a bronze serpent and put it on a pole. The saving message to those who were bitten in Israel was: “Those who look at it shall live.”

Even so, Jesus' death on the pole (cross) is God's remedy for the venom of sin. He became “sin judged” on the cross. Those who look to Christ on the cross as their only remedy shall live. Why? Because He lives—He is risen from the dead! By the power of an endless life, He intercedes to make sure we receive the “cure” that we so desperately need.

Now, we have an altar through which great boldness of faith against sin is secured in our hearts. This boldness entirely displaces all false security and presumption that would otherwise have gotten people killed in the Old Covenant. It only comes from God's remedy—remission (removal) of sin through the blood of the Lamb.

The Power of Christ's Sacrifice

As previously quoted, Jesus suffered outside the city on the altar of the cross, the hill of Golgotha. We are commanded to identify with Him, throwing off the fear and the praise of men, and live as those who have no citizenship here in this world. The writer further exhorts:

“Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. (16) But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (Heb. 13:15-16).

So, what are the sacrifices that God requires of us? At the New Covenant altar we are to offer the sacrifice of praise continually. Our praise is to bear the fragrance of the Lamb's sacrificial suffering. This is the only type of sacrifice that the Lord accepts. By continually praising God for Christ's finished work, our focus will remain continually on the remedy for sin's venom. We will, therefore, not only receive life but will walk in it. This will remain true as long as we keep our “gaze of praise” on Christ's finished work. Our well pleasing sacrifices of good works will then come from our faith in His good and finished work. All that we do and are must be of faith, honoring Christ's sacrifice and not the “sweat of our brow” as did Cain. Remember, the Lord rejected his offering.

The altar from which we worship God is the cross, and worshipping from this place will cause us to know its life-changing power. As we offer the sacrifice of praise continually

because of Christ's sacrifice, the power of that sacrifice becomes a reality to us. God inhabits the praise of those who worship at the altar of the cross. This is true worship indeed. As the aroma of Christ's sacrifice ascends from our lives before God's throne, His resurrection power will rest on us.

We remain in submission to the power of the cross by continually acknowledging and experiencing, through praise and thanksgiving, its effectiveness. Praise and thanksgiving offered from the altar of the cross keeps the forgiveness and cleansing of sin alive in our lives. We are kept from becoming like those who are blind because they have forgotten that they were purged from their old sins (2 Pt. 1:9). As we rejoice in the love of God revealed through Christ's death, no matter how we feel, our whole being will come into harmony with its power. Our spiritual hope and strength will be resurrected.

Our hearts will become hardened if we lose sight of the cross of Christ and began to strive in our flesh to accomplish what Jesus has already finished. We will create altars of self-righteousness and dead works, because of which we will be rejected as was Cain. By offering up a continual sacrifice of praise from the finished work of the cross of Christ, we will be kept from the endless, non-productive, and life-draining toil of those who do not know God. Jesus said to such people, "Come onto me all you who labor and are heavy-laden and I will give you rest."

Praise and thanksgiving of this type will keep the sacrifice of Christ current to us. We will live life as if all of our sins were just recently washed away, and we will, therefore, not hesitate to forgive others. How do we stay at the cross? By honoring God's sacrificial Lamb above all human effort, ingenuity, talent, skill, wisdom, and knowledge. We can only do this by virtue of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Oh, if we only knew the benefits of being indwelt by Him.

When we stray from the shadow of the cross of Christ, we will lose sight of our only means of justification, sanctification, redemption, and wisdom and will be left to follow the dictates of our hearts and that of other people. Thanksgiving and praise to God for Christ's finished work will no longer be the rule but the fear and praise of men will become the rule instead. Our standard for loving others will be based on what is acceptable to men instead of God. From this comes a pseudo-spirituality that seeks to please people and not God.

What is intended by the use of the phrase "shadow of the cross?" It entails spiritual heart focus. It is a state in which we keep our heart so that Christ's finished work and victory never becomes vague to us. Two things that will aid the believer in maintaining this focus is to often partake of the bread and the cup of the Lord's Supper and to fast (do without) food.

Walking in the Spirit must begin at the altar of the cross. The Holy Spirit only honors Christ's sacrifice for sin and not our efforts. In the Kingdom of God, this is why that surrender to God must precede all effort on our part. Otherwise, we are honoring our efforts above Christ's sacrifice. This will grieve the Holy Spirit, and we will, consequently, receive nothing from the Lord.

Learning God's Protocol the Hard Way

King David learned a hard lesson in honoring God's means of redemption from sin above his own determination and presumptuous ways. In 2 Samuel 5, David attempted to bring the Ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem. The Philistines had taken it years earlier in a battle against Israel during the days of Eli the high priest. Because it brought ill will to them, they sent it back to Israel on a cart pulled by two cows (1 Sam. 5).

Perhaps, David decided to outdo them and place it on a "new cart" when bringing it into Jerusalem. However, this was not God's way. While they were attempting to transport the ark, "Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. (7) Then the anger of the LORD was aroused against Uzzah, and God struck him there for his error; and he died there by the ark of God" (2 Sam. 6:6-7). Afterward, David became afraid and left the ark in Obed-Edom's home for an interim. If He had followed God's instructions in carrying the ark in the first place, this incident would have been completely avoided.

Listen to how David brought the Ark into Jerusalem on the final and successful attempt:

"Now it was told King David, saying, 'the LORD has blessed the house of Obed-Edom and all that belongs to him, because of the ark of God.' So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with gladness. (13) And so it was, when those bearing the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, that he sacrificed oxen and fatted sheep. (14) Then David danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was wearing a linen ephod. (15) So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting and with the sound of the trumpet.

They had played music on the previous attempt but forgot Divine protocol. On the final attempt, they played music and worshiped, but at every sixth pace, blood sacrifice was honored. The priests were carrying the ark as prescribed by God, and there was a continual offering made, all the way to Jerusalem. Now their worship and rejoicing were legitimate. They had clout before the Lord. The fear of the Lord had replaced presumption.

David became afraid of and forsook the ark because of its power but became encouraged to retrieve it because of the blessings it brought. He learned that its power was nothing to fear as long as you handled it correctly. It was not designed by God to harm anyone but for blessing those for whom it was made. *The mishandling of and presumptuousness concerning the holy things of God will make them dangerous to us although God's aim is to always bless and not curse.*

Does this help you understand how that we must offer up the sacrifice of praise continually at the altar of the cross, honoring Christ's sacrifice? All else is vain and could be dangerous for those who already know the Lord. It is not enough to just have determination, zeal, and to be a people who desire God's presence, but we must also understand and follow His protocol or ways.

A Desperate Heart

Why is the cross of Christ the altar of brokenness? Because when we behold His inconceivable suffering on it, when the light of the depths of His mercy and grace dawns upon us, and His unconditional love pierces our poisoned and embittered hearts, our selfish preoccupation will be swept away and our hearts will become like clay in the hands of a potter. This is the power of the cross—the power of God's perfect love revealed!

We will know the power of Divine love when we become as desperate before the Lamb on the "pole" as the children of Israel were desperate before the bronze serpent that Moses made and placed on the pole. Desperation arose among the children of Israel as they sensed the effects of the poison in their bodies. As more people died from the poison, they became even more desperate. By seeing and experiencing the effects thereof, the children of Israel were ready to fully embrace God's remedy as the only remedy.

How often have God's people tried to overcome sin's power and effects by their own resolve? How often have we turned to supposed worldly remedies and self-imposed means of dealing with the "poison?" How often have we sought to use anger, manipulation, flattery, spitefulness, accusation, jealousy, self-pity, alcohol, drugs, and other means as a solution to our "unhappiness"? We would flee from these things if we realized that all these things are futile attempts to circumvent the cross of Christ.

These things are clear indications that we are self-deceived and bound up by unbelief; an unbelief that refuses to believe in the comprehensive power and efficiency of Christ's finished work. Such unbelief always looks elsewhere for relief from the torment associated with not walking in perfect love (1 Jn. 4). Looking to Christ's finished work would mean that we would have to be completely responsible for the condition of our heart before God and man without having someone else to blame.

As we steadfastly behold the Lamb of God who has taken away the poison of sin, then our souls will find complete contentment and rest from all toil. Our hearts will become as forgiving and merciful as the meek and lowly Lamb who died for us.

Contrary to popular belief, low self-esteem is not the result of a lack of confidence in one's self, but is the result of our not loving others as Jesus as commanded. By loving others, we will assure our hearts before God and receive His esteem (see 1 Jn. 3). True self-esteem only comes from esteeming others above ourselves. The ability to do this comes from our glorying in and surrendering to Christ's finished work alone.

"By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 Jn. 3:16).

When we lay down our lives for others, according to Christ's example, then we will not think to lowly or to highly of ourselves. The cross is the end of self-will, self-pity, self-hatred, the need for self-esteem, self-justification, and self-exaltation.

Will you cry out before the Lamb who was lifted up from the earth so that you might

live? Come before Him as one who has been bitten by the “serpent” and you will be made completely whole. Receive the saving message now. No longer doubt the power of His love for you.

May we all be found honoring Christ's sacrifice with all that we are and do when He returns to gather us unto Himself. May our hearts bear the marks of brokenness accomplished by embracing the love of God revealed through the cross.

*Oh, to stay in the shadow of the cross,
No foe can there withstand,
God's grace revealed, His love aflame,
Flowing from the Son of His right hand.
Gruesome was the sight
On Golgotha's hill that day,
The Lamb of God poured out His life,
And washed our sins away.
The hosts of Hell shouted with glee,
When Jesus breathed His last.
But, they did not foresee
Nor did they understand,
Their evil would shortly pass-
God used their scheme to fulfill
His redemptive plan.
So, our whole life must bear
The fragrance of Christ's death
Lest we fail of God's grace
And to our enemies be left.
We must, therefore, stay
In the shadow of the cross
So, when Christ returns
to receive His own
We will suffer no loss.*

Chapter Eight



The Power of Divine Love

“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, that the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know...what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power (20) which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all...” (Eph. 1:19-20)

“That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, (18) may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—— (19) to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph. 3: 17-19).

In these two passages of Scripture, God’s love is revealed in the exceeding greatness of its power and in its boundless reach. These passages emphasize the need for the believer to have their spiritual eyes opened to the reality of God’s love *toward* them. When God raised Jesus from the dead and seated Him at His right hand, the exceeding greatness of His power was on display. This great power was His love in motion. God the Father used the exceeding greatness of His power to fulfill His love promise to the Son. Paul makes it clear in chapter one of Ephesians that the same power that God used to raise up and exalt Jesus is also *toward* us who believe. Listen very carefully. *God’s most awesome love is always moving toward us in its power and boundlessness to fulfill His promises to us.*

I John 4:16 states: “And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.” If we will truly know and believe in the power and boundlessness of God’s love, then we will overcome all resistance, every stumblingblock, or obstacle placed in the way of our fulfilling His purposes for our lives. We will have immunity to anything the devil would throw at us. In addition, God is given His rightful place of rulership in our lives and is provided an open door to manifest His great power that is *toward* us.

“His love is stronger than the angels and demons. His love—it keeps me in my life’s darkest hours,” as the song so wonderfully proclaims. Paul also assured us so convincingly in Romans 8 that nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Do we truly believe in the greatness of God’s love? Do we truly believe that, if we walk in the faith that works by this great love, we will overcome the world (I Jn. 5:4)?

This unshakable faith does not struggle and cannot be defeated because it wars (wrestles) victoriously. It is the victory. *Its victory is as certain in facing the humanly impossible as was Jesus' victory of overcoming death, hell, and the grave.* Why? Because the greatness of God's love toward us is the same as it is toward Jesus (Jn. 17:23). It is always moving in our direction, awaiting its appointed time of manifestation—the time when we completely abandon ourselves to it. The Holy Spirit then lavishly reveals it in our hearts (Rom 5:5). This truth produces unshakable and enduring faith within.

The problem, therefore, does not lie with God but with our believing. Our faith must not just simply wait for God to fulfill His promise, but must have wisdom (the ability to live life or to love skillfully—how to relate to God, those in authority, peers, family, enemies, and such). Faith must have a strategy by which it can be expressed toward God in daily action. It must first begin with what we speak out of our mouths concerning ourselves, our problems, people, sin, the world, and the devil. This is how faith is proven alive instead of dead. Our heart and must first be in agreement with God's New Covenant provision. This will keep us from coming up with a plan of our own plan and producing an "Ishmael" as Abraham and Sarah did (Gen. 16). We must cry out daily for wisdom from God (Pro. 8:32-36) and obtain His daily strategy. *The reason why we have delays in God's promises being fulfilled in our lives can be traced back, not so much to a lack of faith, but to a lack of wisdom in our faith walk.*

Months before I went to minister in a United Methodist Church, I began to cry out to God daily with one consuming passion. My desire was that He would use me as a channel of His great love (Jn. 3:16). This was wisdom from God and I did this not knowing I would be ministering at the Methodist Church. The time came when the door opened and I went. God manifested Himself in such a way that caused skeptics to be won. People who did not know the power of God and were skeptical of it experienced it for the first time. Of course, questions arose within their hearts, and so we decided to have a question and answer time. God gave even greater favor with the people through this. How? I was enveloped in a mantle of God's love and a gift of faith that could not be shaken while there (I was given an uncanny ability to love skillfully). This great love was the means by which God was subduing all resistance to His work. I found favor with the pastor and even with the former pastor who attended that church at that time.

People were healed, set free, filled with the Holy Spirit, as God lavishly poured out His love among them in power. At one point while there, I was able to attend a local area pastor's meeting. After the prayer service, we met in a conference type room, and a good friend of mine and I were given the floor to share what God was doing at the Methodist Church. They had obviously already heard about it and some began to express what they defined as concern over what was going on there. One of those individuals was a pastor who was recently kicked out of his particular denomination for becoming Spirit-filled. Though they were obviously sincere in their concern, fear began to fill the room and we sensed the Holy Spirit was grieved. We held our peace and let them continue, but the tide turned and God had His way and we were able to minister to most of them. God's love prevailed!

The reason I had such an impact at the Methodist Church was because of the love that God had put in my heart prior to that time. When I went, my sole purpose was to serve them in accordance with the measure of grace that God had given me for ministry. I was sent by God and was there only for them without any selfish ambition. *We must first*

learn to have the heart of a servant before we can function in the authority of a son. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God (Ro. 8:14).

The Heart of a Servant

Luke 17:5-10 states: “And the apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith.’ (6) So the Lord said, ‘If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you. (7) And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come at once and sit down to eat?’ (8) But will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink?’ (9) Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. (10) So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.’”

In response to the disciples’ request to increase their faith, Jesus told them they needed faith *as* grain of mustard seed, and He was not referring to size but quality. Inherent in the mustard seed is the ability to grow into a large plant having many uses. It has the potential to feed all future generations. When the seed of God’s word is sown where it can grow, faith is never hard to come by. The problem is a scarcity of the good ground (heart condition) into which the seed of the word of God is sown. “...Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God” (Ro. 10:17).

Jesus made it clear that His disciples would see quick results when such faith is exercised. He continues with a real-life illustration to which they could relate. He revealed the true purpose of servanthood. This is the key to having our faith increased and is exemplary of good ground (heart condition) into which God can sow His seed—a *seed that contains the exceeding greatness of His power*. The energy that God is exerting in us, both to will and do of His good pleasure, is first found in us in its *seed* form. If we give God good ground to sow His *Seed* into, that seed will become our victory. So, if we choose to be His servants in the secret prayer closet, we will be revealed as His Spirit-empowered sons or friends in the earth by virtue of the *Seed*.

As a servant is to his master, so are we bound to our Lord Jesus Christ. Our life is not our own. If we will tend to the things of the Master first, then we will have a full assurance that He will take care of our needs and concerns. We will then know His great love and our service will not be self-focused.

The following principles of servanthood will adjust our thinking so that we can have faith *as* (not the size of) a mustard seed:

- ⚓ After a servant has fulfilled his duty to the master, then he too can sit down and eat.
- ⚓ A servant would not have the confidence that his master would meet his needs if he did not make the master the central focus of his life. The master must be put before all things. “And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come at once and sit down to eat?’ (8) But will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and

serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink?” (Lk. 17:7-8)

- ⚓ A servant cannot be preoccupied with his own needs and life and all it consists of because he would not be a good servant if he were.
- ⚓ It is enough that the servant is a part of the master’s household. For this reason, he cannot develop an attitude that his master owes him anything—including a simple “thank you” for doing his duty as a servant. “Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. (10) So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do’” (Lk. 17:9-10).
- ⚓ A true servant lives only for the master’s pleasure. Having his master’s pleasure is his single focus and all consuming passion in life. “Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; (36) and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. (37) Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them” (Lk. 12:35-37).
- ⚓ By maintaining a heart attitude of a servant, the servant continues in favor with the master, otherwise, he could be “beaten with many stripes.” “And that servant who knew his master’s will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. (48) But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more” (Lk. 12:47-48).
- ⚓ A servant’s greatest and real hope is in becoming an heir in his master’s household or in being considered as a friend to the master. Masters do not share personal and intimate things with servants but only with family and friends. “No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you” (Jn. 15:15).
- ⚓ As servants of God, we must never allow a “God owes me one” mentality to form in our hearts. We are a part of His household only because of His goodness. How often have we been more concerned about ourselves than fulfilling our love duty to the Master?

Are you tending to the Master first? In other words, “Is everything we do, an offering of worship to Him?” Is He truly “before all things” in our lives (Col. 1:17)? If we will refuse to live for ourselves and live as God’s servants, then we will have His total support as sons. We will then find that all of our concerns have already been taken care of or are at least in the process. The full assurance of God’s backing will be our immovable anchor, and we will truly know that His heart is toward us as it was toward Jesus when He raised Him from the dead. This defines the simplicity of devotion to which Paul was referring in 2 Corinthians 11:1. Jesus held to fulfilling God’s purpose for sending Him as the single most important thing in life and refused to allow anything or one to deter Him from it. As sons and friends of God, we will, as Jesus did, know what our Father is doing and do likewise (Jn. 5:19). They who are lead by the Spirit are the sons of God (Ro. 8:14). To the degree that we are lead by the Spirit, to that degree we will know what the Master is doing. Consequently, we will ask whatsoever we will in Jesus’ name and it will be done (Jn. 15:16). When a servant is lead by the Spirit, he is recognized in Heaven as a son and friend of God and will walk in Kingdom authority in the earth. The carnal (self-

serving) mind is enmity (not friendly toward) God. It is not subject to the law of God and cannot be (Ro. 8:7).

The story that Jesus told of the persistent widow and the unjust judge is a source of great comfort and courage (Lk. 18:1-8). Jesus assures us that if we will cry out day and night to God that He will avenge us speedily. The question we must ask though is what should be the main focus our crying out? Our own personal vindication or, first and foremost, the vindication of His name in the earth? If we are entirely devoted to seeing God's name vindicated among those who do not believe, He will speedily see to our vindication. We must tend to the Master first, and then we too will be satisfied—filled up to overflowing.

May you know the exceeding greatness of God's love in motion toward you as you give yourself fully to His service.

Pray this prayer with me:

Father in Heaven, I give my life to you completely without reservation as a servant who loves you supremely. Forgive me of all my sins. I make Jesus Christ my supreme Lord. I can no longer live my life for myself. Take my life and make it into that which pleases you. Wash me in the Blood of Jesus. Come and live within me. Let the power of Your love become as real to me as the air I breath. Amen.

Chapter Nine



The Excellence of the New Covenant

New Covenant Dynamics

In order to partake of the inexhaustible benefits of all that Jesus Christ our Lord has accomplished in our behalf through His death, burial, and resurrection, it is vital that we, His people, who by God's grace have been made joint-heirs with Him, understand the terms and the provisions of the covenant by which God has bound Himself to us. We must explore the depths of His abounding grace—the extraordinary and unmerited power, love, and favor that make the New Covenant so proficient. Such understanding, as revealed in Hebrews 10, will afford us a true heart and a *full assurance* of faith by which we can draw near to God.

Compared to the Old Covenant, as revealed in the book of Hebrews, we now have a better covenant, better promises, a better hope, a better priesthood, and, therefore, a better faith. All of these await those who dare press through the crowd of religious traditions and form, beliefs, and interpretations of Scripture that have clouded the way into the very throneroom of God to which we are exhorted by Him to draw near. To intimately know and partake of the fellowship of the triune God is the greatest and most excellent privilege afforded us by the blood of Christ. Experiencing this great privilege makes us fit for the Master's use in the earth—friends of the heavenly Triune Council.

God has established three dynamics, appropriated through Christ's Lordship, to make the New Covenant successful in the earth. First, Christ, after having sacrificed Himself for our sins and having sat down at the Father's right hand, as our Great High Priest, makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God by the power of His endless life (Heb. 7:15-16, 25). Secondly, that intercessory work is extended and executed in the earth through the Holy Spirit (Ro. 8:26-28). Thirdly, the saints, in their human frailty (weakness), are to be the "wombs" that birth God's will in the earth, through prayer, supplications, thanksgivings, and exploits, (Jn. 14:12-13; 1 Jn. 3:18-24).

"Likewise the Spirit also helps in our *weaknesses*. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. (27) Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. (28) And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Ro. 8:26-28).

This divine synergy of intercession primarily works *for* the saints to keep them from falling short of God's perfect will. This intercession involves the divine ordering of "all

things,” good or bad, to reveal and/or keep us in God’s perfect will. His perfect will is the outcome of “good” to which He was referring in the above verse.

There is a difference between the perfect will of God and the permissive will of God. God may permit you to have a car accident but His perfect will was not accomplished because you failed to heed the warnings that would have prevented it. God may permit you to get involved in a relationship with someone although He warned you not to through various individuals. What seemed to be a good thing, therefore, becomes a nightmare. He will allow our foolish and rebellious ways to chasten us. Yes, in spite of this, God will work all things together for our good. His grace is still extended but mainly for our chastisement—to get us back into His perfect will. While I do agree with the idea that nothing comes into our lives unless God allows it, yet this must be understood in light of whether we are in God’s perfect or permissive will. We are either well-pleasing to God or we are at the mercy of His longsuffering. His perfect will is accomplished by our aligning our thinking, believing, and behavior with His New Covenant standard. Sadly, too many of His people are suffering things unnecessarily because of:

- 1) Their ignorance of God’s New Covenant provision
- 2) Believing false doctrine.

All things work together for [the greatest] *good* to those *who love God* and love not the false security of their ignorance and wrong beliefs. One cannot be self-sufficient and truly say that they love God. Remember, the Holy Spirit *only* helps us in our weaknesses and not in our unbelieving self-sufficiency. All things work together for good as the Holy Spirit helps us in our weaknesses. Otherwise, we reap the fruit of our foolish ways.

God’s main goal is to transform us to Christ’s image and not necessarily change our circumstances. To be Christlike is to continually be in God’s perfect will—spirit, soul, body. If, after having assessed our lives, we realize that we are under God’s chastisement, let us repent and get back in sync with the known will of God. Whatever we do not know will be revealed to us. There is grace that keeps us out of self-made troubles and there is grace to get us through those troubles. In the interim, let us be mindful of how helpless and vulnerable we are apart from Christ. Again (this cannot be emphasized enough), the Spirit helps us in our weaknesses and not in our strengths, abilities, know-how, talents, and cleverness. So, in order for us to be a success-story of the New Covenant, we must maintain this realization: all that we are before God adds up to absolutely nothing and apart from Him we can do nothing. The Holy Spirit only aids us in our weaknesses; otherwise, we are left to our own devices—for chastisement under God’s grace. A lack of power, anointing, and favor from God will be the witness against us.

How effective is this divine synergy of Christ’s intercessory work in Heaven and the Holy Spirit’s on earth? Let us first look at the definition of the word “synergy.” It is:

“The interaction of two or more agents or forces so that their combined effect is greater than the sum of their individual effects.”¹

Jesus said that it was necessary (better for us and to our advantage) that He go back to the Father. Why? Because the One who could be everywhere at all times would be sent and do for, in, and through us exactly what He, Jesus, would do if He were here. This was indicated by Christ’s referring to the Holy Spirit as “another” Comforter.

The Holy Spirit will only glorify Christ and take what is His (Christ’s) and reveal it to us (Jn. 14:16 & 16:14). Christ searches the mind of the Spirit and makes intercession accordingly to provide what is needed. That is incredible! What is Christ’s? It is His anointing, healing, deliverance, favor, love, peace, joy, blessing, righteousness and holiness, and his relationship with the Father. Whatever we need is available. He is full of inexhaustible grace and truth for all.

This synergy that exists between our beloved Lord and the Holy Spirit can and must also exist between the saints and the Holy Spirit. He has come to glorify—exalt and draw attention to—Christ only in and through us. Although He does take what is Christ’s and reveals it to us, we have a responsibility to fulfill in order for this to happen. Jude 20-21:

“But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, (21) keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

The intercession of the Holy Spirit for the saints can only be accomplished with their cooperation. The perfect will of God is revealed and accomplished in our lives as we build ourselves up in faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, thereby, keeping ourselves in the love of God. The “building up” referred to concurs with and is the catalyst for the Holy Spirit’s work of glorifying Christ in us, carrying out the perfect will of God in all things, and keeping Christ on the throne of our hearts. When we are built up, Christ and His great love for us becomes the predominant influence in our thoughts. In this place, we are strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, necessary for our patiently enduring all things with joy (Col. 1:11).

There is no reason for any of God’s people to live defeated lives. They only do so because of not seeing the importance of their role in this divine synergy, and, thus, they spend most of their Christian lives falling short of God’s perfect will. Most of their lives are spent attempting to get from the Church what they should be getting by praying in the Holy Spirit. The Church itself cannot be the primary influence that keeps us in the perfect will of God. That is mainly our individual responsibility and it is not burdensome to us but light and easy—a grace afforded us by Christ’s finished work.

¹Excerpted from *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition* © 1996 by Houghton Mifflin Company.

Prophecy:

“I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go. I will guide you with My eye. As an arrow is shot forth and guided by the eye of the archer even so shall you go forth from before Me, from My face, and hit the target—dead center—of My will and destiny for your life. In all adversity, you can know My will. So cease fretting over your bumbblings and mistakes and lay hold of the courage that is made available only by My blood. Draw near. Mercy is extended. Flow in the grace of My intercession for you. Find this grace that is yours. Ask of Me and I will show you the way into it. It isn’t difficult. It is only found by those who are convinced of their dire need of it—those who know they are weak and choose to rise above despair and unbelief. Will you believe? This believing is also my grace toward you. Allow Me to deeply convince you that My grace, that is as the air you breathe, is sufficient for all things. Then you will know that you cannot fail because I cannot. I have bound Myself to you to the end of this age.”

In light of all this, the Holy Spirit is the best and closest friend that we have in this life. Our hearts should always resound in all things, “Welcome, Holy Spirit.” The continual sacrifice of praise must displace our attempts at getting by in our blind self-sufficiency (Heb. 13:15).

The Old and the New Contrasted

In 2 Corinthians 3, the Apostle Paul contrasts the Old and the New Covenant. He emphasized: “(9) For if the ministry of condemnation [the Old Covenant] had glory, the ministry of righteousness [the New Covenant] exceeds much more in glory. (10) For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels. (11) For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious.”

The Old Covenant had glory only in similar way to that of the moon. The moon reflects the light of a much more glorious celestial body, the sun. As the moon only reflects the light of and points to the sun, having no light (glory) of its own, even so, the Old Testament merely reflected (foreshadowed) the Covenant that was to come. It pointed to the One who *is* the brightness of God’s glory and the express image of His person—in whom all fullness dwells (Heb. 1:3). The Old Covenant was clothed in types and shadows but now the “Sun” has risen, and His light judges all things. We are now “ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” (2 Cor. 3:6). The Old Covenant ministered condemnation through the letter of the law but the New Covenant redeems from that condemnation and ministers life through the Spirit of grace. The Old Covenant glory was one that faded as a forerunner who announces the arrival of king. The New Covenant glory is based on the power of Christ the King’s endless life. God has declared Him to be a priest *forever* according to the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 6:20). He forever exists to secure, administer, and appropriate grace and truth to His own. He is our *Great High Priest—full* of grace and truth and *rich* to all that call upon His name (Ro. 10:12-13).

Oh, how excellent is this Savior, this Lord, this Father God, this grace of this New Covenant. How wonderful are God’s plans and purposes. We will spend eternity

searching the depths of His wisdom and knowledge. While our understanding in this life may be in part, God enables us to go from glory to glory by His Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 13 & 2 Cor. 3:18). Let us go on!

This life of the New Covenant is symbolically depicted in the Old Covenant as a great river that increasingly flows from the temple of God, giving life wherever it flows and to whatever it touches (Ez. 47:1-9). We now have this magnificent ministry of life. Whatever we touch shall live as that River flows out of us—God’s temple. That River flows with grace—the Spirit of abounding grace. Where sin abounds, grace abounds much more (Rom. 5:20). As sin increases in the earth, God’s grace is more abundantly available to the hungry and broken heart. Sin has left such desolation in its wake from the first Adam until now, but oh what life, restoration, beauty, and wholeness is left by God’s super-abounding grace. Do you believe?

Is it no wonder why the Apostle James stated that the indwelling Spirit of God yearns jealously over us (Jas. 4:5)? While too many of the saints are romancing the world, the Spirit of God is yearning—pregnant with grace—as a great dam waiting to break forth upon this generation. Will we allow His yearning to become ours? A child is waiting to be born. Who will deliver? Who will push in intercession until the dam of worldliness, apathy, lethargy, and complacency in the Church breaks, and Jesus reaps a harvest in this final hour that is worthy of His suffering? Who will allow their hearts to become so broken, causing a flood of salvation, wisdom, revelation, healing, deliverance, purity, and holiness to be released through them to this generation?

How excellent is this divine synergy of intercession between our Great High Priest, the Holy Spirit, and the saints.

*While great men will stumble,
And they will fall
God’s grace is found there
And abundantly available to all.
How then can we fail,
Fall into despair,
When God’s grace is as available
As the wind and the air?*

The only hope that the Old Covenant offered to sinful humanity was as the harbinger of the New Covenant. There were those in the Old Covenant who were able to see through the symbolism to the Christ who was to come. While the children of Israel were afraid of God and would not draw near to Mt Sinai, Moses and Joshua feared God, drew near, and ascended the mountain. Their faith was in the grace of God that was to come. By faith in the Christ who was to come, many Old Testament saints did great exploits and suffered many things. Some of these are recorded in the *Faith Hall of Fame* (Heb. 11).

Now, we can have great boldness and a full assurance of faith because our faith looks back to Christ’s finished work. Before He died, Jesus said, “It is finished.” He did not say “To be continued.” Jesus put away our sins by the bodily sacrifice of Himself. Our debt of punishment has been canceled—paid in full—by the blood of the spotless and impeccable Lamb of God.

The Old Testament heralded the coming of the Messiah and His redemptive suffering. As the Apostle Peter wrote: “Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that *would come* to you, (11) searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow (1 Pt. 1:9-11).

The “grace that would come” and “glories that would follow” have now become the grace and glories that are. The Apostle Paul agrees: “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that *have been freely given* to us by God (1 Cor. 2:12).

Note the use of the past tense. This indicates that all we need in this life has been already secured by Christ’s finished work on the cross. Listen to Peter again: “As His divine power *has given* to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, (4) by which *have been given* to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Pt. 1:3-4). All that we need that pertains to life, godliness, and to escape the corruption in the world has already been given! We are *now* partakers of the divine nature! Jesus secured all in Heaven for us through His death and now guarantees it on earth for us by the power of His endless life. *All that we need is continually available and immediately accessible and is as sure as Christ’s life is endless.* Do you believe? This is why we must believe with our heart and confess with our mouth that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead and, therefore, Lord of all in order to experience salvation of any kind (Ro. 10). To be unbelieving is a denial of Christ’s resurrection and, consequently, a denial of His continual High-Priestly ministry in the earth.

Our sojourn in this life is symbolized in the Old Testament by Israel’s campaign of possessing the land of Canaan. This land was given to them through God’s promise to Abraham over four hundred years earlier. Their God-given responsibility was to possess a land that was already theirs. In order to do that they had to dispossess the intimidating giants and strongholds that claimed legal right of possession to that land. The giants or strongholds we must overcome, as a New Covenant people, all consist of strongholds of thoughts, proud arguments, religious tradition and man-made doctrine, and emotional and mental turmoil and instability. All of these are rooted in social culture, childhood raising, generational disease and moral weakness, and in various religions. These open the door for demonic oppression and the consequent fortification of those strongholds. The question we must answer, as presented to Israel, in the Old Covenant is: “Whose report will you believe?” We will either be as the first generation of Israelites, who through unbelief lost their inheritance (the book of Exodus), or we will be as the Joshua generation who possessed their inheritance (the book of Joshua).

When Joshua led Israel to destroy Jericho they found out that the people there were already paralyzed with fear from having heard of Israel’s former exploits of razing the cities on the other side of the Jordan river. As Rahab stated: “I know that the LORD has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you” (Jos. 2:9). Three things contributed to this paralyzing effect superimposed on Israel’s enemies:

- 1) The inheritance (of land) was already given to them by God
- 2) God went before them
- 3) They, by exploits of faith, obeyed God's directives to possess the land. As God said, "Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon, I have given you" (Jos. 1).

Listen carefully. All that we need pertaining to life and godliness has already been given to us in the New Covenant. Jesus has already gone before us, into death and now behind the Veil, and the prince of this world *is* judged (Jn. 16). However, this paralyzing effect on the works of hell will not become a reality for us unless we enforce Christ's victory (our inherited victory) by faith. Sin, sickness, disease, mental and emotional instability, and all the works of darkness are now waiting for the sons of God to carry out the sentence of judgment that is already upon them. All of the inhabitants of the soulish strongholds are waiting in fearful and paralyzing expectation for us to believe they are already defeated. When we are filled with such genuine assurance, the words of our mouth will bring down any work of the devil. While any stronghold, as was Jericho, can look intimidating (exalting itself against the knowledge of God; 2 Cor. 10:1-5), we must believe that Christ's finished work has left every work of hell fainthearted. They have no will to fight. God only requires that we believe His assessment of our enemies, show up for the fight, and follow His instructions. Battle won! Any questions?

Counterattacks by the devil will prove the strength or weakness of our faith. Such counterattacks are nothing more than the floundering efforts of a drowning man. The devil and all of his works are nothing other than leaning walls and tottering fences (Ps. 62:1-4; see the chapter entitled *The Power of Righteousness*). All that is needed is for us to apply the weight of our authority in Christ to them and they will topple. While there may be a process that God requires us to go through to bring us into the place of unfaltering faith, nevertheless, that place is ours in Christ. God does not require just faith from us but enduring faith.

Naaman the Syrian commander was told to dip in the Jordan River seven times to be healed of leprosy (2 Kings 5). Why? Because he did not like the Jordan River as proven by his insisting that the rivers in Syria were better. This pride and prejudice had to be dealt with in order for him to receive healing. "Seven times" represents the perfection of faith and indicates that it could possibly take numerous attempts for God to entirely purge such things from us. In patience, our faith will be perfected so that we have no lack in anything (Jas 1).

We cannot have pure, unfaltering faith if we are self-sufficient and prideful. God resists the proud (or self-sufficient) but gives grace to the humble (Jas 5). The Holy Spirit (of grace) can only help the weak. Our ignorance and foolishness are weaknesses that must be overcome. How do we overcome them? By asking God for knowledge, understanding, wisdom, and revelation without doubting. He will give what is needed and will not put you down for being ignorant or foolish (Jas 1).

What should be our response to all of these things?

Paul asked in Romans 8 (paraphrased):

“If God be for us, who [or what] then can be against us? Who can lay a charge against God’s elect? Who is He who condemns? Where is your accuser? Who [or what] can separate us from the love of Christ?”

He concludes:

“In all these things [all things that contradict His love for us; the things that would intimidate us into believing that all that Jesus died for is not available], we have been made more than conquerors through Him who loved us.”

Do you honestly believe that the accuser of the brethren is still allowed some sort of legal access before God to accuse you contrary to the blood of the everlasting covenant? Do you actually believe that the devil can do anything to you contrary to this most excellent covenant, without your permission? How could we believe such a hellish lie? Satan is judged and we are made righteous by faith in Christ’s finished work! Sadly, beloved, we often short-change and falsely console ourselves in our ignorance, unbelief, and traditional platitudes.

God’s New Covenant is so complete, so perfect, and so excellent that we cannot fail except through stubbornly clinging to our ignorance, fear, doubt, and complacency! God have mercy. Do you see how important it is that we know Christ, not only as our Savior, but, ongoingly, as our Great High Priest? Do you understand that Christ has committed Himself to one thing forever: your wellbeing—spirit, soul, and body. He is forever committed to finish the good work He has begun in you by the power of His endless life. He will not fail! We now have an anchor of our soul (mind, will, emotions, intellect, desires, and personality) that is sure and immovable, connected to the unshakable eternal. *Father, awaken us to Your great grace and love!*

The Anchor of Our Soul

“This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the Veil, (20) where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek” (Heb. 6:19-20).

“For the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God” (Heb. 7:19).

An anchor is only as secure as the object to which it is attached. If the anchor is not secure, the boat isn’t either. This anchor of our soul is Christ, as our Great High Priest, who forever assures our place before the throne of God in this life and in the one to come. This hope we have now in that Presence behind the Veil where there is no sickness, demonic oppression, and no pain. There exists joy inexpressible, peace that passes all understanding, and power to defeat the works of darkness on every level. This is our right, our inheritance, purchased by the incalculable suffering of our precious Lord and Savior.

Who will you believe? Will you take your place in His presence? There, in that place, God is all in all. There is no lack, no want, no need. In His presence is fullness of joy

and at His right hand there are pleasures for evermore (Ps. 16:11). All of creation is waiting, groaning in travail, for you to take your place and be manifest in the earth as a Spirit-led son of God. You are the hope of creation in this era...until the Son of Man appears the second time.

“Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. (15) For we do not have a High Priest who cannot *sympathize* with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. (16) Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:14-16).

There’s that infamous word again—*weaknesses*. Jesus’ sympathy with our weaknesses indicates that He is affected (not overwhelmed) with the same feelings that we are experiencing as if He were “in our shoes.” He does this by way of the Spirit dwelling in us.

“He who searches the hearts knows the mind of the Spirit and makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.”

Do we truly know how jealous the Holy Spirit is over us? While Jesus sympathizes with us, the Holy Spirit is waiting for us to sympathize with Him and fulfill His yearning for us. He is waiting for us to sympathize with His cry in us: “Abba, Father!” He yearns for us to receive and walk in the fullness of the New Covenant—the fullness of Father God. His yearning communicates His great love, passion, compassion, and determination for us, and the availability and accessibility of all that Jesus died for. The Holy Bible is the love letter that expresses His yearning. Realizing this yearning, longing, and groaning of the Spirit is the first step into this fullness. Righteousness through Christ’s blood and the consequent boldness is found through this yearning, giving us right of access to the throne of Grace—the Presence behind the Veil. In that place God’s grace rules. Everything must bow the knee.

We are the people of His most excellent grace—the people of unshakable and immovable hope. The question is: will we arise to our place?

The world is waiting for you, son of God.

Chapter Ten



Physical Objects/Kingdom Realities

Does God use physical things as a means for us to grasp and experience His Kingdom realities?

The physical things to which I am referring include the waters of baptism, the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper, anointing oil, and such things. All of these physical objects can be found in Scripture, but, sadly, some have been reduced to mere rituals and mystical observances in certain sects of Christendom. Even so, that does not invalidate the true power and impact that such will have on those who truly understand their purpose and validity for today.

Are water baptism and the Lord's Supper only rituals or are they physical things that serve as points at which our faith links us to the unseen substance of the Kingdom?

Water Baptism

There are two passages of Scripture that some may use to argue against the practice of water baptism today. The first is when Paul stated that he thanked God that he baptized none of them except for two people (1 Cor. 1:14).

Can we rightly conclude from this passage that Paul was teaching against water baptism? Was he not promoting baptism being done for the right reason when he stated that he was glad that he had only baptized a couple of them? According to the context, his reason for saying this was so that none of them could say they were baptized in his name. He was teaching against the divisiveness that came from the Corinthian's claim to greatness based on who baptized them. Obviously, Paul did baptize some of them and so did Apollos and Peter, but his stating that Christ did not send him to baptize is not an indictment against it.

The second passage that some may use to argue against water baptism is found in John 4:1-3, "Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (2) (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples), (3) He left Judea and departed again to Galilee."

Some would argue that since Jesus did not personally water baptize anyone, then that makes it invalid today. As the same passage reveals, did He not tell His disciples to water baptize? Was He not also water baptized by John the Baptist (Mt. 3:13-17)?

Scripture does indicate the reason why Jesus did not personally water baptize people. In Matthew 3:11, John the Baptist proclaimed: “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.” It was prophesied that Jesus would baptize people with the Holy Spirit and fire and not with water. This was one important thing that distinguished Jesus the Messiah from John the Baptist (who came as the forerunner to the Messiah). Jesus’ commitment to making that distinction clear was evident by Him not personally water baptizing anyone.

This in no way signifies that Jesus’ baptizing people in the Holy Spirit and fire would replace water baptism in the New Covenant either. One would have to read into Scripture something that is not there (a.k.a. begging the question) in order to arrive at such a conclusion. Neither Jesus nor the apostles taught any such doctrine.

Did Jesus’ death and resurrection fulfill water baptism? Some would use this argument also. If so, He would have not commanded his disciples to baptize after His resurrection. There would have been no need for it under *any* circumstances. Baptism in water and the baptism with the Holy Spirit are two very distinct entities and serve different and separate purposes.

Christ has obviously commanded us to water baptize and, thus, fulfill part of the Great Commission as revealed in Matthew 28:19-20.

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, (20) teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen.”

We are to teach all nations *all* things that Christ has ordained and commanded us. This includes water baptism and the Lord’s Supper. If Jesus commanded it, should that not be enough?

The Apostle Paul wrote:

“In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, (12) buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead” (Col. 2:11-12).

One can clearly see how God works *through* physical objects in water baptism. Notice that faith is not to be put in our being immersed in or raised out of the water, but it must be placed in the inward working of God who raised Christ from the dead. *The immersion into and the raising out of the water serve only as a means through which we express our faith to God.* The passage does not say that water baptism represents our death with Christ, but it states that we *are* buried with Him in baptism. There is no distinction made here between the act of water baptism and our actually experiencing a work of God within us.

The expression of true faith in God through such physical means is what makes them indistinguishable from the Kingdom realities symbolized by those very things.

Paul gave more evidence of this in Romans 6:3-4:

“Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? (4) Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

Water baptism is obviously an initiation into a new walk. We have the life of God in us when we are born again. Our spirit becomes a new creation in Christ. It is raised up in new life with Him, but that new life needs to be translated into our walk. This happens through our co-death with Christ. Scripture obviously states that this can be accomplished through (not by) water baptism. The accomplishment of this co-death through the waters of baptism applies to our soul (basically the mind, will, personality, and emotions). The state of these faculties affects how we walk out the new life we have in Christ. While Scripture teaches that water baptism is a means that the Lord has commanded to initially help us walk in newness of life, this does not mean it cannot be accomplished apart from it. God instated water baptism for us, and we were not created for it. It was given to help strengthen or undergird the faith of the new disciples of Christ. Like other physical things, it is a tangible means that connects us to Kingdom realities.

Someone might respond, “How do you know that the above passages are referring to water baptism?”

Every place in Scripture where the word “baptism” is used alone is safely assumed to be referring to water baptism. Scripture is always clear where reference is given to any other baptism. This was obviously assumed by Paul and the readers during that time. Paul would have distinguished it as being another baptism if it were otherwise. Does it bear witness in your spirit? Note that I did not say, “Does it agree with your doctrine or thinking?” We have an anointing from God by which we can know and rightly discern the truth (1 Jn. 2:27).

Water baptism is also far more than a ritual. The Apostle Peter taught that it has saving power like unto how Noah and his family were saved through the water while everyone else perished. “Who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. (21) There is also an antitype [counterpart] which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Pt. 3:20-21). This is obviously referring to water baptism.

Failure to bring our walk into alignment with the life of Christ within us will eventually end in condemnation from God. This is how water baptism can save us: by helping our faith link the seen with the eternal and unshakable unseen. It is much easier for us to believe Jesus died for us than to believe that we died with Him. So, God has helped us to believe and experience it through water baptism. This is why it is commanded by God as the finalization of repentance, so that we will not be condemned.

“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mk. 16:16). “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of

Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

The Lord’s Supper

This is Paul quoting Christ concerning the Lord’s Supper:

“For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; (24) and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ (25) In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’ (26) For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes” (1 Cor. 11:23-26).

Notice that Jesus did not say that the bread and the cup represent His body and blood. He said that they *are* His body and blood. He is making no distinction between partaking of the bread and the wine than from experiencing oneness with Him. Of course, He is not referring to a literal eating of his natural flesh and blood. These contain no inherent spiritual life because Jesus stated that the Spirit gives life and the flesh profits nothing (John 6:63). What we are actually partaking of is what the tearing of His flesh and the shedding of His blood represent. Through His death, He opened the way into the throne room of God once for all. We can be one with Him and the Father now without fear of death or punishment. The physical bread and wine are physical means (among others) that God uses to reveal and impart to us the unseen Kingdom substance that Christ’s death has purchased for us.

The Lord’s Supper is more than just sitting down and having a meal together. God forbid! In fact, Paul told the Corinthians that if they were hungry that they should eat at home (11:22 & 34). The Lord’s Supper is an actual encounter with Christ and is not an occasion to satisfy our bodily appetites. The Corinthians were selfishly doing it for this reason and were bringing judgment on themselves (vs. 29-30).

To eat and drink the Lord’s Supper unworthily (in a selfish or inconsiderate manner) makes us guilty of the blood and body of Christ (v. 27). According to this, Jesus likens the physical bread and the wine with what His sacrificial body and blood represent. In this context, if we partake of the physical unworthily, then we violate the spiritual because we are actually partaking of the Lord through a physical means. Do you perceive the implications of this? Do you see the substance and power in a physical object that God has ordained as a point at which our faith links the seen with the eternal and unshakable unseen. The Lord’s Supper is a premeditated, deliberate, and formal event. If we take bread and wine for the reason that our Lord prescribed, it will have a life-changing impact on us. If those who partook of it unworthily died, then what are we to expect who partake of it worthily?

This is one effective way that we proclaim Christ’s death until He comes.

We can conclude that water baptism is commanded and the Lord's Supper ordained by the Lord to be physical points at which our faith makes a link between the seen and the unseen substance of the Kingdom of God. They are not mere rituals.

Ways of Healing the Sick

Anointing Oil

“Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord” (Jas. 5:14).

God has provided the Church with various means to heal the sick (see 1 Corinthians 12 & 14). Anointing with oil is one of them and is a valid Biblical practice. There are those who have taught that this is only referring to the healing properties that naturally exist in the oil. This is quite ridiculous. Try putting anointing oil, pour the whole bottle on them if you like, on someone who has a terminal illness and see if that heals them. Again, this is another physical object that God has ordained to be a point at which our faith links the seen with the eternal and unshakable unseen.

When the Lord told a prophet in the Old Testament to anoint someone with oil, the immediate result, in most cases, was that the Spirit of God came upon them (see 1 Sam. 16:13). Any delays in the response of the Spirit of God in this matter was for the sole purpose of waiting for the conditions He had set forth to be met (see 1 Sam. 10:1-10). This clearly reveals that there is no distinction between the carrying out of the physical act of anointing with oil, and the Spirit of God coming upon the individual. This is where the New Testament concept of anointing with oil came from.

God has commissioned the elders of the Church to anoint the sick with oil. The Apostle James continues: “...and the prayer of faith *will* save the sick.” Beyond that, we are also assured that any sins we have committed will be forgiven. When the oil is applied, then the healing and forgiveness is correspondingly applied by the Holy Spirit. God honors what He ordains as long as it is done in faith and in cooperation with the Spirit of God. Faith sees into the unseen realm of God's Kingdom, perceives what He has determined to do, and works with Him in carrying it out. The anointing oil is a that physical point of contact that releases God's provision from heaven into the earth.

Handkerchiefs

The conclusions made concerning anointing with oil are applicable for healing the sick with handkerchiefs with two exceptions. 1.) Knowing that the articles were taken from Paul's body and then sent to heal the sick and cast out demons indicates that there was a transference of anointing into the cloth material. The anointing was then transferred from the cloth to the sick or oppressed. 2.) The healing of the sick with handkerchiefs was considered a special or unusual miracle and was not taught as a practice of the Church. Such things as these are to be done *only* by the prompting of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 19:11-12).

The Apostle Peter's Shadow

“And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, (15) so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. (16) Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed” (Acts 5:14-16).

This passage does not actually state that Peter's shadow healed anyone, but it does indicate that the people were expecting to be healed when his shadow fell on them. It would be safe to assume that it had possibly happened before or else they would have no expectation of it happening. If such is the case, was it Peter's shadow that was actually healing them? A shadow cannot heal anymore than oil or a handkerchief. Could God use someone's shadow to heal the sick? Of course, He can use whatever He chooses. God's glory may have so rested on Peter that anyone coming within a shadow's distance of Him was affected by it. Whatever the case, God does use physical things to link the seen to the eternal and unshakable unseen.

In Conclusion

Why would God use physical things to link us to the unseen realities of the Kingdom of God? The only answer that I could give would be this:

He saw the need for it and knows the weakness of our flesh and has made it easier for us to grasp His Kingdom realities. God-ordained physical objects to enhance our ability to have faith in Him.

Faith is primarily the eyes of our spirit or its ability to perceive God. As our natural eyes serve as a means to validate the existence of natural things, even so faith is the evidence or validation to us of the existence of the eternal and unseen things of God (Heb. 11:1). These physical objects, covered in this section, are but reflections of the unseen Kingdom realities. Only by faith can we see through the reflections into those secret realities of God. God obviously uses such physical objects as windows through which we can see and experience His Kingdom. While these are not the only way in which God reveals Himself to us, yet they are a blessing to those who truly know their power and purpose. Apart from having faith in God in our use of them, these things are merely physical objects. We cannot put faith in the objects; otherwise, they will be reduced to talismans or magical rituals.

Chapter Eleven



Difficult Christian Doctrines Made Simple

*A Concise Look at the Doctrines of
Foreknowledge, Predestination, and Election*

Throughout my adventures in Christ (since 1980), I have heard and read differing views referencing the Christian doctrines of foreknowledge, predestination, and election. Very few historical and modern perspectives have fully met my expectations, rather, have not consistently stayed true to the character and ways of God and to the rules of Biblical interpretation that the authors claim to uphold. Too often, there is at least a tinge of bias influencing the view of the theologian, teacher, or scholar in their presentations and study.

Most of us have probably heard of the age-old debate of Calvinism verses Arminianism. This debate originated from the differing views of a Protestant reformer, John Calvin, and a Protestant theologian, Jacobus (or James) Arminius. Calvin's perspective of God's redemptive plan for humanity is summed up in what is referred to as the five points of Calvinism², and they are:

- 1) Unconditional election: before God created the world, he chose to save some people according to his own purposes and apart from any conditions related to those persons.
- 2) Limited atonement: Jesus Christ's substitutionary atonement [sacrifice for our sins] on the cross is limited in scope to those who are predestined unto salvation and its primary benefits are not given to all of humanity but rather just believers.
- 3) Irresistible grace: the saving grace of God is effectually applied to those whom He has determined to save (the elect) and, in God's timing, overcomes their resistance to obeying the call of the gospel, bringing them to a saving faith in Christ.
- 4) Perseverance of the saints: none who are truly saved can be condemned for their sins or finally fall away from the faith; the doctrine of unconditional, eternal security; aka, "once saved always saved."
- 5) Total depravity: asserts that people are by nature not inclined to love God wholly with heart, mind, and strength, as God requires, but rather all are inclined to serve their

² This information was adapted from the Wikipedia website

own interests over those of their neighbor and to reject the rule of God; there is nothing about fallen humanity that is salvageable—sin has corrupted every part of their being.

Arminius opposed three of these points: unconditional election, limited atonement, and irresistible grace. He also had doubts about another: the perseverance of the saints. To sum up, Arminius' objections were that God's choosing us (election) does have conditions, Christ's atonement was intended for all of mankind and not just a select few, and that the grace of God could be resisted and the Christian faith could be forsaken because of free will.

So there you have it. Most Christians either claim to be a Calvinist or Arminian. I do not claim either although I do agree with both on some points. Whether we claim to be a Calvinist or Arminian, it becomes the major influence in how we interpret the word of God. One rule of Biblical interpretation that must be strictly observed without exception is to never approach it with preconceived ideas or a biased perspective, trying to customize Scripture to fit them.

I am not saying that *all* Calvinists or Arminianists are biased. They are *not* as long as what is concluded about Scripture is in agreement with what was originally intended by God. A departure from the original intent is common among the biased. In using the word "bias," I am referring to the minds of people that are already influenced and convinced from other outside sources besides the plain-sense meaning of God's Word. This tends toward our reading into Scripture what is not there and toward pride and deception.

[The word *redemption* or any of its variations used in this article refers to the price (ransom) that Jesus had to pay for our sins. Through His death, He ransomed (redeemed) us from sin, the devil, and death.]

Understanding God's preplanned redemptive blueprint for humanity is not difficult like some code that can only be cracked by experts. God hides the things of His Kingdom from the wise and the prudent (experts) but reveals them to the "babes" (Mt. 11:25-26). In other words, it is *impossible* for those who lean to their or another person's understanding to grasp the things of God. In this is the difficulty: refusing to do what our unrenewed minds insist on doing. No one can understand it, trying to figure it out themselves, because God's way is to reveal it, keeping anyone from boasting in His presence. He reveals it only to those (babes) who know they *cannot* figure it out; those who look to Him *only* to give them understanding. Study, of course, is not ruled out, but must be centered on God's personal revelation of Himself to us. Then, and only then, are we qualified to make conclusions about the written Word.

I write this as one who has limited understanding of God, has walked with Him and studied His Word since 1980, and has become familiar with what He likes and dislikes. My intent is not to answer every question that the reader may have on the subjects because I cannot. The intent is to establish sound Biblical understanding that will serve to clear up any confusion or consternation that may exist because of those who have handled the word of God deceitfully. This is not a complete or exhaustive work on the subject because I believe simplicity will serve the purpose.

First, clear definitions of the applicable words and what is God's intended use of them in His written Word must be established. By doing so, we will be able to see how all these fit neatly into the package of God's blueprint for the redemption of mankind.

Foreknowledge

The Greek word is *prognosis*. Broken down, *pro* means "before" and *gnosis* means "knowledge." The word is often used "as is" in medical science among English speaking people but takes on, for the most part, a different meaning than its Biblical counterpart. It simply means "to know something or someone beforehand."

The word *foreknowledge* (or variations thereof) is used in New Testament scripture four times. One instance alludes to God's foreknowledge of the places, people, objects, events, and the wickedness of people's hearts that He used to bring about Christ's crucifixion (Acts 2:23). The other three occurrences involve God *favorably* foreknowing a certain category of people and not necessarily individuals (Ro 8:29, 11:2, & 1 Pt. 1:2). Explanation: the "whom" God is referring to as used in "whom He foreknew" (Ro. 8:29 & 11:2) is modified by "these" (8:30) and "people" (11:2). "These" and "people" are plural and suggest a group or category. The Apostle Peter stated (1 Pt. 1:2) that God's people are the "elect according to the foreknowledge of God." The designation "elect" is never used in Scripture to refer just to one person but to a group or category. It would be inappropriate to claim "I am *the* elect of God," but instead we should say, "*We* are the elect of God" or "I am *one* of the elect."

Am I saying that God's *foreknowledge* does not apply to individuals but only to a certain group or category of people? It applies to individuals if they fit into that favorable category or group. God did tell the Prophet Jeremiah that He [favorably] knew him before He formed him in the womb (Jer. 1:5). (The identity and characteristics of this category or group will be discussed later, proving that this assertion is soundly derived from Scripture.)

God's criteria for favorably foreknowing someone is of greater importance to Him than that individual person or else He would favorably foreknow all people. In other words, God is particular about to whom He shows mercy and sets His love upon.

This does not mean that God is willing that anyone should perish (should have to pay for their own sins). He desires all people to come to repentance (2 Pt. 3:9). God sent His Son into the world because of His great love for it—that the world might be saved through Him (Jn. 3:16-17). It is clear that God sent His Son to die for the whole world but not everyone is eligible for it. He resists (opposes) the proud but gives grace to the humble (1 Pt. 5:5). This resistance or opposition to the proud indicates that God sees them as a serious threat to His Kingdom as was Lucifer (Isa. 14:12-17).

Four basic things that we can now soundly conclude about foreknowledge are:

- 1) God knows all people and things prior to their existence and occurrence (He is omniscient—knows all things in the past, present, and future. He works all things according to the counsel of His will; Eph. 1:11).
- 2) God "favorably" knows a category or group of people prior to their existence.

- 3) God's foreknowledge of events, thoughts, choices, and motives must be differentiated from His favorable foreknowledge of people as it pertains to His redemptive plan.
- 4) Therefore, there are two types of foreknowledge: universal and redemptive (or favorable).

Bear with me, things will become clearer to you as this revelation progresses.

Predestination

The Greek word is *proorizo*. Broken down, *pro* means "before" and *orizo* is the root from which we get our English word *horizon*. It means "to define, determine, or lay out the boundaries of." Simply put, predestination is the act of determining or planning something beforehand and putting it into action. For instance, this word was used in Greek/Roman culture to describe a farmer laying out the boundaries of a field *before* planting it. This is similar to drawing up a blueprint *before* building a house. A farmer predestines his crops by laying out and preparing the field and a builder predestines a house by drawing up a blueprint.

The word *predestined* is used 4 times in the KJV (Ro. 8:29-30 & Eph. 1:5, 11; referring to God's people). The same Greek word is translated "determined before" once (Acts 4:28; referring to God planning ahead for Jesus' death) and "ordained" once (1 Cor. 2:7; referring to God planning ahead to make His wisdom available to us). Altogether, it was used six times in the writing of the New Testament.

In Romans 8, God's people are predestined to "be conformed to the image of Christ" and in Ephesians 1 we are predestined to "adoption as sons." Explanation: Christ is *the* Son of God and we are to be conformed to His image as adopted sons. We are adopted by receiving His Spirit into our hearts (Ro. 8:15 & Gal. 4:6).

- ⚓ When a farmer lays out a field, prepares the soil, and plants the crop, unto what is the crop predestined? To grow and produce fruit for his good pleasure.
- ⚓ When a builder draws up a blueprint, obtains the supplies, and builds the house, unto what is the house predestined? To provide shelter, safety, and happiness for his good pleasure.

God's good pleasure for us is our being conformed to Christ's image by means of the Spirit of adoption.

Predestination is, therefore, the architect's "blueprint" or "farmer's field" of redemption that God created ahead of time for those He favorably foreknows.

- ⚓ The blueprint: we are being built together on a foundation of apostles and prophets (Jesus is the Chief Cornerstone) to form a habitation for God by the Spirit (Eph. 2:19-22).
- ⚓ The prepared field: we are God's planting in the field prepared beforehand to grow and produce fruit as the elect. "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you" (Jn. 15:16).

Having established the literal and functional definitions of the words, we can now make some sound conclusions about them:

- 1) Scripture mentions nothing about anyone being predestined to heaven or hell. People are predestined to be conformed to Christ's image. Predestination is always used as a redemptive term. Scripture does mention, however, the vessels of wrath that are fitted for destruction (Ro. 9; more on that later).
- 2) God predestines only those He favorably foreknows.
- 3) Those He foreknows (regards beforehand) are those who meet the requirements of (not by earning it) a category that God favors.

Although it is commonly believed and taught, God's redemptive foreknowledge has nothing to do with His choosing us because He knew beforehand that we would choose Him although He does know that. That would give place for us to boast about our choosing Him and infringes on the free will of man. Since God does foreknow our choices, and if He did indeed incorporate that into His redemptive blueprint, then we would have no other choice but to do what God already foreknows. Therefore, choosing Him would no longer be an act of free will and could not be attributed to us as righteousness. We will soon see the importance of this. Jesus told His disciples that He chose them and that they did not choose Him. God's choosing people (the elect or chosen) is not based on whether they have chosen Him or done any good or evil. It is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but it is based on God's willingness to show mercy (Ro. 9:10-16).

The Elect

The elect, therefore, are those upon whom God chose to have mercy. What is His criteria for showing mercy? Can God show mercy to some and not others and still be just? Most definitely. *God is not obligated toward anyone who rebels against Him. Redemption is solely and act of mercy.* The better question is: how can God remain just while having mercy on those who deserve eternal incarceration and torment? Remember, He destroyed the whole world with water except for Noah's family during those days. Eight people received mercy and the rest of earth's human residents received justice.

God's justice must always be served but His mercy is reserved for whom He chooses.

What is mercy? It is refusing to kill the dog that just attacked and killed your child. Instead, you capture it, take it home, feed it, provide it shelter, and take care of all of its other needs until it becomes unafraid of and friendly and loyal to you. This parallels God's mercy toward us. It is the execution of His intended and preplanned good will toward us in spite of our hostility toward Him.

Okay, now we will satisfy your curiosity about the category of people that God favors.

God's Criteria for the Elect

Throughout this, always keep this former statement in the forefront of your mind: *God is not obligated toward anyone who rebels against Him. Redemption is solely and act of mercy.*

This is proven by statements made by Paul in Romans 9 like: “He [God] has mercy on whomever He wants to, and hardens [makes stubborn] whomever He wants to” (v. 18; paraphrased).

This would mean that He is more obligated to something else than to fallen humanity. What or who is that “something else?” The Holy Bible has the answer to that.

“But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; (28) and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, (29) *that no flesh should glory in His presence* (1 Cor. 1:27-29).

God is first true to Himself before anyone else. He designed His redemptive plan for mankind unto one end: *that no flesh glory in His presence*. This is the safeguard for His Kingdom. Without it, more “Lucifers” would arise to challenge Him and, yes, even from the ranks of mankind.

The passage quoted from 1 Corinthians was preceded by this verse (26): “For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called.*” Why? They bear too much of the image of the fallen angel Lucifer—the proud, self-exalting, and self-sufficient one for whom there is no redemption. (Notice that “are called” is italicized in the above verse. This indicates it was added by the translators for clarity and was not a part of the original text. It would have been better rendered “are chosen.”)

The elect (chosen) are mostly made up of:

- ⚓ The foolish who will put to shame the wise
- ⚓ The weak who will put to shame the mighty
- ⚓ The base and despised who will put to shame the noble (those who boast in their lineage)

These make up the category of people that God favors. In one word, they are the “lowly.” This verse is appropriate: “Though the LORD is on high, yet He regards the lowly; but the proud He knows from afar” (Ps. 138:6). Here it is in another translation: “Even though the LORD is high above, he sees humble people close up, and he recognizes arrogant people from a distance” (GWV).

Who is it that God regards and wants to observe close up? They are the same ones upon whom He is most likely to show mercy.

So, where Scriptures states: “Whom He [God] foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son,” it would be referring to what category of people? It would be those who are the least likely to boast about themselves in His presence—*those who are the least like Lucifer*—the lowly. *They are still in touch with their insignificance caused by sin.*

All this, of course, does not mean that those people who have similar pride to that of Lucifer cannot be saved. By humbling themselves, they will receive grace from God. Saul of Tarsus, who became the Apostle Paul, is a good example of this, but is, nonetheless, an exception to the rule. He came into the Kingdom, not by means of the preached Gospel, but by an actual visitation from Jesus. Normally, if a person does not receive Jesus through the preaching of the message of the cross, they will perish (see Ro. 10). This visitation was a departure by God from the rule. Obviously, provision was made in His redemptive blueprint for it. He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy.

The Means for Redemption

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, (9) not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Eph. 2:8-9).

Wow, there it is again, “. . .lest anyone should boast.” Not only is the framework of God’s redemptive blueprint designed to prevent boasting in His presence, so are the means for redemption. If anyone is going to approach, relate to, commune with, pray to, worship, and receive from God, it must be by grace through faith. Both of these prevent any of us from boasting about ourselves in God’s presence because both originate from Him. They are not produced by our intelligence or will power. God only gives grace to the humble and faith can only come from a heart He has enlightened (1 Pt. 5:5-6 & Jn. 6:44-45).

“Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?” (Jas. 2:5)

Let’s sum up thus far:

Foreknowledge, predestination, election, grace, and faith show us that God regards the lowly but shuns the proud. This was to prevent what? God, in His great desire to redeem man from sin, death, and eternal punishment, installed a safeguard that is evident everywhere within His plan and cannot be bypassed by anyone. It prevents anyone from boasting in His presence. This sin of pride will cause the greatest harm to God’s Kingdom and especially to those who harbor it. This is the reason for the safeguard. *It secures Him as the only One to be worshipped.*

The Proof is in the Blueprint

We have spent a good bit of time observing God’s redemptive blueprint for mankind as it is clearly portrayed in Scripture. Guess what? All of this soundly disproves the first

point of Calvinism, unconditional election, which states: “Before God created the world, he chose to save some people according to his own purposes and apart from any conditions related to those persons.” Contrarily, the condition is that *God chose mainly the lowly so no flesh could glory in His presence.*

Calvin’s second point, limited atonement, basically states that Christ only died for those who were to be saved. Scripture does not concur. It states that Christ died for all (2 Cor. 5:14-15, Jn. 3:16-17, & 2 Pt. 3:9) as proven earlier. It is not that Christ’s atonement was limited but that the eligibility of people for atonement was limited...to mostly the lowly. As Paul asserted: “For you see your calling brethren that not many of you were mighty, wise, or noble according to the flesh. But God has chosen...” The use of “but God has chosen” indicates that God, in the best interest of all creation, *had to* choose a different category of people than those previously listed. He does not desire that those listed perish but:

- They are guilty of high treason against His glory and only see the message of the cross of Christ as a threat or foolishness.
- Their hearts are hardened to everything but their temporal possessions, social status, good works, and intelligence.
- They are intoxicated and enamored with themselves as was Lucifer.
- They are the greatest threat to the welfare of God’s creation so He arises to its defense by opposing them as an archenemy.

This is why Pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt during the time of Moses, was chosen as a vessel of wrath fitted for destruction (Ro. 9). God showed him no mercy because he was praised as a god in the earth. He hardened Pharaoh’s heart instead (opposed his arrogance). It better served God’s plan for His people not to show him mercy. Besides, Egypt saw Israel as a threat and mistreated them for hundreds of years. God foresaw this and told Abraham four hundred years earlier what He would do about it.

In contrast, God softened the heart of King Artaxerxes of Persia whom Ezra the scribe honored as the “king of kings” (Ezra 4). Persia, at that time, was the most powerful nation on earth and also practiced idolatry like Egypt. It better served God’s purpose to soften this king’s heart.

We should be extremely grateful that God chose to show us mercy. Do you see why we must flee from everything that tends toward pride, arrogance, and self-sufficiency? By doing so, we make our calling and election sure.

What About Free Will?

“Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; (11) for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pt. 1:10-11).

As stated in Calvin’s fourth point, if our election is eternally and irrevocably sure and its surety is unconditional, entirely dependent on God’s keeping power and on nothing we do, then why did Peter make this statement? Was He warning us about something that is

not a real threat? If so, the Bible is a façade because it contains many such other passages. Peter was emphasizing the fact that if we are not diligent to secure our calling and election then it is not secure. He also stated in the first chapter of his first letter that we are kept by the power of God through faith. God keeps us as we continue in faith in that power. God supplies the keeping power and the ability to believe but we are responsible for having and keeping our faith in place. How then can God charge us with unbelief if indeed He we are not responsible for our faith? “Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God” (Heb. 3:12). Notice that the warning was given to “brethren” as in fellow Christians.

Everything we need has been supplied by God, but we will be held accountable for our stewardship of those things. This is why Paul warned the church in Corinth not to receive the grace of God in vain. (Also read this parable: Lk. 13:6-9; See the chapter entitled: *Understanding the Fear of the Lord.*)

Colossians 1:23 exhorts us to continue in the faith, not allowing ourselves to be moved away from the hope of the Gospel. This implies a real possibility of our not continuing in the faith and the hope of the Gospel.

Listen to this:

“For if God did not spare the natural branches [Israel], He may not spare you [Gentile believers] either. (22) Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off” (Ro. 11:21-22).

We are warned to continue in God’s goodness or else be cut off as was Israel. This is scary because it is a real possibility.

I could go on but you get the point. Our eternal security before God involves the deliberate and free exercise of our will or else how can God attribute righteousness to us? He desires that we continue in the faith because we love Him and not because He has us shut in behind a locked door and refuses to let us out. Personally, I do not want to escape from God but there exists the potential for me to be lured by the devil outside the boundaries of His redemptive blueprint.

If we do not have the right to choose then that defeats the whole purpose of God sending Christ to be our Lord and Savior, supplying us a sure means of escaping His wrath. If we were on a sinking ship, a lifeboat would be *irresistible* (Calvin’s third point) because we understand it is our only means of escape and that there will not be another. However, we still have a choice not to get on it because, for instance, we may think:

- Since I am such a good swimmer, there is no need for a lifeboat.
- I still have more time and will not get on the lifeboat right now.
- I do not believe the ship is really sinking.
- Surely, there has to be another lifeboat so I will wait for it or for someone to come up with something else to save us.
- I do not deserve the lifeboat.

God sent Jesus not because we deserve it, but because we would perish without Him. It was an act of mercy. Our total depravity (Calvin’s fifth) point is what necessitated

Christ's sacrifice. All of our sins were put away by Him, but *we* must come to the mercy seat. Only those who can receive this will receive it. Those who refuse will use similar excuses as those above.

So, if we are one of the elect, presently partaking of Christ, we must be diligent to make sure that we continue in faith or forfeit our right to be eternal partakers of Him (Heb. 3:14). Only those who endure to the end (of their life or this age) shall be saved (Mt. 24:13 & Mk. 13:13). As long as we live in this life, there exists the possibility of the Lord removing our name from the *Book of Life* (Rev. 3:5). Otherwise, there would be no serious and pressing need to abide in Christ, fear God, and depart from evil.

Certain doom exists for *all* who stray outside the boundaries of God's protection by failing to heed the clear and legitimate warnings from Him against doing so. No one would ever deliberately go swimming in a pond full of alligators (unless, of course, you are Chuck Norris). When God commands us to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure, and we do not, it is similar to our ignoring the alligators.

The Conclusion

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. (14) For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil” (Ec. 12:12).

Now read Romans chapters 8-11 and see if it is easier for you to understand.

Chapter Twelve



Understanding the Justice of God

Throughout the history of mankind, many questions and debates have arisen in response to such atrocities like what happened September 11, 2001 in New York City. Most of the questions have gone unanswered and the debates have not reached true resolution because of a dreadful lack of understanding in the Church of the justice of God. These questions and debates often center on whether or not God in some way was involved.

It is of utmost importance that we correctly understand the dealings of God with humanity and His dealings always concur with His righteous judgments. Too often, the Church has shirked her responsibility to justify God in all things by ignorantly responding with statements like: “God allowed it to happen for a reason.” Such statements do not do God justice.

A renowned archbishop of the Roman Catholic Church expressed doubts concerning the existence of God because of the December 26th, 2004 tsunami disaster. If those who are supposed to represent God doubt His very existence because of such things, then how will those who do not know Him ever believe? The more we point to God as the One who allows such things to happen, the more He is blamed. *God is either blamed for doing it or blamed for not stopping it.* Sadly, traditional religious mindsets are mistaken for actual Biblical truth and God is thereby misrepresented. Consequently, the character of God is further marred in the minds of those who do not know Him.

It is quite dumbfounding to watch people, who claim to know God, blame Him for such disasters, attributing cruelty to Him, and then call for united efforts to help the victims, not realizing that such sympathy and compassion originated from the very God they blame. What subtle arrogance! Why do you think Jesus instructed His disciples to pray, “Your Kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Mt. 6:10). Whatever is not in Heaven, God does not want it on earth either! Oh, if we only knew how He longs to bring all peoples of all nations under His protective and loving covering.

Someone may respond at this point with: “Well, what is wrong with responding with statements like: “God is sovereign. He could have stopped it from happening.” God’s ability to stop such from happening is not the issue. He is all-powerful and the only thing that limits the use of His power or ability is His character. He character will not allow Him to violate the free will of people by forcing His goodness on them. Satan is still the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4) by reason of Adam and Eve allowing him legal rights because of sin. The last Adam (Jesus) will end the devil’s limited reign upon His return (1 Cor. 15). He is already condemned and only Jesus can carry out the sentence (Jn. 12:31, 16:11; Rev. 20). So, the true issue is whether God has the right or freedom to intervene. The better question is, are we allowing or invoking Him to intervene or will

we continue to plug along in our stubborn self-sufficiency? If we think we can go at it alone, God will oblige us.

If God's justice seems cruel and tyrannical to us, it is because we do not truly understand it. To further clarify, two types of justice can be found in Scripture. First, there is *retributive* (pronounced ri-trib'ya-tiv) *justice*. "Retributive" is a variation of the word "retribution" which is defined by the *Microsoft Bookshelf 98 Dictionary* as "*something justly deserved*" or "*punishment.*" This type of justice is revealed in the law of sowing and reaping and is the principle by which civil or national government was designed by God to function:

"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. (8) For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life" (Gal. 6:7-8). "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. (2) Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. (3) For rulers [those in civil or national government positions] are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. (4) For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil" (Ro. 13:1-4).

Civil government was *not* designed by God to offer redemption or forgiveness but mainly to execute judgment on those who practice evil. Any civil government that fails to hold to the true paths of God's justice will inevitably be judged by Him.

Retributive justice is constant and unchanging and is the standard by which God judges all people. It cannot be circumvented or in any way compromised but it can be satisfied or fulfilled through another means besides the individual having to suffer just punishment (the exception is with civil governments). It is the foundation of God's throne. His throne represents His ruling authority (Ps. 89:14). God's ruling authority consists of Him making righteous decisions for or against humanity and executing what is decided. This process is otherwise known in Scripture as His judgments. He decides what a person should justly reap, and ultimately, oversees their reaping what is justly deserved. We reap corruption (ultimately death, Ro. 6:23) for sowing to the flesh and we reap life (eternal in quality and length) for sowing to the Spirit. This applies to both Christians and unbelievers. When unbelievers sow *repentance* to the Spirit, they reap eternal life.

Secondly, there is *redemptive justice*. "Redemptive" is a derivative of the word "redemption" (the root word is "redeem") which is defined by the same dictionary as "*deliverance upon payment of a ransom; rescue.*" This type of justice is revealed through Christ's death on the cross and is the principle by which God designed the Church to function.

"But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, (22) even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; (23) for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (24) being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, (25) whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over

the sins that were previously committed, (26) to demonstrate at the present time His *righteousness*, that He might be *just* and the *justifier* of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Ro. 3:21-26).

In order for God to remain just and still justify or have mercy on the ungodly, there had to be provision made for sin. He could not just hand out pardons to fallen humanity because it would be a violation of His rules of justice. The guilt and punishment (retribution) of sin had to be set aside. His retributive justice had to be satisfied. This left humanity in a dilemma because anything originating from us as a redemptive sin offering is unacceptable to the Lord. As the Lord spoke through the psalmist: “They have all turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is none who does good, no, not one” (Ps. 14:3).

God has answered the human dilemma by revealing His justice in its greatest splendor. His retributive justice toward humanity was satisfied at the cross of Calvary and it came at a dreadful price. The Father sent His Son as His spotless and undefiled Lamb who took away the sins of the world (Jn. 1:29; Heb. 7:26). God’s justice requires such merciless retribution because of the merciless nature of sin and Jesus’ extreme suffering on the cross reflected its nature. Thank God that He is merciful even though sin is not. Thank Him for His gift to us of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Praise Him for His flawless plan of redemption!

Whether God was directly or indirectly involved in the terror of September 11, 2001 in the USA, He is still the Chief Overseer of the affairs of men. When I discipline my child for disobedience, the rod directly causes the pain, yet it has no power unless there is a hand attached to the other end of it. The evil intent and wickedness of men, the devil and his cohorts, the elements of the earth (i.e. nature) are all used by God to reveal His retributive justice to suffering and sinful humanity. *His retributive justice serves as one of the greatest incentives for humanity to flee to the cross of Christ for refuge.* Through it, we understand the fear of the Lord.

The cross of Christ stands far above, overshadowing, all things that God uses to reveal His justice. As Jesus proclaimed, “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth [on the cross], will draw all peoples to Myself” (Jn. 12:32). Those who do not flee to the cross will perish whether or not they are “innocent bystanders.” This is why the preaching of the message of the cross is so important to God.

Understand, that I am not saying that all suffering happens to people as the direct result of their sin. Persecution is a form of suffering inflicted by sinful humanity on the truly righteous. The Father allows us to be persecuted because it is part of His plan (1 Pt. 3:8-18).

The Lord makes sure that all people receive just retribution for their deeds. Even though some who do not believe *seem* to escape retribution in this life, they will definitely reap it in the next. God is the judge and jury of all. Satan plays more of the role of a prosecuting attorney (the accuser of the brethren), and there is only one way to overcome him: by the blood of the Lamb, the word of our testimony, and by not loving our lives even unto death (Rev. 12). Those who do not flee for refuge to the blood of Christ will eventually perish like those revealed in Luke 13:1-5 (see the chapter: *Understanding God’s Judgments*). Anything else that we trust in is a refuge of lies.

“Therefore, as through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life” (Ro. 5:18).

“And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. (20) For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed” (Jn. 3:19-20).

This world can be likened to the *Titanic*, a British luxury cruise liner that sank in the icy waters of the North Atlantic in 1912 AD. The ship had been proclaimed unsinkable. We cannot foolishly take comfort in a lie similar to what some did on the ship: “Even God couldn’t sink this ship.” Pride, false securities, and over-confidence have been the demise of many in this world who have aspired to “greatness.” Yet God in His justice has provided us a Mercy Lifeboat that will take us to His safe haven if we will humble ourselves and turn from our own remedies and excuses. Will we be reconciled to Him? Jesus Christ has become our Rescuer from retributive justice.

A drowning man, in his state of panic and desperation, will drown other people to save himself. Everyone on this planet, who has not found refuge in Christ, is sinking into the abyss, fulfilling God’s retributive justice. The fear of death has left *all* people of the world blindly self-absorbed while grasping for something secure. One can see all the evidences of incipient death on their face: anger, cravings, sorrow, pain, hatred, sickness, desperation, hopelessness, pride, and denial. All of this works to intensify the suffering of others who are perishing also. Those who refuse to get off the ship onto God’s Mercy Lifeboat will be subject to reap the destructive forces that are unleashed by the sinking ship and those who are perishing. All people on the ship will reap the same harvest as what we would consider “the worst of sinners” should deserve. The wrath of God remains on all who do not believe—all who do not make Christ their Mercy Lifeboat (Jn. 3:36). [I say this with the understanding that Jesus indicated some people would be punished more severely than others *after they die*. In Matthew 10:15, He declared: “Assuredly, I say to you, *it will be more tolerable* for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!”]

Now, this all brings us to a very controversial subject in the Church:

What happens to people who have never heard the Gospel? Has God made some sort of provision for them after death? Do they get to hear the Gospel somehow after they die? Apart from some vague passages of Scripture, there is no indication of this.

First, when all people stand before God on Judgment Day, the records will show that even those who did not officially hear the Gospel had many opportunities to call upon the Creator and find Him. All people are without excuse as Romans 1:20-21 reveals:

“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, (21) because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.”

John 3:36 declares:

“He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides [continues to remain on] on him.”

Even if God never sent Jesus, He would still be just as good and just and our eternal punishment would be just as deserving. As Scripture indicates, we were without excuse before He sent Him (since the creation), already under God’s wrath. The whole point of the matter is that God did not “owe” the world Jesus. Redemption is solely an act of His mercy. Mercy is only given at God’s discretion and is never merited or obligated.

“Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens” (Ro. 9:18).

One day, as a teenager, I was walking along the shore of a lake below the house where I grew up and came upon a black snake that was in a terrible predicament. At some point in its recent past the snake had managed to squeeze its body inside a large metal bolt washer. In its attempts to free itself, the snake had done serious damage to its body. The metal was eating into its flesh. As infamous and threatening as snakes are or are perceived to be, most people would have left it to die but I chose to attempt to deliver it from its death sentence. I got down on my knees on its level and picked it up with my hands to my level. Imagine what could have happened if the snake were poisonous? This is a good description of mercy. God sent Jesus on our level at the expense of His life to deliver from death those who were enemies of all that He represented. He did not have to do it! This proves how wonderfully good He is. Thank God that He had mercy on this wretched, poisonous snake of a human being who deserved death!

Jesus stated that the way to life everlasting is straight and narrow and only a few will find it (Mt. 7:14). A “few” as compared to all people that have ever lived or will live is many.

Someone might respond, “Does all this mean that a person cannot be saved unless they hear and properly respond to the Gospel? Can someone come to Christ without a person telling them about Jesus?” While these are the primary ways God uses to bring people into His Kingdom (Rom. 10), that does not mean that they are the only ones. For example, the Apostle Paul was convinced by Jesus appearing to him. I believe a person could sincerely ask for help from the Creator and this could open the door for them to come into the Kingdom. God can use whatever means He desires, however, as Jesus said in John 3, “You must be born again.” There is no way around this. Everyone must come to the Father through Jesus even if they do not know Him by that name.

In conclusion, God by His justice has provided a way of escape from His justice. Hallelujah! Jesus satisfied retributive justice through His death. God’s redemptive plan is not ambiguous but very plain. We must flee to Him as our only refuge. If we do, then we can live this life with a full assurance of faith, having our heart set on the unseen, eternal things of God. We can live free of fear and hopelessness—free from incipient death and those things that the perishing will inevitably experience.

“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” (1 Cor. 15:55; KJV)

“For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. (18) ‘He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God’ (Jn. 3:17-18).

People of the earth, your condemnation already exists! You are condemned to die on a “sinking ship.” Flee for refuge from the condemnation that is upon all who do not believe in Christ. Turn to Him as your only hope.

“But whoever listens to me [wisdom] will dwell safely, and will be secure, without fear of evil” (Pro. 1:33).

Chapter Thirteen



Understanding God's Judgments

If you were to ask Jesus what He would say concerning the crises in the world, as in the mayhem, suffering, and death resulting from such things as terrorist attacks, earthquakes, tsunamis, and unstable weather conditions, what do you think that would be? What would He say concerning those who die at the hands of inexcusable or uncontrollable brutality or mayhem?

Jesus already addressed the issue two thousand years ago and we may not find His words to comforting:

“There were present at that season some who told Him [Jesus] about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. (2) And Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? (3) I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. (4) Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? (5) I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish” (Lk. 13:1-5).

History records in the year 70 A.D., close to forty years later, that those who did not repent *likewise perished* at the hands of Titus the Roman general. His soldiers laid waste the city of Jerusalem, massacring one million Jews. As Jesus prophesied, not one stone of the temple was left upon another. Only those who had truly repented and loved Jesus were saved because they heeded His warnings (see Mt. 24).

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus’ heart always went out to the hurting and suffering multitudes. Since that time, He has continually expressed His great love and care in countless ways to humanity. His compassion and mercies are new and assured to us every morning (Lam. 3:22-23). He is the Great High Priest who is touched by our suffering and needs, and for this reason, He clothed Himself with humanity (Heb. 4:15-5:8).

Now listen carefully to God’s revelation of Himself to Moses:

“The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, (7) ‘keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children’s children to the third and the fourth generation” (Ex. 34:6-7).

This passage portrays God as being full of mercy and compassion but it also portrays Him as being severe. His justice will not allow Him to overlook guilt (clear the guilty).

The force of sin (iniquity, lawlessness or all that opposes Him) and its viciousness gains momentum until it is complete or the cup of iniquity is full. This dreadful process takes, at the most, three or four generations to complete. After that, the Lord judges and cuts off the iniquity and this *could* result in the death of many people. If so, it is done to secure the greatest good for all people.

When God ratified a covenant with Abram (also known as “Abraham”), He told him: “Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. (14) And the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. (15) Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. (16) But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete” (Gen. 15:13-16). God in His great mercy would not let the Israelites destroy the Amorites, in order to possess the promised land, until “the iniquity of the Amorites was complete.”

The book of the Revelation speaks of this in a different manner but proves the same point. It speaks of Babylon as having a cup that is full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication (Rev. 17:4 & 18:6). In that context, because Babylon’s cup was full, she was about to experience God’s wrath. Up to that time, she could have repented. Similarly, the Amorite’s cup of iniquity was not yet full. God gave them close to four hundred years (four generations) to turn to Him. Afterward, at the appointed time, Moses led the Israelites against the Amorites, defeating them with the edge of the sword (Ex. 21:21-26). During that time, God used the Israelites to execute His judgment against nations whose cups of iniquity were full. Simultaneously, this worked to fulfill His promise to them.

In our Scripture text taken from Luke 13, Jesus implied that atrocities such as horrendous accidents and death and suffering brought about by ruthless men and uncontrollable natural occurrences would happen to people who are sinners. This is not because those who suffer such things are worse sinners than others. No, the cause for such suffering is an unrepentant heart. Such things do not happen to alcoholics, adulterers, thieves, homosexuals, abortionists, child molesters, pornographers, and murderers any more readily than it will happen to a lukewarm Christian, a hypocrite, a “charitable” person, or a self-righteous person who goes to a church meeting every Sunday.

“For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: ‘I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones’” (Isa. 57:7).

“Though the LORD is on high, yet He regards the lowly; but the proud He knows from afar” (Ps. 138:6).

God is not willing that any should perish but that all would come to repentance (2 Pt. 3:9). He only revives or gives life to the hearts and spirits of the repentant. They are reconciled to Him and are no longer considered criminals and enemies. All who do not repent could reap a harvest of a violent death.

All unrepentant people in a nation could perish when its cup of iniquity becomes full. History itself testifies to this truth. Examples of this were mentioned earlier concerning the atrocities of what happened to the unrepentant Jews in 70 AD, and there are a number of instances where such events are recorded in the Old Testament. This is why the

Church must today take its rightful representative place before God and the people. We must be as Aaron, who as high priest, took the golden censer, filled it with incense, and stood between the dead and the living. By doing so, he made atonement for the people and stopped a deadly plague that had come upon them because of their stubbornness and rebellion (Nu. 16:41-49).

In Leviticus 18:24, the Lord told the children of Israel, if a nation defiles itself with sexual perversion and idolatry, that He would "...visit the punishment of its iniquity upon it, and the land vomits out its inhabitants." God will cause even the earth to bring punishment upon those nations whose iniquity is complete. Earthquakes, famine, destructive forces of weather, and diseases are used to this end by the Lord.

The Lord told the church in Laodicea that He would vomit them out of His mouth if they did not turn and repent. They were self-deceived, proud, lukewarm, and self-righteous (Rev. 3:14-22). Obstinate continuation in these types of sin could bring the Lord's rejection upon us, no longer claiming us as His people. Therefore we must, "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. (18) I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty" (2 Cor. 6:17-18).

Some people may try to take comfort in saying: "I am not an abortionist, homosexual, or any other kind of evil person," but are you a liar, a hypocrite, or a proud and self-righteous person? (See Lk. 18:10-14) To take on such attitudes is wicked, deserving the same retribution as any other wickedness. *Pride and self-righteousness in the Church has done as much, if not more, toward the filling up of the cup of iniquity in this nation as any other single sin.* In Luke 13:1-5, Jesus was saying, by implication, that all who have contributed to the cup of iniquity in a nation will be subject to the same retribution as what we would think that "the worst sinner" deserves.

How many ministers in this nation have blamed the homosexual, abortionist, the "God-hating liberals," and others for the atrocities that took place in this nation on September 11, 2001? Is this a true attitude of brokenness and repentance? If we continue to promote an unrepentant spirit in the Church, the Lord in His chastisement may allow us to die with the wicked because we continue to contribute to the cup of iniquity. In Revelation 18:4, the Lord warns us concerning Babylon: "Come out of her, *my people*, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues."

In Ezekiel 9, the Lord spared only those among His people who sighed and cried over the abominations in the land. Everyone else was to be slain by the destroying angels. *This included those who were indifferent and not necessarily doing the abominations.* Those who are lukewarm, apathetic, and lethargic shall suffer the same fate of the wicked if they do not repent. On the other hand, those who sighed and cried over the abominations were familiar with God's heart. They knew God, and God, likewise, knew them. They were His true friends and confidants.

The opportune time for Israel to possess the land in Moses' day was when the cup of iniquity of those particular nations was full. Israel's possessing the land in that time involved destroying the inhabitants of the land—all who resisted. This foreshadows the New Testament Church's commission from the Lord to go into the entire world, preach the Gospel, and make disciples, putting to death the sinful flesh of men through the preaching of the Cross.

The most opportune time for this is when a nation's cup of iniquity is full. At such times, religious, economic, and political false securities are exposed. God, at that point, exposes the refuge of lies in which a nation trusts, and a clear line of demarcation begins to form between the temporal and the eternal. As people began to literally die, as the works of men's hands began to crumble, and their ingenuity fails before their eyes, they will have only one true place of safety to which to turn. At this point, the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ can have its greatest impact and shine in its greatest glory!

Someone might respond: "You speak as if it is inevitable that people will die and that such atrocities will happen." In God's justice, these things will happen to people if they do not turn to Christ for the forgiveness and cleansing of their sins. Remember, as we have seen in Exodus 34, iniquity can only be passed down at the most to four generations. "What about those who suffered and died as 'innocent bystanders?'" Jesus would respond: "Were they living repentant lives? Did I truly know them and did they know me or did they just have knowledge about me?" We must take the stance that in all things God is just. In addition, one must be careful to take into consideration the possibility of the Church suffering some casualties (martyrs) during such atrocities for the testimony of Christ.

We, the Church, are at the threshold of what may prove to be the most opportune time for an outpouring of God's Spirit on this nation and others. This outpouring could be unprecedented in scope. There are cities in this nation whose cup of iniquity is nearing the brim. This has become evident by the shameless flaunting of sin, such as homosexuality, in the streets of our major cities and through various media (See Ro. 1). What shall we do? Shall we miss the time of our visitation? God forbid!

The Lord has given to us the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18-21). As ambassadors of Christ, He would plead through us: "*Be reconciled to God!*" As the refuge of lies is removed in this nation, sinners will be at their most vulnerable point. In their helpless and hopeless state, they will be seeking a place to hide. This is where the Church must be ready to apply the sword of the message of the cross to their sinful flesh. Consequently, this will put away the enmity between them and God and set aside the need for punishment.

Like the Amorites in Moses' day, the iniquity of our generation is almost complete. We live in a very strategic time to see the harvest of souls brought into the Kingdom. Ask the Lord and He will give you the nations as an inheritance (Ps. 2:8). It is time to possess the land!

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him [Christ] the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6).

Jesus has paid in full the incalculable price for the iniquity of the whole world. God's retributive justice is satisfied but this Good News must prevail over the hearts and minds of the people. Church, arise to your place and stand between the dead and the living in this nation. May the unified cry of the Church to the world become: "*Be reconciled to God!*"

Chapter Fourteen



Why Homosexuals cannot be Gay

The Law Problem

This was written in response to someone whom I know that wanted a clear Biblical representation on the subject. This is not an attempt to single out homosexuality as being worse than any other sin but merely to point out why it is a sin against God. It is not my intent to provide any comprehensive solution to becoming free from the sin of homosexuality but to Biblically define why it is a sin. Nonetheless, this is where one must begin in order to be truly free. We must first agree with God's assessment of our heart and not sources of personal or public opinion.

(The title of this article includes a play on words. The word "gay" is used to mean *cheerful* or *happy* as it was originally. Hopefully, by the time you read this, you will clearly understand that homosexuals have no reason to be "gay" just as adulterers, liars, thieves, drunks, idolaters, witches, and others.)

I remember talking to a young lady once who told me she was living with her boyfriend and proceeded to justify it because of her parent's divorce. She obviously became disillusioned with the idea of marriage. Her defense was, "Some people think its wrong and some don't."

In order to counter the flood of moral relativism unleashed in this nation, we must be able to solidly defend what we believe, based on the eternal word of God. All moral laws and boundaries have existed in God from eternity. They existed before the creation of humanity and have not changed. Because of this, the fluctuating tides of public opinion, personal whims and sentiments, and deceitful handling of Biblical interpretations have all failed to erode the universal moral law of God. God transcends all of His creation and any of its influence. Moral erosion has taken place only within the hearts and minds of those people who subject themselves to the encroaching darkness.

The Old Testament states:

Leviticus 18:22 - "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination."

Leviticus 20:13 - "If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them."

God's commandment here is clear and it remains unscathed to this day.

So, are you saying we should kill all homosexuals based on this commandment?

What did Jesus declare?

“For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved” (Jn. 3:17).

“...The Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them” (Lk. 9:56).

Jesus knew that the world and everyone in it are already condemned; all people have been declared guilty of violating God’s moral law (Rom. 3:19-26). Behavior such as homosexuality (along with many others) are deserving of death according to Romans 1:32, but such infliction of punishment and how and when it is done is God’s responsibility and not ours. Within God, there exists both Judge and Redeemer. Similarly, in the earth, the primary role of civil government is punitive and that of the Church is redemptive. Both are to represent God as He has prescribed and are subject to His judgment.

Although Jesus did not “condemn” or judge the world, He spoke the truth in love, as a father reaching out to his rebellious children. By doing so, He proved the guilt of the world. There is a difference between condemning or wrongly judging and proving guilt (also known as conviction of sin). *Too often, when people accuse others of “judging” them its only a feeble attempt to sidestep their guilt before God.* As Jesus stated: “And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. (20) For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. (21) But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God” (Jn. 3:19-21). God’s light first exposes sin to prove our guilt and then bestows the hope of the Gospel to set us free.

We, the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, must make sure, while condemning homosexuality as an abomination before God, that we clearly portray Christ’s great love toward all. Apart from the grace of God, we are all on the same sinking ship—sinking into the abyss, never to rise again. By portraying Christ’s love, the claims that we are promoting hate crimes against homosexuals will have no legitimacy. Nonetheless, there will always be those who will attempt to manipulate civil law and Holy Scripture for their own selfish gain, seeking to gain public support for their shameful deeds, but their condemnation from God will be just.

Someone might respond with a New Testament quote from the Apostle Paul:

“We are no longer under the law but under grace. Therefore, those Old Testament laws are not applicable in the New Covenant.”

While the quote from Paul’s writings is, without a doubt, true, it does not imply that we are no longer liable to meet the righteous requirements or demands of the *moral* law.

Romans 8:3 states:

“For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, (4) *that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us* who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”

The righteous requirements of the law still demand obedience from all people but the only way to meet its demands is to surrender to the Holy Spirit of God who changes our hearts and leads us away from temptation. He enforces Christ's death and resurrection within the believer. Since we could not meet the requirements of the moral law, God did it through Christ in our behalf and now does it in us through Christ in us.

God's moral law can only demand righteousness and pass judgment on us (who cannot live up to the standard), while the Spirit of God gives us divine life, including the ability to meet the standard acceptably before God. As the result, the punishment (condemnation) required by the law is set aside (Ro. 8:1). The ability to "meet the standard" can be summed up in two words: trust and obey (having faith in God and proving it by our works of love).

In the Old Testament, there existed the ceremonial and the moral law. The ceremonial aspect, which all foreshadowed Christ, became obsolete when He, the Word of God, became flesh, suffered and died, resurrected from the dead, and ascended to the Father in Heaven. Although true believers in Christ are "under" grace and not the law, they are still under God's authority. The moral law (i.e. the Ten Commandments) defines God's righteousness (the opposite of sin). He has not changed His mind concerning what sin is. The grace of God freely gives to us righteousness (what the law requires) when faith in Christ's finished work is present within the heart. That same grace also transforms us by engraving the moral law into our hearts. The three promises comprising the New Covenant confirm this:

"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. (11) None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. (12) For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more" (Heb. 8:10-12).

"But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, (22) even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; (23) for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (24) being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Ro. 3:21-24).

Righteousness through faith in Christ is separate from (is not accomplished through) the moral law but does fulfill its demands. While the moral law of God declares everyone guilty and deserving of just punishment, the grace of God offers pardon to all who surrender their lives to Christ as the only way of redemption (ransom) from sin. This wipes the slate clean of the judgments passed by the law against us because of sin (Col. 2:11-15).

There is yet more proof.

1 Corinthians 5:1-2 reveals:

"It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—that a man has his father's wife!

(2) And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you.”

How did Paul arrive at the conclusion that it is sexually immoral for a man to have his father’s wife? (The obvious reference here is to a step-mother without regard to whether or not his father was living.)

Before he came to Christ, Paul was at the top of the pecking order of the Pharisaical religious sect. He knew the law in its entirety. In these verses, he was referring to the laws governing sexual immorality as defined in the book of Leviticus. Listen to God’s commandment written by the hand of Moses:

“The man who lies with his father’s wife has uncovered his father’s nakedness; both of them shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them” (20:11).

[There are those who are this day twisting the Scriptures to their own destruction, portraying the grace of God as a license to sin but their condemnation will be just.]

Listen dear ones: we are no longer under the law as a tutor (teacher) that brings us to Christ. God’s grace now instructs us in His ways (Tit. 2:9), but God’s righteous requirements have not changed. Those demands are still in force. God’s grace exalts us from a criminal and slave status to that of sons and daughters. We are no longer under the moral law’s condemning influence but are now under God’s fathering influence. Grace is that fathering influence—the power, moral courage, comfort, wisdom, healing, and deliverance that enables us to have the pure, righteous, and moral behavior required by God.

We can only live by the power of Christ’s endless life and not by a mere knowledge of good and evil. To the carnal or natural mind of people, the moral laws of God are nothing more than the knowledge of good and evil, inciting rebellion within them. To the Christlike spiritual mind they are a lamp unto their feet and a light unto their path—more desirable than the finest of gold....sweeter than honey.

Listen to the Apostle John:

“And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because *we keep His commandments* and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. (23) And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment. (24) Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us” (1 Jn. 3:22-24).

The Apostle Paul sums it up:

“For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Gal. 5:14).

Faith in God and love for others completely fulfill the moral law. Therefore, God is pleased because His *retributive* justice has been satisfied. His desire for us not to perish has turned into a song of joy solely because of what Jesus has done for us. This is the only way that God could remain just and also justify sinners or law breakers (Ro. 3:25-

26). God now offers us righteousness as a gift that cost Jesus His life. It is free but not cheap.

Overcoming Doctrinal Stumbling Blocks

How often have you heard someone quote the following verses in light of our “not being under the law” anymore?

“All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any” (1 Cor. 6:12). “All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify” (1 Cor. 10:23).

Note that these verses refer to “all” things as being lawful.

The Apostle Paul also stated in Romans 14:20:

“All things indeed are pure...”

[The use of “all” in Scripture does not always indicate every single person, place, or thing referenced. Quite often, it means “most,” “many,” or “some of all kinds.” Example: “Then *all* the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were *all* baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins” (Mk. 1:5). Did every single person from the land of Judea and Jerusalem come out to John to be baptized? The answer is obvious.]

So, it would seem that we have a contradiction in Scripture. If all things, including every act of sin, are pure and lawful then sin no longer exists for the believer. Is this true? Absolutely not!

These verses, that seem to contradict other Scripture, must be interpreted in their context. In all three verses, Paul is referencing *all food* as being pure and lawful. Read them in their context! Taking one verse out of its context could cause us to become hindrances to people coming to Christ and being set free.

To further prove my point with a little humor, Matthew 27:5 informs us that Judas went and hanged himself. Luke 10:37 states: “Go and do likewise.” So, the Bible says that we should all go out and hang ourselves as Judas did. Wow! What a revelation. Why would we ever attempt to understand any Scripture out of context? There is such a thing as spiritual common sense (rightly dividing or discerning the Word of God), which some Christians, to their shame, have forsaken and have gone after doctrines that may make sense to the natural mind but are antagonistic to the Spirit of truth, sound doctrine, and moral law. Such teachings only puff up those who think them up and appeal to the naïve, carnal minds of people.

There are other potential possibilities here but one thing is sure:

Whatever the case, Paul was not teaching anything contradictory to the moral law of God, the righteousness it requires, and its universal and binding application on all creation.

We must keep our power of reason (opinions, conclusive thought, exercise of thought and meditation) under Christ's yoke of meekness.

"I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes" (Mt. 11:25 & 28-30).

"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. (13) These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. (14) But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:12-14).

As a babe is totally dependant on its mother so is the spiritual mind dependent on God. Any other state of mind is hostile toward God and His Word and is left to its own dark devices of reason.

If Only Romans Chapter One was not in the Bible

Romans 1:18-22 paints a clear picture of God's stance toward homosexuality.

- 1) Verse 18 states that the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against those who suppress (refuse and resist) the truth in unrighteousness. The implication here is that a person can only become righteous before God by receiving His truth. ("Wrath" is best defined as *punishment inflicted by a court of law, in this case by God Himself.*)
- 2) Verses 19-22 detail the moral depravity of idolatry and how God's "wrath" is revealed against those who refuse and resist the truth and embrace idolatry. Notice it does not state that God's wrath is revealed against their sin but against *them*. Wrath is, therefore, reserved for God's execution only, as He asserts, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay" (Ro. 12:19).
- 3) Verses 24, 26, & 28 use expressions such as "God gave them up (or over)." This indicates how God as the Supreme Judge is inflicting punishment (wrath) on them in accordance with verse 18.
- 4) Such acts in which men and women burn in their lusts for their same gender are referred to as:
 - i. Unclean and dishonorable to the body (v. 24)
 - ii. Vile passions and against nature (v. 26)
 - iii. Shameful behavior that will not go unpunished (v. 27)
 - iv. Improper behavior that is the fruit of a debased mind (v. 28)
 - v. Deserving of death (v. 32)
- 5) All this evidence categorizes homosexuality as a direct result of God implementing punishment (wrath) on idolatrous humanity.
- 6) The "Gay" lifestyle is, therefore, completely unacceptable to God and must be unacceptable to His Church. The Good News is that Jesus came to save those who are lost but cannot if they are hiding behind a refuge of lies promoted by compromising religious leaders in the Church in the name of "compassion" and "tolerance." God hates mixture. We must fear Him more than men.

- 7) The Old and New Covenants are in irrefutable agreement in reference to what is a violation of moral law and its just punishment or remedy.

If you are a child of God and are in a battle to be completely free from homosexuality, then there is no condemnation to you. Walk in the grace of God given directly to you and indirectly through faithful believers.

To those who profess to be Christians and at the same time profess to be homosexuals and have found community among similar people then consider this. If you are without chastisement (correction, rebuke, discipline), of which all of God's children are partakers, you are illegitimate and not sons (Heb. 12:8). If God is your Father, you could not continue in any such lifestyle. His fathering grace would not allow it. Possibly, the reason for your state is that you have failed to endure chastening as a son and have been turned over to your sin. Do not attempt to justify your sin by twisting the Scriptures to suit your depraved minds. Saying that its about love and not lust is nonsense. So, you have no sexual desire for your same sex partner? That is the same as lust.

Lastly, to those of you who are seeking to justify your homosexual lifestyle, then that in itself is proof that you are already under the wrath of God. You have refused the truth by embracing a refuge of lies about yourself, Holy Scripture, and God. This would include those who claim to be atheists, agnostics, or deists. Do you think that your disbelief exempts you from God's moral law? You are resisting (suppressing) the truth (of God's moral law), keeping it from working in your life and thus bringing you to repentance. Why would you seek to justify a lifestyle that is at the bottom rung of the moral degradation of a society? Such a lifestyle is only proof that you have exchanged the truth of God for a lie. God, in His sequential, temporal judgment, has turned you over to sexual perversion because you have resisted worshiping Him as Creator and His loving attempts to draw you to Himself. You have worshiped vanity—preoccupied with your own desires, emotional pain, and debased self-fulfillment. Read Romans 1:16-32 and agree with the condemnation of your sin, clearly portrayed, and then turn to Christ's blood as the only source of freedom. You will not be disappointed. You will become the *gayest* that you have ever been in your life.

Chapter Fifteen



Jesus' Pattern for Church Authority

Introduction

Some will take this as a slight against authority and submission to it in the Church. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is rather a challenge to *your* understanding and practice of it. True Church (internal) authority, when understood and practiced correctly, will agree with, exemplify, and personify these principles:

- 1) “All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. (7) The grass withers, the flower fades, because the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely, the people are grass. (8) The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever” (Isa. 40:6-8).
- 2) It will glorify Christ only, taking what is of Him and revealing it to others (Jn. 16:13-15) because He is the Head over all things to the Church and its sole source of life, light, truth, and power.
- 3) Every individual member in the body of Christ has no need that anyone teach them. Each of them shall know Him from the least to the greatest (Heb. 8:7-13; 1 Jn. 2:27).
- 4) There are no military type ranks in the body of Christ although there are different measures of maturity. To the degree that we honor Christ and His ways, to that degree will He honor us.
- 5) Christ claims absolute and direct headship of each member without the need of mediators or go-betweens. Every believer is a king-priest in the Church (1 Pt. 2:9-19).

Those who function in New Covenant leadership authority will, on the one hand, portray the fallibility and limitations of their humanity and, on the other, exemplify Christ as the sole Head and Source of life to His Church. Their leadership will portray the clear difference between the self-exalting world system and God's shepherd heart. This will be their theme:

“We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God *and not of us*” (2 Cor. 4:7).

They do not seek a following or loyalty but seek to make true disciples of Christ, securing their loyalty to Him. When those who look to their leadership attempt to exalt them beyond their place, they readily rebuke it. Any idea, doctrine, or practice that would cause them to compete with Christ for the affections, loyalty, and submission of the people are treated like dung.

What Does it Look Like?

“And He said to them, ‘The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called ‘benefactors.’ (26) But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. (27) For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves” (Lk. 15:25-27).

These verses set the precedent for how governing authority in the Church is supposed to look and function. Since Jesus is the Chief Cornerstone of the Church’s foundation (Eph. 2:19-22), all other teachings must align with His. In accordance with what He commanded:

The exercise of Church authority must *never* be *over* people (as the Gentiles do) but *for* them, that they may grow up unto Christ (Eph. 4:11-16). Hebrews 13:7 & 17 (KJV) reference “obey those who rule over you.” Looking at the context, this is obviously referring to church leaders. The word “over” does not exist in the original Greek text. The Greek word for “rule over” should have been translated “lead,” as in “those who lead or oversee you.”

Church government and networks should *never* be set up in such a way that one person is exalted above others as a “benefactor,” thereby, catering to their egos, and attributing to them titles of greatness and fame. It was these type of structures that agreed together to nail Christ to the cross. Everything in the Church must be designed for His fame alone. God-ordained structures must facilitate apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers as *servants who seek to be the least among the brethren and not heroes and great ones who court the people’s loyalty*. As Jesus said, “He who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves.” [A *benefactor* is one who is given a title of honor because of their accomplishments; a hero; an overlord. It is equivalent to the word “savior” and is a title conferred upon princes. “Underlings” or subordinates and those of less rank are required to pay homage to them.]

True Church authority is, therefore, not determined by title, position (or claim to position), generational succession, or delegation but by Divine calling. Walking in perfect love, making sound decisions based upon wisdom from God, and having sound doctrine that does not allow a displacement (by human control) of Christ’s authority over His Church is also required. Church leadership authority should perfectly accommodate Christ’s sole headship and not compete with it.

If we do not treat others in a Christlike manner, we forfeit our authority until we humble ourselves and repent no matter what titles or positions are held. Leadership authority in the church does not make a person someone else’s boss but their servant—a living example of the meek and lowly spirit of Christ. (Not that we are servants of people. We are bondservants of God who perform services for people.) An atmosphere of mutual accountability is established in the Church when its leaders seek not to exalt themselves above the people but to serve others in accordance with Christ’s example. Christ’s nature can then draw people out of darkness and the fear of exposure into His marvelous light. This is true accountability.

If we are not operating in accordance with these guidelines then we are at least, in part, self-empowered and are falling short of God's glory and the favor He desires to bestow on us. [Oh, by the way, God does not like mixture. A little leaven leavens the whole loaf.]

Churches of western culture will find it difficult to swallow these words. Why? Because when we think of authority, it is always equated with ranks, positions, and chains of command and hardly ever with being the least or a servant. Although Jesus was recognized by His disciples as Lord, He never exercised lordship as a king who rules downward. On the other hand, His disciples knew He was at the helm because of His character and God-given ability to lead and oversee them.

The greatest example of this was when He washed His disciples feet (Jn. 13:1-17). This one act made the towel and water basin the most powerful weapons in the arsenal of the New Covenant minister. Through such lowly means, not only is Christ's mind of lowliness revealed (Phil. 2:1-11), but His greatness is veiled to those who are too fond of the greatness defined by the world. Such acts are "beneath" those who have the hearts set on power, influence, prestige, and rule instead of on serving.

The greatest kingly glory and magnificence the world has ever known was found by *shepherds* in an animal stable, lying in a manger. Through this babe, all the nations of the world would be blessed. To Him alone has been given the right to judge and rule all nations. Christ's glory came veiled in something so inglorious, that the majority of those who were awaiting Him entirely missed Him. If we wish to retain His honor and manifest His glory, we must follow His humility.

Those church authority structures that do not parallel Christ's lowliness in their functionality, but instead accommodate the inflation of the egos of men through hierarchal positions and titles, cannot contain and reveal His glory. They must resemble the lowliness of the stable in which Christ was born instead of the palaces of the king's who despised Him and saw Him as a threat. Such lowly structures will not allow one person to be exalted as greater than another in the Church. This is why Jesus established Luke 22:25-27 as the pattern for all Church authority.

All that God does is veiled to those who are ambitious for power and greatness and is revealed to those who are looking and longing for the Savior of the world in a manger.

Misplaced Faith

What are the fruits of *not* doing things the way Jesus commanded in reference to Church authority and government? First, we must consider the doctrines that facilitate the counterfeit authority. Such doctrines have these characteristics:

- Allows the exaltation of an individual above another in the body of Christ.
- Allows the exercise of authority *over* "underlings,"
- Displaces absolute faith-obedience to Christ as the believer's primary means to protection, blessing, and salvation with something else.

These doctrines will produce offense, confusion, and dissension. Any such doctrine will cause the believer to misplace (misdirect) their faith away from their only true Head onto someone (or something) else. Misplaced faith will become disillusioned because a human being can never live up to their faith's expectations. Those who submit to such structures of authority will become frustrated in their walk and calling because of unmet expectations. Where a church has established authority structures that allow preachers to be exalted as greater ones over the rest of the body of Christ, it is already reaping tremendous trouble through offense and will eventually reap judgment from Christ. Everyone who is submitted to that authority will reap the results in their lives of Christ's opposition to it. If we submit to and agree with whatever attempts to displace Christ as our Head, we will be subject to the consequences of His displeasure toward it. In other words, we will be lacking the supply (grace; favor) that only Christ can give because we have replaced Him with a man-made religious system that was created as a monument to a benefactor's accomplishments.

Church leaders cannot preach out of one side of their mouths: "Get your eyes off me, and keep them on Jesus," and, contrarily, espouse from the other side that people need to be "under" a church or "apostolic" covering. What is wrong with that teaching in comparison to what Jesus commanded in Luke 22:25-27? Is a church or any spiritual leader all-knowing, all-powerful, and ever-present? If a church or an apostle is my "covering," then who is theirs? Someone "up the line" will eventually have to claim Christ as their covering. No one qualifies for the position of "covering" as it is promoted in many churches except Christ. He is the *sole* Benefactor over the Church. Such "coverings" are often promoted as the "Holy Grail" of the Christian walk. If you don't have a "covering" as they define it, they label you as a rebel or misfit. If we are promoting and emphasizing a "covering" as equal to or above the direct obedience of each individual member to the true Head and covering then who is really in rebellion here? If we are doing that, then we are in conflict with Christ's headship.

If church leaders would fulfill their responsibility in overseeing and maturing each believer's relationship/connection to their true covering and Head (Eph. 4), then those believer's will be able to clearly hear Christ's voice (refusing all others) and obey Him absolutely (Jn. 10:1-16). Their obedience to Christ's lordship then becomes their perfect covering.

I have seen flaky people make churches and leaders their "covering" and they were still flaky many years later. I have seen people who completely fall in love with Christ and obey Him become major assets to the body of Christ. In accordance with Christ's example, they were rightly connected to the body of Christ and submitted to authority. Those who obey Christ have a spiritual covering—Him. They have His complete favor and blessing.

The believer cannot place their faith in a limited and fallible human covering as their source of protection, blessing, and salvation instead of in Christ. We must learn that God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all to the exclusion of everyone else. This even includes those leaders who truly represent Him in the Church. Every believer in Christ has an anointing in them that will never lie to them or lead them astray—the Holy Spirit (1 Jn. 2:27). Outside influences from other people, even the most reliable, are never that dependable.

So, does New Testament Scripture ever command or allow apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers to proclaim themselves as spiritual coverings for God's people? On the contrary, they must prove themselves servants and not as being greater than or as go-betweens. If submission to a ministry or church is an action of direct obedience to Christ as their Head and covering, then that submissive person is blessed. God never blesses disobedience even though the disobedient person has a "covering." So, obedience to Christ is what church leaders should emphasize above all.

When Church leaders emphasize submission to their "authority" above individual and direct obedience to Christ, they are in rebellion against Christ. They have become His competitors. If Church leaders spend most of their time causing people to fall in love with Christ, those people will recognize the true spirit of Christ in them and submit to it. People will follow Jesus (the Jesus in us) once they get to know Him.

Submission to Authority

My Father in Heaven once told me, "Son, always have a submissive attitude toward all spiritual authority, but there are those to whom you must never subject yourself, not even for one moment." When you go into a church service, do not look for those who are in charge or who have titles or positions, but look for mature Christlikeness. To that, we must submit. We must refuse to submit to anything (or anyone) who is in competition with Christ for the affections and loyalty of His people, whether it is done by doctrine, practice, superimposed authority structure, or coercion.

It was easy for needy people to submit to Christ and the early church leaders. Why? Because of their meekness, lowliness, and the resulting flow of the life of God from them. Even the spiritually blind and naïve could see the major difference between Christ and His authority, and that of the Jewish leaders of that day. *Christlikeness appeals to all people accept to those who are in competition with or are threatened by it.* Is our thinking in line with Christ's authority or have we established our own authority and are reaping the results thereof? *If we have set up authority structures that displace Christ's direct and unmediated headship of every individual member of His body, we are reaping the results of His displeasure and are subjecting those who look to our leadership to the consequences.*

Christlikeness draws attention and submission from the people and administers life and peace, resulting in obedience. Anything else demands attention and submission and expects duty-oriented performance and loyalty. If spiritual leaders are Christlike, people will submit to their authority, otherwise, they are not trustworthy or qualified. It would be un-Christlike if a leader expects or demands submission but has failed to set the example as a servant of all. If people in a church fellowship are truly rebellious or misguided, then demanding submission to our authority (or covering) will not cure it. It will only reproduce the problem. Portraying true Christlikeness is the sure remedy, and this may involve confrontation and correction. First and foremost, the same mind that was in Christ must be in the Church leader. Jesus never sought to establish or protect His own reputation (Phil. 2:1-11). His concern was for His flock. Those things we create and do for our honor will have to be maintained and protected by us.

In conclusion, doctrines, as these being taught today, will cause people's faith to be placed in something other than Christ as their Head and covering. Many opportunities for offense will arise because of the unmet expectations and vacancies left by human limitations. This is a major root cause of offense and dissension existing in the Church, and is why we should never dare set ourselves up as "benefactors" who have authority (coverings) over the people. Those who compete with Christ always lose. They do the body of Christ great harm. We must heed Christ's warning, "Woe unto those through whom offenses come" (Lk. 17:1).

May God expose and dismantle wrong authority in the Church and establish what is true to the New Covenant.

Chapter Sixteen



Should Christians Practice Old Covenant Observances?

The Apostle John stated: “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” What was true then has not changed today. In fact, it has probably worsened. This is all the more reason to test the origins of and motives behind what we hear, see, and experience in these last days.

There are a number of false prophets (wrongly motivated people who claim to speak for God) today who are aiming to accomplish one thing:

To cause us to entertain the idea, as the serpent seduced Eve, that God is keeping something back from us, subtly persuading us that Christ is not enough...that we need Him plus something else.

Scripture reveals Christ’s preeminence over all things using plain, understandable words:

“For it pleased the Father that in Him [Christ] all the fullness should dwell” (Col. 1:19).

“For in Him [Christ] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily and *you are complete in Him*, who is the head of all principality and power” (Col. 2:9-10).

“Therefore let no one sit in judgment on you in matters of food and drink, or with regard to a feast day or a New Moon or a Sabbath. (17) Such <things> are only the shadow of things that are to come, and they have only a symbolic value. But the reality (the substance, the solid fact of what is foreshadowed, the body of it) belongs to Christ” (Col. 2:16-17; Amplified Bible).

“But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30).

Since, based on the authority of Scripture, we are *complete* (filled up, perfected, fulfilled) in Christ and there is nothing else that we need in all things that pertain to life and godliness, how is it that some Christians are being turned aside after things that are not required by God and is therefore obsolete in the New Covenant? Touch not, taste not, observe this day and not that day, and this feast or that feast. All Old Covenant observances that foreshadowed Christ have become obsolete and non-applicable to New Covenant practice. We now have the Substance of those things. It is Christ to whom we owe all of our allegiance. We must observe and celebrate Him 24 hours a day, seven days a week. He is our Bread of Life, our Sabbath, our New Moon festivity, our Passover, and our festal celebration.

Listen to Paul's words to the church in Galatia: "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, (7) which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ" (Gal 1:6-7). Later, Paul chided them with this rude awakening: "My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you" (4:27). Another gospel was being embraced by the Galatians that was undermining their faith in Christ and was displacing Him in their hearts to the point that He had to be reformed in them. What was this false gospel?

Paul identifies and defines this false gospel in a question he asked them: "How is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? (10) You observe days and months and seasons and years" (4:9-10). He continues in 5:1-5: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. (2) Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. (3) And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. (4) You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. (5) For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith."

In summary, Messianic Jews were cunningly persuading the Galatians to observe Old Covenant feasts and sabbaths that pertain to the keeping of days, months, seasons, and years and also circumcision as if these were still commanded by God. Paul makes it clear: *Christ will profit you nothing if you observe these things.* Why? Because Christ is no longer found in those things that God has declared obsolete. To embrace these things is to denounce that we are complete in Christ alone and is, therefore, an insult to Him. Instead of these things being a means to an end, as they were in the Old Covenant, when embraced now, they become the end in and of themselves.

To those who seek to observe only part of the law, hear this:

As Paul stated, you are required to keep the whole law.

Today, under the New Covenant, these observances must be to us as "the weak and beggarly elements." Paul rightly defined them as such when comparing them to the One who is the Substance of those things.

A fellow Christian had a vision in which he saw a Jewish prayer shawl and a serpent coming out from under it. This is definitely a timely vision. Explanation:

While we must pray for the peace of Jerusalem and support the nation of Israel, individually, corporately, and nationally, this does not mean that Christians should embrace all things that are "Jewish" and become like them as if Christ is not enough. In Romans 9-11, remember Paul stated that the Jews are "the enemies of the cross of Christ." Yes, the time will come that "all Israel (the nation) will be saved," and we must embrace Israel and the Jewish people in the earth. They are precious to God for the sake of His promise to Abraham. Yet we must equally make sure that we do not insult Christ in the process and, thereby, fall from God's grace (unmerited favor and ability).

Jewish prayer shawls are not evil or good in and of themselves. Just because they are "Jewish" does not make them automatically blessed either. My using one will not make

my prayers holier or more acceptable to God. Those who are justified by faith receive the blessing of Abraham through promise. The blessing of Abraham is the promise of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 3:14). When the Spirit-led sons of God utilize a prayer shawl by the Spirit's directives then people are blessed. Anything less will result in a curse—a serpent—the one who deceived Eve into thinking that what God had given was not enough. Beware of those who have a form of godliness but deny its power. They glory not in Christ but in their works and in how they can get people to take notice of their outward show. It is false doctrine even if it is Old Covenant observance being taught as if it is still valid now.

“For as many as are of the works of the law [Old Covenant observances] are under the curse” (3:10). Why? Because none can keep it—none can invoke God's favor through the observance of the law. This is done only through faith in Christ Jesus. If you wish to cut off God's grace in your life then start observing the Old Covenant rituals.

Nowhere in the writings that define the New Covenant are Gentile Christians commanded to become like the Jews or to include Old Covenant observances in New Covenant practice. We are commanded to be led by and walk in the Spirit. By doing so, we prove our status as the sons of God in the earth and fulfill the righteous requirements of the law in us (Ro. 8:1-14). Nothing more is needed according to God.

Can we learn from the Old Covenant observances? Yes, of course, *all* Scripture was given for that. There is evidence that God still fulfills His Kingdom purposes in accordance with the Old Covenant feasts as there is a time and season for all things. However, to observe (practice) such having already found Christ is an exercise in futility because they were given as a tutor to prepare those under the law for Christ (Gal. 3:23-26). Such things do not make you a better Christian, more acceptable to God, or anything of that nature. There is no profit to be gained from Christ in it. In other words, He will not bless it.

Would God tell someone to observe, for instance, the Feast of Tabernacles today? Well, possibly, as a prophetic act or sign but not because it is required in the New Covenant.

There are teachings in the Church today that suggest that the next great move of God will be that of the Church getting back to its Jewish roots. Certain leaders have written books promoting the idea. They believe that, through this movement, the keeping of the Old Covenant feasts will be “restored” to the Church. This goes completely against everything written in the book of Galatians. It is antichrist and those ministers should be sternly rebuked. Let them all be accursed, as Paul said (Gal, 1:8). Beware of those who seek to place you under bondage. We are not the children of the bondwoman but of the free (Gal. 4:27-31).

Since our Jewish roots actually go all the way back to Jesus, the Lamb slain before the creation of the world (Rev. 13:8), it is He to whom we owe our allegiance. Besides, the feasts were not really “Jewish.” They originated from God and not the Jews. The feasts were made for people and not the people for the feasts.

Some final words from our beloved brother Paul:

“For <if we are> in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision [or any Old Covenant observance] counts for anything, but only faith activated and energized and expressed and working through love” (Gal. 5:6; Amplified Bible).

“But even if we, or an angel from heaven [anyone], preach any other gospel to you...let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:8).

Chapter Seventeen



The Danger of Defining God by our Perceptions of Love

“The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!” (9) Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, (10) the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: (11) “You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created”” (Rev. 4:8-11).

In the Old Testament, the word “holy” is used over six hundred times and can often be translated “moral purity.” Through it, God established within the hearts and minds of fallen mankind the one most important characteristic about Himself: that He is holy. Anyone who approaches Him must give God’s holiness its due honor first and continually. His holiness is first on the checklist of His protocols and must also be ours. Under the same conditions, we too would cry out the same things as the seraphim and elders. Notice that the creatures (seraphim; see Isa. 6) do not cry out “good, good, good, or love, love, love, or grace, grace, grace, or tolerant, tolerant, tolerant is the Lord God Almighty.”

Holy Scripture is clear:

The morally unclean (dogs) will never be allowed into that Presence (Rev. 22:14-15).

“Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14).

“Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God” (Mt. 5:8).

In Matthew 25, Jesus reveals three types of *His people* who are not allowed into His presence on His day of judgment: foolish virgins (the unprepared), unfaithful stewards (of His grace), and goats (those who live self-centered lives). None of the above kept themselves pure. God’s holy presence was not the top priority and focus of their lives. This indicates that if we are holy as God is, we will love like He does. One cannot be separated from the other.

“Love” has been twisted into being superior to anything else in the minds of ungodly, naïve, and ignorant people. There are those who have a form of godliness but deny its

power. They tolerate what they should be condemning and condemn what they should be embracing. They often use this truth in their own defense: “God is love” (from 1 Jn. 4:8). The problem is not with this actual truth but is found in how love is defined by them. *How they define “love” determines how they define God.* God defines love but love does not define Him. The one and only holy God is reduced to a god (only within their minds) who can set aside his moral law and make exceptions in certain cases, calling good evil and evil good. The one true God and His love are holy. His love is not defined through the filters of human bias, moral depravation, sentiments, experience, and religious tradition. No, God’s holiness and goodness define His love and they are constant—never changing.

To be holy means to be pure and separate, having no mixture.

Another question often tossed around out there in Christendom is: Why would a loving God send people eternally into hell (a place of eternal incarceration originally created by God for the fallen angels—Mt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10)? The common answer I have heard coming from Christian’s mouths only partially answers the question with a half-truth: “God does not send anyone into hell, they do it to themselves.” In an attempt to protect our wrong notions of a “nice” God, some of God’s people have sidestepped Biblical truth. Tell me, who created hell and the lake of fire? Does a criminal court judge sentence and send criminals to prison and/or capital punishment or do they send themselves? Would a shepherd be considered good if he did not protect the sheep? What if he had to kill the predators to do so? Is he still good? He may not be “nice,” but is definitely good.

Most certainly, the criminal who is subject to a court’s justice is there because of his or her crimes, however, the court alone wields the power to incarcerate them and sentence them to punishment. Apart from committing the crimes, they would not be subject to the court’s wrath.

Similarly, God’s moral law has condemned every human being as a sinner (Rom. 3). Because of this, His (judicial) wrath abides on all people. Instead of leaving us without hope, to pay for our own sins, He sent Christ who took our deserved punishment upon Himself to the cross (Jn. 3:36). By putting away our guilt and, therefore, punishment from before God, Christ has also destroyed our enemies. Those who believe will live (eternally) with Christ.

Speaking frankly, some people are asking the wrong question. Instead, we should ask: “How could a holy God-Judge not send people to eternal incarceration?” How could a good shepherd not protect his sheep even if it means killing the predator? Those who reject Christ are treated as predators by God.

Much to the chagrin of the modern advocates of “tolerance,” the angels who surround God’s throne do not cry out day and night: “Love, love, love, is the Lord God Almighty.” No, they cry out: “Holy, holy, holy.” This indicates, in order for fallen mankind to approach God, personally benefitting from His great fatherly love, they must *first* come to terms with His holiness. Listen to what God says to His own:

“I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people. (17) Therefore come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. (18) I will be a Father to you, and you

shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty. (1) Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God (2 Cor. 6:16-7:1).

Holiness (aka moral, personal purity and separation) is first required from God's people in order for them to know the depths of His acceptance and fathering love. This was most evident in the Kingdom truths foreshadowed in the Old Covenant temple. God-ordained rituals, washings, along with items of protocol had to be incorporated and observed before approaching the Most Holy Place where the (intimate) presence of God rested. Now that we have become the temple of the living God, we are required to be most holy (1 Cor. 3:16-17). "...As He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, (16) because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy'" (1 Pt. 1:15-16). We are and become holy because of the indwelling *Holy Spirit*. As we daily give ourselves in absolute surrender to the Holy One of Israel, we become as He is. This is not a hard thing unless we have allowed ourselves to become isolated from the purifying fellowship of the saints. Together with others of like conviction, we do this by going boldly and consistently to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need (Heb. 4:14-16). We are always in need to surrender more and more to and encounter God to become pure as He is pure.

Thank you Jesus for making a way for us to be the Father's Most Holy Place. May our soul and flesh be used for His glory alone.

The writer of the book of Hebrews associated the appearance of God's presence on Mt. Sinai with burning fire, gloom, darkness, and a great storm. Even Moses was terrified at the sight (Heb. 12:16-29). To fallen man, God's holiness is and always will be terrifying. However, that fear will melt away in the light of Christ's glory and grace. Our experience with the holy God no longer has to be terrifying. Now, we can be incomparably blessed by His holy presence. This is true only if we take serious the writer's conclusion. He ends the discourse:

"Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace (the Divine favor we receive because of our honoring Christ's blood as it is honored in heaven), by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. (29) For our God is a consuming fire."

We can be cleansed from every (unholy) thing that hides God from our spiritual eyes and understanding—that keeps us from making the necessary connection with Him and His anointings.

"Blessed are the pure (holy) in heart for they shall see God" (Mt. 5:8). The Apostle John was able to see God differently. "Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. (3) And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald. (4) Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads. (5) And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. (6) Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back" (Rev. 4:2:6).

The twenty-four elders sat on thrones, having golden crowns on their heads, were wearing what kind of robes? Yes, they were wearing white robes, indicating their moral purity. They sat on thrones of authority and power and wore golden crowns because of their white robes.

"I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see...(20) Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. (21) To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne" (Rev. 3:18-21).

Only those who have purified themselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit will be able to see through the terrifying veil of His holiness and actually see God in His entire throne room splendor. How incredibly wonderful is He. He will be their God and father and they will richly benefit from the river that makes glad the city of our God (Ps. 103; 46:4).

It is time for God's people to come out from among them. By being holy as God is holy, we can then love as He loves, without partiality, fear, or distortion. We can then correctly and powerfully represent His love to the masses of people in this generation that cannot morally discern their right from their left hand.

Some Final Thoughts

One should never seek holiness as an end in itself. We should desire to become and maintain purity for the sake of our fellowship with Christ. Doing so is never difficult if we value the prize. If someone offered us twenty five thousand dollars to jog five miles without stopping, that would be strong incentive to begin preparations to do so. We would actually welcome and be enthusiastic about the necessary preparation and discipline.

There is no life to compare to a one of walking with our Father in Heaven, allowing Him access to and including Him in every aspect of our lives. As the old song says, "It gets sweeter and sweeter as the days go by, oh what a love between my Lord and I." Then add to that, the prize we will receive after our life here is done. Human words do not do it justice. I can only imagine.

Written with love aflame.

Chapter Eighteen



Possessing Your Soul

“By your patience possess your souls” (Lk. 21:19).

Introduction

The purpose for this article is “...That each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor...for God did not call us to uncleanness but to holiness” (1 Ths. 4:4, 7).

In this context, the Apostle Paul contrasts uncleanness with holiness, portraying holiness as the opposite of uncleanness. Therefore, the word “holiness” could appropriately be replaced with the words “cleanness” or “purity.”

We are justified by faith in Christ’s finished work. To be justified by God is to be declared righteous by or to be in right standing with Him—just as if we had never sinned. No sin is accredited to our account. Along with being forgiven of sins there must also be a cleansing from it. *We can also be cleansed by God to the degree that we become just as if we had never sinned.* If we confess our sins, He [Christ] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 Jn. 1:9). We can receive forgiveness for the act of sin from God but must also receive personal cleansing from unrighteousness. Unrighteousness is referring to the predisposition that we have toward sin.

Whatever controls the soul determines whether we are pure or unclean before God. Therefore, we must possess our souls in order to keep other influences from overpowering it. The soul must be wrenched by the power of God from carnal influences. [For those who do not know, the soul consists of mind, will, emotions, intellect, and personality.] To better understand what possessing our soul actually means, one Old Testament story comes to mind: the story of Abraham when God made a covenant with him and gave instructions concerning the appropriate animal sacrifices (Gen. 15). Before God came and accepted the sacrifice with fire, Abraham had to keep the “fowl” of the air away from it. He had to patiently wait before the Lord. As he waited, protecting the sacrifice, he fell into a deep sleep and God revealed to him his future, the future of his descendants, and what He promised to do. Likewise, in the place of waiting before the Lord, as we take possession (ownership) of our soul, keeping the fowl (demons) away, He will reveal those things that will establish our identity, purpose, and future. Look at it from this standpoint, your soul is the sacrifice instead. As we daily wait before the Lord, we will know and experience the anchor of hope that is secured by God’s presence behind the veil (Heb. 6:13-20).

We can gain the whole world and lose our souls. What will a man give in exchange for his soul (Mk. 8:34-38)?

Remember King Saul, who failed to wait the whole seven days before making a sacrifice as instructed by the Prophet Samuel? Instead, he was moved by other influences and forfeited his right to reign over Israel. His destiny ended in tragedy because he no longer remained little in his own eyes (1 Sam. 15). He lost the integrity of his soul as seen in his behavior toward David in the following years. Failure to patiently wait before the Lord could cost us the fulfillment of our destiny at least in this life. We could lose our souls.

By our patience we will possess our souls and understand and secure our destiny.

Demons and Deliverance

The intent in writing this section is not to discuss the origin of demons or to take an indepth look into their nature, whereas, Scripture itself does very little of that. When seeking understanding in the matter of the sanctification of the believer, we must stay balanced and convey to others what is acceptable to God, not allowing ourselves to promote teachings that come from invalid extra-Biblical sources. Information gained from experience or conversing with demons and deliverance is not a valid source. Their nature is to lie and they will only tell the truth when it helps them to accomplish their evil agendas.

All Church doctrine and practices must line up with God's word. *Nowhere in Scripture can anyone prove that deliverance from demonic oppression is the central focus of the sanctification of the believer.* No, as proven in the introduction to this chapter, the central focus is the complete and patient offering of ourselves to God. Sanctification is the process at work in us in which the Holy Spirit secures what is Christ's. The central focus and hope of the New Covenant is *Christ in us* and not the expertise of the deliverance minister (Col. 1:27).

Yes, I know, some of you do not like this because of the level to which you have exalted the deliverance ministry—a level that has no Scriptural legs to stand on. In fact, it has been exalted by some to a level equal to *Christ in each believer serving as their only hope of deliverance.* This means some of you will have to repent of the pride that has allowed your “expertise” to usurp Christ working in His people. True freedom only comes from knowing (experiencing) the truth and that truth is Christ as Lord revealed in everyone of us (Jn. 8:31-36).

When the Church in Galatia embraced another Gospel, the Apostle Paul did not go to them and set up deliverance sessions to get them free from the antichrist spirits they had allowed to invade their thinking. No, He rebuked them, showed them where they had missed it, and travailed [prayed with groanings that could not be uttered] in birth until Christ was reformed in them. They had exchanged the true Gospel with a false one and had to repent or be disqualified for eternal life. The only way back into the favor of God was to give up those things that had brought His displeasure.

Paul made it clear that any attempt on their part to add to Christ as their only need for righteousness would completely displace Him as such. He would no longer be their Lord.

Deliverance can be narrowed down to one single question: who is your Lord and Master?

Why do you think that the book of Romans does not include deliverance from demonic oppression as a major part of the sanctification of the believer? It assumes that all believers have already made Jesus Lord of their lives. That should never be an issue with a true believer who has received the baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire. If we are playing around with the world and have only added Jesus as one of our many other idols, then we will be demonically oppressed. The book of Romans portrays Christ in us as our primary and dependable source of deliverance from the power of sin. In order to be free indeed, we must first decide who our master is because we cannot serve more than one. As Paul said, “Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?” (Ro. 6:16).

The deliverance minister enforces Christ Lordship from the outside to cause the believer to surrender their will to working of Christ within. They will seek, first and foremost, to secure the will of that person to Christ’s Lordship only, causing them to realize the fact that they have already died to sin and have been made alive with Him unto righteousness. The soul and all it consists of must be brought into subjection to Him. This is the sanctification process: *realizing who Christ is in you, who you are in Him, and surrendering your wayward soul to His Lordship*. This parallels Abraham’s experience in Genesis 15.

Examples of Demonic Influence

There are different levels of influence that demons can have over and within people as portrayed in Scripture. Demonic possession indicates that the person is under the complete control of the evil spirit or spirits. (A literal translation of what is often translated in Scripture as demonic possession is “demonized.”) In extreme cases, the person’s mental and physical faculties are controlled to the degree that the spirit(s) is able to make them do physical harm to themselves and others. They often display supernatural strength and abilities. In such cases, the person’s voice is used by the evil spirit(s) to speak through. Jesus’ encounter with the Gadarene demoniac is a good example of this (Mk. 5:1-13).

Another level of demonic control is when a spirit inhabits a person for the purpose of performing sorcery or witchcraft. Paul encountered this with the woman who had a spirit of divination (Acts 16:16). This spirit empowered her to make money from predicting people’s futures. Spirits of witchcraft and sorcery can also perform lying signs and wonders through people (Acts 8:9-10).

Spirits of infirmity can cause, among other things, sickness, disease, paralysis, blindness, deafness, loss of speech, epilepsy, depression, and insanity within people. After fasting food for a week, during the process, God told me He had set me free from a spirit of heart disease. After that, I noticed a significant difference in my breathing and endurance, especially while hiking in the mountains. The gift of discerning of spirits (1 Cor. 12) has been of great importance in my life and has kept me from making wrong decisions, warned me about certain people, and directed me in getting people set free.

To what degree can an evil spirit influence a Christian? We are commanded by the Lord not to give place to the devil (Eph. 4:27). “Place” is referring to a foothold that allows him a platform of influence. Evil spirits can influence, control, and use a Christian *if* we give them a place.

Jesus rebuked Peter as if he were the devil for trying to persuade Him not to go to Jerusalem and die. This proves that evil spirits will even use what may seem to be the best of human intentions for their purposes. Peter asked Ananias and Sapphira why they had allowed the devil to “fill their hearts” to lie to the Holy Spirit. Doing so, brought God’s judgment on them, and they, consequently, forfeited their lives (Acts 5:1-10). From these two examples, we can conclude that evil spirits can control the mind and fill the heart of a Christian with their wicked intent *if we allow it*.

Victors or Victims?

Modern worldly philosophies portray all of us as victims of bad parenting, bad decisions, bad genetics, bad government, and of random evolutionary selection. God’s word, on the other hand, condemns us all as sinners who must be reconciled to Him. Modern philosophy provides us with others to blame for our troubles in life but God holds us accountable for the state of our heart toward Him and other people in spite of it all.

Only when we are willing to reconcile our sinful selves to God will we find the grace for healing from what others have done to us. When we make what others have done to us (or neglected to do) the central focus, we will never know the grace that sets us free indeed. We are all on the same sinking ship, as Paul stated, “For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another” (Tit. 3:3). The hatred we have for those who have mistreated us is just as wicked as that of the offender. Except now, we have become the offender and offense is perpetuated by our hatred. In such cases, changing the heart of a person will change their behavior and *correct behavior will always shut the door to demonic oppression*.

Only those who continue in the sinful behavior of their parents will reap the results of what their parents have sown. As the Prophet Jeremiah foresaw: “In those days they shall say no more: ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.’ (30) But every one shall die for his own iniquity; every man who eats the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge” Proverbs 26:2 teaches that no curse can come without a cause. It is quite clear that the behavior of a person will determine whether evil spirits have control over their lives and not bad genetics, parenting, or the conditions in which the child grew up. After making Jesus the Lord of their lives, that person can be completely free by correcting the behavior that would cause “their teeth to be set on edge.”

Scripture states that we *are* made more than conquerors in Christ and *are* new creations in Him (Ro. 8:37; 2 Cor. 5:17). Old things *have* passed away and all things *have* become new. So, is this just a vain hope or is it real? Romans 6 provides the answers.

In summary, Romans 6 teaches us that since we have died and are resurrected with Christ, we must present ourselves to God, and our bodies, as instruments (or weapons) of

righteousness. In other words, if we are to be free from the power of sin and the demonic oppression that comes with it, we must believe we are already free from it through Christ's death and resurrection. We must then follow through with the daily corresponding actions of presenting our bodies as God's instrument of righteousness. This defines what a consecrated life is.

I have seen Christian's living under demonic oppression because of their believing modern preachers who have told them that they are not really free, thus, making them dependent on that preacher's expertise.

Beloved of God, you are free, if indeed the Spirit of Christ dwells in you. Much of the problems that are still lingering from the Christian's past exist because of their not applying the power of Christ's finished work to their minds and bodies. They truly do not believe they are already free in Christ—that the old things have passed away. The power of their past is more real to them than their spiritual status before God (read *The Power of Righteousness*).

The deliverance minister can assist the oppressed by using their anointing to resolve "unrest" within the soul until that person is no longer tormented. Removing the torment involves resolving the lack of confidence one needs to receive revelation from God. If the person does not have the confidence to walk with God, ongoingly receiving answers to their prayers, then they will need someone to help resolve the internal and external sources that are working against their faith.

We must, on a daily basis, present ourselves to God as a living sacrifice, knowing we are new creations, until we experience in our souls and bodies what God says is already a reality. That reality is experienced as we daily yield to the saving life of Christ that flows from our spirit into our soul (mind, will, emotions, and personality) and body (Ro. 5:10). Nothing can take the place of entirely consecrating our lives to Christ. There are no shortcuts for it or loop holes around it.

I saw a t-shirt once that stated, "The problem with living sacrifices is that they keep crawling off the altar." By our patience we possess our souls. We must learn to wait before the Lord and not "crawl off the altar" until we acquire the faith that causes us to walk in the victory that is already ours in Christ. The more steadfastly we look into Christ's finished work, the more finished (perfected) we become. In that place, we can inquire of the Lord concerning specific problem areas of our lives and He will lead us in His triumph (2 Cor. 2:14) through the revelation of hope, power, peace, and joy (Eph. 1:17-19).

The laying on of hands by a discerning minister can help the troubled believer identify and overcome the strongholds of oppression. Through this, anointings for healing and deliverance are applied and the believer experiences relief and, ultimately, deliverance if they walk in the truth God has planted in their hearts. The key to our next breakthrough is found by our daily overcoming everything that keeps us from the intimate worship of and communion with God and the purifying fellowship of the saints.

These two Scripture verses must become a part of our thinking:

“The *work* of righteousness will be peace, and the *effect* of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever” (Is. 32:17) This is referring to the “work” and “effect” that is produced in you by the Holy Spirit.

“For if by the one man’s offense death reigned through the one, much more those who *receive* abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ” (Ro. 5:17). Notice that the word “receive” and not “achieve” is used. *Abundant* grace is needed and available for us to reign as Christ did when He walked on earth.

To be free indeed, we must believe that God’s grace is enough and is immediately accessible and continually available because of Christ in us, the hope of glory (Col. 1:27). In other words, Christ in us is the guarantee of our realizing our greatest and most splendid state before God.

Principles of Consecration

Four important Hebrew words in the Old Testament are translated “consecrate” or “consecration.” The following is a breakdown of the characteristics of these four words. This section may be like reading some of the chapters of books of the Pentateuch. Just like in Exodus and Leviticus, its purpose is to prove the overwhelming evidence of the importance God places on our complete consecration to Him. May God grant you understanding.

- 1) *qadash* (kaw-dash'; Ex. 28:3, 29:1, 30:30) – Involves the initial anointing and preparation required of Old Covenant priests before they began to carry out their duties in the temple. It is the dedication of someone or thing to the service of the Lord.
 - It is the first step of consecration required by the Lord.
 - It is commanded by the Lord—no exceptions.
 - Had to be completed in order for the Lord to consecrate and sanctify the tabernacle of meeting, the altar, and the priests.
 - It corresponds to the New Covenant born-again experience.
- 2) *male'* (maw-lay'; Ex. 29:35-37, 44-46) – It involves a complete or perfected consecration for the preparation of the priests.
 - It is a completion of the first—*qadash*.
 - It is commanded by the Lord—no exceptions.
 - It is often associated with the number seven.
 - Seven days of preparation were required by the Lord for the priest’s complete consecration.

- When the priests consecrated themselves accordingly, God’s glory completed the appropriate consecration and sanctification within seven days. In so doing, He could establish a permanent dwelling place among His people.
 - People, other than priests, who were assigned specific tasks in reference to the holy things of God, were encouraged to do it.
 - It is the same word used when God gave the command to be fruitful, multiply, and *fill* (male) the earth (Gen. 1-2).
 - This complete consecration and its results are usually what is missing in the Church before the Lord has to send a revival. The beginning stages of revival is always about a return to consecration unto completion.
 - It corresponds to the New Covenant baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire (Mt. 3:11-12). Through this baptism, Jesus will “thoroughly purge his threshing floor and burn up the chaff (the unusable or unprofitable) with unquenchable fire.”
 - It is the surrender of the soul to Christ’s complete Lordship in order to be empowered for service.
- 3) *millu’* (mil-loo’;) - Often translated “consecration,” whereas, the other three words are more often translated “consecrate.” It literal means to set stones into place and metaphorically involves the official setting of priests into their place for service in the temple.
- It is commanded by the Lord—no exceptions.
 - This setting into the office/gift of a priest is done initially but also incorporates the previous two types.
 - The record in the Gospels of Jesus baptism in water and the subsequent action of the Holy Spirit coming upon Him was His *millu’*. Being the undefiled Son of God, He did not need *qadash*, but had to be tested 40 days in the wilderness in accordance with *male’*. After this, He returned in the power of the Spirit to serve as the Great High Priest of the New Covenant.
 - In the New Covenant, we are a royal priesthood who are built together as *living stones*—a holy habitation of God through His Spirit (Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Pt. 2:1-10).
- 4) *nazar* or *nezer* (naw-zar’; Num. 6) – It is the root from which the words Nazarite, Nazareth, and Nazarene are derived. It means to dedicate, consecrate, or separate oneself in accordance with the Nazarite vow. Samson, one of Israel’s judges, was separated as a Nazarite by the Lord from his mother’s womb (Jdg. 13-14).
- It is not commanded but encouraged by the Lord for those who were not a part of the priesthood.

- Samson’s anointing of supernatural physical strength was directly linked to his Nazarite vow/consecration.
- The anointing to accomplish specific things was released through this type of consecration. Samson broke the power of the Philistine’s oppressive rule over Israel by it.
- It corresponds with New Covenant God-given and assigned gifts and anointings needed to break through, uproot, conquer, establish, heal, and deliver.
- Fasting food and worldly distractions will increase God’s Samson-type anointings upon New Covenant people.

In light of all of this, *consecration has to do with being dedicated and committed to God and not the people*. The result is you are fit to be used by the Master to minister to the people. So, the question we must ask ourselves is, beginning first with the New Covenant Church leadership: Have we been preaching what God requires concerning consecration from the pulpits in America? Someone might respond with: “The word consecration is not even used in the New Covenant.” Well, the Old Covenant has already established its importance from God’s perspective. The New Covenant narrows everything down to whether or not we are serving one Master—Christ. Our experiencing the fullness thereof is dependent on it. No one can fully represent God’s New Covenant to the people unless they are *male’*. Jesus spent forty days in the wilderness, the 12 disciples/apostles spent three years with Christ, and the Apostle Paul spent a number of years in the desert before being released into public ministry or given church oversight. Jesus told His disciples/apostles close to the end of His time with them that they were clean because of the word He had spoken to them. These examples parallel *male’* in the Old Covenant—the seven days required of priests in order for the Lord to consecrate and sanctify them with His glory. Their purification was complete.

The New Covenant strongly emphasizes a *daily* and continual dedication, devotion, and recommitment to Christ’s lordship over our spirit, soul, and body (See Rom. 6-8 & 12). This secures or maintains our perfect consecration (*male’*) which had to be accomplished immediately after *qadash*, the born-again experience. Listen to how Paul addressed the Church at Corinth: “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, (10) nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. (11) And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:9-11). He is referring to *qadash* and *male’* in verse eleven. If you have been washed, then you are free. Notice He did not say that they were going to be washed. They *were* separated from the power of sin and their past. We can only serve one Master unless we desire to return and wallow in the mire of which we have been washed (2 Pt. 2:22).

Now, we must learn obedience and mature in our understanding of His love, mercy, and grace. This will take place for the rest of our sojourn on earth (See Romans 5 & 2 Pt. 1).

The lack of *male'* within the Church is the source of the open doors for much of the worldliness, demonic oppression, sickness and disease, addictive/sinful behavior, doctrinal and moral compromise, disunity, and complacency within the Church. These things are the reason the Church must often experience revivals. Past Christian revivals can be defined as the reintroduction of the concept of *male'* within the Church.

One of the proponents of the first Great Awakening, John Wesley, emphasized the need for a second work of grace. No doubt, this is a reference to the Old Covenant concept of *male'*. The reason he stated that his ministry was successful was because of his burning in God's presence and then going out and burning before men. Charles G. Finney, the main proponent of the second Great Awakening, described an experience he had with God before entering ministry as waves of liquid love going through him and as immense wings fanning him. I have personally experienced and seen the fire of God come upon people who described it as if gasoline was poured on them and someone struck a match and set them aflame. In some cases, evil spirits would leave screaming out, "I don't want to leave." Healing from various sicknesses and diseases is also commonplace—not forgetting the complete breaking of the power of sin.

What is the solution? The five-fold ministry must purify themselves first and then preach the truth, calling together God's people to fulfill the "seven day" consecration/sanctification in their lives. God will respond with His purifying presence. The key is this: *the sacrifice cannot be removed from the altar before God comes with the fire*. In the Old Covenant, God's fire consumed the offering first as a signal to the priests and people that it was acceptable. Then His glory filled the temple (2 Chro. 5-7). Should we expect anything less? We are now the temple of God (1 Cor. 3:17; 6:19).

It is time for the New Covenant Nazarites to be released—those who are anointed to change nations. However, we must beware of the pitfalls that await even those who are set apart from the womb as was Samson. He lost his anointing by compromising his consecration. Ministry anointings do not accomplish Christlikeness (especially self-control and soundness of mind and emotions) within us. Daily communion with Him and enduring tribulation does.

"In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness. (2) "It shall be in that day," says the LORD of hosts, "that I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, and they shall no longer be remembered. I will also cause the [false] prophets and the unclean spirit to depart from the land"" (Zech. 13:1-2).

The Priorities of Consecration, Prayer, and Discipleship

Jesus taught His disciples: "No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. (16) You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you" (Jn. 15:15-16). This truth embodies God's ultimate purpose for His people in the earth: that each one, united together as one body in Christ, would know and experience the fullness of His intent as stated in His calling His house "a house of prayer for all nations" (Mt.21:13).

Earlier in John 15, Jesus declared over His disciples, “You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you” (v. 3). In this, he was referring to the completion of their consecration to Him. As referenced earlier, in Exodus 29, God commanded what was necessary for the complete consecration of the priesthood. This process was to take place over a span of seven days. The Lord finalized it by sanctifying (purifying) them with His glory. The Hebrew word for this type of consecration is *male’*. It is the same word used in this context: “Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill (*male’*) the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth”” (Gen. 1:28). Obviously, the word *male’* means *to bring to completion by filling up what is lacking*. God did His part in the creation of the heavens and the earth, now it was up to Adam and Even to do their God-given part.

Jesus was indicating to His disciples that their time of *male’* was complete in John 15. The word He had spoken to them was the means by which His glory had purified their souls unto being His true disciples. A disciple is a *disciplined one*. A true disciple of Christ is not self-centered, selfishly ambitious, or self-promoting. They no longer live for the people or things of this life but for the unseen Eternal. They live with a motto burned deep into their hearts and souls by Christ’s glory: “If any one glories, desiring to give full credit to someone with their whole heart, let Him glory only in the Lord, giving full credit to Him with their whole heart” (1 Cor. 1:31; paraphrased). This molds them into a perfect fit for the baptism with the Holy Spirit as emphasized by Christ one chapter later in John 16. Jesus said concerning the Comforter whom He would send after His resurrection: “(13) However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. (14) He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.” The Holy Spirit’s primary purpose is to reveal, draw attention to, and impart the risen and glorified Christ. He will always be at odds with anyone who lives for themselves and seeks their own fame, reputation, and selfish gain.

Jesus had devoted much of His teachings and time to the completion of His twelve disciples’ training. The miracles they saw firsthand were also part of their training and purification. His statement in John 15 to them was another way of saying, “It’s time for your promotion.” Their having been chosen by and purified by Him was unto one end: That they would bear enduring fruit (good works of faith and grace) so that whatever they asked the Father in His name would be done by Him. His desire was for them to walk in and experience the same fellowship He had with the Father as a son—to experience the fullness of that joy.

It is time for the royal priesthood of Christ (all believers; 1 Pt. 2:9) to present themselves to God unto *male’* (complete consecration) until they no longer live for themselves or the expectations of other people. Even too much of what is now called the Church consists of little more than believers trying to live up to other people’s religious expectations or *other* voices that always demand conformity, loyalty, praise but are never satisfied. These demanding “yokes” always leave us only hoping for the best but never with a full assurance of faith (Heb. 10:19-23). This defines what many have phrased as “trying to be a good Christian.” Our complete consecration must be our top priority—above anything else. This will afford us Heaven’s full assurances and wonders displayed in the earth as never before. We will continuously see the Holy Spirit carry out anything we ask because we no longer live for the will of the people but for the will of God. This

ultimately translates into freedom from ancestral, familial, traditional, cultural, and religious bondages that bear the stench of idolatry.

Every Christian Great Awakening and Revival in history mainly focused on restoring God's primary purpose and protocol (male') back to the Church.

The Antioch Company

“Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. (2) As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, “Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them”” (Acts 13:1-2).

These “prophets and teachers” understood what Jesus indicated when He declared, “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.” Jesus proclaimed this in the context of a rebuke because the religious leaders had made His house into something corrupt instead. Peter learned, as a part of His discipleship training, that the devil will use even the best of human intentions to accomplish his wickedness. Jesus had rebuked him, calling him Satan, for attempting to hinder Him from going to Jerusalem to die (Mt. 16:23). No matter how good our intentions, we must make sure our way of thinking is disciplined into a mold suitable for the Master’s use lest we find ourselves opposed by Him. The Antioch Company of believers understood this. They knew God first required complete (*male'*) and continuous (*nazar*) consecration unto Him as indicated by their ministering to the Lord and fasting. These are the first responsibilities of Christ’s “house of prayer.”

The New Covenant equivalent to *nazar* is detailed in Romans 6, the whole chapter. The daily presentation (consecration) of our minds and bodies to God as instruments (or weapons) of righteousness, using our co-death and resurrection with Christ as our point of reference, will secure our spiritual strength and stamina and keep us safe from the “Delilahs” of the devil. The “Delilahs” represent those plans of the devil set into motion to sap the spiritual strength and anointings from the Church that undeniably spell out the destruction of his works in the earth. While in fellowship with other “prophets and teachers,” a continuous flow of ministry to the Lord that includes prayer and fasting is crucial unto our entering into, experiencing, sustaining, and correctly representing the full blessings and provisions of the New Covenant in Christ. Because of this, the chief priority of the Church’s leadership is to secure and sustain Christ’s house as such a house of prayer for all nations. By doing so, there will be no limitations as to what Christ can accomplish through us.

Birthered out of the Antioch Company came a ministry that was destined to change the whole world. The Apostle Paul was not called into ministry there but was fully released into it. His ministry to the Gentile nations after that is a major reason why we, as western Christians, are here today. All of the Roman Empire, from Jerusalem to Great Britain, was greatly impacted by his ministry either directly or indirectly. He operated in Moses-type anointing that challenged and brought down the dominant influences of sorcery and witchcraft over individual people, towns, cities, and nations. The folly of counterfeit religion was disclosed to all onlookers by the power and demonstration of the Genuine. Paul prophesied that in the midst of perilous times the same things would happen in the latter days (2 Tim. 3:1-9). That means today!

In light of all of this, when the Church becomes the House of Prayer that Christ intends, she will be used to birth apostolic authority and ministry that will transform society. The impact will continue from generation-to-generation.

Beloved of God, now is the time for our complete consecration so that the Samson-type spiritual strength and anointings can be sustained and released through His people into the earth. Apostolic authority and anointing awaits the Church of this generation, the likes of which she has not known. Many who are sitting in deep darkness are waiting to see a great light. Will we arise to our place through the “eye of the needle” or seek another easier but futile way? Let’s become the House of Prayer for which Jesus would not have to make a scourge (whip) to drive out the corruption (Jn. 2:15). May the zeal of the Lord of Hosts increase His Kingdom in the earth through a purified people (Isa. 9:6-7). As did the Antioch Company, may the Church become the catalyst to release the much needed apostolic authority and demonstration in this hour.

Chapter Nineteen



Staying True to Scripture

As a Bible teacher, one of the things I have endeavored to achieve is accuracy in reference to Biblical interpretation, including the teaching of principles that help assure such accuracy among fellow believers. There is no excuse in the Church for becoming negligent in this area but in some ways we have. As God pours out His Spirit in these last days we must make sure we maintain our spiritual bearings and remain humble before God and man. Emotional experiences (or any experience), human loyalty, persuasive teaching, and spiritual excitement should never be used as excuses to tolerate a departure from correct Biblical interpretation and application. It is possible, as God draws nearer to His people and manifests His glory, for us to subtly get caught up in the excellence of what God is changing us into instead of who Christ is. This will open the door for naivety and hype in both teaching and manifestation. We must always remember that the excellence is Christ's and not ours.

Frank Bartleman³ was a man used mightily by God to lay the groundwork of prayer and intercession for the Azusa Street Revival. What happened to him after the revival? He joined the Jesus-only movement.⁴ William Branham⁵ was a man used incredibly by God during the days of the healing evangelists around the mid twentieth century but allowed flattery and delusions of grandeur to bring about his untimely death. Just because we have experienced the fire of God's glory and have been used mightily by Him does not mean we can throw out Biblical common sense and established truth. There have been men and women in the Church, who have had visions of Jesus and Heaven on several occasions, but failed miserably in some areas in correctly representing the written word of God. Sadly, some of those teachings are still around today.

One rule to live by that significantly contributes to discerning error is understanding that no matter how reputable, how much they mean to us, or what they have done for the cause of Christ, five-fold ministry leaders are fallible—they can be deceived. The Holy Spirit is always right and never misleads us (1 Jn. 2:27). In other words, no human being has a monopoly of expertise in interpreting Scripture. God hides the things of the Kingdom from the “wise and prudent” but reveals them to “babes” (Mt. 11:25). Anyone who pretends to have any such monopoly is bound up with pride—seeking honor and a following for themselves among men. It is up to each believer to hone their skill in the

³ <http://www.gctoldlandmark.org/azusa/az13.php>

⁴ This sect of Christianity does not believe in the Trinity—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—three persons in one. They believe the three are the same person and are not distinguished from one another.

⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_M._Branham & http://www.godsgenerals.com/person_w_branham.htm

word of righteousness (Heb. 5:12-14). We must love the Truth more than any human being in spite of the consequences. The benefits are far greater.

The following are truths about Biblical interpretation collected over the past few years, containing some of my own and some adapted from other sources. These truths outline safety boundaries that will help insure a pure representation of God's word and prevent us from seeking our own glory. As Jesus taught: "Those who speak their own thoughts are looking for their own glory" (Jn. 7:18; GWV). God's word cannot be mixed with human speculation and opinions. In fact, the carnal (independent) mind is an enemy of God's thoughts and ways (Ro. 8:5-8). The carnal mind is rooted in pride but the spiritual mind is rooted in the praise and honor of God.

- Taking the scriptures to mean what they say in the normal sense of meaning is the solid foundation for interpreting God's Word. A reliable rule to follow is: 'If the plain sense makes sense, seek no other sense, lest you wind up with nonsense.'
- A Christian never has to decide between God's word and God. They are always one absolutely consistent voice. Because God is truth, He is absolutely good for His word. He is totally consistent and His character never changes (Heb. 13:8). Therefore, He cannot disagree with Himself or His written word. His word stands entirely faithful in all ways.
- If one passage of the Holy Bible is not taken to be true in its literal sense, we can have no assurance that another, such as John 3:16, is literally true. Interpreting the Bible allegorically can really just be a devious way to make it *appear* the Bible is being supported, while effectively draining it of any objective meaning and authority.
- Where the Holy Bible does speak symbolically, it's quite clear, and it either explains the symbolism there or elsewhere in the scriptures, i.e., "These great beasts, which are four in number, are four kings" (Dan. 7:17). We must always allow the scriptures to interpret the scriptures.
- When the Old Testament prophecies about Jesus' first coming were fulfilled, they were fulfilled *literally*. When Jesus quoted scripture, He used the *normal, literal meaning*.
- It has been said 'A verse can never mean what it has never meant.' The meaning of God's word does not evolve with time. Our God is the same yesterday, today, and forever—and His word reflects His character.
- The written word of God is like a road map, directing us in the understanding of God's will, ways, and character. While all moral and doctrinal boundaries are clearly portrayed within its pages, it would be naïve to suggest that all of God could be confined within the pages of a book. This is why the Bible itself teaches us to be led by the Spirit of God, even in our application of Biblical truths. As Jesus did, when led by the Spirit of God, we will be in agreement with and fulfill

the written word of God. While on earth, Jesus fulfilled more scripture in one Spirit-led minute of His life than all of the religious leaders combined. He told them: “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life” (Jn. 5:39-40).

- Since Jesus himself stated in scripture that scripture testifies (gives evidence) of Him, the primary and central goal of scripture is the unveiling of who Christ is.
- To remain true to the written word of God, we would also have to stay true to Christ and not to religious traditions or denominations, persuasive words, and human thinking that rob Christ of His rightful place and glory (reputation) among His people.
- The written word of God provides the framework (covenant; blueprint) in which we can be led by the Spirit of God. Scripture itself testifies that it is the Spirit who gives life and the “letter” of God’s word kills (2 Cor. 3). The Spirit alone gives understanding of the Holy Scriptures, but conclusions made by human thinking about scripture are *always* used by the devil to thwart the purposes of God. Jesus warned that the teachings and traditions of men could make our worship useless and His word ineffective in our lives (Mt. 15:9; Mk 7:13).
- It is possible to believe that we are staying true to Holy Scripture (to the letter of God’s written word) and dishonor Christ. A person can be zealous for the letter of God’s written word and be a minister of death and a stronghold of religious spirits. Many religious spirits (demons) hide behind some people’s claims of being true to Scripture. In reality, they are often resisting the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, “He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory” (Jn. 7:18). A person can in appearance seem to be emphasizing the divine authority of scripture but in reality are self-deceived and only true to their perception and application of it. Holy Scripture is used as a cloak to veil their insecure and self-righteous need to be in control (See John 8:38-59). The Holy Spirit only draws attention to Jesus (Jn. 16:13-14) and not to anyone’s “expertise” at interpreting Holy Scripture.
- Self-righteousness often veils itself behind a person’s zeal for the letter of God’s written word. God-given and faith-based righteousness boasts in complete dependency on the Holy Spirit and His desire and ability to reveal what God has said in His written word and is presently saying. Not grieving the Holy Spirit should be our top priority. The sons of God are led by the Spirit of God and not by their attempts at staying true to Holy Scripture. Man-made religion often originates from zeal for the means and not the goal or end intended. The great blessing and privilege to know Christ in a face-to-face relationship becomes irrelevant. The means is always emphasized as being equal to or above the end, thereby, putting the means in competition with the end—the end being the

unveiling of who Christ is. This will ultimately place people at risk of judgment from God—of being cheated out of at least part of the Kingdom inheritance.

- Since God hides the things of His kingdom from the wise and the prudent and reveals them only to babes, we are constrained to become like the “babes” in order to receive the revelation of His written word (Mt. 11:25-30). In James 4:6, Holy Scripture also reveals that God resists (opposes) the proud (the wise and prudent; those who think they have it figured or worked out) but gives grace to the humble (those who know they cannot figure or work it out). Because of this, our first priority as believers is to humble ourselves unto complete dependency on the Holy Spirit, unto His discipline and willingness to reveal who Christ is. This is a discipline that Jesus described as a yoke upon our soul (mind, will, emotions, personality). This yoke makes our soul subservient to the Holy Spirit—to become meek and lowly like Jesus so that we can learn of Him. The more acquainted we become with the ways and influence of the Holy Spirit upon our souls, the more secure we will be in sound biblical doctrine and in our walk.

I have become quite familiar, over fifteen years, with the various flowers, herbs, shrubs, trees, reptiles, and insects in my yard. I know the difference between the things I did plant and the weeds or wild flowers I did not. I know exactly where to find my praying mantises, toad frogs, wolf and orb spiders, and worm snakes. I can recognize the webbing of a black widow spider as opposed to a wolf spider. I often catch the praying mantises and play with the jumping spiders in my hands. I do things that many-a-person would fear to do. How and why? Because of experience. Gardening is a discipline. If you are going to do it well, you have to do it often. It involves passion, research, a bit of trial and error, and disciplined devotion.

Those who have “yoked” their souls to Christ will have more passion and devotion to the Holy Spirit and His guidance than to any other single thing. As Jesus taught, “He will guide you into all truth and take what is mine and reveal it unto you” (Jn. 16:13-15). By the witness (anointing) of the Holy Spirit in us, we will understand all truth, and that witness never lies or deceives; it anchors our thinking into sound biblical doctrine (1 Jn. 2:27). We are required by God to exercise that God-discerning ability unto maturity (Heb. 5:12-14). Those who are more zealous for the written word of God than they are for the disciplines and workings of the Holy Spirit always end up persecuting revivals and outpourings of God’s Spirit unless they repent of their pride and misapplication of God’s written word.

Some Examples Of Misinterpretation

Let’s now look at some contemporary examples from which we can gain insight and wisdom.

I once confronted an individual, whom I esteem as a brother in Christ, about some of his teachings. He was interpreting passages of Scripture allegorically that the context itself did not allow, purporting such teachings as prophetic revelations and the “deep things of God.” The confrontation revealed his arrogance. He became very defensive and condemned me as being unloving and as someone who did not want to know the “deep things of God.”

Such “revelations” provided the teacher with a false place of honor among “agreeable” people because of the unspoken and implied claim to have “insight” into Scripture that no one else has. Any doctrine that instills an elitist mentality within its teachers and students does not originate from God but from hell. Such “hyped” doctrine always carries with it a false spiritual “high” to those who embrace it and creates divisiveness within the body of Christ. It is often used by the devil to inflate the role of the Church in the earth in the last days to a place not actually portrayed in Scripture (ordained by God).

One example of this is the twisting of Scripture passages, that are obviously in the plain sense only referring to Christ’s second coming, to teach that Christ is coming to earth *in His Church*. This distracts from the Scripture’s true and original meaning and, therefore, diminishes its authority and hypes the role of the Church in the earth. Can you see the subtle work of Lucifer in this?

I once heard someone teaching out of Acts 3:21: “Whom [Jesus] heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.” This verse is actually indicating that Jesus will not return to earth in His second coming until “the times of restoration of all things.” The individual was using this verse to support his claim that Jesus will not come back until we, the Church, restore all things. Does this verse actually imply that? Does it state that Jesus will not return until all things are restored? Look at the wording carefully. Heaven must receive Jesus until when? The answer: “*the times of restoration of all things.*” Notice it does not state “until the restoration of all things” or “until all things are restored.”

According to many other sources in Scripture, especially the book of the Revelation, Jesus is the One who will ultimately restore all things and not the Church. He is the One who slays all His enemies by the words of His mouth and will also sit to judge the nations after His return. To Him alone is given the right to oversee and consummate the end of the age by the loosing of the seven seals (Rev. 5). Scripture teaches that Christ’s second coming *is* the restoration of all things. Therefore, the correct interpretation would be: “Heaven has received Jesus until the appointed time comes for the restoration of all things.”

The Church must take Paul’s words serious: “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15), lest she be seduced by hyped demonic truth that diminishes her authority before God and in the earth. *The Church must rebuke and not align herself with teachings that wrongly exalt her in her role in the earth or before God.*

One more example.

Was the earth created in six literal days? There are those who teach it was not.

This verse settles the matter:

Exodus 20:9-11 - “Six days you shall labor and do all your work, (10) but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God...(11) For in six days the LORD *made* the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.”

This clearly states that the earth was created in six literal days as confirmed by the Lord's command to work six literal (solar) days. In this text, God himself equates creation days with work days. The word "day" is only used figuratively throughout Scripture when the context clearly indicates it. The first use of the word "day" (as in Genesis 1) would have to establish its literal meaning and then, afterward, can it be used figuratively. The Hebrew word translated "made" in the above verse is synonymous and can be used interchangeably with the Hebrew word translated "created" in Genesis 1:1.

Beloved of God, we must stay true to the truth and shun man-made theories and speculation. Such speculations glorify the intellect of man and not God and work to our enemy's advantage to diminish the authority of Scripture and ultimately our authority in the earth.

As the end of the age draws near, the church will be faced with some of her greatest challenges in maintaining her bearings for the truth. We must be alert and never forsake Biblical common sense, refraining from being partial to the spiritual stature and level of influence of those Bible teachers claiming to have new, persuasive, or contradictory revelation from God.

Hopefully, this article has stirred in you a greater love for the truth and a greater dedication as a student of God's written word.

Chapter Twenty



Contentment: the Basis for Biblical Prosperity

A surplus of teaching on the subject of Biblical prosperity engulfs us in this hour. Some teaching is excellent, yet there are teachings that encourage people to set their heart upon material possessions and not upon the eternal. The following would apply to some: “And in their desire for profit they will come to you with words of deceit, like traders doing business in souls: whose punishment has been ready for a long time and their destruction is watching for them” (2 Pt. 2:3; BBE).

There are false teachers who are attempting to seduce with enticing words that God desires you to be rich or have the best in material possessions. By what standard are we determining who is rich? Do we measure wealth or the best according to a worldly standard and or according to the Kingdom of Heaven? Who determines what the best is for you: you, a preacher, or God? Nowhere in the Bible does God reveal that He would give us the world’s best. He has already given us His best! Jesus became poor that we through His poverty might become rich (2 Cor. 8:9). If we are rich in faith (Jas. 2:5), then we can ask what we will in Jesus’ name, according to His will, and it shall be done for us (Jn. 16:23; 1 Jn. 3:22, 5:14). Someone might say, “Well, I am sowing money into the Kingdom so I can become wealthy.” The following reveals what we will reap if we sow with such motives. “But those who have a desire for wealth are falling into danger, and are taken as in a net by a number of foolish and damaging desires, through which men are overtaken by death and destruction” (1 Tim. 6:9; BBE).

The Bible is clear concerning the attitude we must have toward becoming rich for any reason. We cannot desire to be rich nor pursue it or we will place ourselves in danger. In fact, the Bible does not speak favorably of those who are rich except where they have actually repented of their proud and condescending attitudes and injustices toward those who are less fortunate (e.g. Zacchaeus; Lk. 19). It is not justified to say we are pursuing the riches of this world (or the best) for the Kingdom’s sake. Christians must be content with whatever state in which *the Lord has them*.

“But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content” (1 Tim. 6:6-8).

We must never be content with being in debt because of misfortune, *a bad national economy, poor money management, or a lack of wisdom and diligence*. God can and will cause His people to flourish (Ps. 76) even in the midst of famine and tribulation if they will honor His ways and do what He says. He will prosper you even if your mess has

been caused by *your* foolish decisions. Out of the mess will come a message and out of the test will come a testimony. God takes pleasure in the prosperity of His servants (Ps. 35:27). The word prosperity is often translated in the Old Testament from the Hebrew word *shalom*. *Shalom* indicates completeness, soundness, wholeness, and peace. This is what God desires for all His people. The Apostles James clarifies it: “But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. (5) If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him” (Jas. 1:4-5).

Is it God’s desire to bless us with money and possessions? Yes! We first must be content with the eternal things. Our overall completeness, soundness, wholeness, and peace must only come from Him and not from what we physically possess. When we learn to value the eternal above everything, then God can entrust us with the riches of this life. Those who rightly value the eternal will be faithful stewards of money and possessions, resulting in God entrusting the true riches Jesus referred to in Luke 16:11 to those faithful individuals. Those who are content with the eternal will have an excellent spirit in all that they do.

Worshipping God with Tithes and Offerings

The Lord releases an anointing that draws people into the true worship of Him. Whether we sing, dance, or play an instrument unto Him, in solitude or corporately, He provides a life-giving flow of His Spirit that causes us to be caught up in Him. The more we yield our hearts to Him, the more of His anointing we experience. Worship is nothing more than dead works without this flow of God’s anointing, making it impossible to draw near to Him without it.

Likewise, the Lord releases an anointing that brings great liberty in giving to God our tithes and offerings. He also considers these acts to be worship (Deut. 26:10). Those who stand (e.g. behind a church pulpit) to receive the tithes and offerings of the people are also leading them in worship. One must know how to get people into the flow of God’s blessing and anointing in order for them to be givers like unto the Lord. Manipulation of the people with hype or enticement is not worship. An example of this would be “God will make you financially rich if you give to our ministry”. If we give according to God’s Biblical design, we will reap a harvest (Lk. 6:38; 2 Cor. 9:6). *His design will keep us debt free, worry free, and free from greed and poverty.*

Jesus commended only one person who gave at the temple on a certain day: a widow. “And she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And He called unto Him His disciples and said unto them, ‘Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in than all they that have cast into the treasury; for they all cast in of their abundance, but she of her want cast in all that she had, even all her living’” (Mk. 12:41-44). Hear what He said: the widow gave MORE (two mites made of copper) than all those who were rich! Though their gifts were of the highest monetary order, the Lord counted her wealthier than them all. By what standard of wealth do we live and judge others? When we give, our desire should be to get God’s attention and commendation rather than men’s. The widow greatly honored God because she gave everything—out of her lack. She honored God with all her heart by judging Him worthy the best earthly possessions. She gave what was valuable to her—something she actually needed for herself.

In Malachi chapter one, the Lord rebuked his people for giving Him blemished or less than perfect offerings. They were giving to Him that which they did not value or would never miss. They dishonored God and did not fear Him. The question we must ask ourselves when we give to God is:

“Does my offering honor Him?”

The degree that we honor Him will determine the degree that He will honor us. *The widow gave with all of her heart and the Lord responded with all of His heart.* We must follow her example—not just in giving tithes. Ten percent of our income is but a good starting point. It is a token of the honor that is due the Lord.

If people are going to be at liberty to fully give their hearts to the Lord in this act of worship, they must have a proper affinity with money. Wayne Myers, a wonderful man of God and long-time missionary to Mexico, said something like “...a man’s true spiritual state before God is determined by what he does with his money”. If our hearts are free from the love of money, we will not hold on to it. “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Mt. 6:21). You will be stingy if your heart is in your wallet or bank account. When you do give, it will be done with reluctance and not with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Beware beloved, Jesus is still observing with what motives we are giving.

Money Motivated?

The passing of the offering plate is not the lull between the worship service and the sermon. In fact, we can sing, dance, and play musical instruments unto God with all of our hearts, but do we tithe and give offerings with all of our hearts. Worshipping God with song and music makes us feel good, but letting go of our money may not! That is why the Lord loves a cheerful giver (2 Cor. 9:7). A cheerful giver is not sad to see their money go.

Cheerfulness would indicate that we have a proper association with money. The love of it is the root of all evil (1 Tim. 6:10). Those who love it hold on to it as if their life depended on it. They are bound by greed, stinginess, and fear—fear of not having enough. This is one thing that opens the door for poverty to rule over people. Those who are rich in faith toward God shall never be disappointed by poverty (Rom. 10:11-12). He has chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith. Faith in Christ is our certain riches.

Poverty must not be defined according to a worldly standard either. Jesus, by worldly standards, was not wealthy but His Father met all of His needs and gave Him the desires of His heart. Paul said he was as someone who had nothing, but still possessed all things (2 Cor. 6:10). When we have God, we are possessors of all things, and He gives us richly all things to enjoy (1 Tim. 6:17). Therefore, we must obey His command that we are not to put our hopes and trust in uncertain chances of wealth (1 Tim. 6:17). This is where faith comes in: when God tells us to do something, regardless of its nature, we can rest assured that He will fulfill His promises to us. Now that is a certainty beyond price!

Elijah was taken care of in the wilderness by the ravens (1 Kings 17:4-6). He did not need money for that. His life was completely dependent on God's provision. Unbelievably, we could actually live without money! Someday, we may not have a choice. Our life does not depend on the increase of money or possessions. That is what Jesus told a man whose heart was given to covetousness (Lk. 12:14, 15). He wanted Jesus to tell his brother to divide the disputed earthly inheritance with him. This man desired what was rightfully his brother's. He obviously believed a part of the inheritance belonged to him. Yet, Jesus told him that being pre-occupied with the matter was covetousness. The man should have left the matter in God's hands. He should have had faith in God's ability to change his brother's heart if He so chose. Those who do not walk in faith toward God in their relationship with money or possessions will end up becoming greedy and eventually overcome with despair and anxiety. Their security in this life will be in their wallet, bank accounts, government checks, and stock and bond investments. Their first moments of the day will begin with anxiety. Anxiety is nothing more than fear of the unknown. Repeatedly, Jesus declared, "fear not." Is this not sin? We must learn to look unto and be content with the unseen and eternal provision of God.

Content with the Eternal

Jesus was not rich according to the world's standard but He always had everything he needed. There are Bible teachers today who insist that He was but there is no true Biblical evidence—He was provided for by His Father. He gave up much to become human and became poor. His poverty is defined in humbling Himself to a place of continually being dependent on the Father. He knew His Father's faithfulness and power would provide every need at every occasion. Because of this, we can be rich toward God. We, as He is, are possessors of all things.

The Apostle Paul was a man who was obviously content with the eternal. He gave up much in order to gain the riches of Christ. He had learned to be secure in the One who worked in him mightily. He knew to have Christ was to have everything. If God blessed him with much, he was content, and if all he had was food and clothing, he was content. At times, he did not even have food, so he fasted and God saved the lives of everyone on the sinking ship (Acts 27)! He was rich in faith toward God and possessed all things.

By faith, Abraham dwelled in tents with Isaac and Jacob because he looked for a future city built by God... a city unseen. He confessed he was a citizen of another country and was wealthy enough to have built a big house for his family, but his faith was content with the eternal. He declared that this world was not his home and that he was only passing through. Beloved we cannot become too attached to this life! Abraham was rich in faith toward God and possessed all things.

By faith, Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter and chose to suffer affliction with the children of Israel. He counted the reproach of Christ as of far greater value than all that Egypt had to offer. By faith, he kept the Passover, and left Egypt *as seeing Him who is invisible*. *Faith in God has as much to do with knowing what we should refuse as it does in receiving what God desires to give*. It is the ability to see into the eternal realm of God and lay hold of His best for us, even in the midst of hardship, and working with Him to see it manifest in the natural. Moses was rich in faith toward God and possessed all things (See Heb. 11).

These all reveal to us the true way of faith. Faith values the unseen, eternal things of God more than anything else. This in turn affects the way we live out our pilgrimage here. If we are rich, as men count wealth, then true faith will not permit us to be puffed up in our minds and our riches will not be our security—proven by our generosity. We must follow Abraham’s example and understand that we have nothing to prove to the world, ourselves, our parents, etc. in this matter. We are to live like we are citizens of another country and are just passing through.

How would we handle it if we were thrown into prison for something we did not do? Could we keep our eyes on the eternal as Joseph did? Ultimately, God’s best for him was to be second in command in Egypt. However, God’s best at that time was for him to prosper in prison! He was in training for reigning. Can you identify with Joseph? Do you feel like you are in a prison waiting for God to fulfill His word to you? God will prosper (shalom) you where you are at, if you will be *content with the eternal*.

Allow your Father to convince you deeply that He is committed to your overall completeness, wholeness, soundness, and peace. Receive the comfort and assurance of His promises. It will take patience. Rest assured though that all that God has promised is as sure as Christ’s life is endless.

Chapter Twenty One



Anatomy of a Counterfeit Preacher

Introduction

First, understand that true spiritual discernment is always an extension of Christ's love in us (Php. 1:9). The truths in this article should never be used as ammunition for "witch hunts." My motive for writing this was done out of love and to protect the flock of God from the wolves in sheep's clothing. As with any, this article does not cover the subject matter from every possible angle. It would take a book to do that and then some.

When you read something similar to "they are false preachers" in this article, understand that *we*, because of the defilement of sin that exists within American Christianity, have lowered the standard of God's criteria for leadership within the Church. So, it is not my intent to raise the standard to an unrealistic level but to only define the Biblical standard. As it is in the world, so has it been in the Church in America. In the history of the United States of America, we have incrementally given presidents the leeway to subvert the constitutional rights of its citizens for the sake of "security" and "safety." The lines that divide true freedom from tyranny have been obscured. The responsibility to define the true Biblical standard rests upon the shoulders of the five-fold ministry within the Church. Charles G. Finney, the main proponent of the second great awakening in America, preached from a heart that was set aflame by God, that if morality and the fear of God declines in a nation, it is because of a lack of holiness and anointing in the pulpits of that nation (paraphrased). Who can argue with his results? There is a severe lack of moral courage, not only coming from the political platforms of this land, but also from its pulpits.

Jesus told His disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Mt. 16:6). He later explained to His disciples that "leaven" was referring to "doctrine" which also indicates "influence." They had to beware of any influence coming from them. The Apostle Paul stated concerning leaven:

"You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? (8) This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you. (9) A little leaven leavens the whole lump" (Gal. 5:7-9).

He was addressing a problem that the church was having with false apostles who were persuading them contrary to their faith in Christ, turning their loyalty from Him to them and their teachings. Notice that he used the word "persuasion." He also used a variation of it in second Corinthians chapter two:

"And my language and my message were not set forth in *persuasive* (enticing and plausible) words of wisdom, but they were in demonstration of the <Holy> Spirit and power <a proof by the Spirit and power of God, operating on me and stirring in the minds

of my hearers the most holy emotions and thus persuading them>, (5) So that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men (human philosophy), but in the power of God” (Amplified Bible).

As Paul stated, a little “leaven” will leaven a whole lump of bread. The point being made was that those things that are originally pure, good, and pleasing in God’s sight can be completely corrupted by just a little wrong enticement, doctrine, persuasion, or influence. What this implies is that whole movements, ministries, churches, and ministers can progressively go from being genuine to counterfeit by accepting wrong doctrine and influences into their thinking. They could be preaching ninety percent truth and ten percent error and qualify as being false preachers.

Think of it this way. If you added a hint of another color of paint, such as black, to pure (ultra) white, it would produce an off-white color. The off-white color could be easily mistaken for real white without having a sample of it to be used for comparison. I was under the impression that the walls in our house were white until we painted some of the trim with ultra or pure white. The difference was quite noticeable. Off-white can never be real or pure white. This is how the devil brings in his persuasive lies. He first interjects nuances and slight deviations that go unnoticed to the unsuspecting and untrained eye. Those people who have spent much time experiencing the pure, real, and genuine things of God will recognize the off-white persuasions of the devil. If we keep ourselves pure and pursue wisdom from God, we will always have that as a standard for comparison.

The one sign that indicates that a ministry has crossed over into being a counterfeit is evidence of *elitism*. It is defined as: 1) “The belief that certain persons or members of certain classes or groups deserve favored treatment by virtue of their perceived superiority, as in intellect, social status, or financial resources [and spiritual authority and position⁶].” 2) “The sense of entitlement enjoyed by such a group or class.” 3) “Control, rule, or domination by such a group or class.”

Because of the existence of elitism (which is a demon, by the way), the followers of such ministries will not listen to sound Biblical reason. They are bewitched, intoxicated with the sonnets of high-sounding doctrines of demons that are designed to inflate the egos of men. This bewitching has a similar effect that hallucinogenic and mind-controlling drugs have over the minds of addicts. It is *humanly* impossible to reach them while under the influence. With God, all things are possible.

There is modern “leaven” that is beginning to take hold within various sects of the church (post 2010 A.D.). One of those is what some have named the *Grace Movement*. To justify its teachings, its proponents twist certain Scriptures that were addressed to Christians in an attempt to make people think they were addressed to non-believers instead. This movement began by promoting liberating truth concerning God’s grace but has crossed over into extreme or hyped grace. Many of its followers refuse to hear anything contrary to what is being taught which is a sign of elitism.

⁶ Spiritual authority and position was added by the author to the definition for clarification.

The Apostle Paul had to confront the Apostle Peter because of hypocrisy (Gal. 2:11-21). He was obviously caught up in fearing man instead of God. I am sure that Peter was acquainted with Paul but there is no evidence they were close friends. Whatever the case, Paul had already established a good reputation with the apostles in Jerusalem. The result was that Peter embraced the truth. What if he had refused to repent? Paul would have had no other choice but to mark him as a false apostle to protect the flock of God.

My Father in Heaven once told me: "Son, you must embrace the truth no matter what package it comes in."

As an addendum added later to this article, one response to this suggested that the article might be wrongly "judging" or showing a lack of compassion toward those who are suspect of being counterfeit preachers. It is my view, from a Biblical and experiential perspective, that a person could qualify as a counterfeit church leader but still be a true believer in Christ. That must be taken into consideration in any case. On the other hand, if I had a flock of sheep and saw a wolf attempting to do harm even to my neighbor's sheepfold, there would be no hesitation as to what action I would take to keep them safe. The wolf would receive no mercy for the sake of the sheep. This same paradox exists in God. Mercy must be withheld from some in order to protect others. We must judge those who are counterfeits or we will be judged as partakers of their sins. When Jesus commanded: "Judge not that you be not judged" (Mt. 7:1), He was obviously speaking to hypocrites.

Let us heed the warning signs.

The Warnings

In 1965, Stanley Frodshams gave a crucial prophecy at Elim Bible Institute warning the Church of the coming onslaught of seducing spirits and doctrines of demons. The entire prophecy can be read [here](#) from our website. Here are some relevant quotes:

"Listen to the messengers that I will send, but do not hold any man's personality in admiration. For many whom I shall anoint mightily with signs and miracles and wonders shall become lifted up and put upon a pedestal, but they shall fall by the wayside. I do not do this willingly, for I have made provision that they might stand. I call many into this ministry and equip them, but remember many shall fall in that hour. For Babylon shall not stand. They shall be like bright lights, and the people shall delight in their ministries, but they shall be taken over by deceiving spirits and lead many of My people astray."

"For those that perform miracles and speak not righteousness are not of Me. Those that have large crowds that follow them, but speak not of purifying and holiness are not of Me."

"There shall come deceivers among My people, in increasing numbers, who speak for the truth and shall gain the favor and the hearts of the people. For the people shall examine the Scriptures and say, "Is not what these men say true?" Then, when they have gained the hearts of the people, then and only then shall they bring out their wrong doctrines. Therefore I say unto you and warn you, 'Oh people, do not give your hearts to men, nor

hold people in admiration, for by these very persons shall Satan enter into My people.’ Watch for the seducers. Do you think a seducer will brandish a new heresy and flaunt it before the people? No, he will speak the words of righteousness and truth, and will appear as a minister of light declaring the Word.”

The idolization of preachers, ministers, prophets, apostles, teachers, or any spiritual leader is the open door for seducing spirits and doctrines of demons into the Church (1 Tim. 4:1). This prophecy defined it as “holding a man’s personality in admiration” or “putting them on a pedestal.” We are warned that by doing so, the devil would enter God’s people. Can the devil “enter” God’s people? Is it in agreement with Scripture? Yes. We are warned by the Apostle Paul not to give place (quarter, space marked off, habitation) to the devil (Eph. 4:27). Also, the Apostle Peter asked Ananias (a believer) in Acts 5:3, why he allowed Satan to *fill his heart* to lie to the Holy Spirit.

Did you notice how the prophecy stated that people would be seduced? First, the false teacher would speak the truth and gain the favor and hearts of the people and then they would present their wrong doctrines. This is similar to the same means that false teachers used to “bewitch” the Church in Galatia (Gal. 3). It is known as the principle of courtship and exclusion. Listen to what Paul said:

“They (the false apostles) zealously court you, but for no good; yes, they want to exclude you, that you may be zealous for them” (4:17).

What was happening here is very important for us to fully grasp. *The believers in that church were made to feel that what they already had in Christ was inferior to what was being presented by the false apostles.* They were only showered with “acceptance” if they embraced their “teachings” and “authority.” Otherwise, they were excluded.

To justify themselves, such false leaders will attempt to either shower you with flattery to win you over or mark you as a rebel or an “Absalom” because you refuse to place them on a pedestal as others wrongly have.

In summary, Paul told them that the New Covenant did not consist of Jesus plus something else (as in the works of the law; including Old Covenant festive observances). Jesus is the entirety of all that we need. This is confirmed by what he declared to the church in Corinth, “who [Jesus] became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption— that, as it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the LORD”” (1 Cor. 1:30-31). Let everyone glory in the Lord as opposed to the personalities of men because we are complete ONLY in Christ (Col. 2:8-10).

The foremost principle that must be embraced and enforced by every spiritual leader is to never allow anyone to place them on a pedestal, holding their personality in admiration. This temptation from the devil will put us in dangerous competition with Christ’s headship of His Church. The failure of any leader to overcome it will place God’s people at risk as described in the previously mentioned prophecy. What may have started out as a genuine God-ordained ministry will, consequently, become a tool of the devil. The Great Shepherd will rise to protect those who prefer His voice instead of the voice of inflated human rationale, who desire to do His will above their own, and who refuse to compromise the truth that God has written in their hearts.

We must never allow ourselves to be deceived because of an anointing upon someone or the results produced by it. That is no indication that their ministry is legitimately of God.

Demonic influences are lurking within the mind of any church leader who is still motivated by inferiority, insecurity, and the pride that provides a false sense of security through self-justification, self-defense, self-promotion, self-consolation, and the flattery of people. They have not denied themselves and taken up their cross to follow Christ. They have not allowed Jesus to “thoroughly purge His floor” (Mt. 3:11-12).

The Real Church Leader

A church leader, whether they are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, or teachers (Eph. 4:11-12), will have a consuming passion, not to *primarily* exercise their gifts or display their anointing, but to be the greatest servant of all. Hirelings, those who are paid money (or adulation) to look after the sheep, will be mainly concerned about themselves. When dealing with resistance from people, they will always react to it as being an attack against them personally or “their” authority. For them, most everything centers on their position and authority because they delight in being positioned above the people and in having the greatest authority in the church. They do not delight in being the greatest servant. Their authority is, therefore, exercised over people instead of in the service of them contrary to Jesus’ command in Luke 22:25-27. *Because their position and authority has become the platform to feed their need to feel superior and be held in high esteem among the people, it will also be the point of most of the spiritual assaults against them until they humble themselves and become servants.* God resists (opposes) the proud but gives grace to the humble (1 Pt. 5:5-6). The Lord spoke to me once and said if we, as God’s people, would bow low enough and remain there, that the fiery arrows our enemy would always miss us.

A genuine church leader will be well-studied to make sure they understand God’s ways, protocol, and order in reference to the structure of a New Covenant church. They will be careful to love and protect God’s sheepfold at the expense of their own lives even if they stand alone in their decisions. King David learned the hard way of God’s refusal to compromise protocol when it comes to handling those things He calls precious and holy. Someone was killed as the result (2 Sam. 6).

A church leader cannot be ignorant of the foundational principles that release the full blessing of the New Covenant upon the Church. I will now attempt to cover some of these principles below. These consist of characteristics the Lord has shown me are most important to Him:

1) Creation order

- While both male and female have equal access to all that God has promised in Christ, they have differing roles in the family and also within the Church. This was established by Paul in 1 Timothy 2:8-15. What happens when women are allowed to operate in roles that belong to the man within the family and Church? A genuine church leader, being filled with God’s wisdom, will only allow a church structure that facilitates God’s creation order for the protection of both genders.

- 2) Absence of a man-pleasing mind-set
 - Man-pleasing is the only ingredient needed for the devil to make those who are candidates to become true church leaders into false ones. Paul said, “For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ” (Gal. 1:10). A man-pleaser is a false leader.
- 3) Ruling by Biblical principle instead of emotions
 - This is the main reason why the oversight within a Church should be male. Women, if they are truly honest, are more apt to make decisions based on their emotions and so do men who have been mostly imprinted by female influences in their lives. Those leaders who allow crucial decisions for the church to be based on someone’s emotions are more concerned about people’s feeling than God’s truth. They are false.
- 4) Loving God’s truth
 - The true Church leader will love God’s truth above anything or anyone else. Jesus testified before Pilate: “For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice” (Jn. 18:37). He also stated earlier in His ministry, “If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority” (Jn. 7:17). A church leader cannot truly hear God and the truths that are necessary to secure the overall integrity of the church and impart those things necessary for the Church’s growth if they have divided interests. The desire to do God’s will must be supreme in their life or they will be deceived by seducing spirits and doctrines of demons.
- 5) Ruling their household well
 - “If a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God” (1 Tim. 3:5). One of the marks of Paul’s apostleship was his emphasis on practical Christianity. He made this statement not as a suggestion but as the criteria for Church oversight. He equated “ruling” one’s house or church well with “taking care of” them. This establishes what God expects from those who watch over the souls of His people. They must take care of them as a true shepherd does his sheep. True leaders will not allow someone who does not rule their house well to step into a place of oversight in a church is false. The primary criteria used for selecting leaders in a church should never be whether that person is loyal to *them*. Being loyal to Christ and His ways should never be compromised for the sake of loyalty to a minister or church.
- 6) Hearing God’s voice
 - It would have been of no intrinsic value to Jesus, if His disciples were “affirming” Him as the Messiah before His Father in Heaven had established it within Him by direct and intimate declaration. In fact, such human

affirmation is always proven as undependable, presumptuous, and, ultimately, nothing more than flattery.

- All feelings of self-worth within us have to come directly from God by personal encounters with Him. God-given “gifts” to the Church, such as those listed in Ephesians 4 and 1 Corinthians 12, can never be used by the endowed person to bolster their personal insecurities. The gifts from God will become false securities instead and are defiled because of the wrong motives of the bearer.
- All outside ministry to us should only define and mature our ability to hear directly from God.
- Reaffirmation, confirmation, and reassurance can come through people but endorsement only comes directly from God.
- The Father’s public endorsement of Jesus (Mt. 3-4) became evident to the whole world, not just in anointing, but, more importantly, in His ability to pass all the tests to which He was subjected. Without this, we will spend most of our sojourn here being tossed back and forth by every wind of tribulation and persuasive and seductive doctrine. We will spend most of our time trying to get from people what we should be getting from God.

In addition, any secretiveness about the church/ministry finances without accountability and any evidence of wrongful sexual behavior toward or emotional dependency on other people among church leadership are signals to us that we need to gently and discreetly confront the matter (Gal. 6:1-2) and leave if there is no show of humility. Whatever sinful defilement is on the leadership to whom you submit the oversight of your soul will eventually defile you. In order to keep yourself pure you will have to leave. Do not allow your soul to be vexed for too long by any such wrongdoing or you will succumb to their ways and be judged by God as a partaker of their sin.

False spiritual manifestations that are portrayed as being of God by a preacher are also indicative of something very wrong in their spiritual foundation. True signs and wonders do not make us fall in love with supernatural phenomena or angels. All of them are designed by God to glorify Christ and *edify* but not entertain the people. Let us never judge such things by how they appear to our natural eyes or by how they make us feel. Is the Holy Spirit bearing witness as to the authenticity of such things?

The counterfeits are *at least* human attempts to manipulate things to prove that God favors us. It is similar to when the children of Israel shouted so loud that *the earth shook* after the Ark of the Covenant was brought back into the camp. The Philistines heard it and were afraid at first but emboldened themselves against Israel. Israel took the ark into the battle with them, thinking that it was the key to having God’s favor in their midst but were defeated. They assumed that God was on their side because of their excitement over the restoration of a *symbol* of God’s presence. They lost that symbol to the Philistines (1 Sam. 4). Too much focus on symbols, signs, and wonders can be no more than attempts to make up for what is lacking of the favor of God.

Someone may respond to some of my statements as being harsh or exclusive. Ignorance of these things is no excuse because knowing God’s protocol and ways is the main criteria for being a church leader. In all things, we must seek Heaven’s applause above

all else. In order to do this, no one who is called to the five-fold ministry should ever compromise, customize, or water-down God's truth for the applause of the religious status quo or to conform to what is expected by people. May my and your greatest admirer be Christ Himself who sought no approval from the face of men. "Who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously" (1 Pt. 2:23).

Beloved, if the church leadership that oversees your soul does not bear these required characteristics...RUN!

A church, religious organization, or movement could be a counterfeit even if people are receiving "love and care" from the leadership. Love and care of the people by the leadership is not just limited to the true church of Christ.

What if a preacher is only off in one or two of these characteristics? Are they humble, teachable, and repentant? If they are not mature in Christ, they should not be a church leader. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. Remember Paul's confrontation of Peter referred to in the introduction.

Doctrinal error by itself is no indication that the person under scrutiny is a false leader. Are they elitists? If you are part of a movement, denomination, or ministry that meets the criteria of elitism...RUN!

Chapter Twenty Two



Understanding the Fear of the Lord

The Paradox of Loving and Fearing God

“You are not supposed to fear God in the New Covenant.” This is what some people in the Church believe and teach. Scripture passages such as 1 John 4:18 are cited to support such views: “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.” The question concerning this passage that must be asked is: “What kind of fear is this verse referring to?” The preceding verse (17) will help us precisely answer the question.

“Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the Day of Judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.”

Simply, perfected love in a Christian equals boldness in our hearts before Christ on the Day of Judgment. Anything less than perfect love equals a lack of boldness before Christ on the Day of Judgment.

It would also appear that some leaders in the Church would have us believe that knowing Christ’s love is all that is necessary. Personally, I believe this is true but not in the way that some have portrayed it. For example, I heard a well-known television minister state: “God is a good God. He is no longer a God of judgment.” Well, stay with me and I will prove to you that unless you truly know the fear of God that you will *not* know the depths of His love. In fact, we are about to find out that the fear of the Lord is established in our hearts by His love or grace. I will prove to you that if you do not fear Him, then you do not truly love Him.

In the before mentioned passage of Scripture, the Apostle John is contrasting having boldness on the Day of Judgment as the result of our knowing and walking in perfect love to being afraid because of *not* knowing and walking in perfect love. Perfect love will cause us to have boldness on Judgment Day, and imperfect love will cause us to be afraid of suffering loss on that Day. If we are not made perfect in love, then we will have a reason to fear that Day. Fear equals a lack of confidence.

The torment of the fear referred to in verse 18 is the precursor, and, therefore, a warning sign to what would be experienced on Judgment Day by those who are not walking in perfect love.

Perfect love displaces—leaves no room for—the tormenting fear resulting from having any reproach before the Lord Jesus Christ. Failure to walk in love toward all is obviously the greatest reproach because we will be judged according to our faithfulness with the measure of love He has poured into our hearts (See Mt. 25:14-46). The degree we lack in

perfect love will determine the degree of reproach we will experience before His Judgment Seat. It will determine whether we can stand before Him ashamed or with great boldness. Listen carefully to the apostle again:

“We know that we have passed from death to life, *because we love the brethren*. He who does not love his brother *abides in death*. (15) *Whoever hates his brother* is a murderer, and you know that *no murderer has eternal life abiding in him*. (16) By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. (17) But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? (18) My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. (19) And *by this we know* that we are of the truth, and *shall assure our hearts before Him*. (20) For *if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart*, and knows all things. (21) Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, *we have confidence toward God*. (22) And *whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight*. (23) And this is His commandment: *that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment* (24) Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us” (1 John 3:14-23; all italics mine).

We can assure our hearts before the Lord now! Even if our hearts and other voices are telling us that we have not walked in love, we can regain our confidence by submitting to His mercy as revealed through the cross. Although God uses our heart to reflect His judgments toward us, He is greater than our heart. Therefore, we must look away from our condemning heart (more specifically, conscience) to what God has provided to remedy it.

Confidence in the Father and Him giving us whatever we ask in this life in Jesus’ name serve as a precursor to the confidence we will have before the Judgment Seat of Christ. We will have favor instead of reproach.

Receiving and walking in perfect love is the source of the boldness or strong confidence that we can and must have on Judgment Day. If this is the case, then why do we need the fear of God? Listen to King Solomon: “In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence, and His children will have a place of refuge” (Pro. 14:26). So, what secures strong confidence or boldness in our hearts before the Lord, perfect love, the fear of God, or both? The answer is both. Does this seem contradictory? How can you fear God and love Him at the same time?

By our fearing the consequences of not walking in perfect love, we will be constrained to turn and embrace that very love that we may otherwise avoid or fail to properly value. In this, we see how God, by His corrective love, motivates His own people away from danger into blessing.

Imagine yourself having to endure the scorching heat and other tormenting conditions of a desert. You have been walking for two days, lost without water or food. On the third day, just before you are about to give up all hope, you come upon an oasis. With all the strength you can muster, you run and plunge into the depths of the cool water. The torment inflicted by the desert journey made the “blessings” of the oasis far more attractive and desirable. The desire to ever venture into the desert again has left you. It

has been swallowed up by the consuming need you have for the oasis. One important truth now stands out above all others: you would have never come to know the value of staying out of the desert if you had never experienced it. Now, you properly *fear* the desert and properly value the oasis.

In order to truly love, value, embrace, pursue, and entirely surrender to God, we must come to know the *fear* of the “desert.” The “desert” represents the chastening experiences we receive from the Lord. This is where the idea of the fear of the Lord comes from since it is He who chastens us. It indicates that it is God who oversees or orchestrates our reaping the consequences of straying from our Oasis, and wooing us, when we do stray, back to Him. Undeniably, the fear of the Lord is a “fear” that comes from Him. It *does not* involve being afraid of Him. No, it involves our completely giving ourselves to Him, while completely fleeing from our other loves and dangerous intrigues!

The Apostle Paul revealed:

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. (11) Knowing, therefore, the *terror of the Lord*, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences” (2 Cor. 5:10-11; italics mine).

As in the desert experience, understanding how terrifying the Judgment Seat of Christ could be serves as a powerful incentive for us to love the Lord and others in deed and in truth. It makes us fit vessels for the Master’s use. Now do you see how the fear of the Lord perfects love, providing us with complete assurance that what God has promised is true—that He is everything that our soul has ever longed for?

More proof?

Parents who correctly train their children, according to the biblical pattern, will not spare the “rod” (Pro. 22:15). In fact, the Bible teaches that a parent hates their child if they do not use the “rod” when necessary (Pro. 13:24). The purpose for the rod is to use the pain it inflicts to turn the heart of the child away from foolishness, disobedience, or rebellion. If the rod is promptly used in love then that love becomes the indirect source of pain. The rod is, therefore, only the instrument used by love to inflict the pain necessary to form character within the child. As the result, the child will understand that not only do you care for them, give them a lot of your time, provide for their needs, and shower them with affections but that you *deeply* love them. They will understand that you truly love them enough to turn them away from the very things that will destroy them. This will cause them to have a deep immovable trust in their parents and will provide a foundation for them to have deep immovable trust (faith, confidence, boldness) in the Lord. I have seen this proven in my daughter. If parents do not discipline or wrongly discipline out of anger and frustration, the children will be shallow in character (self-willed) and untrusting. They will close up their heart from receiving or comprehending love.

*A fear of the consequences or punishment is established in a child through anger, thus numbing him or her to receive love, and there is a similar fear that is established through love and instills strong confidence and forms character. The love that instills fear in the heart, in doing so, conditions the heart for understanding intimacy, love, and compassion on deeper levels. A child who is never taught and trained by *the rod* to fear the*

consequences of their unacceptable behavior will be a liability or menace to society instead of an asset.

We must embrace God's warnings and correction. If we do not, we will ignore, possibly even scorn, those things that we should love and embrace the things that bring death, not fearing the consequences of doing so. Those who are *not* chastened by God are not one of his children. They have another father instead. Let us submit to Our Father in Heaven, understand His fear, and plunge into the depths of His love.

This would, therefore, be a true statement:

The fear of the Lord motivates us to do what is necessary for us to receive God's promises of protection and provision. The love of God sustains us in all things.

“By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, *moved with godly fear*, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith” (Heb. 11:7).

The Goodness of God

Someone may still respond, “Is it not the goodness of the Lord that leads us to repentance and not the fear of God? How can you have a relationship with someone that you fear?” Let us go to the passage of Scripture and understand it in its context. Romans 2:3-11 reveals:

“And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God? (4) Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? (5) But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, (6) who ‘will render to each one according to his deeds’: (7) eternal life to those who by *patient continuance* in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; (8) but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, (9) tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; (10) but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (11) For there is no partiality with God” (italics mine).

Tough words! To whom was it written? To the Roman Christians, of course.

We cannot know the depths of the goodness of God apart from understanding the consequences of despising the riches thereof. Therefore, *the warning not to despise the riches of God's goodness and such serves as a powerful and course-setting incentive to embrace those very riches.* We are warned that it is very dangerous to do otherwise. This is why Paul (and we will get more into it later) warned the Corinthians *not to receive the grace of God in vain.* Most of us would have no problem in choosing between a sirloin beef steak over cow manure when choosing what to eat for dinner, especially, when these are the only two items on the menu. God gives us a choice between life or

death and blessing or cursing. Which of these shall we choose? If we fear the Lord, we will choose life and blessing.

A child who ignores his mother's warning not to throw rocks at the hornets' nest will, most likely, find himself forsaking his mischief and fleeing from the "crime" scene into the open arms of his loving but very concerned mother. The "sting" of the experience will help to reinforce in his heart the value of his mother's wisdom and the dire need for her loving care and protection. After experiencing the fruit of his folly, the child will find it easier to trust his mother's judgment. In this case, the child learned the hard way—in a state of frantic need. If his mother had not been there, his despair could have turned into hopelessness.

This illustration helps us understand how the fear of the Lord is the end of folly and the beginning of wisdom (Pro. 1:7; 9:10). In a similar way, God's children will learn through "stinging" experiences the importance of heeding His loving warnings. Because of our foolishness, we misperceive His goodness as an encroachment on our "freedom," when, truthfully, our "freedom" is self-will and rebellion. Yet, if we heed God's warnings, we will avoid many such "stinging" experiences.

This quote from Psalms 119:67 is appropriate: "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word."

We can argue until Hell freezes over as to whether the Lord afflicts us because of disobedience or if it is the devil. Yes, we do bring chastisement on ourselves, however, it is our loving Father who oversees and orchestrates it as revealed in Hebrews 12. Chastisement, in whatever form it takes, originates from God even though He may use our enemy to accomplish it. "But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, *that we may not be condemned with the world*" as first Corinthians 11:32 reveals.

Listen to what the Lord told Israel about how He would deal with their disobedience:

"If they break My statutes and do not keep My commandments, (32) then *I will* punish their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. (33) Nevertheless My lovingkindness I will not utterly take from him, nor allow My faithfulness to fail" (Ps. 89:31-33; italics mine).

"I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men" (2 Sam. 7:14).

"For I am with you," says the LORD, "to save you; though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, yet I will not make a complete end of you. But I will correct you in justice, and will not let you go altogether unpunished" (Jer. 30:11).

Those who are not punished by God as their Father are left to reap the full weight of the law's justice.

In Leviticus 26, the Lord promised Israel that they would rule over their enemies as long as He looked favorably upon them, otherwise, their enemies would rule over them until Israel repented. He warned them that He would incrementally increase (seven times) their punishment (correction, chastisement) for every time they refused to turn back to Him. Jesus alluded to this in Matthew 11:43-45.

Whomever the Lord loves, HE chastens. That is clear.

In spite of being mischievous, a child will still benefit from the love and care of his parents. However, that child will not receive the full benefits thereof until he or she is trained to value the words, warnings, and counsel of the parents over self-will. Proper training will cause the words of his or her parents to become more valuable to the child in comparison to the experienced painful results of disobedience. The child, consequently, becomes more fond and trusting of his or her parents, being made perfect in love. The child will then be able to separate in his or her understanding the true goodness that secures the highest and best for them from a “goodness” that only caters to the child’s personal happiness and self-will.

Yes, the goodness of God does lead us to repentance. So, let us not equate His goodness with our misperceptions of it. God’s goodness or grace trains and chastens us, if necessary, to understand his fear and brings us into perfect love. Listen to the old hymn: “*It was grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved...*”

Does God’s Grace Promote

Sin Tolerance?

Paul, with great clarity, expounds on the grace of God:

“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, (12) *teaching us* that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, (13) looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, (14) who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works” (Tit. 2:11-14; italics mine).

Now, what does this passage state that the grace of God teaches us? Does it teach us that it is okay to continue in sin? God forbid. This invalidates *any* doctrine that suggests in any way that the grace of God teaches sin tolerance. *Anyone* who would claim that they could go out and sleep with a prostitute tonight and still be the righteousness of God in Christ is ignorant, proud, and self-deceived. They are setting themselves up for a fall, possibly judgment. Is the grace of God a minister of sin? All such boasting only proves we lack in the fear of God. If we fear God, we will flee from anything that would invoke His displeasure.

God’s grace first establishes righteousness in us through faith, not by works of our self-effort. Christ finished work and our faith in that is our only source of righteousness (right-standing with God). This is the first step to our becoming holy (in behavior) as God is holy in accordance with the commandment of the Holy Spirit (1 Pt. 1:15-16). Without holiness no one will see the Lord—will not be able to draw near and stand before Him (Heb. 12:14; Mt. 5:8; Rev. 3:4).

Heed the words of Paul:

“What fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? (15) And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer

with an unbeliever? (16) And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.' (17) Therefore 'Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. (18) I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.' (7:1) Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1).

If I, in an attempt to reveal the greatness of God's grace, become a promoter of lawlessness, then I am defeating the purpose for grace altogether. Teachers of God's word should in no way associate righteousness with lawlessness lest God judge them as ministers of sin. Rather, the grace of God empowers us to say, "By God's grace I will not go out and sleep with a prostitute tonight. How can I do such a wicked thing against the One who ransomed me by His blood? God has warned me not to do any such thing and that there would be serious consequences for doing so. Because I love Him and fear Him I will not do it."

Until self-will is broken in the child of God, he or she will *not* take His warnings seriously and will, consequently, cheat themselves from a portion of His great love, favor, and protection for a time—until they run into His arms. The Father awaits with open arms all those who have strayed from His counsel. Did He not say, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Heb. 13:5). Since this is undeniably true, there is no room in our hearts for hopelessness. Hopelessness is not an option even if we are desperate because of our own foolishness. The Father pleads, "Come to Me and understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of My great love for you."

"My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; (6) For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.' (7) If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? (8) But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then *you are illegitimate* and not sons. (9) Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. *Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?* (10) For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. (11) Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, *afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.* (12) Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, (13) and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed" (Heb. 12:5-13; all italics and emphasis mine).

*The fear of the Lord will compel us
To choose the way of life and blessing.
It comes from understanding the penalty
Of choosing death and cursing.
His goodness we will embrace
Avoiding His severity as we seek His face.
Seeing that all else is futility,
We will turn away from all*

*But Christ's finished work and victory.
On Christ the Solid Rock we will stand
With unshakable conviction, we will comprehend
That all other ground is sinking sand.*

God's promises are the primary means by which He arouses the understanding of His love in our hearts, and His warnings serve as the primary means by which the Lord arouses His fear in our hearts. Both promises and warnings are used to reveal the character of God to humanity. Together, these reveal both the goodness and severity of God (Rom. 11:22). In these two things, the love of God is revealed in its completeness.

The Importance of Heeding God's Warnings

Little Joey came running out of his bedroom only to meet his mother at the entrance. In a seeming state of panic, he cried, "Mommy, there is a snake in my bedroom. Don't go in there." His mother, knowing Joey very well and what day of the year it was, responded with a suspicious look, "Don't tell me. April fools!" Joey smiled, jumped up, turned around in midair, and ran back into the bedroom. What may have appeared to be true danger only turned out to be a joke. (For those who are not familiar with the idiom "April fools," it is taken from a somewhat common tradition observed among people in America. On the first day of the month of April, some children (and sometimes adults) play jokes on other people. This day is otherwise known as *April Fool's Day*.)

All warnings that are given to us through Scripture and directly from God are to be taken seriously. He does not joke around. Not taking God's warnings serious will result our being subject to danger of some kind.

To further illustrate:

You are out enjoying a quiet afternoon ride in the country when you come upon a sign warning: "High water ahead. Road closed." Does this sign give you an option to proceed nonchalantly, ignoring the warning? To proceed would be a violation of the safety boundaries as prescribed by that specific department of state government. The warning signs were placed there to alert motorists of a *real* danger that is ahead, as opposed to a possible danger. To continue will place you in danger, period. Your enjoyable afternoon would soon turn into disaster.

The main purpose for the book of Hebrews is to establish in the hearts of Christians the understanding of the New Covenant in Christ as being much better than the Old Covenant of the Law of Moses. We now have a better priesthood, a better hope, better promises, and as the result, a better faith. It serves as the paramount New Testament book written to teach Christians the fear of the Lord by warning them to continue in faith and the dangers of not doing so.

One of the apexes in Hebrews points out that, since we have a better covenant, that is mediated by the resurrected and glorified Son of God/Man and not by angels, as was the Old Covenant, we could be subject to far worse consequences than those who despised or rejected Moses' law. This serves as a "road sign" alerting us to the danger of continuing on certain "roads" in this journey of life. The writer of Hebrews was clearly warning

those who had already been sanctified (washed) by the blood of Christ not to throw off their confidence in Him (See Heb. 10:26-31).

This same context speaks of the Lord's disposition toward "willful sin." In the Old Testament, "willful sins" were only those that could be committed by God's people (See Num. 15:22-31). Such willful sin, as it is used in Hebrews 10:26 would *not* be sins committed out of weakness, ignorance, or deception. Willful sins would not be classified as those that involve the will of person since all sin involves our will and does not just involve knowing you are sinning in the process. *It also involves knowing what you are entirely despising or rejecting.* The Lord obviously considers most sins not willful or else all of us would be without hope.

Hear this sobering commentary from Matthew Henry⁷ :

"...What punishment can be sorer than to die without mercy? We answer, to die by mercy, by the mercy and grace which they have despised. How dreadful is the case, when not only the justice of God, but his abused grace and mercy call for vengeance!"

How can you abuse something that is not in your possession?

Esau was not granted repentance and the restoration of his birthright although he sought after it with tears (Heb. 12:14-17). Why? Because he knew the value of what he gave up for a morsel of food. He, only one time, valued his hungry stomach above the blessing and favor of God. Afterward, he had to face repercussions that would echo throughout eternity.

Another example of willful sin is revealed in one of the main reasons for the writing of the book of Hebrews. It is believed that certain Jewish believers were considering throwing off their faith in Christ and returning to Judaism, thus treating Christ's blood as being no better than that of animals. They were, therefore, warned that in having come to the knowledge of the truth, and then completely forsaking it, that they would only be left with an expectation of fiery indignation on Judgment Day. There would be *no* more sacrifice for sin for them.

In addition to the warnings in Hebrews, the Jewish believers would be joining themselves to a religion that was antichrist—haters of God's true people. As John declared to the believers of that day: "Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding [remaining or continuing to be present] in him." Listen, beloved of God, their eternal destiny was at stake! Scripture is clear on this matter. Such sin would be considered worse than that of Esau's because of them knowing the value of the Son of God, the Spirit of grace, and the blood of Christ and then turning *completely* away from it.

Now understand, if someone, having known the Lord, turns away from Him, that is no *absolute* indication that they cannot come back to Him. The Lord loves His own children

⁷ Matthew Henry Concise Commentary, Online Bible Edition

and is very longsuffering and kind toward them. As I made clear before, most of us will not even come near to committing such a sin against the precious blood of Jesus. Heeding God's warnings and our being moved by His fear, in faith, will absolutely assure this in our hearts. So, if your heart is not assured before God, take some time now and call upon Him. His loving arms of grace are awaiting you.

I would not even think of disowning my daughter, even if she, wholeheartedly rebelled against me, left home, refused to return my calls, and sought to blatantly defame my name wherever she went. Nevertheless, she will reap the consequences of doing so. I would not be able to protect her from it in spite of my ever-enduring love for her. Above all, I would patiently wait in hope that the "fruit" of her ways would send her running to the tireless arms of her father. So, if I by God's grace, in my human frailty, would do this for my child, how much more would God do it for His own? While God has no desire to disown His own children, we have the potential to disown Him.

Being Faithful With the Grace of God

Earlier, I mentioned how Paul warned the Corinthians not to receive the grace of God in vain. He declared:

"We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. (2) For He says: 'In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.' Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation (2 Cor. 6:1-2).

Jesus told a parable that will help us to understand what Paul was warning the Church about:

"A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. (7) Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, 'Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?' (8) But he answered and said to him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. (9) And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down'" (Lk. 13:6-9).

The writer of Hebrews also warned the Jewish believers about their "slothful immaturity" in Hebrews 5:12-6:12. They were told that the time had come that they should all be teachers (those who ground people in the truth), yet they were still like "babes," needing the milk of the word (5:12-14). Then the writer exhorts them to leave the elementary principles and go on to maturity (6:1-2). Beginning with verse 3 of chapter 6 heed the warning given to them:

"And this we will do *if God permits*. (4) *For it is impossible* for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, (5) and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, (6) if they fall away, *to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame*. (7) For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; (8) but if it bears thorns and briars, it is rejected

and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned. (9) *But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you*, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner. (10) For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. (11) And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, (12) that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

“And this we will do if God permits” in verse 3 conveys the writers intent to take the believers on to maturity. Yet he hesitates with a warning of there being a *possibility* of God not permitting it by not granting them repentance. Why? Because the forgiveness of their slothful immaturity may require that Christ be crucified again, putting Him to an open shame. In other words, the writer was indicating that there may not be a sacrifice of sin left for them as they were warned again later in chapter 10. God was indicating that He would *not* allow His Son to be put to an open shame again.

In the passage from 2 Corinthians, we are warned not to receive the grace of God in vain, and, in the parable in Luke, Jesus warns those who are planted in the Lord’s orchard (His people) about using up ground (grace) and not producing fruit for His pleasure. He reveals that there is a time when such a “tree” would be plucked up from the ground (grace) if it does not produce the expected fruit. In Hebrews 6, the writer uses the earth and the rain it often receives as a word picture to convey that God expects fruit worthy of the measure of rain (grace) that is often poured upon us. If the earth produces briars and thorns instead, “it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.” Such will be the end of those who stubbornly continue to receive grace, not producing the expected fruit.

No doubt, by the time the writer of Hebrews got to verse nine of chapter six, the Jewish believers were probably becoming quite disturbed. But what a sigh of relief when they read the next verse: “But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you...” The reason that such news would have been so disturbing was because of a real possibility of God not granting them repentance.

(Hey, if the clear evidence of Scripture cannot convince you, then how will you be convinced? However, I am convinced of better things of you and most of God’s people. I believe, if you truly love Jesus (keeping His commandments), that you will embrace the truth even if you have to admit you are wrong. No matter how painful it may be to your pride, you will turn loose of the traditions taught by men.)

Much to our advantage, God has placed many “road signs” and “blockades” in our path to prevent us from harm and from crossing the point of no return. Nevertheless, they are not foolproof, that is, only a fool would ignore and scoff at God’s loving warnings and chastisement. As clearly portrayed in the book of Hebrews, if we are warned not to throw off our faith in Christ, then there is a possibility our doing so and our experiencing the consequences thereof. God’s warnings are not idle threats. Hebrews 3:14 declares: “For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end.” Paul exhorts the Colossians: “And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled (22) in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight— (23) *if indeed you continue in the faith*, grounded and steadfast, *and are not*

moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister” (italics mine). 1 Timothy 5:11 also speaks of those who are condemned because they cast off their first faith.

There is the possibility of our not becoming partakers of Christ, of our not continuing in the faith, of our being moved away from the hope of the gospel, and of our being condemned with those who have no faith or else we would not have been warned about it by the Holy Spirit through Scripture. All this indicates that God has given us a stewardship of His grace and holds us accountable for what we do with it. We will either be found faithful or unfaithful.

Eternal security is only found in our continuing in our first faith. It is not found in some absolute doctrine that guarantees you “irrevocable, never-ending fire insurance.” No such doctrine was taught by either Jesus or the apostles. In fact, Jesus taught that we must abide in the vine (John 15), and John reiterated it to the Church in his first epistle. The use of the word “abide” by both Jesus and John is synonymous with faith. Both words communicate our dire need to cling to, trust in, and completely rely on Christ. This is the basis for our relationship with Him, and the “connection” through which we are imparted life. He holds us responsible by commanding us to abide in Him. If we are not abiding in Christ, then we alone are to be blamed.

Jesus made clear the consequences of not abiding Him. He said: “If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.” If you throw withered, dry branches in the fire they are destroyed. Is this not similar to the earth that would be rejected, cursed, and burned because of not producing the expected fruit by God?

Someone might respond: “You are devaluing the sovereignty of God.”

Well, all I have done is tell you what Jesus and the apostles have already said. If I am taking away from the sovereignty of God then so were they. In fact, God in His sovereignty has declared through Peter: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (4) to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, (5) *who are kept by the power of God through faith* for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Pt. 1:3-5).

In this passage, Peter emphasizes God’s ability to keep us and our Kingdom inheritance. However, he does not say that we are just kept by the power of God, he includes “through faith.” It would be quite easy for God to keep us if it was solely dependent on His power but that is not the case. His ability to keep us is never in question. We are the ones who are subject to things that could undermine our faith in Christ. What can undermine the keeping power of God’s love? Absolutely nothing. Yet many things could undermine our belief in it.

Scripture passages such as the following would, therefore, have to be understood in light of this:

“All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out” (Jn. 6:37).

“This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day” (Jn. 6:39).

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. (28) And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. (29) My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand” (Jn. 10:27-29).

God *does not* cast us out of His family once we have become one of His children, and is more than able to keep us. God in His sovereignty has designed such a flawless and perfect plan of redemption for humanity that, in these passages, Jesus reveals His complete confidence in God’s ability to fulfill His promises to those who are heirs with Him in the New Covenant. However, as with all promises, their fulfillment is contingent on our having enduring faith. That is why Jesus emphasized, not only God’s keeping power, but also our need to abide in Him and the eternal consequences of not doing so.

In this New Covenant, we relate to God by grace through faith and no longer through the laws and commandments engraved in stone. Grace provides the favor and ability necessary for us to fulfill our part of the Covenant, and faith is the means by which we lay hold of the provision of grace. It is not just by grace, but by grace through faith. Faith makes grace effective in our lives. Yes, the primary or initial responsibility for the success of the New Covenant rests solely on God’s shoulders, however, we are responsible for what measure of grace He gives us. Grace does not automatically accomplish anything in our lives because only the humble receive and benefit from it (1 Pt. 5:5-6). It is, therefore, only effective in the humble faith-filled heart.

God’s sovereignty is evident in its greatest splendor by His provision of grace and our having to stand in it by faith. Grace glorifies Him and so does faith. He provides the grace and enables us to believe, but we must do the believing—to the end. His great love is enough to rouse faith within the most wicked of hearts, yet He gives that heart the freedom not to surrender. Being God’s beloved, we still have the potential to be deceived, throw off our faith, and commit willful sin. If we do not have a free will to walk away from God, throwing off our faith, then the righteousness accredited to us because of faith is no longer righteousness.

To illustrate, Adam and Eve were created in an innocent state in the Garden of Eden but they were not necessarily created righteous. We also find that there was, in addition to the Tree of Life, a forbidden tree placed there. Its purpose was to incite them to choose righteousness and continue in it or else righteousness would not have been considered a moral choice of their will. Of how much value is love or righteousness if we only do it because we were created to do so apart from a having choice to do so. One of the things that makes my wife’s love and respect most valuable, valid, and real to me is the fact that she has been faithful not to prostitute it somewhere else. Tried and proven love is the greatest and perfect love.

God has designed, in His plan of redemption for humanity, that all things praise the glory of His grace (Eph. 1:3-6). He has also made faith to be a moral choice of our will even though God does enable or give us the privilege to believe. Where He gives grace, through the message of the cross, there is also present the ability to believe. God’s sovereignty becomes more glorious when, in order to keep them eternally secure, He has

to work with the wills of people who have difficulty in comprehending Him. “We see through a glass darkly” (1 Cor. 13).

As long as our “beginning confidence” remains intact then we are eternally secure. God, therefore, works in us now to secure our faith and we must cooperate with Him in order for it to happen. We had a free will before we believed and we have a free will now. Eternal security cannot, therefore, be automatic.

The doctrine of eternal security as taught by some in the Church is one of the most dangerous and erroneous doctrines in the body of Christ. Why? Because it is man-made and severely discounts the need for the child of God to fear the Lord. If you are “eternally secure,” then there is no need to fear the consequences of despising and rejecting the benefits and blessings of the New Covenant, once having already partaken of them. The warnings clearly portrayed in the New Testament to God’s people would, consequently, be of little significance. Furthermore, there would be no need for us to abide in Christ, if we are already “eternally secure.”

Do you now see how dangerous this doctrine is? Do you see how that some people’s sense of security before the Lord is based on a false doctrine and not on the fact that they fear the Lord, heeding His warnings? Would this not make their eternal security false? As quoted earlier: “In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence, and His children will have a place of refuge” (Pro. 14:26). In the fear of the Lord, we have strong confidence and an eternal place of refuge and not in a doctrine fabricated from a biased and imbalanced point of view. So, we must know whether our eternal security is based on a fabrication or on the eternal word of God.

If Noah had taken a nonchalant attitude toward the warnings of God, he would not have fully understood the importance of building the ark. What if he had said, “Well, I am already eternally secure? I already have my ticket to Heaven. That’s the most important thing.” He would have not become the heir of the righteousness by faith and would not have completed the ark. Instead, by faith, he awoke every morning and faced the inevitable of the destruction of the world. Every morning, for over one hundred years, he was moved with godly fear and built the ark as God designed. If he had failed to obey the Lord then he and his family may have perished with the rest of the world.

If our keeping were solely dependent on God’s power and love, then the doctrine of eternal security would have legitimacy. The security of our salvation is also contingent on our continuing in faith—of our having faith in His keeping power and love. What shall we believe? Doctrines of men or Scripture? Let us heed God’s warning and follow His instructions for the eternal keeping of our souls.

Chapter Twenty Three



The Inherent Safeguard

Within every Christian is an inherent (inborn) safeguard that leads them in the way of truth and warns them when subjected to deceptive influences. This safeguard is identified in Romans 8:16:

“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”

It is by the witness (testimony) of the Holy Spirit in our spirit that we know we belong to God. By it, we can also know Him. This involves being able to discern what is not of Him—the true from the false, good from evil, and the genuine from the counterfeit.

The Apostle John said it this way:

“But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and *you do not need that anyone teach you*; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and *is true, and is not a lie*, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him” (1 Jn. 2:27).

The main reason Christians are deceived is attributed to their failure to develop and be taught by this anointing. This inward witness or anointing and its development is the key to our growing up in Christ.

Notice that John stated that we would not need any man to teach us. What does he mean by this? No person or thing, whether pastors, priests, preachers, or religious organizations, can take the place of your personal relationship with the Father in Heaven. Neither can anyone, except Christ, mediate that relationship (1 Tim. 2:5).

Our relationship with God cannot depend on a person or church and their teachings. We are already deceived if we depend on someone else’s discernment or teaching to protect us from the devil’s deception. In varying degrees, this unhealthy and unholy dependency dominates the Church because of our failure to understand that no man or organization can monopolize the truth. God’s New Covenant design leaves no room for such to take place. *Christ in us* is sufficient to provide all things that pertain to [this] life and godliness (2 Pt. 1:1-3). Man-made religious structures and systems are threatened by Christ revealed in every believer because it threatens the control they have over the people.

If you were to take a snapshot of the healthy and holy dependency that should exist in the Church, what would it look like? One of the most important things that an airplane pilot must learn is how to read and fly solely by the airplane’s instruments. It was speculated that the reason John F. Kennedy Jr. became the untimely fatality of an airplane crash was because of his inexperience in flying an airplane solely by its instruments. An inability to

read and follow an airplane's guidance instruments could result in the pilot thinking that he is ascending when he is actually descending. While pilots must trust and follow the instructions of air traffic controllers, thus preventing disaster, their onboard instruments are their closest friends. They are with them wherever they go. In a similar way, the Christian must learn to follow their internal guidance instrument—the witness of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is their closest friend and is always with him or her. The Christian must also trust and follow the “air traffic controllers” assigned to them in order to make it safely to their destiny. The “air traffic controllers” represent the body of Christ. This type of dependency exemplifies to us what is pleasing and brings honor to Christ’s headship of His Church.

There are three promises that frame the New Covenant as defined in Hebrews 8:10-12.

They are as follows:

- ✓ Sanctification and Relationship: “I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (v.10).
- ✓ A thriving and unmediated relationship with God: “None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them” (v.11).
- ✓ Forgiveness and cleansing from sin: “For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more” (v.12).

Most of us are familiar with and understand the first and third promise, but what about the second? In the Old Testament, Moses went up the mountain and received God’s revelation for the people. He spoke with God face-to-face (Nu. 12:8; Deut. 34:10) and was actually living out a New Covenant promise under the Old Covenant. Why then do we, as New Covenant people, live under Old Covenant restrictions? In the Old Covenant, the people were not allowed to even touch the mountain for fear of their lives (Heb. 12:18-20). Now, we are conditioned in varying degrees by man-made religious traditions (teachings and practices) to not “go up the mountain” for ourselves. Listen to what Jesus declared:

“The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the Kingdom of God has been preached, and *everyone* is pressing into it” (Lk. 16:16).

We are to no longer send a “Moses” up the mountain to receive the revelation of God for us. We are *all* commanded to press in.

The Dependability of the Anointing

During one service in a church I used to attend, my attention was drawn to a man who was serving on staff at that time. When I saw him, I knew in my spirit that something was not right. Afterward, my spirit was troubled every time I saw him. (Notice that I did not say that my emotions were troubled. We can know the difference between troubled emotions and a troubled spirit. If our spirit is troubled, we will sense it from deep within where the Holy Spirit dwells.) Within one year this man had resigned his staff position, was arrested by the police, found guilty, and put in prison for crimes he had committed.

The Spirit was bearing witness in my spirit the whole time that this man was living a lie, but I could not identify the problem. If I had diligently sought the Lord concerning the issue, this man could have possibly been confronted long before his arrest. I learned something very important from this experience:

The anointing within me does not lie, and I need to completely trust it. Someone's life, including mine, may depend on it.

We were sitting on the porch at a couple's home who are very dear to us. They had asked us to come and pray specifically for the wife concerning physical problems that she was having. As she was talking about an experience she had with another relative, I sensed a knot well up in my throat and was nearly overcome by feelings of rejection. At the time, I did not completely understand what was going on, but after conveying what was happening with me, we petitioned the Lord. She confirmed that there was hurt in her heart concerning the relative. I had sensed hurt and rejection in her that neither she nor her husband knew was there.

There have also been a number of occasions, while sitting in a church service or watching Christian television, that I have sensed the teacher or preacher step over from speaking by revelation into a spirit of error. We can know the difference between those things that come from God and the product of a person's understanding (which can also be demonic in origin; see Jas. 3:13-16).

The inherent witness of the Spirit along with a thorough understanding of the word of God have kept me from such error on many occasions.

If we learn to receive revelation from our Father every day, recognizing what is not coming from Him is much easier. We will be sensitive in recognizing those things that bring honor to man and not to Christ. Our hearts and thinking will have one ultimate goal: uphold Christ's honor while showing kindness toward all people. This is the Christian code of honor. Above all others, we will love and contend for what is Christ's and will rebuke those, showing no disrespect, who walk contrarily. The following two truths clearly and succinctly form the dividing line between those who are of the spirit of antichrist and those who are truly of Christ and are loyal to Him alone:

- Whatever originates from man brings honor to him (Jn. 5:43-44; 1 Jn. 2:22-23).
- Whatever comes from the Holy Spirit brings honor to Christ (Jn. 16:13-14). The same would be true about God's angels.

[Warning: the minister of Christ should never attempt to redirect to themselves the honor that belongs to Christ, receiving hero worship as if the message and gifts originated from us. Those who compete with Christ never win.]

For many days, a woman followed Paul and Silas declaring, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation" (Acts 16:16-18). Paul became greatly annoyed and cast a spirit of divination out of her. This woman was telling the truth and saying all the right "Christian" words but what was wrong? The gift of divination empowered by the evil spirit in her was drawing all the attention to her. This proves that a person can say and even do all the right things by the wrong spirit and for the wrong reasons. This woman was operating in an antichrist spirit [a spirit that seeks to steal Christ's glory, drawing the attention to it or to what it is saying or doing].

How much of the manifestations, signs, and wonders, gifts, and talents in the Church draw attention to themselves rather than to Christ? How much of it is empowered by a flamboyant spirit of divination? Fleshly pride and insecurity can eventually open the door to such an unclean spirit if that person does not confess their sin (bring it into the light) and repent.

By the anointing that abides within us, we can *always* know when someone is operating in the wrong spirit and teaching false doctrine with deceitful and persuasive words.

John pointed out in 1 John 2:27 that we abide in (tenaciously cling to, trust in, rely on, obey) Christ by the teaching of the anointing within us. All outside teaching must agree with its teaching, and it will always agree with Scripture and the corporate witness of the Spirit (not opinions or speculation) in the body of Christ. *The cause for much of the instability in Christian's lives today is that they are taught more from an outside influence rather than from within.* This produces a disadvantage in their ability to continually abide in Christ. They are tossed back and forth like the waves of the sea when tested and are almost clueless in their ability to differentiate the good from the evil and the genuine from the counterfeit.

While teaching from outside sources can be dependable, it may not be on every occasion. Thank God that we have an anointing that will keep us safely in Christ if we will heed its instructions. The inward anointing will be our immovable anchor and link to God during our sojourn on earth. Do *you* believe it is entirely dependable? Notice that I did not ask if you were confident in your ability to hear from God. *If we are going to clearly hear from God, we must first have complete confidence in the dependability of the Holy Spirit within us.* If we are confident of this, then confidence in our ability to hear from God will not be a problem.

Upon the dependability of the Holy Spirit rests the success of the entire New Covenant. We have no other choice than to be entirely dependent on Him. Jesus is fully assured of the Holy Spirit's dependability to take what is of Him and get it to us, bringing honor to Him. So, we can live with the full assurance that the Holy Spirit (and His witness within us) never lies, surpasses all human understanding, and will keep us forewarned and safe. "Now He [Jesus] who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Rom. 8:27). Jesus mediates for us as the Great High Priest and interferes with and cancels the devil's plan against us but must have our cooperation to successfully do so.

Geese are known for their ability to return before winter to warmer climates in the south. They have a very dependable God-given internal homing device that takes them back to the same place (home) each year. This old saying is appropriate: "Home is where the heart is." Jesus proclaimed also: "...Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Mt. 6:21). As a compass always points toward the north, even so the inherent witness of the Spirit in our hearts points toward Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He is our goal, purpose, home, and treasure.

In all that He says and does, the Holy Spirit only seeks to glorify—to bring to everyone's attention—Jesus. If we will listen to the inherent witness of the Spirit in us, we will never fall short of knowing Christ and will not miss God's perfect will. We will understand that anything that does not draw attention to Christ is not of the Holy Spirit. Our hearts will be locked in to the coordinates of our destiny in Christ—of becoming like

Him. The more we listen, trust, and obey, using God's written word as the guideline, the less self-centered and worldly we will be. Jesus will be our greatest love and focus. We will lay down our lives for His honor and His people.

Our enjoying the fullness of what God intends for us in the New Covenant largely depends on our ability to hear from God. The Holy Spirit dwells in us to make sure we do.

Are you listening with undivided attention?

Chapter Twenty Four



Revelation: the Flow of Christ's Life Within

“In Him [Christ] was life, and the life was the light of men. (5) And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend [perceive and apprehend] it. (10) He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him” (Jn. 1:4-5 &10).

Why could the darkness and world *not* comprehend and know Christ?

God revealed Himself to the world through Christ but they, because of their self-made righteousness and intellectual pride, could not comprehend it with their spiritual eyes. As Paul said: “For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not [and could not] know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. (22) For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; (23) but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, (24) but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. (25) Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men” (1 Cor. 1:21-25).

- The Jews saw Christ as a threat.
- The Greeks saw Him as a fool.
- The Jews were self-sufficient in and boasted about their works of righteousness.
- The Greeks were self-sufficient in and boasted about their wisdom.
- The Jews placed faith in Abraham as their father.
- The Greeks placed faith in their culture.
- Both disqualified themselves to receive understanding from God.
- Both rejected Christ.

Jesus drew the dividing line between those to whom God would personally reveal Himself and those to whom He would not:

“At that time Jesus answered and said, “I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes”” (Mt. 11:25).

The wise and prudent represent those who are intellectually self-sufficient and will not humble themselves in order for God to give them revelation. They are pridefully blind to and will not admit their continuous need for God. The babes are those whose self-sufficiency is bankrupt and *are ready* to be convinced of their continual need for God.

The Apostle Paul prayed for the church at Ephesus:

“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, (18) the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, (19) and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe...” (Eph. 1:17-19).

Notice that he did not ask God to just give them wisdom and revelation. “The spirit of” preceded it. This indicates a constant and ongoing event. When we were born and took our first breath, it was only the beginning of many. Not just one breath was needed. Even so, not just one revelatory experience with God is needed. The spirit of wisdom is the ability to *repetitively* comprehend, discern, and understand God. This includes knowing how to apply to ourselves and others what we are seeing. The spirit of revelation is God *repetitively* disclosing or unveiling Himself to us. We cannot comprehend God or the things of Him unless He first reveals Himself to us (revelation). Without having the ability to comprehend and discern Him (wisdom), we would not be able to understand what is being revealed. When God grants us these two things, our spiritual eyes are enlightened. As our natural bodies need air, even so, the spirit and soul of the Christian must breathe in revelation from God. Walking in the spirit of wisdom and revelation is abiding in Christ. It is living in and breathing the atmosphere surrounding God’s throne. It is absorbing and assimilating the glory (the outshining and radiance; the reputation) of who God is.

Simply put: Paul prayed that God would unveil (reveal) Himself and also grant them the ability to comprehend, interpret, and apply what was revealed so that they could continuously experience God in a transforming way.

The spirit of wisdom and revelation will prevent us from having just emotional, thrilling, and exciting religious experiences that achieve no definable change within us. It is possible to have encounters with God and not experience transformation. While transforming power is available during such encounters, the spirit of wisdom and revelation that defines our experience and provides transformation must be sought out. God desires truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part He will make us to know wisdom (Ps. 51:6).

From the scripture in Ephesians, we can conclude that any revelation received from God must be sought out by us first while laying aside the common temptation to try and figure things out for ourselves. No one is brilliant enough to wrap their minds around the most “foolish” things of God. This must be a deep, dominant, and constraining conviction within every church leader as it was with Paul. Unless it is prioritized as a major point of prayer and emphasis, it will be severely lacking. Where it is lacking, a particular church body will go astray and become barren.

God grants revelation only to those whose knees remain bowed to the Lord Jesus Christ as opposed to their intelligence and reputation or that of someone else.

Unless we receive revelation from God, the Holy Bible is reduced to just another one of the many religious books existing today. We will know the book but not intimately know its Author. Jesus told the religious leaders of that day, “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. (40) But

you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life” (Jn. 5:39-40). He proved that we can become devoted to the things of God but not truly know and be devoted to Him and, therefore, be disqualified for (eternal) life.

Receiving revelation from God is the Christian’s lifeline to Him. This is why we must have an enduring love for the truth and not just truth coming through another human being although God’s revelation can and does come that way. We must operate in the *spirit of wisdom and revelation*. By doing so, we are partaking of the divine nature which is the flow of the life and light of Christ to us (2 Pt. 1:2-4).

Mount up with Wings

Which of these have a greater perspective and ability to ascend to the top of a mountain, a rock climber or an eagle? Through the spirit of wisdom and the knowledge of God, the “rock climber” is given the wings of an eagle to accomplish the same tasks with supernatural skill. God’s “super” is thus added to their natural. Every spiritual breath we inhale of the spirit (atmosphere) of wisdom and knowledge from God is similar to every single extension and thrust of the wings of an eagle as it launches from the limits of the earth. They that wait upon the Lord...shall mount up with wings like eagles (Isa. 40:31). Their spiritual eyes will see what they have never seen before. Their talons (weapons of war) will destroy the serpents (the works of darkness) they could not reach before, and their hearts and lives will find unimaginable fulfillment.

Fortunately, for fifteen minutes, I stood and watched an awe-inspiring event. I first heard the sound of the hawk in the distance and began searching the sky for it. Then I saw him, accompanied by two annoying crows. The crows were obviously upset because of the invasion of their territory, yet they did not get too close and never made contact with the hawk. As I watched this event unfold, the hawk never flapped his wings one time or even flinched at the onslaught of the crows. As the hawk soared in a circle, it gained greater altitude, rising beyond the reach of the crows. He soared to that place where crows can never go.

Likewise, we are called and assured by Christ’s finished work to extend our wings of faith upon the winds of the upward call of being seated in the heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 2:4-6). Each flap of our spiritual wings represents the flow of Christ’s revelation to and through us. In this way we will soar to that is the place of immunity from all the annoying powers of darkness.

Leonardo da Vinci once said:

“For once you have tasted flight, you will walk the earth with your eyes turned skywards, for there you have been and there you will long to return.”

Once you have your wings, you will be ruined for anything else.

Father, we are convinced of our dire need for and desire to be filled with the spirit of wisdom and revelation to accomplish those things that would otherwise be impossible. We, as Your people, cannot become, as prophesied, the restored Tabernacle of David

without it. We will always be careful to remain little in our own eyes as we look to you for our wings because we were created to fly. In Jesus wonderful name we ask, seek, and knock until it is opened unto us. Amen.

Chapter Twenty Five



How the Devil Uses

Human Sentiment

Sentiment: 1. a. A cast of mind; general mental disposition: (ex. Anti-American sentiment is running high in some countries.) b. An opinion about a specific matter; a view. 2. A thought, a view, or an attitude based on feeling or emotion instead of reason. 3. The emotional import of a passage. 4. a. susceptibility to tender, romantic, or nostalgic feeling. b. An expression of such susceptibility... 7. A vague feeling or awareness; sensation:

“From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. (22) Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!” (23) But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men” (Mt. 16:21-23).

This incident serves as one of the greatest examples of how the devil will use human sentiment to hinder God’s purposes. Peter’s response to Jesus was based on an attitude, feeling, or emotion he had for Jesus instead of the understanding of God’s will which Jesus had already disclosed to His disciples on more than one occasion.

The scope of human sentiment is limited only to the realm of the human soul and cannot comprehend God’s mind (1 Cor. 2:14; Ro. 8:7). When the human soul is enlightened and inspired by the Holy Spirit, it can then aspire to something much greater than its own sentiments—the understanding of God’s thoughts and ways (1 Cor. 2:9-10). This is what happened to Peter prior to the previously mentioned event. Jesus asked His disciples (Mt. 16:15-18), “Who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter answered and said, ““You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (17) Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. (18) And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.””

The “rock” upon which the Church must be built, in order to be victorious, is the revelation of who Christ is in the heart of each individual member. Every individual must partake of His divine nature directly (2 Pt. 1:1-4).

These two examples convey the importance of our never allowing human sentiment to interfere with God’s purposes. Anything we do for God’s Kingdom that maximizes human sentiment always opens the door for the devil.

On one occasion, Peter was moved by the revelation of the Holy Spirit to him of who Christ is. On the other, he was moved by what he felt about or how he felt toward Christ. The two events form the dividing line between genuine God-inspired devotion to Christ and powerless and “well-intentioned” piety. Such piety may in appearance seem benign (harmless) but there will always be a “serpent” lurking underneath.

Human sentiment is probably the greatest hindrance to the development and growth of faith in Christ. This is why Jesus declared: “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple” (Lk. 14:26-27). Hatred in this case is referring to our denying ourselves the familial bonds that would keep us from fulfilling the will of God in our lives.

At the announcement of Jesus’ coming birth, Mary was told that a “sword” would pierce her soul (Lk. 2:35). Jesus also stated during His public ministry that He came not to bring [outward, worldly] peace but a sword that divides and causes enmity even among family members (Mt. 10:34). He was indicating that those who embrace the truth (of taking up your cross and wholeheartedly following after Christ) can no longer relate to anyone in the same manner as before. This sword began to pierce Mary’s heart when Jesus started referring to her as “woman” instead of mother (Jn. 2:4; 19:26). Jesus was not being disrespectful toward her. He had to minimize that relationship to maximize His status and relationship with His Father in Heaven. Mary’s status before God could not be based on the fact that she was His mother but only in the truth that He is the Messiah and her faith in Him. She too had to be redeemed from sin because *all* have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Ro. 3:23).

If you are a Christian parent, using the necessary means in raising your children in a godly manner is a bygone conclusion. One thing that became quite clear during the process of raising our daughter is that my perception of providing for, protecting, nurturing, comforting, training, and defending her was at times contradictory to God’s ways. There would be times when I wanted to rise to her defense because of some “injustice” and God would urge me not to. His wisdom still echoes in my heart as to why: “So that her faith would be placed in God and not in me.” Yes, we still coached her through things but she had to develop her own faith in God. Because of my parental love, the time, teaching, and training invested, the pleasant memories, and the mutual fondness developed over many years, I (humanly speaking) would favor her over someone else’s child even if doing so would be an injustice against the other child.

Human sentiment breeds partiality. Partiality is a great injustice according to Scripture (See Jas. 2:1-13).

Throughout history, certain human rights movements may have been inspired by God originally but lost their way because of holding on to the common offense that necessitated the movement. Prejudice shown by a society and its government to a gender or an ethnic minority becomes the source of offense. Prejudice, left unchecked, can turn into indifference, indifference into blatant hatred, hatred into civil and criminal injustices and violence. The sentiments that are rooted in offense and that also bind people together for a common cause end up producing the same fruit as the original offense. Those

people become partial to their own and, thereby, reproduce the bias, bigotry, discrimination, and hatred among themselves.

Universalism is becoming a popular religion because influential television celebrities such as Oprah Winfrey have embraced and preach it. Its message is “tolerance.” This includes tolerating things that God rejects or condemns. According to this message, those who (although in agreement with God) call homosexuality an abomination or Islam a false and idolatrous religion are intolerant or “haters.” Universalism in its more blatant form accepts all religions as the pathway to God and teaches that all creatures and people will ultimately be reconciled to Him. It denies the foundational doctrine of God’s eternal judgment and advocates reincarnation and “karma” (Heb. 6).

Ms. Winfrey, who was taught about Jesus in her early years, has denied Him as the Son of God, the One through whom alone comes salvation and eternal life. Like the woman with the spirit of divination (Acts 16:16-18), she talks about God and salvation, but who is she really glorifying? When she talks about “Jesus,” it is not the same Jesus that God raised from the dead and who He also seated at His right hand. The “Jesus” she talks about is a counterfeit and is no greater than Mohammed or Gautama Buddha. They are both dead.

Variations of Universalism are sneaking into the Church through religious unity movements and misunderstandings concerning God’s system of justice. Some of the inroads are teachings that claim that a loving God would send no one to hell (a place of confinement for criminals). This doctrine comes from an overemphasis of and confusion concerning the goodness of God and a failure to also understand His severity and justice (Rom. 11:22).

If we allow human sentiment to influence how we feel about the foundational doctrine of eternal judgment (Heb. 6), God’s justice will be equated with cruelty. While God’s justice may in appearance seem cruel, cruelty is never just. Cruelty involves not only unkindness but also brutality and malice. God is morally just but never mean or malicious. He is not willing that anyone should perish (eternally) but must protect His Kingdom and people against those who would do it harm. A good shepherd may have to kill a wolf or bear that is threatening his sheep. This doesn’t indicate that he is cruel, brutal, unkind, or mean. No, it reveals that he truly is a good shepherd. We must never allow our human sentiment to define God’s justice as cruel. Nor can we ever attempt to customize or adapt His justice to appease how we feel about something or to cater to our lack of death to idolatrous familial bonds.

The foundation upon which God’s throne (His rule) rests is judgment and justice (Ps. 89:14-18; Isa. 9:6-7). This indicates that the existence and integrity of all creation depends on His justice being served.

How we feel about hell, the lake of fire (places of eternal incarceration), and the possibility of loved ones suffering in those places cannot ever influence our interpretation of the Biblical truth about those things. In the last days, those who refuse the love of the Truth will be turned over to strong delusion (2 Ths. 2).

Is God’s system of justice discriminating, allowing only certain people to be saved (redeemed, justified, born-again)? What about those who have not heard the Gospel? Will they end up in hell or, eventually, the lake of fire? First, we must understand that all

people are already condemned (sentenced) to eternal separation (incarceration) away from God's presence because all have sinned—are found guilty by God's moral law (Rom. 3). The Gospel message is God's final and most evident attempt to send them a "lifeboat." He does not have to send it if you have refused all of His other attempts to prepare your heart for the Gospel through the laws of creation, all of the evidences of His intelligent design, conscience, moral law, and difficulties that challenge the limitations of our humanity. God, through the work of the Holy Spirit, uses all of these things to bring us to the place in our hearts in which we can fully embrace His Son as our Redeemer. The Gospel message is His commitment to go the "second mile" although we have treated Him like refuse and rejected all of His previous "messengers." God is looooooongsuffering and is not willing that anyone should perish but that all would receive eternal life (2 Pt. 3:9).

God's written moral law was given to prove the guilt of every person that has ever lived or will live (Ro. 3:9-19). Those ethnic groups to whom the law was not given are a law unto themselves by virtue of their conscience. A person's conscience echoes God's moral law.

God did not owe us Jesus' sacrifice for our sins (our crimes against God government). That act was based solely on His willingness to show mercy. His mercy is better defined in the proper context. Imagine showing mercy on the person who just murdered your child. Not only that, you willingly take that person's punishment upon yourself. This is similar to the mercy God has shown us all. All of our sins, from Adam to the last person to be born on earth, nailed Jesus to the cross. In a sense, we all murdered Him.

Let us fully embrace this truth: all of the goodness of every human being combined cannot attain to the righteousness that God requires in order for our sins to be put away before Him. Jesus had to die to put away our sins and, in so doing, our just punishment also. Faith in His sacrifice and resurrection is our acceptable and perfect righteousness before God. Our faith must be in what He did and not in what we do.

Mercy is available to all people but not all find it. Why? Because not all have allowed themselves to be convinced that they need it. Instead, they scoff at and defy their Redeemer. They spit in the face of such a great and excellent love. God has set everything in place to convince every single person of their need for His mercy. Instead, they are ungrateful and shake their fist in His face (see Psalm 2). Because of despising His rule (His throne; justice and judgment), the mercy, grace, and truth that shines from His face is hidden from them (Ps. 89:14-18). God will not waste His "pearls" on the swine (Mt. 7:6).

In Acts 16:6-7, why did the Holy Spirit tell Paul and Timothy not to preach the Gospel in Asia and in certain Asia Minor provinces? Instead, the Gospel went west—to Rome, Spain, Europe, England, and then to the Americas and the nations of Africa. The east is comprised of nations that have continually shown hostility to the nation of Israel. These nations include the descendants of Ismael, Esau, Lot (Abraham's nephew), and those nations that make up, at least in part, what is defined as "Babylon." These nations have embraced antichrist religious and political beliefs and systems that greatly hinder them, to this day, from being prepared for the Gospel.

Jesus made it clear that no one can come to the Father except through Him (Jn. 14:6). He also took it a step further and said, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent

Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. (45) It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me" (Jn. 6:44-45). If the necessary preparation of the heart of people within a society is greatly hindered, then the Gospel will be "wasted on the swine." The messengers' blood will also be wasted—they would become needless casualties of war.

According to Romans 1:20, since God is invisible, He has clearly revealed Himself to every person that has ever lived. Every person has received the understanding of who He is since the beginning of creation and are without excuse. The only exceptions within God's justice system are babies and children who have not reached "the age of accountability" (the full development of conscience). Another exception could be those people who are mentally incapacitated to the point they have little-to-no self-consciousness.

No one will be able to blame God for the eternal judgment and punishment to which they are sentenced. Remember, God destroyed every human being on the face of the earth except for Noah and his family. Is that discrimination on God's part? No, it only proves how wicked mankind had become because of sin's death-march and how God's justice must prevail in all things. God is so good that He preserved one family and, as the result, we are here today. Thank God for His incredible mercy. Besides, according to Scripture, Noah's continual testimony of God to that generation and the building of the ark took place over one hundred years (See Gen. 1-4). They were without excuse and scoffed at Noah instead. How many are scoffing today? He who sits in the heavens laughs. The stone (Jesus) that the builders of society have rejected has become the Chief Cornerstone of all creation. It was to Him, that God promised: "Ask Me, and I will give You the nations as Your inheritance" (Ps. 2; Ps 118:22; Mt. 21:42; 1 Pt. 2:7).

How can a loving God send someone to hell or the lake of fire? Yes, contrary to beliefs that are presently gaining popularity, God does sentence people to eternal punishment because they leave Him with no other choice. God has appointed "jailers" who will forcefully take them away. How can a criminal court judge sentence someone to incarceration or to death row? Does this indicate that the judge is void of love or is it that he understands the overall integrity of a society depends on the execution of justice? For judges to succumb to personal sentiment in their judgments would result in the exponential propagation of injustice (crime) within a society. Yes, the Bible states that God is love, but it also states that He is a consuming fire and the Righteous Judge (Heb. 12:28-29; 2 Tim. 4:8).

God will never incorporate human sentiment in His judgments and system of justice unless the concerned person or people seek first His Kingdom and righteousness. (The governments of mankind should never do it either.) Their sentiments must first allow Him his rightful place. Every knee will bow to the Son of God as the Lion of the tribe of Judah (See Rev. 4) and not to human sentiment.

Most, if not all, deceptive doctrines find inroads into our thinking on the human sentiment level. I once heard a television minister state that the Apostle Paul missed it because he didn't have to go through all those trials and troubles. He stated that he believed this because his "spiritual father" taught it. To begin with, the arrogance here is obvious. Secondly, this minister's fondness of a "spiritual father" should never be in

competition with a solid and uncompromising love for the truth. He believed it because of his feelings for and loyalty to another human being. By so doing, he has betrayed Christ. You cannot serve two masters (Lk. 16:13). This gives us more insight as to why Jesus told us not to call anyone “father” except our Father in Heaven (Mt. 23:1-12). The title “father” allows certain entitlements to the bearers of that title. Those entitlements are defined by the expectations a particular society or religious group places on it. When loyalty to a “father” infringes on our supreme loyalty to Christ, we become idolaters.

The spiritual battle of this age can be defined in terms of God-inspired truth verses the counterfeits. One truth stands out above the rest as the judge and jury of all the other claims of truth in the world. As already established in an earlier chapter, the Spirit of truth only brings honor to Christ—draws attention to who He is and His finished work of redemption. God-inspired truth does not sing the praises of human accomplishment, intelligence, sentiment, religious devotion, or goodness. Only the wayward, insecure, and “unyoked” (not having Christ’s yoke) souls of men seek the limelight.

God has made it quite clear: what we believe to be true will determine our eternal destiny.

Jesus testified before Pilate: “For this cause I was born and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice” (Jn. 18:37). The present increase of God’s Kingdom in the earth largely depends on the prevalence of His truth in the hearts and minds of people. As was recorded in Acts 19, the word of God must grow mightily and prevail. The success of God’s word depends largely on the purity and overall reliability of the messenger. The messenger must be one heart and mind with the Author, Christ. His anointing must be their anointing in character and in ability.

Jesus concluded His rebuke to Peter by directing this exhortation toward all His disciples:

(24) “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. (25) For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. (26) For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? (27) For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.”

A lack of death to the self-life within believers (See Mk. 8:34-38) has allowed, through human sentiment, distorted perceptions of and doctrines about God and civil government to arise in this hour. Those who embrace sound Biblical doctrine are true to the person of Christ above all else, even above their family, associates, and political affiliations.

To deny ourselves indicates that we have forgotten or lost sight of ourselves and our own interests and have embraced God’s interests. Jesus pressed His disciples to give up complete ownership of their souls to Him, becoming a servant of His intents and purposes. He warned them that their eternal destiny would depend on their doing so—that they could lose their own soul by loving the things of the world. Jesus warned us all that our final reward will be determined by what we do with our soul and the quality of the works that follow.

So, which shall we allow to rule us:

Our souls and its sentiments or...

Christ's (ruling) yoke that is easy, light, and ministers rest to our souls?

Chapter Twenty Six



God's Creation Order

Is God male or female or a combination of both? Yes, this is a trick question because He is neither. He is God and no one else can be included in that genre. God created genders within the earthly creation (angels not included; they are in a genre of their own).

Scripture reveals: “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Gen. 1:27). The fact that male and female humans are created after God’s image indicates that both are to equally reflect who He is without violating creation order. They are not an actual part of Him but were made by Him. The expression or form of the human “reflection” could vary because of the difference in the psychological makeup of male and female. For instance: I may not worship God in the same way a woman does but both are acceptable to God as long as it is done in Spirit and in truth (Jn. 4:23). This indicates, whether we are male or female, that only by our regenerated spirit and in compliance with God’s truth can we relate to Him.

This brings us to two important questions:

Are there spiritual things that can be categorized as male or female? While there are obvious physical and psychological differences between men and women, does gender apply to the spirit of a human being?

The answer to both questions is no. The promises, commandments, and covenant of God are not gender specific unless otherwise indicated. In Christ Jesus, there is neither male nor female. We are all one in Him (Gal. 3:28). God’s love is not partial to human gender. Yet a major distinction exists in God’s creation order that defines the role of male and female in the earth. Sadly, the modern Church has for the most part been biased in its application of creation order among its own. We have gone out of our way not to offend some while simultaneously failing to provide God’s best for the many.

Why was the first human being created as a “he?” More importantly, why does Scripture refer to God as “He” before any human genders were created by Him (see Gen. 1:10)? The pronoun “he” was first used in referring to God thus establishing its original meaning. Again, that original meaning had nothing to do with human gender. The original meaning as applied to Adam was, therefore, not referring to gender either. The use of the pronoun “He” defined God as the originator (the Father) of all things—the First and the Last. Adam was created first after God’s design and was, therefore, established as the originator (father) of all people. Eve was created afterward, taken from Adam, as the mother of all living. All humanity came from Adam through Eve. The seed originated from Adam and the conception and birthing came from Eve. Adam sowed the life and Eve carried it to fruition. Adam is the giver and Eve is the receiver

and producer. By this, we understand how that the woman is the glory of man (I Cor. 11:7). This is why the first place of authority belongs to the man not just in the earth but also within the Church.

Gender Roles within the Church

The role of the man within the Church is similar to that of an architect and the woman's role is similar to that of the builder. Each are equally crucial for the completion of the building. The establishment of the spiritual order/structure and ministry of the Kingdom of God in the Church must *first* come through the man. The woman can then properly aid him in bringing the "blueprint" to life. This is why Jesus chose twelve men as his disciples (ultimately, the apostles), why only men were used to write Holy Scripture, and why He first established His covenants with men in the Old Testament (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and, ultimately, Christ). *Women have the authority to build (edify) both male and female in the Church.*

All of this helps us to more clearly understand the Lord's directive through Paul: "In like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, (10) but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works. (11) Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. (12) And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. (13) For Adam was formed first, then Eve. (14) And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control" (1 Tim. 2:9-15). The following can be concluded from this:

- Paul referenced creation order as being the structure and standard for authority and teaching in the Church—first Adam and then Eve. This order is universal and not only applicable to the scenario addressed here by him. Sadly, too many within the Church have catered to the spirit of this world and have either heavy-handedly applied this order or do not apply it at all in the Church. Again, Paul makes it clear here that God's creation order does and must be applied within the Church: first Adam and then Eve.
- As to whether a woman can teach or have "authority over" a man was not the main point Paul was addressing. There had been a violation of God's creation order: first Adam and then Eve. His directive was that under no circumstances can there exist scenarios that allow male and female roles to be reversed. The results will not be desirable. It will not be fully honored by God.
- In verse 12, Paul equated a woman "teaching a man" with "having authority over him." This clearly defines the type of teaching that is unacceptable. The Greek word translated "to have authority over" means *to dominate*. This type of authority should never exist even between men, especially not between men and women in the Church. The women were trying to operate as architects and not builders (edifiers)—trying to dominate the men in the scenario that Paul was addressing.
- A violation of this creation order will result in the woman no longer having a covering protection and the man drifting through life frustrated without aim or purpose.
- The "silence" of women in the Church is not referring to a complete silence, as if they cannot teach, preach, or prophesy under any circumstances, but rather to remaining

silent (self-controlled) and not interfere with or usurp the first-place role that belongs to the man. The builder should never attempt to do only what the architect can do. The results will not be desirable. Women can never be allowed to function in a role for which a man alone was created and vice versa.

- ♦ It is not appropriate for a woman to attempt to make up for what a man fails to or is not there to do. This leads the birth of counterfeit forms of authority that will be used to control and manipulate people and things because she will not have authorization from God. Those who are subject to that authority will never be able to grow until they are delivered from that authority and receive fathering from the Lord.
- ♦ This is not a slight against women as if they have a lesser role, although it is a slight against the modern feminist movement. If women are to step into their God-given place in the earth, they must first rid themselves of the mindsets associated with this movement. Such mindsets are rooted in facts mixed with insecurity concerning her place in God's creation. They down-play a "dominant" patriarchal society or Church as being undesirable and oppressive and accuse it of denying them equal rights. They label most men as sexists or chauvinists. Yes, some but not all men are oppressive toward women, and some cultures or nations are that way by man-made civil law. Some churches are that way by man-made tradition.
- ♦ A man's first-place role and authority in creation will accommodate and nurture the woman in her role and not oppress or suppress her to something less.
- ♦ A woman's stance toward the man should never be to tell him how to do what he is supposed to be doing. If she desires to instruct him, let it be done respectfully as dialogue, not with condescension, but in meekness as the helper she was created to be.
- ♦ A large part of the woman's role is to help the man fulfill his. She can encourage him with godly wisdom and understanding to reach his greatest potential. By doing so, she reaches her greatest potential and is held in high esteem.
- ♦ The insecurities existing within women because of Adam's (the architect's) failure to protect her cannot be healed by outward protest or show. Paul warns the women not to fall into the trap of replacing inward purity and godliness with such things. Insecurity opens the door for human control, competition, manipulation, self-promotion, contention, hatefulness, spite, gossip, and many other evils. These are evidences of someone who is fending for themselves, not understanding their God-given role.
- ♦ The man's headship of the woman is not one of dominance but of stewardship. He is overseeing one of God's precious, more fragile, ones. Handle with much care.
- ♦ The dominant influence of authority within the Church can never be that of a woman, although she can be dominant in carrying out delegated responsibilities. Major decision-making, the establishment of Church doctrine, the direction and future of the Church, the training and equipping of men, and, among others, the recognition and placement of qualified people in ministry is the role of the man in the Church. These are some of the first-place responsibilities.
- ♦ A man who has been mostly subject to Christian women ministry and mentoring will always fall short of his place as a man. This is true even if the women doing the ministry and mentoring are pure and godly. They are obviously also misguided to think that they can "teach" (mentor) a man. Thus the reason Paul stated, "...a woman cannot teach nor have [dominant spiritual] authority over a man." The dominant influence over a man should be the man Christ Jesus revealed through other mature men.

- ♦ Let me reiterate ladies: Paul said these things to protect you, not to suppress you! If you are operating in a role that belongs to a man, you are already taken captive by the serpent—you are frustrated and are frustrating the men around you. You are under demonic oppression and torment.

In order for women to be empowered within the church to become who God has called them, men must become the empowering agents by stepping into their first-place roles. Otherwise, women will be tempted to *empower themselves* with attitudes such as:

- If the men aren't going to do it then I will
- My husband is a wimp or incompetent so I have to do it myself
- If the men don't rise up then God will use women instead

If a woman is already functioning in a role and making decisions that belong to the man, she will likely develop a martyr complex that believes most men are chauvinists and uncooperative. *The reality is that the men are flinching and withdrawing to protect their masculinity.*

Any Christian ministry that derives its origin from self-empowerment and not from adherence to God's creation order will not last. The fruit will mostly be wood hay and stubble (1 Cor. 3).

Yes, women should be encouraged and empowered to arise to their God-given place alongside men to fulfill their Kingdom purposes, but doing so has to be in cooperation with God's order.

The Untouchable

The woman was created comparable to Adam as his helper (Gen. 2:18). She was created to acquiesce to him, honoring him as the "he." Her purpose was to help Adam fulfill his purpose. She could never stand in his place as the father (originator; the first created) of all living. When this order is violated in the Church, a man will have little interest in attending because his masculinity is at stake. *To protect it at all costs from the dominance of the feminine is a powerful motivating force within him.* His masculinity is directly linked to his first place in creation and cannot be compromised. It is as sensitive as his groin. It is the untouchable.

- The insecure man will react in anger or with cowardice when experiencing infractions against his masculinity.
- The secure man will speak the truth in love or remain silent (self-controlled) until he knows from the Lord what he should say and do.

A man will avoid everything that attempts to emasculate him. (Emasculate means to rob a man of those traits that define him as masculine.) If he was emasculated in childhood, he would have become an "Ahab" (one who habitually acquiesces to dominant feminine influences). The ultimate failure or success of the last days Church in raising up a true "bride" for Christ depends largely on to what degree we have honored God's creation order. (The use of the noun "bride" here and in certain places in Scripture is not a reference to human gender but to an endearing acquiescent role and purpose.)

From God's perspective, in relation to the fulfillment of His purposes in the earth, there exists only he/she not a he and a she. God defines "man" in this way as both male and female according to Genesis 1:27. The "he" is assigned the role as the head. "...The head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God" (1 Cor. 11:3). The Lord's use of the word "head" is not referring to a boss. It is referring to the order through which His Kingdom purposes are fulfilled in the earth. Christ defers to the Father, the man defers to Christ, and the woman defers to man. This is done because of each one's recognition and respect for God's creation order and because of the mutual inclusiveness one has with the other. The distinctions are defined this way: Deity oversees creation, and male oversees female. Both male and female worship, relate to, and fellowship with God on the same level within the directives given by God. God relates to both on the same level but sees them differently in their roles in the earth.

Where there exists a breach in God's creation order there is also impure motives, the frustration of our efforts, contentions, finger pointing, demonic oppression of various kinds, wrongly positioned people, decision-making that pleases people more than God, little to no Church growth, a confusion of roles and purposes, disunity, and organized chaos.

God has been severely misrepresented because of the Church's failure to fear Him more than man. We have been motivated by the fear of offending people. This is proven by the unwillingness to establish clear distinctions between the roles of men and women in the Church. Mainly two extremes exist in the Church today: 1) doctrines teaching that women should never have authority within the Church as teachers and preachers and 2) those that allow complete liberty and teach that women can operate in roles that belong to the man only. We have failed to define the "man only" roles.

Was the Apostle Paul a chauvinist? Why did Jesus choose twelve men as apostles? Were there no women available? Or did He just run out of places for women apostles?

If we believe that all Scripture is inspired by God, we can only come to one conclusion: Jesus was following His creation order and it has never been changed. That order must be honored today or the Church will not fulfill what God purposed for her from the beginning. A church that is primarily overseen by women will not succeed. It will be as dysfunctional as any family under similar circumstances. On the other hand, a church in which woman are not empowered by the men to reach their greatest potential will be orderly but largely nonproductive. Some of the most productive ministries in the Church today are those of women.

Are there any exceptions to this order? There are numerous parachurch ministries today that are led by women. However, Paul's address was directed at a local church structure and not to a parachurch ministry. There are also several examples of women pastoring churches today. Is this contrary to what Paul was teaching? If indeed they are attempting to operate in a role belonging to men, then, yes, it is against God's order and will not stand. If their "pastoring" is overseen by mature and spiritual men, then it could be acceptable. We must be careful not to judge every scenario at face value. Just because a woman is called a pastor that does not mean she is out of order.

What about Deborah whom God raised up as a judge in the Old Testament? She was a national leader (both civil and spiritual) and not a high priest. It was the high priest (men only) who had chief oversight of the house of God.

A Scripture verse commonly used to promote the importance of women within the Church is Psalm 68:11: “The Lord gave the word; great was the company of those who proclaimed it.” Some modern teachers and Bible translations suggest that the text read: “The Lord gave the word; great was the company of *women* who proclaimed it. Yes, after checking into it, I am convinced there is a chance the passage could be translated that way. But this would be referring to what took place after the men of Israel defeated an enemy in battle. It was the women who openly proclaimed the victory. It was Moses’ sister, Mariam, who lead the people of Israel in a victory song and dance after God destroyed the Egyptian army in the Red Sea.

- When men arise within the Church to their place only then can women step into and operate fully in their place.
- God’s creation of Adam first established him in his role. Only then could Eve be created to step into her role.
- Just as the house builder’s role is established and defined by the architect, so is the woman’s role established and defined by the role of the man.
- The man’s role finds fulfillment through the woman’s. The woman’s role exists because of and for the man.

Yes, I know much of this will be difficult for the modern Church member to swallow, but ask yourself this question:

To what extent has the modern feminist and men movements wrongly influenced my thinking, causing me to be biased when interpreting God’s word?

God desires to use *not only* men but women in phenomenal ways in these last days but we must first throw off the traditions of men and the spirit of this world and provide God the “wineskin” that perfectly suits the fullness of His Spirit.

This creation order can only be created in love, humility, and impartiality toward all.

Chapter Twenty Seven



The Danger of Defining God by Human Perceptions of Love

“The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!” (9) Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, (10) the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: (11) “You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created”” (Rev. 4:8-11).

In the Old Testament, the word “holy” is used over six hundred times and can often be translated “moral purity.” Through it, God established within the hearts and minds of fallen mankind the one most important characteristic about Himself: that He is holy. Anyone who approaches Him must give God’s holiness its due honor first and continually. His holiness is first on the checklist of His protocols and must also be ours. Under the same conditions, we too would cry out the same things as the seraphim and elders. Notice that the creatures (seraphim; see Isa. 6) do not cry out “good, good, good, or love, love, love, or grace, grace, grace, or tolerant, tolerant, tolerant is the Lord God Almighty.”

Holy Scripture is clear:

The morally unclean (dogs) will never be allowed into that Presence (Rev. 22:14-15).

“Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14).

“Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God” (Mt. 5:8).

In Matthew 25, Jesus reveals three types of *His people* who are not allowed into His presence on His day of judgment: foolish virgins (the unprepared), unfaithful stewards (of His grace), and goats (those who live self-centered lives). None of the above kept themselves pure. God’s holy presence was not the top priority and focus of their lives. This indicates that if we are holy as God is, we will love like He does. One cannot be separated from the other.

“Love” has been twisted into being superior to anything else in the minds of ungodly, naïve, and ignorant people. There are those who have a form of godliness but deny its

power. They tolerate what they should be condemning and condemn what they should be embracing by often using this truth in their own defense: “God is love” (from 1 Jn. 4:8). The problem is not with this actual truth but is found in how love is defined by them. *How they define “love” determines how they define God.* God defines love but love does not define Him. The one and only holy God is reduced to a god (only within their minds) who can set aside his moral law and make exceptions in certain cases, calling good evil and evil good. The one true God and His love are holy. His love is not defined through the filters of human bias, moral depravation, sentiments, experience, and religious tradition. No, God’s holiness and goodness define His love and they are constant—never changing.

To be holy means to be pure and separate, having no mixture.

Another question often tossed around out there in Christendom is: Why would a loving God send people eternally into hell (a place of eternal incarceration originally created by God for the fallen angels—Mt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10)? The common answer I have heard coming from Christian’s mouths only partially answers the question with a half-truth: “God does not send anyone into hell, they do it to themselves.” In an attempt to protect our wrong notions of a “nice” God, some of God’s people have sidestepped Biblical truth. Tell me, who created hell and the lake of fire? Does a criminal court judge sentence and send criminals to prison and/or capital punishment or do they send themselves? Would a shepherd be considered good if he did not protect the sheep? What if he had to kill the predators to do so? Is he still good? He may not be “nice” but is definitely good.

Most certainly, the criminal who is subject to a court’s justice is there because of his or her crimes, however, the court alone wields the power to incarcerate them and sentence them to punishment. Apart from committing the crimes, they would not be subject to the court’s wrath.

Similarly, God’s moral law has condemned every human being as a sinner (Rom. 3). Because of this, His (judicial) wrath abides on all people. God’s justice system “arrests” judges, sentences, and incarcerates all who break His moral laws. Instead of leaving us without hope though, to pay for our own sins, He sent Christ who took our deserved punishment upon Himself to the cross (Jn. 3:36). By putting away our guilt and, therefore, punishment from before God, Christ has also destroyed our (spiritual) enemies. Those who believe will live eternally with Christ.

Speaking frankly, some people are asking the wrong question. Instead, we should ask: “How could a holy God-Judge not send people to eternal incarceration?” How could a good shepherd not protect his sheep even if it means killing the predator? Those who reject Christ are treated as predators by God.

Much to the chagrin of the modern advocates of “tolerance,” the angels who surround God’s throne do not cry out day and night: “Love, love, love, is the Lord God Almighty.” No, they cry out: “Holy, holy, holy.” This indicates, in order for fallen mankind to approach God, personally benefitting from His great fatherly love, they must *first* come to terms with His holiness. Listen to what God says to His own:

“I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people. (17) Therefore come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do

not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. (18) I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty. (1) Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God (2 Cor. 6:16-7:1).

Holiness (aka moral, personal purity and separation unto God) is first required from God's people in order for them to know the depths of His acceptance and fathering love. This was most evident in the Kingdom truths foreshadowed in the Old Covenant temple. God-ordained rituals, washings, along with items of protocol had to be incorporated and observed before approaching the Most Holy Place where the (intimate) presence of God rested. Now that we have become the temple of the living God, we are required to be most holy (1 Cor. 3:16-17). "...As He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, (16) because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy'" (1 Pt. 1:15-16). We are and become holy because of the indwelling *Holy Spirit*. As we daily give ourselves in absolute surrender to the Holy One of Israel, we become as He is. This is not a hard thing unless we have allowed ourselves to become isolated from the purifying fellowship of the saints. Together with others of like conviction, we do this by going boldly and consistently to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need (Heb. 4:14-16). We are always in need to surrender more and more to and encounter God to become pure as He is pure.

Thank you Jesus for making a way for us to be the Father's Most Holy Place. May our soul and flesh be used for His glory alone.

The writer of the book of Hebrews associated the appearance of God's presence on Mt. Sinai with burning fire, gloom, darkness, and a great storm. Even Moses was terrified at the sight (Heb. 12:16-29). To fallen man, God's holiness is and always will be terrifying. However, that fear will melt away in the light of Christ's glory and grace. Our experience with the holy God no longer has to be terrifying. Now, we can be incomparably blessed by His holy presence. This is true only if we take serious the writer's conclusion. He ends the discourse:

"Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace (the Divine favor we receive because of our honoring Christ's blood as it is honored in heaven), by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. (29) For our God is a consuming fire."

We can be cleansed from every (unholy) thing that hides God from our spiritual eyes and understanding—that keeps us from making the necessary connection with Him and His anointings.

"Blessed are the pure (holy) in heart for they shall see God" (Mt. 5:8). The Apostle John was able to see God differently. "Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. (3) And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald. (4) Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads. (5) And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. (6) Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne,

and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back” (Rev. 4:2:6).

The twenty-four elders sat on thrones, having golden crowns on their heads, were wearing what kind of robes? Yes, they were wearing white robes, indicating their moral purity. They sat on thrones of authority and power and wore golden crowns because of their white robes.

"I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see...(20) Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. (21) To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne” (Rev. 3:18-21).

Only the pure in heart will be able to see through the terrifying veil of His holiness and actually see God in His entire throne room splendor (Mt. 5:8). How incredibly wonderful is He. He will be their God and father and they will richly benefit from the river that makes glad the city of our God (Ps. 103; 46:4).

It is time for God’s people to come out from among them. By being holy as God is holy, we can then love as He loves, without partiality, fear, or distortion. We can then correctly and powerfully represent His love to the masses of people in this generation that cannot morally discern their right from their left hand.

Some Final Thoughts

One should never seek holiness as an end in itself. We should desire to become and maintain purity for the sake of our fellowship with Christ. Doing so is never difficult if we value the prize. If someone offered us twenty five thousand dollars to jog five miles without stopping, that would be strong incentive to begin preparations to do so. We would actually welcome and be enthusiastic about the necessary preparation and discipline. Our prize is the praise, honor, and glory (without shame or reproach) received at Christ’s return.

There is no life to compare to one of walking with our Father in Heaven, allowing Him access to and including Him in every aspect of our lives. As the old song says, “It gets sweeter and sweeter as the days go by, oh what a love between my Lord and I.” Then add to that, the prize we will receive after our life here is done. Human words do it no justice. I can only imagine.

Written with love aflame.



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