

Twenty-Fourth Annual

**TRUTH IN LOVE**  
LECTURESHIP

Theme:

**We Trust In  
The Living God**

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## FOREWORD

**W**hy would Abraham be willing to leave his home and friends and move to an unknown place? Simply *because he believed and trusted God!* Why would Gideon be willing to fight against a large, strong and powerful enemy with just three hundred men? *Because he believed and trusted God!* Why would Noah work faithfully for over one hundred years building an ark without a drop of rain falling? *Because he believed and trusted God!* Why would Saul of Tarsus willingly give up all his training, faithfulness to his traditional ways, friends and associates and almost entire life? *Because he believed and trusted God!* Why would Stephen be willing to continue preaching Jesus Christ and Him crucified, even as they were stoning him to death? *Because he believed and trusted God!* Why would Epaphroditus sacrifice and serve even to the point of near death? *Because he believed and trusted God!* Why would Onesiphorus be willing to seek Paul out in prison when it meant his own life was fearfully in jeopardy? *Because he believed and trusted God!* Why would Peter pull his sword and seek to fight against the mob that was taking Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane? *Because he believed and trusted God!* Why would Jesus Christ be willing to be scourged, nailed to the old cruel cross, hang there for six horrible hours, and die the shameful death as a criminal? *Because he believed and trusted God!*

The word trust is defined “*belief that someone or something is reliable, good, honest, effective ... reliance on the integrity,*

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*strength, ability, surety of a person or thing; to rely upon or place confidence in."*

Focus with me for a few moment on the spiritual realm, the apostle Paul declared "*We trust in the living God*" (1 Tim. 4:10). In the same epistle Paul encouraged all to not trust in uncertain riches, but "*in the living God*" (1 Tim. 6:17). Certainly these were not mere words spoken, but this soldier of the cross demonstrated time and again his complete trust in the Almighty God whom he served.

In Paul's former life (Saul of Tarsus) he had placed his trust in the old law, friends and ways of the world. He was highly esteemed for his faithfulness and zeal. But as he learned the truth, turned from his earlier beliefs to following Christ, he relied completely on Almighty God. Listen to a few statements (from the inspired apostle Paul and other inspired writers) which reflect such confidence and faith in God:

The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence (2 Sam. 22:3).

The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower (Psm. 18:2).

I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust (Psm. 91:2).

It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man (Psm. 118:8).

For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us (2 Cor. 1:8-10).

And such trust have we through Christ to Godward: Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God (2 Cor. 3:4-5).

Solomon declares in the powerful book of Ecclesiastes that riches, sensual pleasure, power, etc. will not bring happiness. Simply spoken,

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil (Eccl. 12:13-14).

The design of the lessons to be presented in this volume (and during this lecture series) is simply to encourage, edify and uplift us to greater faith and trust in the Living God. It is our prayer that we will recognize the need to turn from the temporary, carnal, materialistic things of the world and refuse to place our trust in such fleeting matters. Simon Peter informs us that the earth and all things therein shall be burned up (2 Peter 3:9-10). Friends, we must realize this world is NOT our home! Our life on earth is brief; as a vapor (James

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4:14). We have an appointment with death and then comes the judgment (Heb. 9:27).

So the words of Paul serve as a further admonition for each servant of Jesus Christ today...

This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. <sup>(10)</sup> For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe. <sup>(11)</sup> These things command and teach. <sup>(12)</sup> Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. <sup>(13)</sup> Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. <sup>(14)</sup> Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. <sup>(15)</sup> Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. <sup>(16)</sup> Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee (1 Tim. 4:9-16).

Let us...

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:13-14).

~ Paul Sain

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**We Trust  
In The  
Living God**





This great and glorious nation we call the United States has as its foundation these wise words, “*In God we trust.*” Although these words would not appear on our money until 1864, or be adopted as our official motto until 1956, their spirit is present in every early document, going back as far as the Mayflower Compact in 1620.

In the name of God, Amen. We, whose names are underwritten, the loyal subjects of our dread Sovereign Lord King James, by the Grace of God, of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, King, defender of the Faith, etc.

Having undertaken, for the Glory of God, and advancements of the Christian faith and honor of our King and Country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the Northern parts of Virginia, do by these presents, solemnly and mutually, in the presence of God, and one another, covenant

and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic; for our better ordering, and preservation and furtherance of the ends aforesaid; and by virtue hereof to enact, constitute, and frame, such just and equal laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions, and offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the colony; unto which we promise all due submission and obedience.

In witness whereof we have hereunto subscribed our names at Cape Cod the 11th of November, in the year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord King James, of England, France, and Ireland, the eighteenth, and of Scotland the fifty-fourth, 1620.

Our nation began because of a trust in God, in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds. During these complicated and tumultuous formative years our Founding Fathers demonstrated, and included in their drafting of our laws and government, trust in God. His name, His will, His laws permeate our Declaration of Independence, our Constitution, our monuments and our laws. Even the briefest perusal of these early documents produces an avalanche of evidence for this conclusion.

While we are zealously performing the duties of good citizens and soldiers, we certainly ought not to be inattentive to the higher duties of religion. To the distinguished character of Patriot, it should be our highest glory to add the more distinguished character of Christian.

—*The Writings of Washington*, pp. 342-343

Suppose a nation in some distant Region should take the Bible for their only law Book, and every member should regulate his conduct by the precepts there exhibited! Every member would be obliged in conscience, to temperance, frugality, and industry; to justice, kindness, and charity towards his fellow men; and to piety, love, and reverence toward Almighty God ... What a Eutopia, what a Paradise would this region be.

—*Diary and Autobiography of John Adams*,  
Vol. III, p. 9

Resistance to tyranny becomes the Christian and social duty of each individual. ... Continue steadfast and, with a proper sense of your dependence on God, nobly defend those rights which heaven gave, and no man ought to take from us.

—John Hancock, *History of the United States of America*, Vol. II, p. 229.

Without a doubt the earliest Americans took great steps of faith due to an overwhelming trust in God. But the question remains, why did they trust in God? What would prompt them to take such giant steps of faith, often risking both life and liberty in the process? In order to answer that question we must travel far back into history, even farther than the first pilgrim settlers in the New World. To answer the question of why anyone would trust in God we must travel back thousands of years to the beginning of God's interactions with man.

### **Why Should I Trust God?**

Several years ago I worked with a congregation

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that scheduled a weekend men's retreat at a high ropes obstacle course. Virtually all of the exercises we participated in were designed to create trust amongst the men. This was especially true of the "*Trust Fall*" where you would fall backwards from a high platform into the interlocked arms of the rest of the team. It was difficult to take that leap of faith with only the trust that your brothers would keep you from slamming into the ground. After each exercise the preacher who was the moderator for the course led us in what he called "*debriefing*." Upon completion of the exercise we sat together and discussed what we had done, what we had learned and how we could implement it in our lives and congregations.

If we were able to interact with Adam and Eve immediately following their dismissal from the Garden of Eden, and have a "*debriefing*" of sorts, they would be able to teach us a great deal about trusting God and the pain of their "*distrust fall*." God created Adam and Eve and provided them with everything they needed. The Garden was filled with trees that were both "*pleasant to the sight, and good for food*" and also "*the tree of life*" (Gen. 2:9). Adam and Eve enjoyed beauty, sustenance and everlasting life, in addition to their direct fellowship with God. They knew a God that gave them life and sustained it, provided for their every need, and had never disappointed, failed, or hurt them in any way. They had all of the ingredients for complete trust in God. However, they allowed a third party to weaken that trust when they believed his lies, rather than trusting in God's faithfulness (Gen. 3:1-

7). Suddenly everything changed. Their trust failed and then they fell. Why? Had God failed them? Did He disappoint them in some way? Had God, as Satan implied, lied to them? Absolutely not! In fact, despite Adam and Eve's failure to trust, God continued to provide for them. This time He provided them with clothes, a sacrifice, and no doubt instructions on how to worship Him and atone for their sins (Gen. 3:21). Even when man did not demonstrate trustworthiness, God continued to prove Himself worthy of trust.

Abraham was asked by God to demonstrate tremendous trust repeatedly. He was told to leave Ur of the Chaldees, the bountiful land of his nativity, to a land that God would show to him (Gen. 12:1). Additionally Abraham was asked to trust that God would make the childless nonagenarian (a person 90-99 years old) the father of many nations (Gen. 12:2). Then, in perhaps the ultimate request of trust, God told Abraham to sacrifice his only son Isaac (Gen. 22:1-8). What was the end result of his demonstrations of trust? His descendants inherited the land to which God called him, his descendants would form several nations and Isaac was spared when a ram was provided. Just as with Adam and Eve, God had proven Himself worthy of trust. He made promises and then He kept those promises.

When God spoke to Jacob it was to ask him to demonstrate a great deal of trust in God. The last time Jacob was in his homeland he had lied to his father and betrayed his brother Esau. He fled from his homeland under dire circumstances as Esau pledged to kill him

the next time they crossed paths (Gen. 27:41). Over a dozen years pass when Jacob begins the journey back to his homeland, and towards a reunion with his estranged brother. During those years in Padanaram Jacob had learned to trust in God and was rewarded handsomely for it. He became a man of great wealth, many flocks and herds, and many children. His trust in God was proven to be justified, however, his greatest test awaited him in Canaan. Knowing the fears that Jacob was facing, God appeared to Jacob in the plain of Peniel (Gen. 32:24-32). God reassured Jacob that He was with him, just as He had always been with him. Although he was facing what seemed to be certain death at the hands of his jilted brother, Jacob returned home and was rewarded abundantly. He was reconciled with his brother and reunited with his family and spent the remainder of his life surrounded by his children. Even when famine struck the land, God through his son Joseph, provided for Jacob and his family. Yet again, God had proven Himself to be worthy of trust.

Like Abraham and Jacob before him, Moses was able to walk headfirst into his greatest fears because of his trust in the Lord. It seems that Moses was raised with an understanding of his heritage and perhaps even his destiny as a leader of the Hebrews, judging by his actions in defending a Hebrew slave (Exod. 2:11-15). However, his utter failure in becoming a leader of the Hebrews, resulting in him instead becoming a fugitive, seem to indicate that his misstep was trusting in himself rather than trusting in the living God. As another testimony to the trustworthiness of God, the



failure of Moses did not disqualify him from service to God, it simply delayed it. Moses needed time to learn to trust in God alone, and it was a lesson he would learn well. When the time was right, God appeared to Moses and called him to become the leader he was born to be, and that he had once attempted to be. Although initially Moses did not trust in God, he also no longer trusted in himself. It is only when we stop trusting self that we are in a position to truly trust in God.

God gives Moses a task as equally terrifying as He had given to Abraham and Jacob. Moses must return to the land of his nativity where he is a fugitive. He must return to the palace where he was raised and face a Pharaoh. He must make a demand of a man that is accustomed to having his every whim satisfied without question by those who consider him a god. He is to become the leader of a people who had previously rejected his willingness and attempt to lead them. If we could put ourselves in his shoes we would likely be thinking this is the worst possible idea imaginable. This is everything you don't want to do. You have a good life in Midian as a successful shepherd, a husband and a father. Life is finally good and now God wants me to change everything. The first response of Moses is probably exactly what ours would be. He begins to make one excuse after another as to why he cannot do what God is wanting him to do. Although Moses no longer trusts in himself, he still has not learned to trust in God, so God does what He always does: He reminds Moses to judge Him based on His reputation. *"I am the God of your father, [a] the God of Abraham, the God*

*of Isaac and the God of Jacob*” (Exod. 3:6). “*But Moses said to God, ‘Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?’ And God said, ‘I will be with you’*” (Exod. 3:11-12). Anticipating the lack of trust by the Hebrews, God instructed Moses to deliver the same message to them. “*Say to the Israelites, ‘The Lord, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you’*” (Exod. 3:15).

Conversations similar to this would be repeated throughout the ages with men like Joshua, Gideon, Elijah, and David, and through Scripture it continues to this very day. In each generation God asks men to trust Him and in each instance He lists His pedigree (I am the God of your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob) as evidence for His trustworthiness. He is in essence saying, “*You can trust me because I have always been trustworthy. I always keep my word.*” Because of these facts, rather than asking why should I trust God, the real question is why wouldn’t I trust God? There is only one answer to that question: Because I have listened to and believed the lies of the devil, rather than considering the actions and reputation of God. If past behavior is the best indicator of future behavior then no one has any reason not to trust God.

### **What Does It Mean To Trust God?**

The students in my Sunday or Wednesday Bible class know that one of my class rules is that we are not allowed to use “*religious cliches.*” By this I mean we cannot use phrases and statements that, while true and

even good, are often generic and given little thought concerning their real meaning. These cliches are true and certainly sound good, but too often their frequent use leads to us forgetting what they really mean or how they apply in everyday life. One such phrase is “*trust God.*” Every Christian has heard or uttered this phrase more times than can be remembered, which is precisely the point of examining its meaning. What does it really mean to trust God? What does it look like in everyday life?

**Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding** (Prov. 3:5). Trusting God requires a full commitment, not a half-hearted effort. One translation of the word “*trust*” is, “*to lie helpless, face down.*” It is a picture of a servant waiting for his master’s command so he can reply obediently. The focus of trust is submission and Solomon is instructing the servant of God to submit fully to His will. When depicted in pictograph form the word “*trust*” is displayed as a man inside a fence or walled city where he is protected. This is the idea behind the psalmist saying, “*My refuge and my fortress, My Lord, in whom I trust!*” (Psm. 91:2).

Other translations of this word refer to “*putting your weight fully on something.*” When you walk out onto a balcony you trust that it will support your weight and not allow you to fall. When you lie in your bed you trust that it will not collapse. This trust enables you to fully rely upon it and do so without fear. Solomon’s description is one of putting all your weight upon the Lord without fear that He will let you fall. It

is an acknowledgment of His strength, not an exercise of yours. Imagine if we learned to live our lives with a total expectation that God, *“is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us”* (Eph. 3:20). We don’t have to imagine what the outcome of that would be because Paul tells us clearly in the next passage, *“Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end”* (Eph. 3:21). When His children trust in Him with all of their heart for everything, He is glorified.

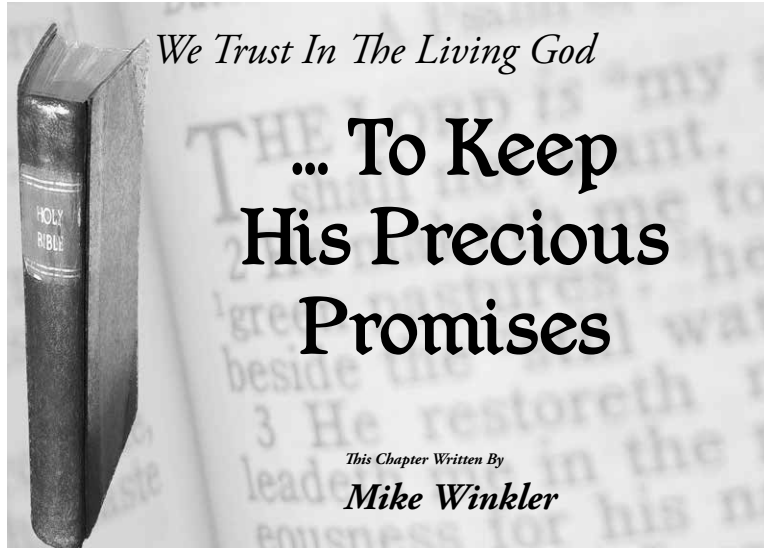
The antithesis of trusting in God is trusting in yourself. Trusting in God means *“putting all your weight”* on Him, whereas leaning on your own understanding means you put some of that weight on yourself. There are two problems here: 1) When you lean on your own understanding you are saying that God isn’t able or reliable. It is a questioning of His willingness or ability to care for you. The command is, *“Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you”* (1 Peter 5:7). When we don’t, our actions say we don’t believe He will do what He says. 2) When you lean on your own understanding you are putting your weight on something that is not stable and reliable. How many times have you encountered problems in your own life due to a misunderstanding? We do not know the future, we can be deceived, we can be wrong, and because of all these things, our own understanding should never be trusted to support the weight of our lives. From God’s perspective we either trust Him or we trust in ourselves.

**In all your ways acknowledge him and do not be wise in your own eyes** (Prov. 3:6-7a). How much of your life has room for God and His input? Obviously we turn to God and seek His wisdom in matters of faith, worship and salvation, but is that enough? Is that all He wants? God is trusted for the spiritual stuff like forgiveness, prayers and blessings, but never given the opportunity to guide and provide in other areas of life like relationships, marriage, careers, education and health. Peter wrote that God has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). Not just spiritual life, but all of life. Those who acknowledge Him in their relationships become better spouses, parents and friends. Those who acknowledge Him in their careers become better employees, bosses, and co-workers. So why wouldn't everyone do this?

Far too many Christians have a practice of compartmentalizing their lives, and this includes their faith. They have one group of friends at work, another at home and another at church. All three groups see different behaviors and standards of conduct. Only the friends at church get to see their faith in God, whereas the others get to see their worldliness. Simply put, they only acknowledge God in a small portion of their lives, while all the rest belong to them. It is essentially the same as saying to God, *"I don't need or want your help in this area"* or *"I can handle all of this myself."* Certainly few would dare to be so brash as to say something like that, but as the old expression goes, *"Actions speak louder than words."*

OVERVIEW — WE TRUST IN THE LIVING GOD

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*We Trust In The Living God*

## **... To Keep His Precious Promises**

*This Chapter Written By*

***Mike Winkler***

### **What God Hath Promised**

God hath not promised

Skies always blue,

Flower-strewn pathways

All our lives through

God hath not promised

Sun without rain,

Joy without sorrow,

Peace without pain.

But God hath promised

Strength for the day,

Rest for the labor,

Light for the way,

Grace for the trials,

Help from above,

Unfailing sympathy,

Undying love.

By Annie Johnson Flint

The word translated “*promise*” in the New Testament is a word used almost exclusively in reference to the promises of God. Too, the “*promises*” usually refer to a gift that is to be or has been graciously given [(2 Peter 1:3-4) *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*]. The *Webster’s 7th New Collegiate Dictionary* defines “*promise*” as, “*a declaration that gives the person to whom it was made the right to expect the performance of a specified act.*”

The word translated “*trust*” in the Bible (esp. the Old Testament) conveys the idea of reliance or a sense of well-being and security which results from having confidence in someone [(Prov. 3:5-6) *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament by Brown-Driver-Briggs*]. Again, *Webster’s 7th New Collegiate Dictionary* defines “*trust*” as, “*the assured reliance on the character, ability, strength or truth of someone.*”

Therefore, when we speak of the “*Precious Promises of God,*” we are referring to the gracious blessings God has made possible through the gift of and by the sacrificial death of His beloved Son, Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:3-4; cf. John 3:16 plus 1 John 3:16; Eph. 2:1-8). Too, as Christians, we unequivocally trust that God can and will fulfill every promise He has made in and through Jesus, our loving Savior, or as it was said of Abraham,

Yet, with respect to the promise of God he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith ... and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform (Rom. 4:20-21; cf. Heb. 11:11-12).



## I. The Foundation Of God's Promises

The very character of God serves as the omnipotent foundation for all His promises. To illustrate, the writer of Hebrews said, "*When God made a promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself*" (Heb. 6:13). Hence, when we think of and discuss the "*promises of God*," we can, without doubt, trust the veracity of every promise, for each promise is rooted in and founded upon the character of God. For example, every promise rests upon:

1. **The "integrity" of God.** God's integrity is assured and manifested by His: (a) inability to lie or deceive (Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:17-18; cf. 2 Cor. 1:20) and (b) impartiality toward all mankind, as Peter proclaimed,

I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him (Acts 10:34-35; cf. Rom. 2:11; Eph. 6:9; 1 Peter 1:17).

2. **The "love" of God.** Jesus affirmed God's love when He said,

God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life (John 3:16; cf. Rom. 5:8-11; Eph. 2:4-8; 1 John 4:9-10).

The apostle John, also, declared, "*God is love*," saying,

The love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him (1 John 4:8-9; cf. 1 John 4:16).

3. The **“faithfulness” of God**. Paul encouraged the church at Corinth, saying, *“God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord”* (1 Cor. 1:9). The writer of Hebrews, encouraged,

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful (Heb. 10:23; cf. 1 Cor. 10:13; 2 Cor. 1:18; 1 Thess. 5:24; 2 Thess. 3:3).

## II. The Magnificent And Precious Promises Of God

The *“magnificent and precious promises of God”* can be divided into two fundamental categories: (a) the physical promises and (b) the spiritual promises of God. Today, for one to attempt to delineate the myriad of promises made by God to mankind, would be an exercise of futility. However, to help us focus on and better understand what God promises, we offer the following:

1. The *“Physical”* promises of God embrace the assurance that all our: (a) physical needs will be met and satisfied (Matt. 6:33; cf. Phil. 4:19; Psm. 37:25) and (b) emotional needs will be addressed, including: loneliness (Psm. 25:16), fear (Psm. 23:4; 34:4; cf. John 14:27; 16:33), anxiety (Phil. 4:6-7), distress (Psm. 31:9-10 plus 19-22) and heavy burdens (Psm. 55:22; cf. 1 Peter 5:7; Gal. 6:1-2).

2. The *“Spiritual”* promises of God recognize man’s tragic spiritual condition [i.e. eternally lost (Rom. 3:23 plus 6:23)] and encompass every spiritual need man has, including:

- **Man's need for Salvation.** Man, being separated from God, as a result of sin, is spiritually dead (Rom. 3:23; Eph. 2:1; Isa. 59:1-2). Yet, God, desiring that *"all men be saved"* (1 Tim. 2:3-5), sent Jesus into this sin sick world to save and reconcile man to Himself (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8-11; 2 Cor. 5:17-21; cf. Rom. 3:23-26; Eph. 1:3; 7; 1 John 4:7-11).
- **Man's need for Identity.** The beloved John, with great humility and assurance, proclaimed, *"See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are"* (1 John 3:1-2). Paul encourages all Christians, saying, *"The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God"* (Rom. 8:16-17). Consequently, those who are God's children are referred to as, *"God's household"* (Eph. 2:19; cf. 1 Tim. 3:15).
- **Man's need to Belong.** Paul, when writing the church at Ephesus, reminded them that they were *"fellow members of the body"* (Eph. 3:6), which was the church Jesus built (Matt. 16:18) and for which He died (Eph. 1:22-23; 5:25-27; cf. Acts 20:28). However, Christians are not only part of *"the body of Christ"* but, are also citizens in the kingdom of our Lord (Col. 1:13-14; Eph. 2:19) and sheep in his beloved flock (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-2).
- **Man's need for Hope.** Paul, when writing the Ephesian Christians, reminded them that prior to their salvation, they were *"dead in [their]"*

*trespasses and sins*” being “*separate from Christ ... having no hope and without God in the world*” (Eph. 2:1; 12). However, he rejoiced with them, announcing, “*But now in Christ Jesus you ... have been brought near by the blood of Christ*” (Eph. 2:13-22). Consequently, the writer of Hebrews penned that Christians have a hope “*as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us*” (Heb. 6:13-20).

- **Man’s need for Life** [i.e. eternal life]. Job queried, “*If a man dies, will he live again?*” (Job 14:14). The answer is, without question, “*Yes!*” There is not only life after death (John 5:28-29), but, for the Christian, there is eternal life. This is a truth: (a) proclaimed by Jesus (John 3:16), (b) affirmed by inspiration (1 John 2:25), (c) promised by revelation (Rev. 2:10) and (d) confirmed by God’s word (Titus 1:2).

Today, as always, it is important to understand that:

1. **God’s spiritual promises are available to every person, without prejudice.** Peter announced to the Jews on Pentecost,

For the promise (cf. Acts 2:36-38) is for you and your children and for all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself (Acts 2:39).

Peter, later proclaimed to Cornelius [the first Gentile convert], “*God is not one to show partiality, but in every*

*nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him” (Acts 10:34-35).*

**2. God’s spiritual promises are conditional, dependent upon an individual’s humble obedience.** Three specific times in the book of Acts, inquiry was made as to an individual’s responsibility; i.e. “*What must I do to be saved?*” (Acts 16:30; cf. Acts 2:36-37; 22:10) and in each situation, the answer was the same; God expected every person to believe (Acts 16:31), repent (Acts 2:38) and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16; cf. Acts 16:32-34).

**3. God’s spiritual promises are assured by God, through the giving of the Holy Spirit.** When an individual chooses to obey God’s will by believing (John 3:16), repenting (Acts 17:30-31; cf. Luke 13:3) and being baptized for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; 5:32) he is promised the “*Gift of the Holy Spirit*” (Acts 2:38; 5:32) (i.e. the indwelling of the Holy Spirit). The “*gift (or indwelling) of the Holy Spirit*” is not connected, in any way, to the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit mentioned by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12 through 14. Rather, as Paul taught the Ephesian church, the “*gift (i.e. indwelling) of the Holy Spirit*” is to serve as: (a) a seal or designation of ownership (Eph. 1:13; cf. Rom. 6:3-4; 16-18) and (b) a pledge or down payment of one’s eternal inheritance (Eph. 1:14; cf. Rom. 8:16-17).

### **III. The Christian’s Response To God’s Magnificent And Precious Promises**

The Christian responds to God’s magnificent and

precious promises with a myriad of emotions and a determined resolve that “*whatever [we] do, [we will] do all to the glory of God*” (1 Cor. 10:31). Hence, as we reflect upon God’s indescribable promises, let us, as God’s children:

**1. Determine to obey God’s every command.**

Jesus challenged His disciples, saying, “*If you love Me, you will keep My commandments*” (John 14:15). Too, Jesus questioned, “*Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?*” (Luke 6:46). Accordingly, let us resolve to submit to our Lords’ will, by:

- Working to “*Preach the gospel to all creation*” (Mark 16:15; cf. Matt. 28:19-20).
- Making Jesus’ kingdom, the church, a priority in our lives (Matt. 6:33).
- Living our lives void of worry or anxiety (Matt. 6:25-34; cf. Phil. 4:6-7).
- Striving to treat others as we would like to be treated (Luke 6:31; cf. Matt. 7:12).
- Refusing to criticize or judge others, before we first examine ourselves (Matt. 7:1-5).
- Serving others, rather than expecting others to serve us (Mark 10:45; cf. John 13:3-17; Gal. 5:13).
- Practicing, on a daily basis, total self-denial (Matt. 16:24; cf. Luke 9:23; Gal. 2:20).
- Diligently working to bear fruit in all that we do (John 15:1-8).

**2. Possess a heart that is overflowing with gratitude.** The apostle Paul, announced, “*God our*

*Savior, desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*" (1 Tim. 2:3-4). Too, it was with this understanding that the apostle declared,

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me ... even though I was formerly a blasphemer, and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy ... and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus. It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all (1 Tim. 1:12-15).

Consequently, with a heart overflowing with gratitude and joy, Paul proclaimed, "*Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!*" (2 Cor. 9:15).

### **Blessings When Christians Trust in God's Promises**

- We will not be disappointed (Psm. 22:5).
- We will live life with confidence, before God's omniscient eye (Psm. 26:1-7, 11).
- We will enjoy God's blessings, beyond measure (Psm. 40:3-5; Jer. 17:7-8).
- We will live life without fear (Psm. 56:1-11; 23:1-6; 55:22-23; 91:1-5, 14-16).
- We will receive God's help (Psm. 28:6-9; 37:23-25; 115:9-11).
- We will enjoy indescribable peace (Isa. 26:2-4; John 14:27; 16:33).

**3. Live with confidence and certainty.** Life is tenuous at best (James 4:13-16; cf. Job 7:7; Psm. 39:4; 144:4). Yet, Christians have the confidence to live everyday with the conviction and assurance that, God: (a) will carry out all that He has promised His children (Rom. 4:21) and (b) is *“able to guard what [we] have entrusted to Him until that day”* (2 Tim. 1:12). Consequently, like King David, we can, with all humility, live and die without fear (Psm. 23:4), knowing we have lived our lives as God has directed in His inspired word (Psm. 26:1-3, 11; 2 Tim. 3:15-17).

**4. Resolve to be faithful throughout life, patiently enduring all of life’s challenges.** Life is so short and unpredictable and *“full of turmoil”* (Job 14:1). Job pled, *“Remember that my life is but a breath”* (Job 7:7; cf. Psm. 39:5). Is it any wonder, then, why we are encouraged to, *“Be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life”* (Rev. 2:10; cf. 2 Tim. 4:6-8) and *“Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that [our] toil is not in vain in the Lord”* (1 Cor. 15:58)? Therefore, let us, with David, remember, *“The Lord is my portion; I have promised to keep your words”* (Psm. 119:57). Consequently, if we will choose to be faithful, we are promised, *“When you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised”* (Heb. 10:36).

**5. Live with a sense of urgency and anticipation.** Life’s urgency was best expressed by Jesus when He said, *“We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work”* (John 9:4). Paul echoed this truth when he declared,



I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day (2 Tim. 4:7-8).

Therefore, as Christians, let us confidently anticipate “*His promise*,” that is, a “*New heaven and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells*” (2 Peter 3:13) and with all Christians, echo the prayer, “*Come, Lord Jesus*” (Rev. 22:20).

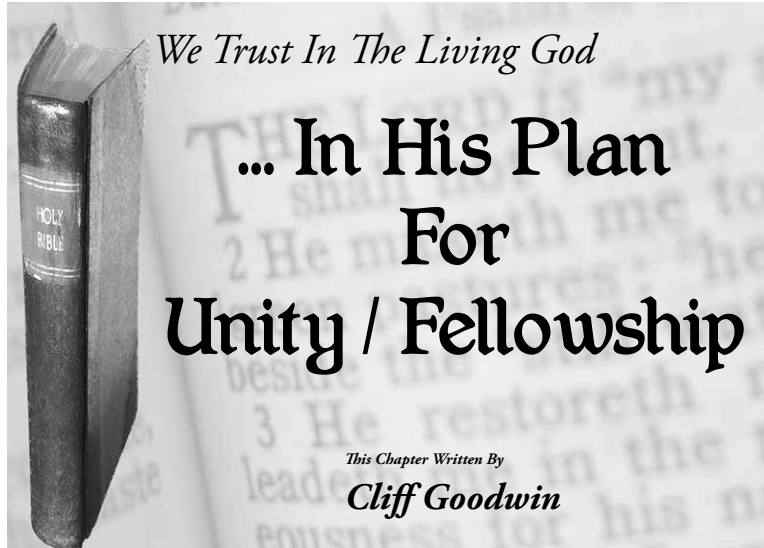
### **Conclusion**

Life outside of Christ is hopeless (Eph. 2:1 plus 12). However, in Christ we enjoy and confidently anticipate all of the “*magnificent and precious promises of God*.” Such assurance rests firmly upon the character of God and our humble obedience. Too, because of these marvelous promises, we can live every day with patience, thanksgiving and confidence, looking forward to the return of our Lord, Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:11-13; Rev. 22:20).

**NOTE:** All scripture references are taken from the New American Standard Bible, Updated Edition.

TO KEEP HIS PRECIOUS PROMISES

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**O** the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out (Rom. 11:33)!

Truly, the omniscience of God is awe-inspiring. Demonstrations of His wisdom are evident throughout the physical world. The order, the complexity, even the beauty that is seen in creation is traceable only to God as Divine Creator. The Divine wisdom, however, is certainly not limited to the material realm. God's wisdom is also observable in the spiritual realm—particularly in the kingdom of God's dear Son (cf. Col. 1:13-14).

God's will is that His children, the saved, be united in His Son's kingdom (the church). Such unity is inseparably connected to the fellowship enjoyed by God's children. The Greek word often

translated “*fellowship*” means “*a sharing together,*” or “*jointly participating in.*” Christians share together in the spiritual blessings of Christ, as they jointly participate in the teachings of the gospel. This commonality is the basis for their unity. There is no true fellowship before God without unity, and true unity does not exist without fellowship.

Some would allege today that unity among God’s people is an impossibility. The very idea is dismissed as idealism. Nonetheless, God’s will is backed by His wisdom, and He has provided the means whereby such unity can be achieved and maintained. It behooves man neither to question the necessity of unity, nor to doubt the possibility of it, but to desire and seek it. One cannot consider the example of Christ without being impressed concerning the importance of unity. When Jesus might have prayed about any number of cares that must have been in His heart, He prayed for the unity of His followers.

Neither pray I for these [the apostles; CG] alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me (John 17:20-21).

Surely, something of such great concern to Christ should likewise be of concern to Christ’s people. Surely, again, Christ did not pray for an impossibility.

### **His Plan For Unity**

God's plan for unity is as reliable as His inspired word. This is because His word is the very basis for such unity. Note that Jesus prayed for those "*which shall believe on me through their word.*" In the context Jesus had been praying for the apostles. These men were selected by Christ to be inspired witnesses to the world (cf. Acts 1:8) and authoritative leaders in His church (cf. Matt. 19:28). Their authority would not be their own, but rather the authority of Christ vested in them by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 14:26; 16:13).

This is why we read that, from the beginning, Christ's church continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42). Inspired by the Holy Spirit, the apostles taught the very doctrine of Christ Himself. Their doctrine was God's word. It is only on this basis that believers can be united. So long as individuals insist on their own opinions, theories or perspectives for religious doctrine, unity will **never** be achieved. Religious opinions vary as widely as people themselves. God's word is the sole and final authority—it is the standard. To it must all believers submit, laying aside their preconceived biases and opinions. To the extent that believers actually do this, unity will be realized and enjoyed.

God's word, then, is the key to unity (and man's submission to that word). This is why it is so dangerous for people to allege that the Bible can be interpreted in multiple ways. It might be interpreted

in different ways, but it **cannot** be interpreted correctly in multiple ways. God is not the author of confusion (1 Cor. 14:33). His law is both pure and perfect (cf. Psm. 12:6; 19:7). As such, God's word never contradicts itself. Its message is pure and simple (single). Its statements run in parallel lines. When various interpretations arise concerning Bible doctrine, one can rest assured that they are not completely equal—unless they are equally wrong. It might even be the case that all such interpretations are wrong. The Bible teaches only truth, but it is man's responsibility to study and handle that truth aright (cf. 2 Tim. 2:15). Religious error abounds, and with it confusion and division, because men either refuse or neglect to study and faithfully apply God's word.

One finds in Ephesians 4:3-6 what might be described as a summary plan for doctrinal unity among God's true people. The following material is taken from a piece written by this author some years back. It utilizes an approach that is not original or novel, but rather one that is likely familiar to many in the brotherhood.

***“One God and Father of all” denotes unity of origination.*** Man's origin (and the origin of the entire universe) can be traced back to God. It was God Who said, *“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness”* and did so (Gen. 1:26). Paul described Him as *“God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth...”* (Acts 17:24).

**“One Lord” denotes unity of coronation.**

Peter announced and proclaimed to the masses present on Pentecost, “*Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ*” (Acts 2:36). It had been prophesied that upon His ascension to heaven, Jesus would be given “*dominion, and glory, and a kingdom*” (Dan. 7:13-14). In other words, upon returning to heaven Jesus was crowned “*King of kings, and Lord of lords*” (1 Tim. 6:15). He is the one King to Whose authority all people must submit (Matt. 28:18; Phil. 2:9-11).

**“One Spirit” denotes unity of revelation.**

Had there been given a diversity of revelations, there would be room for a diversity of movements, organizations, etc. Nonetheless, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, God revealed only one message—the Gospel (cf. Rom. 1:16). In it is contained all truth (John 16:13) and all things that pertain unto life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3).

**“One faith” denotes unity of declaration.** The one Spirit has revealed the one faith. Paul clearly shows this one faith to be the Gospel message (Gal. 1:6-9, 23-24). The church is to preach the whole Gospel (Acts 20:27) to the whole world (Mark 16:15). This means the New Testament, for which Christ died (cf. Matt. 26:28), is the rule of faith and practice in the Christian dispensation (cf. Acts 2:42). Simply put, “*one faith*” cannot and does not mean “*plural faiths*.” Unity will only be attained on the basis of the apostles’ inspired word (cf. John 17:20-21).

**“One baptism” denotes unity of initiation.**

How is it that one enters into a right relationship with God? How is one saved? The answers to these questions are found in the one baptism. New Testament baptism puts one into a relationship with the Godhead (cf. Matt. 28:19). New Testament baptism puts one into Christ (Gal. 3:27), where the blood of Christ is appropriated (cf. Col. 1:14). New Testament baptism is the point at which one is saved, through the blood of Christ (1 Peter 3:21). New Testament baptism is immersion in water (cf. Acts 8:38), for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). New Testament baptism puts one into the one body (1 Cor. 12:13).

**“One body” denotes unity of organization.**

Elsewhere in Ephesians, Paul clearly teaches that the church is the spiritual body of Christ (1:22-23). Thus, three chapters later, when Paul writes, “*there is one body*,” he is writing the equivalent of “*there is one church*.” Christ only built one church (Matt. 16:18); He only died for one church (Eph. 5:25); He only purchased one church with His blood (Acts 20:28). That is true unity of organization, whereas denominationalism is divisive and sinful (cf. 1 Cor. 1:10-13).

**“One hope” denotes unity of destination.** The Bible nowhere teaches that, in eternity, the saved will be divided between the heavenly realm and a new, rejuvenated earth. Neither does it teach that the righteous will reign on earth with Jesus for 1000 literal years (cf. John 18:36) before going to heaven.



However, the Bible does teach that the faithful have the hope of eternal life (Titus 1:2), in heaven (Col. 1:5), and that this hope will be realized at the Second Coming of Christ (1 Thess. 4:13-18; cf. 1 John 2:25, 28; 3:1-3).

Obviously, the foregoing analysis of Ephesians 4:3-6 addresses the matter of doctrinal unity. Though it is beyond the purview of this present work, the reader would do well to remember that God also requires personal unity among His people. Thus, the Bible likewise provides necessary instruction as to how God's people can "*get along*" personally and emotionally. In the same context Paul addresses personal unity, namely, in Ephesians 4:1-3. In this way, Ephesians 4:3 can be viewed as a literary "*hinge*," joining inspired instructions pertaining to both facets of unity.

### **His Plan For Fellowship**

When God's people are unified on the basis of His inspired word, they enjoy a wonderful blessing: fellowship! They jointly share and participate in the redemptive blessings afforded in Christ. Such "*fellowship*" exists because of commonality enjoyed by brothers and sisters in the Lord. For example, they have believed and obeyed a common faith, the gospel (cf. Titus 1:4; Eph. 4:5); and hence, they now enjoy a common salvation (cf. Jude 3). Again, the association and communion they share together is on the basis of gospel teaching. No wonder then that Luke records, "*And they continued steadfastly in the*

*apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers*" (Acts 2:42; emp. mine, CG).

Christian fellowship is a reality only when the participants are themselves Christians. In the New Testament the name "*Christian*" is applied to devoted followers of Christ (cf. Acts 11:26). Such uncompromising devotion even results in one's suffering for righteousness' sake (cf. Matt. 5:10-12; 1 Peter 4:16). The term is undeniably a synonym for a "*child of God*" (cf. Gal. 3:26-27). Faithful children of God, Christians, enjoy fellowship with one another because they share the same spiritual Father. They are spiritual siblings—part of God's family. Without that kinship to the Father, there is no kinship between the would-be followers. This concept is critical to one's properly understanding the basis and nature of Christian fellowship.

Inspired passages from both John and Paul prove helpful at this point. The apostle John wrote,

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ (1 John 1:3).

Any Christian fellowship existing between John and his readers was connected also to their fellowship with God. They enjoyed fellowship together because both sides (parties) enjoyed fellowship with God. Further, their fellowship with one another and with God stemmed from the proper reaction to revelation. The saving gospel had been revealed to John and

all the apostles, and in turn, they declared it to the world. All who responded obediently to the gospel were saved from their sins (Rom. 1:16) and entered into the fellowship of God and the apostles. Paul expressed this glorious concept in the following inspired words.

But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you (Rom. 6:17).

Obedience to the gospel plan of salvation is requisite to true Christian fellowship. That “*form of doctrine*” mentioned by Paul in Romans 6:17 had already been elaborated earlier in the same chapter. The word “*form*” means “*pattern*,” and the pattern to be obeyed involves the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 15:1-4). Note the manner in which one obeys such a pattern:

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3-4).

The conclusion is clear and unmistakable. True Christian fellowship only exists between persons who have obeyed the gospel in being scripturally baptized into Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 12:13; 2 Cor. 5:17).

Understanding these concepts and conclusions answers a commonly asked question, “*Why not fellowship the denominations?*” Simply put, denominationalists

have not obeyed the pure, unadulterated gospel plan of salvation. Most denominations misunderstand (or even mock) the Biblical importance of water baptism, and all of them fall short of the New Testament pattern regarding Christ's church. The careful Bible student acknowledges the connection between true baptism and the true church. True, scriptural baptism places one into the one true church (cf. 1 Cor. 12:13; Acts 2:38, 41, 47), even as it places one into Christ (Gal. 3:27). One cannot be in Christ without being in His church—the church is “*the fullness*” of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23). Any baptism that “*lands*” one in a denomination, therefore, falls short of the Biblical mark. To further substantiate this point, one should note that the Samaritans were instructed concerning the kingdom of God (the church; Matt. 16:18-19) prior to being baptized (Acts 8:12).

Not only are modern denominations conspicuously absent from the New Testament record, but even denominational tendencies and practices are condemned. The following passage should be cause for sober reflection on the part of anyone who is a member of a denomination today.

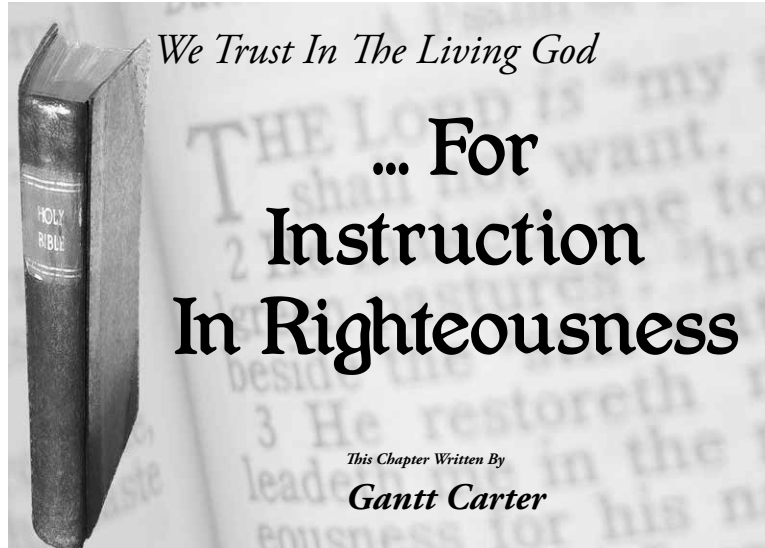
Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one

of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos;  
and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ  
divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye  
baptized in the name of Paul (1 Cor. 1:10-13)?

Denominationalism and division are inseparably wedded together. You cannot have the former without the latter. Such organizational division and the doctrinal diversity producing it are clear violations of the Bible's teaching on unity. This is why denominationalism must not be fellowshiped by those seeking to practice pure New Testament Christianity. An important principle to remember was thus written by Paul, "*And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them*" (Eph. 5:11).

IN HIS PLAN FOR UNITY / FELLOWSHIP

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*“We Trust in the Living God”* is a great lectureship theme, and communicates such a powerful truth. Regardless of how men may want to deny the fact, *“our God, He is alive!”* As Paul told Timothy, *“to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe”* (1 Tim. 4:10). Remember that, *“it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes”* (Psm. 118:8-9). The phrase, *“instruction in righteousness”* is a part of the sentence located in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 of our New Testament. Devotion, diligence, and dedication are essential to true Christianity, and we must strive with all our ability to be properly instructed in the way of righteousness. Let us delve into God’s Word, and consider three areas of thought concerning this subject.

## **The Contrast Of Instruction In Righteousness**

It can be helpful to understand the opposite meaning of a concept in order to gain a better understanding of the concept itself. If we want to see the opposite of what it means to be “*instructed in righteousness*,” then the first few verses of 2 Timothy 3 are a great place for us to start. Paul warns the young preacher, Timothy, that, “*in the last days perilous times will come*” (2 Tim. 3:1). “*Perilous*” is the Greek term *chalepos* referring to that which is hard, difficult, or even fierce (cf. Matt. 8:28). The phrase “*last days*” is a general description of the Christian age or the period of the New Covenant (cf. Joel 2:28-ff; Heb. 1:1-2; Acts 2:17; 1 Tim. 4:1-ff). Paul then describes the nature of this departure from truth. The characteristics listed are very descriptive of our modern society. He says,

Men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God (2 Tim. 3:2-4).

Misplaced “*love*” seems to be a key part of this unrighteous behavior. For example, notice how Paul starts by mentioning the love of self which leads to such things as covetousness, pride, etc. One can also perceive a progression in this text from a lack of gratitude to being unwilling to forgive others (“*unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving*”). Interestingly, such corrupt



individuals may maintain some form of religious practice, a facade of following God but empty of true godliness (v. 5; cf. Matt. 7:21-23). Timothy is instructed to continue to separate himself from such individuals (cf. Rom. 16:17-18; Eph. 5:7-14), the Greek text indicating that these unrighteousness practices had already begun. Paul continues his description by explaining,

For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, **always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth** (2 Tim. 3:6-7, emphasis added).

Some are fascinated with learning and devote much time in exploring their intellectual potential, but that alone does not mean that they are obtaining a grasp on the truth or being instructed in righteousness (cf. Acts 17:20-21; Col. 2:23). Many today “*creep*” into congregations and pass themselves off as righteous, but their lifestyle and teaching deny such (2 Tim. 3:5; Jude 1:4). Simply put: Paul is describing those who resist the truth (2 Tim. 3:8; cf. 2 Thess. 2:10-12). However, these mentally corrupt and disapproved individuals will not be ultimately successful, “*for their folly will be manifested to all*” (v. 9). “*All things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light*” (Eph. 5:13).

The opposite of being properly instructed in righteousness may also be observed in the letter to the Hebrews. After noticing that his recipients were “*dull*

*of hearing*” (Heb. 5:11), the writer of Hebrews declares,

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who **by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil** (Heb. 5:12-14, emphasis added).

The Hebrew Christians under consideration above had become inactive or “*sluggish*,” not pressing on to spiritual maturity in righteousness (Heb. 6:1-12). They serve as an insightful example of what it means to not be instructed in righteousness.

### **The Context Immediately Surrounding The Phrase**

The immediate context of our phrase is as follows:

But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 3:14-17).

In contrast to the progression of “*evil men and*

*imposters*” (v. 13), Paul exhorts Timothy to press on in his knowledge and assurance of God’s truth (cf. John 8:31-32; 17:17). He also observes that the wisdom gained from the Old Testament Scriptures coupled with faith in the Messiah leads to salvation (cf. Gal. 2:22ff). Christians in ancient Rome were informed that, “*whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope*” (Rom. 15:4). We are no longer under the Old Law (Eph. 2:14-16; Col. 2:14-17), but we would do well today to diligently study the Old Testament.

Paul declares that the whole of Scripture is literally God-breathed, that the words of the Scriptures are the very words of Deity (cf. 2 Peter 1:16-21). In immediate application 2 Timothy 3:16-17 refers specifically to the Old Testament revelation from God (cf. 2 Tim. 3:15). However, it follows that this is also an accurate description of the New Testament writings as well. As Barclay says, “*If what he claims for scripture is true of the Old Testament, how much truer it is for the still more precious words of the New*” (Barclay, 199). Of course, at the time Paul wrote those words the written New Testament had not yet been completed. It is important to note the great unity between the Old and New Testaments. The Scriptures are the mind of God revealed in ink (2 Cor. 2:9-15), and therefore, highly useful or “*profitable*” to humanity (cf. 1 Tim. 4:7-8). The Bible is absolutely the world’s greatest book. In comparison with this book all other books fall to a gray backdrop of insignificance. The apostle gives a precise list of the Bible’s usefulness.

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First, Paul explains that the Scriptures are profitable for “*doctrine*” or “*teaching*.” The Bible contains **all** of the spiritual information that we need to learn and understand on this earth. All of God’s truth has been revealed (John 16:13-15; Eph. 3:1-5), and now written down in the Bible. The content of Christianity has been “*once for all delivered to the saints*” (Jude 3). Thus, if one seeks to teach God’s truth, the Bible must be the source—the textbook. Preachers and teachers of the good news are bound by the glory of God to “*preach the word*” (2 Tim. 4:1-2).

Second, we find that the Book is also to be used for reproofing or convicting. The term “*reproof*” is related to rebuking and censuring. The Word of God serves as the ultimate critique of our hearts and our lives (cf Heb. 4:12). As we study privately or hear the Word publicly proclaimed, our sin is pointed out (conviction), and we are admonished to repent (cf. John 16:8; Acts 2:36-38; Gal. 2:11). It is not difficult to see that teaching and reproofing are closely connected. Notice this statement in the same context: “*Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching*” (2 Tim. 4:2).

Third, the book we call the Bible is useful for “*correction*” or restoring. This Greek term was employed by the Greeks to describe repairing broken statues or damaged buildings. *Epanorthōsis* is only used here in the New Testament. The teaching of Scripture has the ability to restore us to our proper behavior before our Creator and allow the right relationship with

our Creator (cf. 2 Tim. 2:15; 2 Cor. 3:18). Hearts and lives, dashed by sin and crushed by sorrow, can be powerfully mended by the words of Deity. The crowning ability of the inspired page is to complete us in Christ. “*Completely furnished*’ reflects a grammatical form which indicates the ‘fitting’ is by God, and the result is a permanent mode (namely the Bible) of completely qualifying man for ‘every good work’ needed to pursue the service of God” (Jackson, 469). Therefore, we do not need any other Book to please God and enter into eternal joy in Heaven one day (cf. Matt. 25:21, 23; Jude 24).

### **The Concept Of Instruction In Righteousness**

According to the inspired apostle, “*instruction in righteousness*” is the fourth profitable use of the Holy Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16). We trust in the true and living God for “*instruction in righteousness,*” and locate such in His written word.

The term translated “*instruction*” is from the Greek term *paideuo* which means “*to train children.*” The word used in our text does literally refer to “*child training.*” Some English versions translate the term as “*training,*” and accurately so. In this context Thayer says, “*whatever in adults also cultivates the soul, especially by correcting mistakes and curbing the passions; hence instruction which aims at the increase of virtue*” (Thayer, 473). This instruction or training is said to be in righteousness. Righteousness in this verse speaks to right behavior that lends itself to a right relationship

with Deity (1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:22; cf. Luke 1:75; Matt. 5:10). God's nature defines true righteousness; proper human righteousness involves becoming more like Deity (Matt. 5:20, 48; Luke 6:36; 1 Peter 1:13-16). "*A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher*" (Luke 6:40). Our holy God is shown to be holy by His righteousness (Isa. 5:16). God does not arbitrarily decide what is right; His perfect actions set forth the standard of righteousness. Simply put: Any action in harmony with His character is right, and anything contrary to His righteousness is wrong/unrighteous (cf. Eph. 5:1-2; 1 Cor. 11:1). God has revealed His righteousness in the precious Scriptures (cf. Psm. 199:172, 160).

The basic nature of training involves repetitious practice. For instance, to be an accomplished musician, one must spend hours of practice time to develop muscle memory and articulate control. So also with spiritual training; it is continually obeying God's commands to gain improvement—to acquire deeper spiritual discernment and strength (cf. James 1:2-4, 12). Consider Paul's earlier words to Timothy regarding godly exercise:

But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe (1 Tim. 4:7-10).

A key part of obtaining and of maintaining spiritual maturity is to develop righteous awareness by continual practice or habit (Heb. 5:11-14). Also, one trained in righteousness is skilled in “*the word of righteousness*” (Heb. 5:13; cf. 2 Tim. 2:15, 22). Therefore, the Bible might be called the “*training manual*” for the Christian. Christians are to apply and to practice the Scriptures daily. The faithful (trained) saint feeds frequently and fervently upon the wonderful words of eternal life (Matt. 4:4; 1 Peter 2:1-2; James 1:21; John 6:68). Real spiritual training comes about by making a habit of being taught (content), rebuked (sin pointed to), and corrected by the inspired page (2 Tim. 3:16).

Another aspect of training in righteousness is that of discipline. Of course, self-discipline is a key part of most physical training. After using a sports illustration, Paul writes, “*I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified*” (1 Cor. 9:27). All Christians must learn to discipline themselves, and to exercise self-control, even in activities that may not be inherently sinful (recreation, sports, hobbies, etc.). Have you ever noticed the etymological connection between disciple and discipline?

In the Greek world, *paideia* primarily referred to education. The New Testament use of the term (and its related forms) clearly emphasizes its disciplinary facet. One might find it interesting to know that a form of *paideia* is translated “*chastise*” in Luke, and used to describe the scourging of our Master (Luke 23:16,

22). Paul uses the word (*paideia*) to describe the way fathers are to train or to discipline their children in the Lord (Eph. 6:4; cf. Prov. 22:6, 15). The term is found four times in Hebrews 12 and translated each time as “*chastening*.”

And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons:

My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the Lord loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. 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? 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. 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** (Heb. 12:5-11, emphasis added).

All proper discipline ultimately comes from God—via His authority. God disciplines us today by teaching us, by reproofing us, and by correcting us through His inspired word. His word instructs us to take disciplinary actions toward Christians who are living in sin (1 Cor. 5:1-13), and disregarding Biblical commands (2 Thess. 3:14-15). Is not one main goal of disfellowship that

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of yielding “*the peaceable fruit of righteousness*” in the disobedient saint?

All that the inspired Word does via teaching, reproof, and correction is designed to make us righteous—to make us complete in accordance with God’s nature (2 Tim. 2:16-17; cf. Matt. 5:20, 48). The way of righteousness is not always easy, but it is the way that leads to life eternal (Prov. 12:28). May we all continue in the spiritual things which we have learned and have been assured of (2 Tim. 4:14).

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FOR INSTRUCTION IN RIGHTEOUSNESS

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Have you ever wondered how twelve men with little to no formal education, no public speaking skills, and no experience as religious teachers, could fill an entire city with their doctrine (Acts 5:28), turn the world upside down (Acts 17:6), and literally transform an entire culture for millennia to come? Actually we don't have to speculate because the Scriptures answer that question. While the apostles were standing trial for the previously mentioned reasons, the religious leaders *"took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus"* (Acts 4:13). Something about their time with Jesus changed them, transformed them from something they weren't, soul winners, to what He wanted them to be, fishers of men. From their first meeting He had told them *"I WILL MAKE YOU fishers of men"* (Matt. 4:19, emphasis added). Their success as soul winners

would not be because of their own talents, skills, or knowledge, but because He would teach them, train them, and make them soul winners. All they had to do was trust and obey.

In the early days of the church trusting Him to reach the lost was not always an easy task. Initially there was great success in reaching the lost sheep of Israel, but in time, God sent His soul winners to different races, nations and ethnicities, and this wasn't always welcomed by those listening to the preaching or even by those doing the preaching! Peter was the first of these soul winners to trust the Lord to save the lost among the Gentiles. Upon converting the household of Cornelius, Peter was asked to give an account to the church at Jerusalem concerning his reaching out to the lost Gentiles. In his explanation he describes a vision in which he is instructed to eat unclean animals, which he initially refuses. It is only after the Lord directs him three times and tells him not to consider unclean what the Lord has called clean, that Peter begins to trust God to reach the lost Gentiles (Acts 11:1-10). He was directed by the Holy Spirit to go with the men to the house of Cornelius "*nothing doubting*" (Acts 11:12). Peter had always believed that as a Jew he was to keep himself separate from the Gentiles, yet the Spirit is telling him to go "*nothing doubting,*" or in other words, "*trust me.*"

Upon arriving at the house of Cornelius, Peter preaches to them, witnesses the Holy Spirit manifest Himself through the miracle of tongues amongst the Gentiles, and then makes what had to be for him a

difficult decision. He had to trust God, and trust that God wanted to save the lost Gentiles as well as the lost sheep of Israel. In his explanation he says, “*what was I, that I could withstand God?*” (Acts 11:17). To paraphrase, Peter said, “*How could I not trust God in this matter?*” As a result of His trusting God to reach the lost Gentiles, “*a great number believed, and turned to the Lord*” (Acts 11:21).

The early success of the church in reaching the lost is directly linked to their willingness to trust in the Lord to reach them. While I am thankful for all of the resources, classes, and seminars we have that focus on evangelism, it concerns me that despite these advantages we are failing to reach the lost the way the disciples in the New Testament did. We do not have a shortage of material (if you type “*personal evangelism*” into an Amazon.com search you receive over 3,000 results), but perhaps a failure to trust the Lord to reach the lost. The greatest personal evangelism teacher is the Lord Himself and in this study we want to focus on what the disciples learned from Him about how to reach the lost, so that we can imitate it today.

**From Him They Learned That Compassion Reaches The Lost**—If we aren’t careful we can begin to see people as problems to be solved or projects to be completed, rather than people needing compassion and teaching. This was a trap that the disciples had fallen into when Jesus arranges a test. Although they had just returned from a “*short term mission trip*” where they preached the Gospel of the kingdom

(Mark 6:7-13), the disciples quickly demonstrated that when they felt they were “*off duty*,” people became problems. It needs to be mentioned at this point that the account in John 6:6 indicates that Jesus arranges this scenario as somewhat of a test for His disciples.

Having returned from their evangelism trip they are now ready for a little down time and board a ship for a mini-vacation, only to have this day off interrupted by a mob of people. Jesus, Who was just as busy, burdened, and exhausted as the disciples reacts, not with frustration, but compassion and begins to teach them (Mark 6:34). It would be the disciples who, at the end of the day, would come to Jesus and ask Him to send them away (Mark 6:36). No doubt they were shocked when Jesus says to them, “*You feed them.*” He wanted His disciples to show the same compassion toward the people that He had shown them and when they failed to do so He demonstrated it for them by feeding this multitude. Bear in mind, the Lord could know the thoughts and hearts of men and knew that most of these people were only seeking Him for the food and not because of the miracles which proved He was the Son of God (John 6:26), and yet He still fed them anyway. He still showed them compassion knowing they were insincere in their hearts. I believe He did this because it provided Him an opportunity to teach them many things (Mark 6:34) and because it was the right thing to do. Although many would later turn away from following Him, the result of His

compassion, feeding the hungry, and teaching, was that many began to confess, *“This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world”* (John 6:14).

His compassion was seen in His healing of the sick (Matt. 14:14), casting out demons (Mark 5:19), comforting those grieving because of death (Luke 7:13), and feeding the hungry (Matt. 15:32). Clearly an important part of Jesus reaching the lost was His demonstrating compassion. The old, true, wise saying reminds us, *“People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.”* People knew the Lord cared about them and as a result they cared about what He had to say. God has enabled us to open the hearts of the lost by opening our hearts to the lost.

**From Him They Learned That Conversation Reaches The Lost**—Many times groups such as Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons or Seventh Day Adventists have knocked on my door and attempted to convert me to their doctrines. Generally speaking they all have the same, well-rehearsed, speech that they use to try and get in the door. They will use this same, formal, monologue on every person they meet. It always seemed to me more like a sales pitch than an attempt to introduce me to Jesus, and yet, I wonder how many times we sound like this to our friends and neighbors? I am afraid that the answer is, most of the time. However, the Lord generally did not employ this *“technique”* when reaching the lost. Instead, He opted for what might be best described as a conversational approach.

Many of the Lord's "*Bible studies*" were actually just casual conversations He struck up with people in all different settings and situations. He didn't "*door knock*" or "*cold call*" but simply started conversations with people and then steered the discussion to spiritual matters. Jesus was a friendly man and One who wasn't afraid to converse with a stranger informally. Two of the greatest examples of this approach are found back to back in John 3 and 4.

In John 3 Jesus is approached by a man of faith, Nicodemus, who brings up the subject of religion on his own. Seeing an open door, Jesus walks through it and begins to introduce into the conversation the things that this Pharisee needed to hear and that he didn't understand. In the course of the conversation Nicodemus has questions, which Jesus answers, and misconceptions, which Jesus corrects. This wasn't a debate or an intervention, but just a conversation between two men. How many friends do you have who are "*religious*" people? Think of the times each day when a question or comment is made that is in the realm of religion, which could be used as an opportunity to share some truth from Scripture that this person has never heard or considered. It doesn't need to be an "*I'm right, you're wrong*" interaction, just a mutual discussion of spiritual matters in which you "*speak where the Bible speaks.*"

Additionally, John 4 follows a similar pattern of "*evangelism.*" Jesus stops and asks a woman for a drink of water. You might think of this encounter as similar to ours with the cashier at a convenience



store or restaurant. One person is serving the other and the transaction requires a degree of interaction, which can be steered into a discussion of the spiritual. Amazingly what started as a conversation about a drink of water resulted in the conversion of an entire Samaritan village (John 4:39-42). It must be noted that this wasn't preceded by a mapping out of the city, mass mailings, an evangelism seminar, and a door knocking. There is absolutely nothing wrong with employing these methods, but they are certainly not required for us to be able to reach the lost. I am afraid we underestimate the power of the conversation, believing that the "formal" Bible study is the only way to evangelize. Imagine if, instead of a dozen or so Christians meeting on a Saturday to knock random doors in their community in an attempt to set up Bible studies, a dozen members went to a public place and struck up a conversation with someone. What would happen if they decided to drop in on a friend and steer the conversation to spiritual matters? Consider the impact of conversing with parents of children who are on our children's ball teams. Is it possible that many people could be brought to Jesus if we had a spiritual conversation with the man who sells us our biscuit and coffee every morning, or the lady who rings up our groceries each week? What could happen if we trusted the Lord's example for how to reach the lost?

**From Him They Learned Casual Settings Reach The Lost**—It is just a fact that some people will not set foot inside a church building. Their

reasons may be varied and even justified, but they are united in that they don't want anything to do with a church service or a church building. They may feel pressured, intimidated, out of place, confused, underdressed, or like an outsider. They may have a bias based on something that happened or what someone did, long ago. There are some people you will never reach if your only approach is to invite them to come to services or a Gospel meeting, or lectureship, or seminar, or VBS (by the way, to a non-Christian, all of those things are basically the same thing from their point of view). That's not to say you shouldn't ask, but that you might learn that they will simply not respond to this approach or come to this setting. However, this doesn't mean they won't respond to another approach or in another setting.

In His time on Earth the Lord did not sit in the temple or in the synagogue and invite people to come in and hear His teaching, He went to where the people were and taught them there. He taught people at dinner parties, He taught people at weddings, He taught people at the seashore, and yes, sometimes He taught people at a religious service. The point is, the Lord reached the lost by taking advantage of opportunities to teach them in what they would have considered a safe, casual, non-confrontational environment. We are literally surrounded by opportunities to reach the lost with the Gospel if we will just pay attention to our surroundings and realize that the best way to get people into the church building is to spend time with them outside of it.

## Conclusion

Too often our best intentions get in the way of the Gospel. We get bogged down with “*sticking to the script*” from an evangelism class, or we approach every person with the same plan of study from our evangelism materials, rather than taking the time to get to know them as a person and listening to them and their questions about spiritual matters. We have to invest in peoples lives. I have listened to brethren brag about the 85% conversion rate that this material/course/seminar produces with mixed emotions. While I rejoice anytime someone is saved, I cringe at the thought of us turning personal evangelism into an assembly line agenda where we streamline a one size fits all approach, rather than one based on how Jesus reached the lost. We must be careful to never think that the plan is what brings about the success in reaching the lost.

When we trust in ourselves there are people who will not be reached. This isn't necessarily because we don't give them a chance, although sometimes this is the case, but because we wouldn't think to reach out to them. For example, Philip was conducting a very successful “*Gospel meeting*” in Samaria when God tells him to go somewhere else (Acts 8). Although we aren't told how many people were saved in Samaria, Luke used words and phrases like, “*the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake*” (Acts 8:6), “*there was great joy in that city*” (Acts 8:8), “*they were baptized, both men and women*” (Acts 8:12), “*Samaria had received the word of God*” (Acts 8:14),

to describe the great success Philip was having. Our logic would suggest the need to stay in Samaria and keep on preaching, but God's ways are not our ways and His thoughts are not our thoughts (Isa. 55:8), and He had other plans. I can only imagine how difficult it might have been for Philip to walk away from such fertile soil only to be sent to "*the middle of nowhere*" (Acts 8:26). He demonstrated great trust in the Lord by journeying to this desert place, where he would encounter one man, a Eunuch of the court of Candace of Ethiopia (Acts 8:27). This one soul would have been easy to overlook or underestimate for us, especially in light of the success in Samaria, but it was the Lord Who taught His disciples that one soul is worth the whole world (Matt. 16:26). Philip trusted God to save the lost, but we have to ask ourselves if we would have?

Another disciple who likely would have been overlooked or outright avoided, would have been Saul of Tarsus. When Saul arrived in Damascus, his reputation had preceded him. So much so that Ananias was afraid to preach to him (Acts 9:13-16). Although he was afraid, Ananias trusted God to reach this lost man, and he obeyed (Acts 9:17). Because Ananias obeyed, Saul obeyed as well, and was baptized for the remission of his sins; sins such as "*breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord*" (Acts 9:1), and "*making havoc of the church....committing them to prison*" (Acts 8:3), and "*consenting to their death, shutting them in prison, punishing them, compelling them to blaspheme and*

*persecuting them*” (Acts 26:10-11). Honestly, how many of us would have trusted God to reach this man? Ananias trusted God and He turned the most hostile enemy of Christianity into its greatest soldier. When we trust in ourselves we say and think things like, “*They’d never change, they won’t listen.*” When we trust in God we stop trusting in ourselves or our plans, our programs, our methods, or our techniques. While these things can be beneficial in preparing us to teach the Gospel to the lost, they do not result in us reaching the lost. God is able to reach them and save them through His Gospel, not our abilities. The power resides in the word of God (Heb. 4:12; Rom. 1:16), not in us.

This was a lesson that I had to learn the hard way through a lesson in humility. In the Summer of 2013 I was in Paso Tempesque, Costa Rica on a Young Evangelistic Servants (Y.E.S.) Campaign with Latin American Missions. Also on this campaign was a good friend of mine who is also a preacher. We were both trained at the Memphis School of Preaching and combined we have over thirty years preaching experience, have conducted hundreds of home Bible studies and been involved in the conversion of hundreds. In contrast, my oldest son Reese, due to necessity, was put in charge of an evangelistic team for the week. Although Reese had been on many campaigns, he had never led an evangelistic team and conducted home Bible studies. In other words, he had virtually no experience or training. At the end of the week my friend and I combined to convert one

person. Don't misunderstand me, we rejoiced over this one lost soul being reached, but with our experience and in such a fertile field like Latin America, this number seemed low. This was especially true when the week ended and my eighteen year old son had converted five people! What we might perceive as his biggest weakness, he didn't know what he was doing, actually became his greatest strength. He simply showed them the Scriptures and trusted God to do the rest, and it worked. I learned a valuable lesson that week in trusting God to reach the lost and not trusting in my own abilities.

When we trust in Him we no longer view any lost person as "*off limits*" or "*beyond reaching*." We view the couple with a marriage-divorce-remarriage problem the way the Lord viewed the oft divorced woman at the well (John 4). We view the promiscuous young person the way Jesus saw the woman taken in adultery (John 8). We view the member of the denomination the way Jesus saw Nicodemus the Pharisee (John 3). We can trust in Him and reach the lost, or we can trust in self and just walk right past them.

Perhaps the greatest area where the principles of Isaiah 55:8-11 needs to be understood and applied is in the realm of reaching the lost.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.  
For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
so are my ways higher than your ways, and my  
thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain

cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

If we will simply trust in the Lord to reach the lost, follow His example, plant His seed (Luke 8:11), and continue to water it (1 Cor. 3:6), He will accomplish what He intends and He will give the increase.

TO ENABLE US TO REACH THE LOST

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**T**rust is a wonderful thing. It affords comfort and peace of mind. In this way, it joins hearts together. Individuals learn to rely on one another, and they feel safe with each other. This is why there is such emotional pain when trust is violated and broken. People have been known to do this, but God never has. God is—and has always been—completely trustworthy. He is true to His word and faithful to His children.

The Scriptures are replete with inspired statements that underscore the trustworthiness of God. One of the most comforting statements was originally made to Joshua and then later repeated by the author of Hebrews.

There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee (Josh. 1:5).

Also,

Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me (Heb. 13:5-6).

Passages such as these can be very comforting. Nonetheless, we tend to be very forgetful as human beings. We need reminding quite often, and thus, we need to be regular students of God's word. Add to this fact that man tends to think of God as a man—even though the careful Bible student knows better—and one can see the spiritual maintenance that has to be performed in virtually all of our lives. Spiritual health requires not only a proper view of oneself (cf. James 1:21-25), but also a proper view of God (cf. James 1:12-18).

Unlike man, God has no blindspots. He knows all and understands all. God is never going to let man down—especially not out of ignorance or lack of vision. He knows the circumstances and trials each of us faces, and He also cares (1 Peter 5:7). This is extremely important for every Christian to remember. God also knows each person's weaknesses. So long as God's child fears Him, and is striving to do His will, God views one's weaknesses out of pity and compassion. The following words of the psalmist are most comforting.

The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for

ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust (Psm. 103:8-14).

The above passage is foundational to the present study. It is God Who formed man—He knows each of us intimately, even better than we know ourselves. He knows the inherent weakness associated with our fleshly existence (cf. Matt. 26:41). Even further, God's Son experienced a fleshly existence firsthand, being tempted in all points common to humanity (cf. Heb. 4:15). Now Christ ever lives, making intercession for His people as their Advocate before God (Heb. 7:25; 1 John 2:1). No better advocate could be sought to plead our case before the Father!

Throughout the Bible, God's relationship with His people is described in terms of a Father and His children. This, too, is most helpful. Any of us who have been blessed with children know the tenderness, compassion and longsuffering which we afford to our offspring. How comforting, then, to reflect upon how God must feel toward us! His attitude and desire is for our good. Our Lord used this fact to make an important point regarding prayer. Christ taught:

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:  
For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that

seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him (Matt. 7:7-11)?

God's love for man does not overlook sin on man's part. Instead, His great love provides man a remedy for his sin problem (cf. John 3:16; Eph. 2:4-5). In the above text from Psalm 103, God's mercy is mentioned in one form or another some three times. God is gracious, merciful and willing to forgive man's shortcomings—so long as man humbles himself before God in penitent submission. Note that only those who fear Him are recipients of God's mercy (Psm. 103:11) and of His pity (v. 13). Put another way, "*God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble*" (James 4:6).

All of this is to say that God is a compassionate and loving God, Who is well-acquainted with His creation. He knows man's inherent weaknesses, but has pity on those who humble themselves in submission to His will. He is interested in the welfare of His children and looks after their needs. He is longsuffering and merciful, gracious and kind. Would a God of this nature expect more of His children than what they are able to do or provide? Absolutely NOT! Nonetheless, as human beings we might sometime feel that He does. A careful examination of the following passages should be of help.

### **1 John 5:3**

For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

God created man in His own image. This fact alone entails many ramifications, among which are man's capacity to love and man's volition. God is the very Personification of love (1 John 4:8), and He has endowed man with the ability to love as well. However, man is not forced to love. He is not forced to love God, nor even his fellow-man. This is where volition comes into play. Volition is the power of will—sometimes expressed as the power of free will. Man is endowed with the power to choose his own course in life, but he will one day give an account for the choices he has made (cf. Eccl. 11:9; 1 Peter 1:17).

In writing what we know as his first general epistle, the apostle John says much about love. He certainly writes about love between brethren in Christ (e.g. 2:10; 3:14; 4:11), but he also deals with one's loving God (e.g. 4:19-21; 5:1-3). In 5:3 John tells us that loving God involves (yes, requires) keeping His commandments. This coincides with the words of our Lord in John 14:15, "*If ye love me, keep my commandments.*" It is also a repetition of what John had taught earlier in this first epistle.

And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of

God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him (1 John 2:3-5).

Thus, God has endowed man with the capacity to love Him; the free will to exercise that capacity; and even the necessary instruction to do so. Truly, God has given us all things pertaining to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3)! Not only do we KNOW that God loves us (Rom. 5:8; 1 John 4:16), but we also KNOW that we can love Him back—and we KNOW how. It is by keeping His commandments.

It is at this point that the inspired John provides us with another most helpful statement. At the end of 5:3 John writes, “...and his commandments are not grievous.” What does this mean? In more modern translations of God’s word, the word “grievous” is often translated “burdensome.” God has given us His commandments—in order that we might love Him according to His will—and His commandments are not burdensome. What a wonderful thought! God wants us to love Him, and He has not put more on us than we can bear!

In this way, our heavenly Father is seen to be infinitely kinder than the Pharisees and scribes of the first century. Note our Lord’s warning concerning both their harshness and hypocrisy.

Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous

to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders;  
but they themselves will not move them with  
one of their fingers (Matt. 23:1-4).

The Greek word translated "*heavy*" in verse four above is the same word as "*grievous*" in 1 John 5:3. The scribes and Pharisees were harsh and uncompassionate in their binding of Moses' law upon their hearers, and they certainly did not lead by example. Even further, they would also bind human traditions on the people, as if such traditions carried the same authority as God's commands (cf. Matt. 15:1-9).

In Jesus Christ we have a religious Leader at the completely opposite end of the spectrum. Jesus both **did** and **taught** the Father's commands (Acts 1:1). He lived up to the spiritual standards that are required of us (cf. 1 Peter 2:21-22). Yet, in His perfection, He is compassionate toward our faults. What marvelous mercy! Consider these descriptions of Christ.

Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted (Heb. 2:17-18).

Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens (Heb. 7:25-26).

In addition to the mercy of our Savior, we also enjoy what is called “*a better testament*” (Heb. 7:22). It is true that the Old Testament law of Moses was called a “*yoke*” (Acts 15:5, 10; cf. Gal. 5:1). However, one must remember the Divine intent behind the law and the purpose it fulfilled. The Old Testament law emphasized the seriousness of sin (cf. Rom. 7:13) and accentuated man’s desperate need for a Savior (Rom. 3:19-20). In this way, the old law did exactly what God designed it to do, and it is described as “*holy, and just, and good*” (Rom. 7:12). That being said, Jesus fulfilled the old law in order to bring the new covenant into effect (cf. Heb. 10:9). It is a better covenant, established upon better promises (Heb. 8:6). In preparing His disciples for that new law, Jesus issued this wonderful invitation,

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light (Matt. 11:28-30).

When the sentiments of Matthew 11:30 are combined with the statement found in 1 John 5:3, there can be no doubt—God does not and will not require more of us than we are able to fulfill!

### **1 Corinthians 10:13**

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye



are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

As mentioned earlier, God is a trustworthy God. Though this fact is brought out in a number of ways in Scripture, perhaps none is any clearer than the simple statement “*God is faithful.*” One who serves God can know and recite, “*God is faithful.*” When physical health is failing and earth-time is drawing to its close, “*God is faithful.*” When the storms of life are howling around us and above us, “*God is faithful.*” In all circumstances of life, “*God is faithful.*”

Paul impressed this fact on the hearts of the Corinthians. In a context in which the apostle is warning of sin and apostasy (1 Cor. 10:1ff), Paul wanted his readers to know that no sin is irresistible. This is because God is faithful. He does not “*set up*” His child, simply to see him fail. In fact, God is not the author of temptation at all (cf. James 1:13). Temptation arises from within man himself—often stimulated by something in man’s environment (cf. James 1:14-16; Gen. 3:4-6). However, God is Sovereign over all—realms earthly and eternal. He does restrict the activity of Satan, keeping him within God-appointed bounds. In this way, God’s child is given the assurance that God will not suffer (i.e. allow, tolerate) one to be tempted beyond his own ability to resist or escape. Again, this is wonderful news! It reminds us that God is for us—He is actually “*on our side*” because we are His children. Paul assures us,

What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared

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TO NOT EXPECT OF US BEYOND WHAT WE ARE ABLE

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not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all,  
how shall he not with him also freely give us all  
things (Rom. 8:31-32)?

It sounds colloquial and, perhaps, even oversimplified to put it this way, but God **will** do His part in keeping His children from sin. What we must concern ourselves with, therefore, is doing **our** part to avoid sin. This is where the context of 1 Corinthians 10:13 comes into play. This wonderful verse is “bookended” by statements stressing man’s own responsibility. Consider 1 Corinthians 10:12, “*Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*” Herein the apostle Paul stresses a proper attitude on the part of God’s child. There is no room for religious haughtiness or overconfidence. Yes, we are God’s children, but so were the Israelites under the old covenant (cf. 1 Cor. 10:1-4). Paul states this sad reality, “*But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness*” (1 Cor. 10:5). Because of rebellion and sin, many of the ancient Israelites fell out of favor with God. As God’s children today, we must ever remember that we, too, are susceptible to the same weaknesses and vulnerabilities. This is not to say that we have to fall away, or even that we will fall away, but it is to say we must not let down our guard. Spiritual overconfidence is a killer.

Then consider 1 Corinthians 10:14, “*Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.*” Whereas 1 Corinthians 10:12 enjoined a proper attitude, 1 Corinthians 10:14 now enjoins proper action (note:

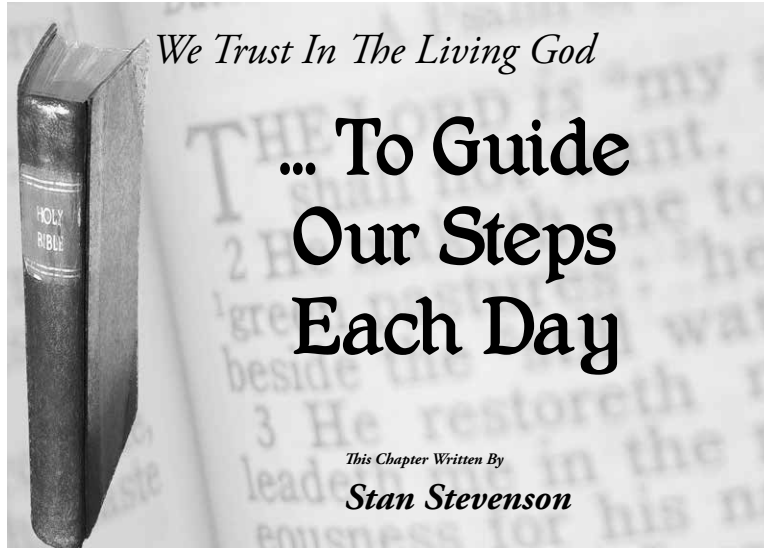
both of these are man's responsibility). The Corinthian Christians lived in an environment in which they were especially exposed to the dangers of idolatry and its attendant sins. Paul urged them to flee such dangers—to get as far away from such seductions as possible—not to flirt with such things. Such is the corresponding action that comes with a proper attitude of humility. A child of God who is well aware of his own weakness realizes the need and importance of fleeing potentially sinful situations. He desires to do this; he seeks to do this. He wants to be pleasing unto God. The good news is: God will make a way to escape (1 Cor. 10:13)! Thus, “*sandwiched*” between two verses stressing man's responsibility is this wonderful statement that says, “*We can count on God.*” Indeed, God is faithful.

### **Conclusion**

An humble child of God is ever aware of his own weaknesses and inadequacies. This is a given. One must be careful to maintain likewise an accurate view of God as his heavenly Father. God is loving, merciful, compassionate, and full of pity. Also, God is just. He will by no means exact more of man than he is able to perform. God wants to see His children succeed spiritually, and He provides all that is necessary to that end.

TO NOT EXPECT OF US BEYOND WHAT WE ARE ABLE

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**W**e all make decisions every day that affect our lives and the lives of those with whom we have to do. How do we decide what is best and what is right? How do we help those we love to make the right decisions? The prophet Jeremiah wrote, “*O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps*” (Jer. 10:23). The book of Proverbs warns against relying on one’s self instead of divine guidance.

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction (Prov. 1:7).

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil (Prov. 3:5-7).

## TO GUIDE OUR STEPS EACH DAY

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The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise (Prov. 12:15).

There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death (Prov. 14:12; 16:25).

The title of our lesson expresses a principle found in the Old and the New Testament. The prophet Habakkuk wrote, "*Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith*" (Hab. 2:4). The last part of this verse is quoted by Paul in Galatians 3:11 and Romans 1:17, and by the writer of Hebrews in 10:38. The apostle Paul expressed it this way: "*For we walk by faith, not by sight...*" (2 Cor. 5:7). Let us think of some of the ways in which God guides our steps daily.

### **Time**

God guides our steps daily in the use of how we view and how we use our time. The Psalmist said,

The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom (Psm. 90:10-12).

Time is not to be used selfishly. Guided by God we recognize the limitation of life in this world and use our time to prepare for eternity. Paul admonishes,

*“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil”* (Eph. 5:15, 16). Jesus said, *“I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work”* (John 9:4). Too often, the eternal is neglected or rejected because of the time needed for such would require turning away from things that are temporal. How often have we excused ourselves from doing something in service to God because we *“did not have the time?”* But were we using that time for entertainment, or extra work that was not really necessary, or something trivial. We had the time; we simply chose to use it selfishly. The person who is guided by God in the use of his time seeks to live, every day, for the glory of God. *“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God”* (1 Cor. 10:31).

### **Religion**

God guides our steps in religion. Religion is a common experience of mankind. When the Gentiles rejected God, they did not abandon religion altogether, only reverence and the worship of God. Paul wrote, *“Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever”* (Rom. 1:25). Likewise, the Jews did not abandon religion when they rejected God, but they turned their hearts to the worship and service of idols. The person guided by God does not use religion to satisfy himself, but to draw near to God in a right relationship with Him. Thus, our worship is guided by

His will and not ours. True religion impacts our daily life. James wrote,

If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world (James 1:26-27).

When the Assyrians carried the inhabitants of Israel into captivity, they placed on the land strangers from other nations they had conquered (2 Kings 17:24). But these strangers knew nothing about God, so when lions slew some of them they sent word to the king of Assyria who sent a priest from Israel back to teach them about God. The text tells us, "*They feared the LORD, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from thence*" (2 Kings 17:33). The new residents in the land only wanted to appease God and not be loyally devoted to Him. But that spirit is not dead. There are some even today, in the Lord's church, who only wants to appease God so as to avoid Hell. They use religion to that end, instead of seeking to draw near to God and cultivate a deep and lasting relationship with Him. When we walk by faith, we will use religion as God intended, to be reconciled to Him and live in fellowship with Him.

### **Money/Material Things**

God guides our steps daily regarding the material things of life and money; how we make money and how



we use it and the things that it buys. Jesus warns about covetousness and reminds us that a man's life is not measured by the amount of things he possesses (Luke 12:15). And Paul told us that "*covetousness is idolatry*" (Col. 3:5). Yet, it is an ever present danger that things can become more important than they should. Why do we make money? Is it to use it on ourselves? Is it to buy things? The New Testament shows that we make money so we can take care of our families. "*But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel*" (1 Tim. 5:6). According to Paul, we work so we can have to give to others (Eph. 4:28). Jesus said,

Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed (John 6:27).

And again, "*Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*" (Matt. 4:4). Guided by God, we recognize the role that money and material things plays in life while never allowing those things to supersede the spiritual. Jesus warned about laying up treasures where thieves could rob us or moth and rust corrupt it. Instead, He said to lay up treasures in Heaven (Matt. 6:19-21). Money and material things should never take priority over the spiritual. And to the person who is guided by God, they will not.

## Speech

God guides our steps daily in our speech. James warns us that the tongue cannot be tamed (3:8). Paul wrote,

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers (Eph. 5:29).

And again, *“Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man”* (Col. 4:6). Jesus said,

O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned (Matt. 12:34-37).

Because we are Christians, we want to use our tongues to honor and glorify God.

## Marriage

God guides our steps in marriage. Husbands and wives who walk by faith will heed the divine instructions regarding marriage. God intended marriage to be for life (Matt. 19:4-7). The only exception for ending a marriage and entering another marriage without being guilty of fornication is adultery by one’s spouse (Matt.

19:9; Mark 10:6-9; Rom. 7:1-3). Paul used the analogy of a husband and wife to describe Christ and the church (Eph. 5:22-33). Guided by God, how can a wife submit to her husband and file for a divorce. Guided by God, how can a husband love his wife as Christ loved the church and file for a divorce. Guided by God, there is no problem that a husband and wife, both of whom are children of God, should not be able to resolve. If every husband and every wife yielded to the will of God, divorce would be rare among Christians.

### **Children**

When God guides our steps daily, we will have a distinctive attitude and approach to the rearing of our children. The Psalmist said, "*Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward*" (Psm. 127:3). We recognize that God blesses us to have children and that we are accountable to Him for how we rear them just as we are accountable for every other thing God gives us. Paul said, "*And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*" (Eph. 6:4). We strive to impress upon our children the importance of a good education, the importance of a good work ethic, and a respect for the role of recreation. Guided by God, we will also strive to impress upon them the importance of being a servant in the Lord's kingdom. We will teach them and show them the importance of using our talents to the fullest in God's service. While encouraging them to set goals for life in their professions and their hobbies, we will

also encourage them to set goals in their service to God. We will encourage our sons to grow up and serve God as elders, or deacons, or preachers, or teachers, or any other area of service for which they are qualified. We will encourage our daughters to be teachers, wives of elders, deacons, or preachers, or any other area of service for which they are qualified. Guided by God, we will realize that the spiritual development of our children is just as important as their vocational and social development.

### **Burdens**

When we are guided by God, we will see our burdens in a way the world does not view such. Christians are not exempt from any of the troubles common to the world. Paul said,

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it (1 Cor. 10:13).

However, the attitude of the person guided by God sets him apart from the world. James wrote, "*My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations...*" (James 1:2). Trials are counted for joy because of what they can produce (James 1:3-4). Paul had a thorn in the flesh, for which he prayed the Lord to remove. When the Lord refused, Paul said,

Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest

upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong (2 Cor. 12:9b-10).

Paul did not, nor do we relish the idea of burdens. However, burdens will come. Some will come as a result of being followers of Christ. When they come, the person guided by God accepts them and deepens one's dependence upon God. Every burden encountered is an opportunity for the person guided by God to show others the value of one's faith.

### **Death**

When we are guided by God our attitude toward death is different. All die (Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:22; Heb. 9:27). But, the death of a faithful child of God is different from all others.

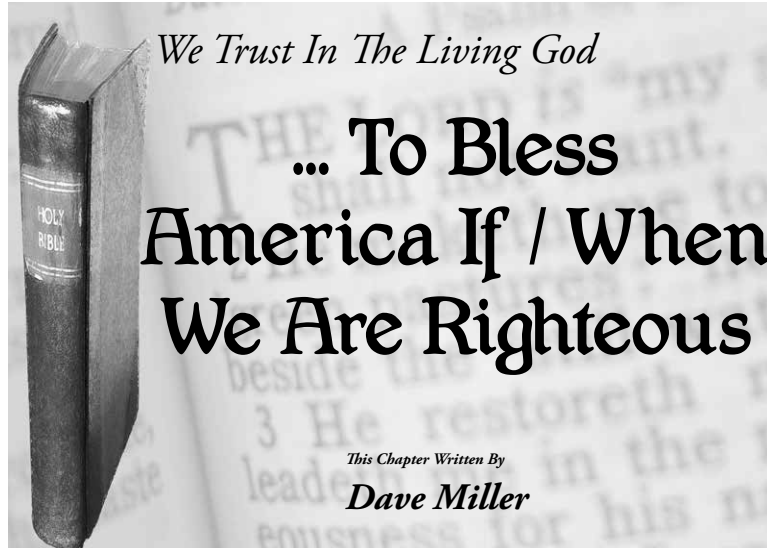
And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them (Rev. 14:13).

The Psalmist said, "*Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints*" (Psm. 116:15). When a Christian dies there is sorrow, but not the same as for those who have no hope (1 Thess. 4:13). For the person guided by God death is a transition from this life to rest and to an eventual home in heaven. Paul described his death as a departure (2 Tim. 4:6). I have always liked the way death was described for Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and Aaron. The Bible says that they were "*gathered to*

*their people*” (Gen. 25:8; 35:29; 49:33; Num. 20:24; 27:13). While death is a universal mystery we all face, by faith we are able to face it with confidence. Our certainty about the experience of death for the person guided by God overcomes the doubts and uncertainty we have about the unknowns of death.

### **Conclusion**

The Psalmist said, “*The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way*” (Psm. 37:23). Since we cannot direct our way (Jer. 10:23), we must have assistance. God gives that assistance to those who will look to Him and trust Him. Living by faith is not a nebulous idea, but one that is certain and impacts our daily lives. Living by faith means that we trust God to direct our steps in every facet of life. May the Lord help us to such confidence and conduct.



Being the word of God, the Bible is timeless. It contains truths that ring of eternity—even when discussing a particular moment in history. If we want to grasp the condition of our own nation, and whether God will continue to bless her, we must turn to God’s communication concerning any number of nations that have preceded us. There we shall be able to look into the mirror and see our own predicament.

Let us begin in Isaiah 2. After predicting the arrival of the church of Christ on the planet (vss. 1-4), Isaiah records the spiritual condition of the nation in his day:

O house of Jacob, come and let us walk in the light of the LORD. For You have forsaken Your people, the house of Jacob, because they are filled with eastern ways; They are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they are pleased with the children of foreigners. Their land is also full of silver and gold, and there is no end to their treasures; their land is also full of horses, and

there is no end to their chariots. Their land is also full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made. People bow down, and each man humbles himself; therefore do not forgive them (2:5-9).

Uncanny, is it not, that people do not change? Regardless of technological progress and the myriad cosmetic changes that accompany human progress, people today are the same as they were when first placed in the Garden. Human beings are created in the image of God, and as such they possess the same attributes and characteristics throughout time. Observe that the nation of Israel suffered from the same maladies that America is experiencing:

1. America is “*filled with eastern ways*”—from the influx of eastern religion that commenced to escalate in the 1960s, to the desire of our politicians to appease the east with apologies and accommodations.
2. America is “*pleased with the children of foreigners*”—in that we are opening our arms to welcome those who do not embrace the Christian worldview or the moral principles that made America great and stable.
3. America is filled with silver and gold and there is no end to our treasures. We have lots of wealth—beyond all nations that have preceded us. The average American lives better and enjoys more comforts and luxuries than the kings and royalty of history. The poorest people in the U.S. have refrigerators, cell phones, nice clothes, television sets, running water,



- indoor plumbing, and a host of other niceties.
4. America is also filled with horse and chariots, that is, we have the strongest military in human history. We consider ourselves generally invincible.
  5. America is also full of idols—both literally (Hinduism, Buddhism, environmentalist “*tree huggers*” and animal rights activists) and figuratively in terms of our devotion to our material things (Col. 3:5). As more and more Americans have jettisoned the Christian worldview, they have opened themselves up to accommodation of false religion.

In view of this tragic state of affairs, Isaiah’s plea to God is “*therefore do not forgive them.*” Could those Israelites have gotten their act together, straightened out their lives, and bowed themselves before the one true God in order to regain His good pleasure and His blessing? Absolutely—and we can trust God to bless America if we as a nation would pursue righteousness.

Turning to Jeremiah 7, we see another example of what God’s people were doing that brought national demise and the termination of God’s blessings. Jeremiah exhorted the nation to “*amend your ways and your doings*” (vss. 3,5). He then enumerated their problems:

For if you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, if you thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor, if you do not oppress the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, or walk after other gods to your hurt, then

I will cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever. Behold, you trust in lying words that cannot profit. Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom you do not know, and then come and stand before Me in this house which is called by My name, and say, “*We are delivered to do all these abominations*”? (7:5-10).

These are the same moral and spiritual circumstances that we as a nation are facing.

1. Failure to execute judgment between people. How so? A disparity exists in dispensing justice to true criminals who get lenient sentences or are released on technicalities. Further, the entitlement programs of our nation are completely out of hand and essentially steal from one segment of society in order to give to another segment of society—in direct violation of the principles of justice, consent of the governed, the work ethic, and more.
2. Oppression of the fatherless—by the wholesale rejection of the marriage institution, rampant divorce, and sanctioning out-of-wedlock births to increase entitlement payments.
3. Shedding innocent blood—via abortion to the tune of over 50 million innocent babies.
4. Walking after other gods—by rejecting Christianity.
5. Stealing—at all-time high levels, from shop-lifting to government corruption and obscene taxation.

6. Murder is widespread and out of control, with a failure to address it righteously (Num. 35:29-34).
7. Adultery and a host of other forms of sexual immorality are rampant in our land.
8. Swearing falsely and lying are commonplace and honesty is no longer held up as a critical feature of social life.

Do these unrighteous behaviors sound like America? Consider God's reaction at that time:

Therefore do not pray for this people, nor lift up a cry or prayer for them, nor make intercession to Me; for I will not hear you (7:16).

Who today believes that God can reach the point where He will not hear? Who believes that the God of grace can reach a point where He declares: "*I will not pardon!*" (2 Kings 24:4).

The Founders of the American Republic, and those supportive of America's founding, understood these biblical principles. Signer of Declaration of Independence, Vice-President under George Washington, and our second President of the United States, John Adams, had this to say in a letter he wrote to a relative on June 21, 1776—

Statesmen my dear Sir, may plan and speculate for Liberty, but it is Religion and Morality alone, which can establish the Principles upon which Freedom can securely stand.... The only foundation of a free Constitution, is pure Virtue, and if this cannot be inspired into our People, in a greater Measure, than they have it now, They may change their Rulers, and the

forms of Government, but they will not obtain a lasting Liberty. They will only exchange Tyrants and Tyrannies.

Edmund Burke, an Irish statesman, political theorist, and member of the House of Commons, and supporter of America during the Founding era, in his *A Letter From Mr. Burke To A Member Of The National Assembly In Answer To Some Objections To His Book On French Affairs* (National Assembly, IV. 319, 1791), offered these sage remarks that are crisply pertinent to our day:

Men are qualified for civil liberty in exact proportion to their disposition to put moral chains upon their own appetites.... Society cannot exist unless a controlling power upon will and appetite be placed somewhere, and the less of it there is within, the more there must be without. It is ordained in the eternal constitution of things that men of intemperate minds cannot be free. Their passions forge their fetters.

John Witherspoon, prominent Founding Father, in his *"The Dominion of Providence over the Passions of Men"* issued on May 17, 1776, deserves to be heard far and wide today:

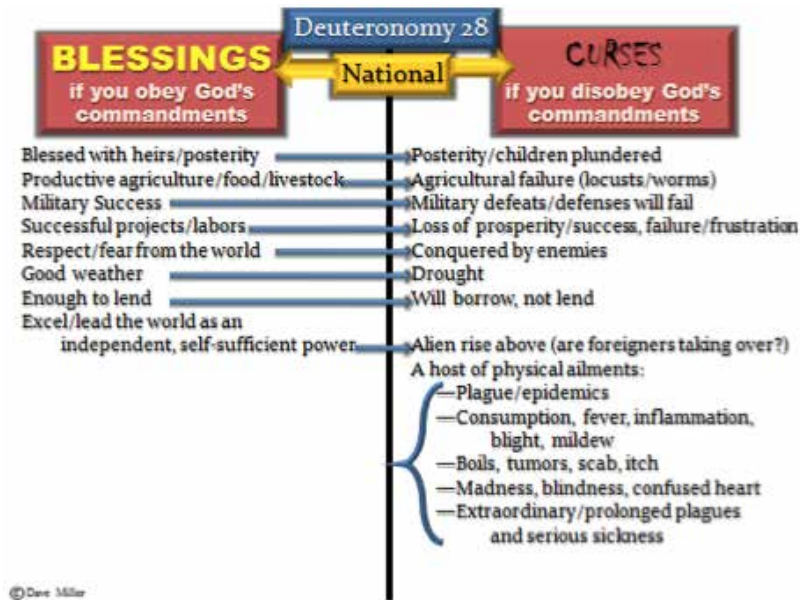
It is the prerogative of God to do what he will with his own; but he often displays his justice itself, by throwing into the furnace those, who, though they may not be visibly worse than others, may yet have more to answer for, as having been favoured with more distinguished privileges, both civil and sacred.

Amos put it this way: *"You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities"* (3:2). Jeremiah quoted God when he wrote—

How shall I pardon you for this? Your children have forsaken Me and sworn by those that are not gods. When I had fed them to the full, then they committed adultery and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses. They were like well-fed lusty stallions; every one neighed after his neighbor's wife. Shall I not punish them for these things? says the LORD. And shall I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this? (5:7-9).

When God takes a nation under His care and sets them apart from other nations, and they turn against Him and wallow in iniquity—He **must** punish them.

When Israel prepared to enter the Promised Land, God gave them the book of Deuteronomy—a guidebook for how to retain national existence and be prosperous and happy. Look carefully at the warnings in chapter 28:



These warnings and predictions sound remarkably like what America is experiencing. Are we not facing dangerous, threatening times in many categories of national life? For example, health authorities in New York report that *“a fourth of adult New Yorkers are infected with Herpes Simplex Virus-2...a lifelong sexually-transmitted infection”* (*“Survey Finds...”*). It’s not much better nationwide, since the figure for New Yorkers is 26% (or 1 in 4) vs. nationally 19% (1 in 5). Another example, the CDC is reporting that gonorrhea is *“the second most commonly reported infectious disease in the United States”* and that it is becoming impervious to antibiotics (Brian, 2010). William Smith, executive director of the National Coalition of STD Directors, says:

We are on the verge of a highly untreatable gonorrhea epidemic.... Gonorrhea has mutated so efficiently that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has *“just a single class of antibiotics left”* to treat it, and resistance is forming even to those drugs, Mr. Smith writes. With a *“nearly empty”* pipeline of new drugs to fight gonorrhea, *“the prospects of this situation are frightening”* and *“the nations efforts to combat syphilis...have virtually collapsed”* (Wetztein, 2010).

So we are facing a variety of scourges to public health. On another front, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper Jr. testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee about the contents of the Worldwide Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community, released January 29, 2014,

making this statement: *“Looking back over my more than half a century in intelligence, I’ve not experienced a time when we’ve been beset by more crises and threats around the globe.”* We are facing threats from our enemies. And what about our financial condition? It’s no secret that the U.S. Government has been borrowing unprecedented amounts of money in an effort to stave off financial calamity (cf. Ip, 2009; Zuckerman, 2009). The sum of all recognized debt of federal, state, and local governments, international, private households, business and domestic financial sectors in America is now \$57 trillion (Hodges, 2009). The majority of that debt has accumulated just in the last three decades, with 79% (\$45 trillion) of total debt created since 1990. America is, in fact, the world’s largest international debtor (Hodges). God predicted this very circumstance when He warned what would happen to Israel if they turned away from Him:

Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth.... The LORD will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand. **You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow....** But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you.... The alien who is among you shall rise

higher and higher above you, and you shall come down lower and lower. **He shall lend to you, but you shall not lend to him;** he shall be the head, and you shall be the tail (Deut. 28:1,12,15,43-44, emphasis added).

Isn't it ironic that, even in the midst of deadly debt, the average American continues to wallow in abject prosperity and wanton luxury every day? Yet I fear America is headed to precisely the same outcome as Israel:

Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy and gladness of heart, **for the abundance of everything,** therefore you shall serve your enemies, whom the LORD will send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in need of everything; and He will put a yoke of iron on your neck until He has destroyed you (Deut. 28:47-48, emphasis added).

Consider the warnings of one additional Founding Father of our country, Gouverneur Morris who was a member of the New York provincial congress, Lieutenant Colonel in the New York State militia, member of the Continental Congress, signer of the Constitution, America's Minister Plenipotentiary to France, and U.S. Senator—obviously a prominent Founder. On September 4, 1816 (two months before death), he delivered a speech to the New York Historical Society on the occasion of the 206th anniversary of the discovery of his home state of New York by English explorer Henry Hudson. He said:

From the same pure Fountain of Wisdom [the Bible] we learn that vice **destroys freedom;**

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that arbitrary power is founded on **public immorality**, and that misconduct in those who rule a republic, necessary consequence of general licentiousness, so **disgusts and degrades the nation**, that, dead to generous sentiment, they become willing slaves.... Then laws to protect the weak against the strong, the innocent against the wicked, become **instruments of oppression and torture**.

Observe that he anticipated what has happened to America in the last 50 years—widespread surge of crime and immorality, governmental encroachments on personal freedom, and the use of legions of laws to favor the lawbreaker over the victim as well as promote hedonism. He continued:

Something more, then, is required to encourage virtue, suppress vice, preserve public peace, and secure national independence. There must be something more to hope than pleasure, wealth, and power. Something more to fear than poverty and pain. Something after death more terrible than death. **There must be religion**. When that ligament is torn, society is disjointed and its members perish. The nation is exposed to **foreign violence and domestic convulsion**. Vicious rulers, chosen by vicious people, turn back the current of corruption to its source. Placed in a situation where they can exercise authority for their own emolument, they **betray their trust**. They **take bribes**. They **sell statutes and decrees**. They **sell honor and office**. They **sell their conscience**. They **sell their country**. By this vile traffic they become odious and contemptible.... But the most important of all

lessons is the denunciation of ruin to every State  
**that rejects the precepts of religion.**

The religion to which Founder Morris referred is the Christian religion—to the exclusion of all others. According to the Founders, the general doctrines and moral principles of the Christian religion must thoroughly permeate our civilization if our nation is to avoid “*the denunciation of ruin.*” Otherwise, America will be subjected to violence inflicted by foreign enemies (terrorists?). And the nation will find itself in the throes of “*domestic convulsion.*” Domestic convulsion? What better epithet to identify America’s current national condition?

Morris said the key to securing America’s future is simple and definitive: “*May it be secured by a pious obedience to that divine will, which prescribes the moral orbit of empire with the same precision that his wisdom and power have displayed, in whirling millions of planets round millions of suns through the vastness of infinite space.*” In the words of the inspired writers: “*Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people*” (Prov. 14:34). “*Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord*” (Psm. 33:12).

### **Conclusion**

Isaiah’s observation fits our current predicament: “*Unless the LORD of hosts had left to us a very small remnant, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been made like Gomorrah*” (1:9). Do you realize that we, the church, are the remnant that can enable God to delay His retribution? Everything you and I

can do to promote the Gospel is well worth the effort since that is the only solution! What should the church be doing? What should you and I as individuals be doing? Answer: what we've been doing! Spreading God's word across the nation and the world, while devoting ourselves to living godly, Christian lives! No doubt, we are the recipients of the same delay to which Ezra alluded: "*a little space grace hath been shown from the LORD our God*" (Ezra 9:8). Let us make the most of it! With exceptional fervor, zeal, commitment, determination, and unwavering trust in our God, let us devote ourselves to waging the good warfare (1 Tim. 1:18) in view of eternity.

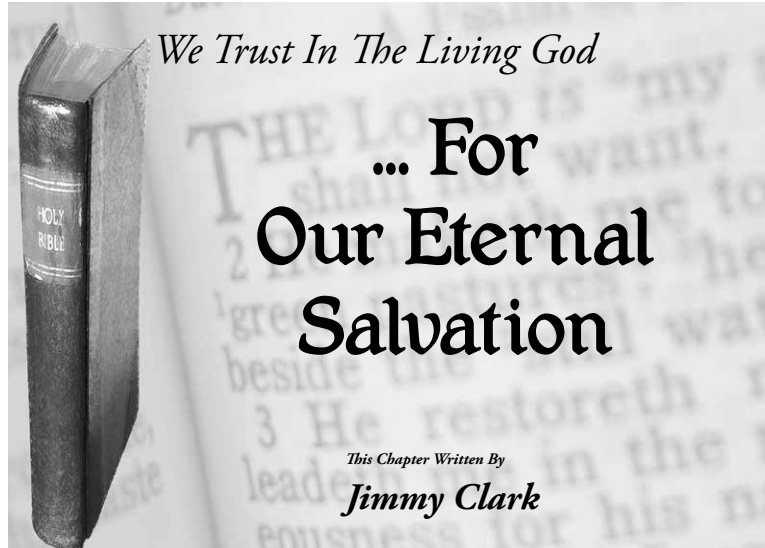
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TO BLESS AMERICA IF / WHEN WE ARE RIGHTEOUS

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Zuckerman, Mort (2009), "Drowning in Debt: Obama's Spending and Borrowing Leaves U.S. Gasping for Air," *New York Daily News*, October 10.



The term “*salvation*” is a special term to God’s people. It implies the saving work of God toward man and the quality that the blessed have with God. Its meaning has to do with the result that comes to the humble, penitent, obedient soul to the will of the Living God. The synonyms of the term “*salvation*” can also give added dimensions. A comprehension and appreciation of the term aid life now and the blessing of the life to come. The fullest possible understanding of salvation is probably not going to be comprehended until the eternal salvation is realized in heaven.

### **The Concept Of Salvation**

A major question concerning the subject of salvation is “*Saved from what?*” There are so many people who do not believe or have the concept that

there is even the need for their being saved from anything. When prosperity is abundant, the heart of man tends to be safe in his own ways. Understanding the concept involves a look at the reason for salvation to be needed. Hence, there must be a look at passages that reveal the need.

The term “*salvation*” as it comes from a Hebrew word in the Old Testament is from a word that denotes deliverance and safety. The very name “*Joshua*” is from the term that is interpreted salvation. There are various ways to think of this salvation. Each usage has to do with the context of the passage.

One viewpoint is to escape from harm. The first time in the Old Testament the word for salvation is mentioned is in the book of Genesis. When speaking of the tribe of Dan, Jacob stated,

Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward. I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord (Gen. 49:16-18, KJV).

The salvation mentioned here is in the context of a rider on a horse being overthrown by an attacking serpent on a road. The tribe of Dan would be a judge for Israel against its enemies. There are several places in the Old Testament where deliverance from one’s enemies in a time of trouble is called salvation or deliverance. Moses recorded of the deliverance of Israel from the Egyptians,

And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will show to you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more for ever (Exod. 14:13).

After the defeat of the Egyptians in the overthrow by the sea, Israel sang a song unto the Lord.

The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him (Exod. 15:2).

Over and over this image of salvation is found in the Old Testament. It is a great theme in the book of Psalms. David wrote when he fled from Absalom,

Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly. Salvation belongeth unto the Lord: thy blessing is upon thy people. Selah (Psm. 3:7-8).

Jonah asked to be rescued or saved from the belly of the great fish (cf. Jonah 2:9) using this very thought from the psalms. Therefore, one concept of salvation is deliverance from harm.

Another viewpoint is to the preserving of life. The first time in the Old Testament that the verb “*to save*” is found is in the book of Genesis. Abram said to Sarai, his wife,

Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. Say, I pray thee, thou art my

sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake;  
and my soul shall live because of thee (Gen.  
12:12-13).

Notice that Abram used the words “*will save*” and “*shall live*” interchangeably. Here one finds that the idea of salvation is to the preserving of one’s physical life in contrast to physical death. This is also found in the words of Lot with reference to his being kept alive in view of the destruction that was to come upon the city of Sodom where he previously dwelt. He said,

Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast shown unto me in saving my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die (Gen. 19:19).

Hence, keeping one alive is also a usage of the concept of salvation. The spiritual idea of the saving of the eternal spirit of man is tied to these basic thoughts.

The term “*salvation*” as it relates to the word in the New Testament is from the Greek word that denotes essentially the same as in the Old Testament. For example, the idea of the preserving of the life is seen in the statement of Jesus of the elect being alive at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem.

And except those days be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened (Matt. 24:22).

Notice that salvation in this context is talking about the preserving of the flesh or the life of the flesh.



Again, salvation is viewed in the New Testament as to escape from something destructive. It is written in the book of Hebrews,

For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him (Heb. 2:2-3).

The context of this usage of the term salvation has a spiritual import as to the result that comes upon the disobedient who do not receive pardon under the terms of law. The gospel contains the terms of great salvation in that it deals with the escape from the ultimate consequence of disobedience as well as providing the preserving of life eternal. Here is the major import of the New Testament teaching about salvation. It is here there various passages on the subject of salvation take on their meaning.

Paul wrote to the Roman brethren,

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith (Rom. 1:16-17).

The wrath of God comes upon those who are not saved by the power of God, the gospel. This is clearly seen in the passage,

And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power (2 Thess. 1:7-9).

This is also in harmony with the passage that states of obedience,

Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him (Heb. 5:8-9).

Therefore, the New Testament picture of salvation is the deliverance “*from the wrath to come*” (1 Thess. 1:10) and the saving or preserving of the spiritual body, the church, in the end (cf. Eph. 5:23).

### **The Companion Terms With The Concept Of Salvation**

Time nor space will allow us to cover every term or concept that is synonymous with the term salvation. The entire Bible is a variegated mural of the manifold wisdom of God for man’s benefit. Looking at a few will, however, enhance a better appreciation of the nature of salvation from sin.

The terms “*to redeem*” or “*redemption*” has to do with a picture of salvation that shows how great it is to be saved. Paul wrote, “*In whom we have redemption*

*through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace*" (Eph. 1:7). There is a treasure trove of thoughts in this one verse alone. The grace of God extended to man shows none of the benefits received from God were due to man's goodness. The riches of that grace show the greatness of the ransom price for the redemption. Redemption is more than just freedom from bondage. It is freedom from bondage that came at a price. Therefore, the term "*ransom*" is needed (cf. Matt. 20:28). The blood of Jesus was required for the forgiveness of sins to take place. It is written, "*and without shedding of blood is no remission*" (Heb. 9:22). Freedom from sin also came with the forgiveness of sin. This means that man can no longer dwell on the thoughts of his past sins. The covenant that came with the death of Christ has as one of its provisions, "*For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more*" (Heb. 8:12). A clean conscience (cf. Heb. 10:22) comes with the redemption from sin. One is no longer a burdened slave to sin but a willing slave to a Greater Master (cf. Rom. 6:17-18, 22). Here salvation motivates service unto God.

Another synonym of salvation is reconciliation. Paul wrote,

For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life (Rom. 5:10).

Both the death and the resurrection of Jesus are identified here. The death of the Son of God provided the link to make former enemies to be friends again. The life of the Son of God from the death provides the means to give the reconciled life from the grave or eternal life. Paul wrote to the Corinthians,

And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18-19).

Here the gospel message involves the explaining of the renewed relationship between God and man through the work of redemption by Jesus Christ. Man's life could not be simply preserved or allowed to escape from destruction without there being a befriending again with God. Reconciliation is the tie of the family unit that was severed when sin entered.

### **The Connection Of The Living God And The Conditions To Meet For Salvation**

While it has already been addressed that God through Christ made salvation possible, the Scriptures are replete with statements that affirm the source of man's greatest spiritual need. Moses wrote about the first generation out of Egypt,

But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art

covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation (Deut. 32:15).

This passage encapsulates the need to be constantly reminded of the source of man's spiritual blessings. Lightly esteeming the foundation of man's salvation is a deadly exercise. It ultimately led the nation into unbelief (cf. Heb. 3:19). It is written in one of the psalms, "*Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation*" (Psm. 78:22). David made sure that the nation was firm in the understanding of the source of their salvation in the Psalms.

Truly my soul waiteth upon God; from him cometh my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defense; I shall not be greatly moved (Psm. 62:1-2).

Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. Selah (Psm. 68:19).

The Lord is my strength and song, and is become my salvation (Psm. 118:14).

The conditions of salvation are greatly needed in the understanding of the great salvation. God does not save arbitrarily. His salvation is connected to conditions that are to be met by man, a free moral agent. David wrote even in the psalms, "*Salvation is far from the wicked: for they seek not thy statutes*" (Psm. 119:155). One cannot please God without faith (cf. Heb. 11:6) and faith comes only through the word of God (cf. Rom. 10:17).

The conditions of salvation are very simple as found in the New Testament. Paul wrote to the Ephesians, *“In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation...”* (Eph. 1:13). One cannot trust in that which he does not know. Therefore, the truth of the word of God must be understood.

The next aspect of the conditions of salvation is to choose to believe the word of truth. Paul wrote,

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ:  
for it is the power of God unto salvation to every  
one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to  
the Greek (Rom. 1:16).

Therefore, the power to save that is in the gospel comes to those who choose to believe that gospel. However, this is not the only condition necessary for one to have the salvation from one's sins.

Another condition of salvation is repentance. One may believe and not be saved. James wrote of the devils, *“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble”* (James 2:19). Demons even confessed that Jesus is the Son of God (cf. Mark 3:11-12). No one would admit that demons would repent even knowing who Jesus is and being open in voice to acknowledge who He is. Nevertheless, repentance is a key condition of salvation coupled with faith. Repentance is actually an expression out of faith that one turn from his sins both in mind and in action. Paul wrote, *“For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world*

*worketh death*" (2 Cor. 7:10). It is the will of the Lord that all come to repentance (cf. 2 Peter 3:9).

Another condition to be saved is to confess the faith that one has in Christ. Paul wrote,

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (Rom. 10:9-10).

Jesus Himself stressed the importance of confessing Him before men (cf. Matt. 10:32-33).

The condition to submit unto being baptized into Christ is also a condition of salvation. This is a great barrier to many in the religious world due to the influence of Calvinism in the doctrines of men. Nevertheless, baptism is stressed by Jesus to be an essential condition just like belief (cf. Mark 16:16), just like repentance (cf. Acts 2:38) and just like confession (cf. Acts 8:35-39). The last time the word "*baptism*" appears in the Bible, it is clearly stated,

The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 3:21).

One is not trusting in baptism to save him, but he is trusting in the living God by doing what to do to be saved.

There is no question that salvation is tied to calling on the name of the Lord (cf. Acts 2:21; Rom.

10:13). One only has to look at the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, the apostle Paul, to see how that is done. Saul learned who Jesus really was (cf. Acts 9:6). He was told that he would be told in the city of Damascus what to do (cf. Acts 9:6). He was penitent as demonstrated by his behavior (cf. Acts 9:9). He was praying for three days waiting to be told what to do (cf. Acts 9:9-11). When Ananias came and told him what to do, here is the specific words, *“And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord”* (Acts 22:16). It was then and only then that Saul came into a state of salvation with the Lord meeting the conditions given. This was his preaching as found through his work in the book of Acts as well as through the epistles he wrote.

The life of the convert or child of God is now to be one in harmony with the nature of God the Father. Paul wrote,

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world (Titus 2:11-12).

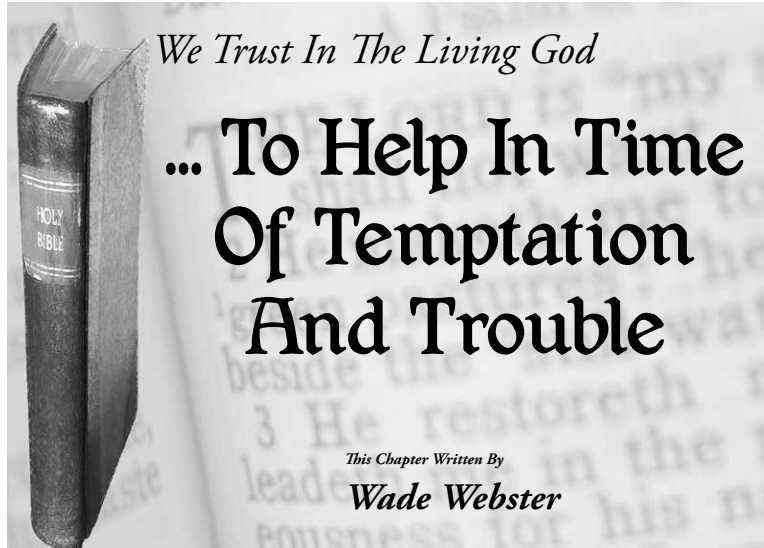
Faithful living is required of God’s stewards (cf. 1 Cor. 4:2). Faithful unto death receives the crown of life (cf. Rev. 2:10). Trusting the Living God for one’s salvation is expressing one’s faith in the obedience of faith by becoming a Christian under the conditions given by the Lord and living a faithful life to that holy calling (cf. 2 Tim. 1:9-10). How blessed the saved are to be freed from the bondage of sin, preserved through continued



faith in Christ and assured of heaven through the blood of the Son of God (cf. 1 John 1:7; 5:13).

FOR OUR SALVATION

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**I**n the fourth chapter of 1 Timothy, Paul wrote,  
For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach,  
because we trust in the living God, who is the  
Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe  
(1 Tim. 4:10).

As Christians, we can endure the toil and trouble of life because the God that we serve is alive. If God were dead, then these things would be impossible for us to take. However, because He is alive, then we know that there is hope and help. In the book of Hebrews, we read, *“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need”* (Heb. 4:16).

#### **The Who—“Let Us”**

It is always important when studying a Bible verse to identify who is being addressed. The verse under

consideration in this lesson offers help to someone in need. Who is that someone? Who is represented by the word “*us*” (Heb. 4:16)? In the third chapter, the writer identified the recipients of the letter as “*holy brethren.*” We read, “*Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus*” (Heb. 3:1). The term “*holy*” means “*saint*” and refers to one who has been sanctified or set apart for a holy purpose.<sup>i</sup> As you know, sanctification comes through the truth (John 17:17). When we obey the truth, we are “*washed,*” “*sanctified,*” and “*justified*” (1 Cor. 6:11). The term “*brethren*” refers to a “*fellow believer.*”<sup>ii</sup> Thus, those who have been called out of the world and are faithfully serving God are the ones who are being addressed in the book. These brethren are further identified as “*partakers*” of the “*heavenly calling*” (Heb. 3:1). The word “*partakers*” refers to “*sharing in*” or “*partaking in.*” It refers to “*a partner* (in a work, office, dignity).”<sup>iii</sup> As Christians, we are laborers with one another and with God (1 Cor. 3:9). The term “*calling*” refers to “*a call*” or “*invitation to a feast.*”<sup>iv</sup> Those under consideration in our text of study had accepted the invitation to come to the feast (Luke 14:16-24). They were enjoying the blessings of being in Christ (Eph. 1:3).

The fourth chapter further identifies those under consideration in the book and in our passage as those who had heard and believed the gospel. We read,

Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us  
of entering into his rest, any of you should seem

to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. For we which have believed do enter into rest... (Heb. 4:1-3; cf. Matt. 11:28-30).

The help that the passage before us offers is for those who are doers of the word and not hearers only (James 1:22-25).

The fifth chapter makes clear that Jesus is the author of eternal salvation to them who obey Him (Heb. 5:8-9). These individuals had obeyed Christ. Because they were faithful, they could ask and He would answer. Had they turned away their ears “*from hearing the law,*” even their prayers would have been “*an abomination*” (Prov. 28:9). Because they were upright, their prayer was His delight (Prov. 15:8). Because they were righteous, their prayers would avail much (James 5:16).

Although there are many other statements in the book that identify those being addressed in the book and the passage before us, these are sufficient for our purpose. They show the immediate context and audience.

### **The Way—“*Therefore Come Boldly*”**

As children of God, we can come boldly or confidently to our Father. John wrote,

And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us,

TO HELP IN TIME OF TEMPTATION AND TROUBLE

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whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him (1 John 5:14-15).

We can come boldly or confidently to God because we have a “*great High Priest*” who knows and understands (Heb. 4:15). We can come confidently or boldly because He loves us and will give us what we need. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus declared,

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? (Matt. 7:7-11).

To come “*boldly*” unto God is to speak frankly, freely, and fearlessly. You may recall that Joseph of Arimathaea came to Pilate in this way requesting the body of Jesus. Mark records,

Joseph of Arimathaea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus (Mark 15:43).

Notice that Joseph went in “*boldly*” and “*craved*” or “*begged*” for the body of Jesus (Matt. 27:58; Luke 23:52). “*Boldly*” in this passage is a different Greek word than the one that the Hebrew writer used in our text of

study (Heb. 4:16). However, it means essentially the same thing. Joseph did not let fear keep him from asking for the body of Jesus. He went boldly and begged for the body of Jesus. Think of the boldness that was required for Joseph to do this. Jesus had just been crucified. The Jewish leaders had turned the tide of public opinion against Him. Jesus' own disciples had turned and fled when He was arrested. Yet, here was Joseph begging for the body of Jesus. He was clearly identifying himself as one of Jesus' disciples. Luke tells us that Joseph had not "*consented to the counsel and deed of them*" (Luke 23:51). He had spoken up when others were silent. Yet, John tells us that he was afraid. John wrote,

And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus (John 19:38).

Although Joseph was afraid, He didn't let it keep him from making his request. In like manner, we need to courageously come to the throne of God and make our requests known to Him.

### **The Where—“*The Throne Of Grace*”**

God's throne is many things. It is power. It is glory. It is holiness. It is judgment. Of all of the words at the writer's disposal, the word "*grace*" was selected. The other words might make us afraid. They might keep us from coming. However, the word grace makes

us bold. It draws us nigh. Just think of the Parable of the Prodigal Son. It was the sweet memories of home that brought him home. He remembered the “*bread enough and to spare*” (Luke 15:17). He remembered the grace. He didn’t remember an overbearing disciplinarian. He remembered a loving Father. Think of the way that the Father received him—watching for him, running to him, falling on his neck, kissing him, forgiving him, and restoring him (Luke 15:20-24). The way that the Father received the prodigal is the way that the Father receives us when we come to him for mercy and grace. He watches for us to come. He is happy to see us. He warmly takes us in. He forgives us. He restores us.

It is fitting that God’s throne is described as a “*throne of grace*.” After all, He is described by Peter as “*the God of all grace*” (1 Peter 5:10). The “*throne of grace*” reminds the Bible student of the mercy seat in the Old Testament. In the book of Exodus, we read,

And thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof. And thou shalt make two cherubims of gold, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat. And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end: even of the mercy seat shall ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof. And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be. And thou shalt put



the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. **And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony**, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel (Exod. 25:17-22, emphasis added; cf. 30:6; Psm. 80:1; 99:1; Isa. 37:16).

Please note that it was at the mercy seat that God met them. It is at the throne of grace that He meets us today. Unlike the Israelites though, it is far easier for us to run to the High Priest for help. Furthermore, our High Priest is a *“great High Priest”* (Heb. 4:15). He has made it possible for us to draw nigh. In the seventh chapter, we read, *“For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; **by the which we draw nigh unto God**”* (Heb. 7:19, emphasis added). In the tenth chapter, he declared,

Having therefore, brethren, **boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus**, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; **Let us 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. 10:19-22, emphasis added; James 4:8).

The blood of Jesus has made it possible for us to draw nigh to the throne of God. The grace of God makes us want to do so.

### **The Why—“*Obtain Mercy And Find Grace To Help*”**

We come to God’s throne to “*obtain mercy*” and to “*find grace*” (Heb. 4:16). Obtain means “*to take with the hand*” or “*lay hold of.*”<sup>v</sup> This word is repeatedly used in connection with mercy. For example, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus declared, “*Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy*” (Matt. 5:7). The word “*find*” is constantly used in connection with grace. It means “*after searching, to find a thing sought.*”<sup>vi</sup> As you know, this word was used in connection with Noah. We read, “*But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD*” (Gen. 6:8).

Mercy and grace complement each other. Mercy is not getting the punishment that we deserve. Grace is getting the favor that we don’t deserve. God blesses us on both sides. He withholds more and more punishment and gives more and more grace. James wrote, “*But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble*” (James 4:6). The “*eth*” suffix reveals that God keeps on giving and giving. He gives repeatedly. He also gives cheerfully (upbraideth not) and liberally each time that He gives (James 1:5).

It should be noted that God gives “*grace to help.*” It does not say that God removes the trouble. Perhaps, that is what we want, but it isn’t always what God does. For example, Paul besought the Lord three times to remove his thorn in the flesh. However, the Lord didn’t do so. The thorn was serving a purpose in Paul’s life. It was keeping him from being “*exalted above measure*” or thinking of himself too highly (2 Cor. 12:7). God

didn't remove the thorn, but He did give grace to help. His grace was sufficient. We read,

And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me (2 Cor. 12:9).

In like manner, trouble serves a function in our lives. For example, it gives patience. James wrote,

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing (James 1:2-4).

Rather than removing the trials, God simply gives us grace to help us deal with these trials. His grace will allow us, like Paul, to have "*all sufficiency in all things*" (2 Cor. 9:8).

### **The When—*"In Time Of Need"***

God gives us grace to help when we need it the most—in time of need. The sweet psalmist of Israel prayed, "*Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me: in the day when I call answer me speedily*" (Psm. 102:2; cf. 22:19; 40:13; 70:1). This prayer and other prayers like it were answered. In the one hundred and twentieth psalm, we read, "*In my distress I cried unto the LORD, and he heard me*" (Psm. 120:1).

Repeatedly, in the Scriptures, we find God helping

in time of need. One of my favorite examples is found in the book of Daniel. In the midst of Daniel's prayer, God dispatched Gabriel to answer him and help him. We read,

Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name. And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God; **Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer**, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation (Dan. 9:17-21, emphasis added).

I believe that you will agree that this was help in time of need. Isn't it wonderful to think about this in terms of our own prayers? Although God may not dispatch Gabriel to us, He will offer grace to help in time of need.

Another example in the Old Testament is that of Nehemiah. Nehemiah asked God to prosper him and to give him mercy in the sight of the king (Neh. 1:11).

This time, the answer did not come during the prayer. It happened several months later. One day when Nehemiah was serving the king his wine, the king noticed that he was sad (Dan. 2:1). Nehemiah became “*very sore afraid*” and reaffirmed his commitment to the king. When the king asked Nehemiah what he wanted, he said a short prayer before answering (Dan. 2:4). Nehemiah came to the throne of grace and God gave him grace to help in time of need. The king granted his request by furnishing the supplies for rebuilding and by giving him an armed escort back to the land (Neh. 2:6-8).

A recounting of Israelite history in the book of Nehemiah records another occasion when God was a “*very present help*” in time of trouble (Psm. 46:1). Ezra prayed,

Therefore thou deliveredst them into the hand of their enemies, who vexed them: and **in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto thee, thou heardest them from heaven; and according to thy manifold mercies thou gavest them saviours, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies** (Neh. 9:27, emphasis added).

Clearly, God granted His people grace in time of need. He sent saviors or judges to deliver them out of the hands of their enemies.

An example that stands out in the New Testament is that of Simon Peter. When Jesus was walking to His disciples on the water, Simon Peter asked to be able to walk to Him on the water. Peter stepped out of the boat and did the impossible. However, when he saw the wind and the waves, he was filled with fear and

began to sink. He called out, “*Lord, save me*” (Matt. 14:30). Immediately, in the time of trouble, Jesus reached out His hand and saved him (Matt. 14:31). Peter found grace to help in time of need.

For sure, we should ask God to “*lead us not into temptation,*” but to “*deliver us from evil*” (Matt. 6:13). Once God has delivered us, we should thank Him for His grace and mercy. However, the passage we are studying is not focused on the before or the after of temptation and trouble. It is focused on the very hour of temptation. In that hour, we can come boldly to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and to find grace to help. Someone has said that if “*the only time that we pray is when we are in trouble, then we are in trouble.*” I couldn’t agree more. However, there is nothing wrong with praying in the time of trouble. We just need to pray before and after also.

In this lesson, we have seen that we should trust in the living God because He is a very present help in the time of temptation and trouble. May we learn to trust Him more! He will not disappoint. He will only amaze.

### Endnotes

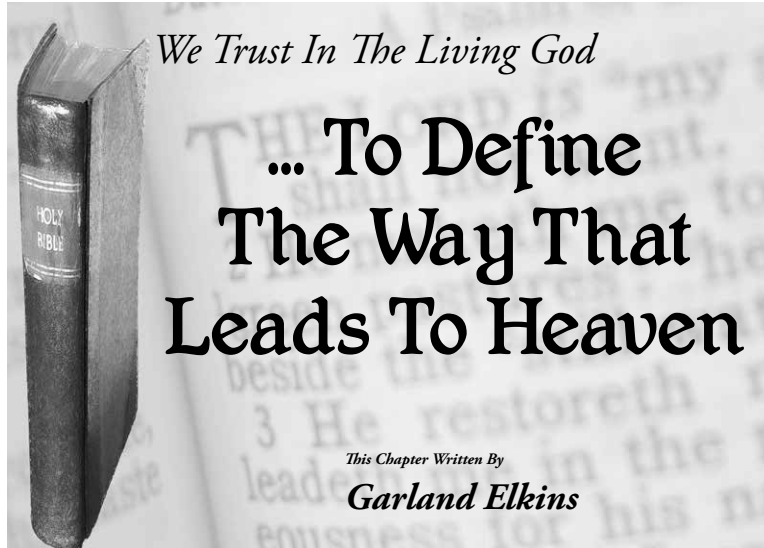
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- vi <http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/kjv/heurisko.html>

TO HELP IN TIME OF TEMPTATION AND TROUBLE

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### **Introduction**

Christ said of Himself, “...*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me*” (John 14:6, KJV). The devil has a false way, and he seeks to deceive people into believing that if they will follow him and his way that they will be saved. However, following Satan and his way will cause one to be lost. An inspired man wrote, “*There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death*” (Prov. 14:12).

I should like to discuss the question: What must I do to be saved?, the church of our Lord, the worship of the Lord’s church, and living the Christian life, as applied to the great truth that: **There is a way that is right and cannot be wrong.**

There is a way that is right and cannot be wrong in answering the question, “*What must I do*

*to be saved?*” **WHAT:** This suggests something is required of man in becoming a Christian. **MUST:** It is not a matter of option. It is an absolute necessity. **I:** This denoted the individual responsibility in human redemption. God has done His part. **TO BE SAVED:** is the object sought by the jailer. The saving is to be done by another. But what must man do to be saved by the Savior?

How shall we proceed to answer the question? One cannot go on feelings, opinions, or prejudice. They vary with different individuals. The only sure way is to turn to the Bible. One must read the question and answer each time it is asked and answered in the Bible, and that is what we propose to do. This would be scripturally right beyond question. Furthermore, it would produce the whole truth on the question. The question is found; substantially only four times in the New Testament, and one of these was while the Law of Moses was still in force.

The rich young ruler who came to Jesus first asked the question:

Good teacher, What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? Jesus referred him to the Ten Commandments: They had not been abrogated. When the young man replied that he had kept the law from his youth up, Jesus commanded him to sell his goods, give it to the poor and come and follow him (Mark 10:21).

The Jews asked the question on Pentecost: “*Men, and brethren, what shall we do?*” Peter’s sermon had

pricked their hearts, and prompted them to ask the question,

Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? (Acts 2:37).

Peter answered,

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:38).

According to the answer baptism is just as essential as repentance. They are joined by the copulative conjunction “and,”—“*repent and be baptized*”—and point to the same object which is “*the remission of sins.*”

Some have argued against baptism saying that “for” means “because of.” But the same word in both English and Greek is the same. Remember that those who pervert the scriptures will be condemned.

The next question was asked by Saul, later called Paul—His conversion is recorded in Acts chapters 9, 22, 26. Ananias answered the question: “*And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord*” (Acts 22:16). So baptism stands between a believing penitent and the remission of his sins.

The Philippian jailer asked the same question. He was an unbeliever who was alarmed by the earthquake. There is no evidence that he had ever heard a gospel sermon. He was told to:

...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway (Acts 16:31-33).

Then the jailer brought Paul and Silas into his house and “*set meat before them and rejoiced believing in God with all his house*” (Acts 16:34). NOW they had obeyed the gospel and were happy as Christians.

We have looked at three different answers to three different groups of lost people. The jailer was an unbeliever so the first thing that he was told to do was to “*believe*” and the last thing he was required to do was to be baptized. The people on the day of Pentecost were already believers so they were told to repent, and like the jailer their last step of obedience in order to be saved was baptism (Acts 2:38).

Saul was a believing penitent man who had confessed Christ so all he lacked was baptism. Therefore, he was commanded, “*And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord*” (Acts 22:16); and he was obedient.

The eunuch was already a religious person but he needed to be taught the gospel. The angel and the Holy Spirit played important service in bringing the gospel preacher Philip and the eunuch together (Acts 8:26-31). Philip preached unto him Jesus and the eunuch desired to be baptized but was

about to overlook the necessity of the confession, so Philip informed him of the requirement of the good confession that Christ is the Son of God. He did this and was baptized and went on his way rejoicing,

And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:34-39).

### **The Lord's Church Is Undenominational**

People generally have become so accustomed to thinking of the church in terms of denominationalism that, in the minds of some, it is almost impossible to disassociate the church of the Lord from denominationalism. Yet when we read of the Lord's church in the New Testament, very few, if any, think it is a denomination. I use the word denomination in the sense in which it is used in religion to refer to a sect or party. The world has

a right and certainly a need to know wherein the Lord's church is different.

### **Neither Catholic Nor Protestant**

Churches of Christ have a distinctive plea. The plea is: be neither Catholic nor Protestant but a simple Christian. First century disciples were neither Catholics nor Protestants for none of these denominations existed and did not until hundreds of years later. A person can be an American without joining any political party: Democrat, Republican, etc. Even so, one can be a Christian without joining any sect. In our day many think of the word "*church*" synonymous with the word "*denomination*." It is extremely difficult to get people to see that they can be Christians without being part of any sect. In our country alone there are many hundreds; but the church of Christ is not a sect. Paul, though a member of the Lord's church, denied that it was a sect (Acts 24:5, 13).

### **The Lord's Church Superior To Denominations**

The church for which our Lord gave His blood is far superior to any and all denominations. They have been started by humans rather than by Divine authority.

It is a fact, both from the Bible and history, that the church of Christ was established and existed in the world for several centuries before Catholicism or Protestantism were known, and before the followers

of Christ divided into various denominations (Acts 2:22-47; Rom. 16:16).

Preaching the same gospel and urging obedience to the same conditions of salvation will reproduce the church of Christ in any given community today. The seed of the kingdom is the word of God (Luke 8:11). The good soil is the *“honest and good heart”* (Luke 8:15). When the word of God was planted in the first century, it produced Christians (Acts 11:26; 26:28), and churches of Christ (Rom. 16:16). Since seed always produces after its kind (Gen. 1:11-12; Gal. 6:7-8), it will produce in this century what it produced in the first century. If not, why not?

### **There Is One Church**

First, I want to show that there was one and only one church in the first century. The New Testament, of course, will be the standard to which we must turn for our evidence.

The word *“church”* comes from the Greek word *“ekklesia”* and simply means the *“called out.”* The church of the New Testament was composed of people—people who were called out of darkness, by the gospel, into the light of the Son of God (2 Thess. 2:13-14; Col 1:13). Such a group of *“called out”* people in any community was called the *“church”* in that community. Therefore we read of *“the church which was in Jerusalem”* (Acts 11:22). Also the church at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:2), and the church at Thessalonica (1 Thess. 1:1).

The congregations were spoken of as “*churches of Christ*” (Rom. 16:16), “*the churches of Judea*” (Gal. 1:22), “*The churches of Macedonia*” (2 Cor. 8:1), and “*the churches of Galatia*” (Gal. 1:2). The plural form “*churches*” is never used except in reference to a number of local congregations in some section of the country.

When Paul wrote to the church in Rome, he said: “*The churches of Christ salute you*” (Rom. 16:16). In the area from which Paul was writing there were a number of congregations sending their greetings to the church in Rome. Hence, Paul said: “*The churches of Christ salute you.*” It is a certain fact that if a number of congregations were called “*Churches of Christ,*” each individual congregation would be “*a*” church of Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 1:2, Paul addresses “*the church of God which is at Corinth.*” He wrote to Timothy after this fashion,

But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15).

Here reference is made to “*the church of the living God.*”

These similar phrases are not proper names, but descriptive expressions which show how the church is related to Christ and the Father.



### **Is One Church As Good As Another?**

Perhaps no statement has been made more often by religious people than that “*one church is as good as another.*” However, this is not true, for the Bible teaches that there is but one church. It is recorded, “*There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling*” (Eph. 4:4).

In our day there are hundreds of conflicting religious bodies. It goes without saying that one body cannot mean hundreds of bodies.

But what does the Bible mean by “*one body?*” In Ephesians 1:22 and 23, we read:

And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

Note “*...the church, which is his body.*” So, the church is “*the body,*” and there is only “*one*” body.

Not only does Paul tell us that the church is the one body and that the body is the church (Col. 1:18), he further declares: “*But now are they many members, yet but one body*” (1 Cor. 12:20). Since there is one body, then there is but one church of the New Testament.

Furthermore, when Jesus promised to build the church He said, “*...upon this rock I will build my church*” (Matt. 16:18). He promised to build only one—His church, and not churches! We know the Lord built only one because that is all He promised to build. Then if He built but one, somebody else must have built all the others. Who will say that

a church some man built is as good as the one the Lord built? That is what a person would be forced to say if he contends that one church is as good as another.

In Colossians 1:18 it is declared: “*And he is the head of the body, the church.*” Note it does not say: “*He is the head of the bodies, the churches.*” There are the same number of churches as there are bodies, and the same number of bodies as there are heads. How many heads? He is the head! That means just one head, doesn’t it? So there is one head, one body, one church. And, since Jesus is the Head of only one, somebody else must be the head of all others. Do you believe that a church of which some man is the head is as good as the church of which Jesus is the head?

Further, we read that “*Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it*” (Eph. 5:25). The words “*the church*” mean but one. So Christ loved one church; He died for one church; He built one church. Hence, He is the owner of but one church—the church we read about in the New Testament.

### **Salvation Is Within The Church**

It is an admitted fact that salvation can be had outside man-made churches, but salvation is not offered apart from the Lord’s church. The fact that it is generally admitted by those who advocate denominationalism that a person can be saved outside the membership of their church proves the uselessness of such churches!

The Bible teaches that the true church is the family of God (1 Tim. 3:15; Col. 1:18; Col. 1:13). No person could expect to be saved outside of the family of God, the body of Christ, for Paul declares: *“But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him”* (1 Cor. 12:18). And, the Lord sees to it that all the saved are in the church (Acts 2:47).

Through the cross Christ reconciles men unto God *“in one body”* (Eph. 2:13-16), and that *“one body”* is the church (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18; 1 Cor. 12:20). To contend that the Lord’s church is not essential, since it was purchased with the blood of Christ, is to take the position that the blood of Christ is non-essential! If one can be saved outside of Christ’s church, then one is forced to the position that Christ’s death was useless. Any doctrine which minimizes and belittles the death of Christ is false doctrine. Therefore, the doctrine that salvation can be enjoyed outside of the Lord’s church is false doctrine.

Popular statements relative to the church are: *“We want people to be saved, and then let them join the church of their choice;”* or, *“One church is as good as another; the church does not save you.”* When a person makes those kind of statements he thinks of the church simply in terms of denominationalism and, therefore, in terms of the doctrines and commandments of men. If one has reference to being saved outside of any and/or all denominational churches, that of course, is a different matter. It

is true that one not only does not need to be in a denomination; in fact he should stay out of all denominations. A very good question is: "*Can a person be saved in a denomination?*" There is no doubt that a person can be saved outside of all of the Catholic and Protestant denominations, but the important question is: "*Can a person be saved in a denomination?*" One cannot be saved outside of the Lord's church (Acts 2:47), therefore, to be in the Lord's church is essential to salvation; but one never reads of anybody during the first century being in any denomination. In fact, Paul denied that the Lord's church was a sect, and denied that anyone could prove that it was (Acts 24:5, 13,14). We must go deeper than emotional appeal if we would penetrate to the full significance of the question, "*Can people be saved outside of the Lord's church?*"

Let us consider the question from another angle: (1) If a person can be saved outside of the Lord's church as well as in it, that is equivalent to saying that he can be saved without the blood of Christ; for the Lord gave His blood to purchase the church and therefore only in the church does the blood save (Acts 20:28; Eph.5:25). When one contends that he can be saved outside of the Lord's church, he is saying that he has absolutely no need for the blood of Christ. (2) The Bible teaches that the church and the kingdom are the same institution (the disciples were to partake of the Lord's supper in His kingdom in Luke 22:18-19), but we learn that they did this in the church (1 Cor. 1:1-2;

11:18-34); therefore, the church and the kingdom are one in the same institution! If a person could be saved outside of the church, that would mean he could be saved outside of the kingdom of God; that he could be saved without submitting to God. But since there are two kingdoms on earth—i.e., the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan, it follows that if a man can be saved outside of the church, he can be saved in the kingdom of Satan, and that would deny plain Bible teaching. (3) The New Testament teaches that the church of Christ is the family of God (1 Tim. 3:15). If a man can be saved outside the family (or church) of God that would be equivalent of saying that one can be saved in the devil's family. There are only two families on earth. Question: "*Where is salvation? In the Lord's family (the church) or in the devil's family?*" There are only two families on earth. Another question: "*Does God have any children outside of His family? Can a man be saved while yet in the family of Satan?*" These questions must be dealt with by every honest person when they are reaching a conclusion as to the necessity of membership in the Lord's church.

### **Does The Church Save You?**

The statement has been made many times that "*the church does not save you.*" Of course, we know that the church is not the Savior. Jesus is the Savior (Matt. 1:21); but Jesus saves the church (Eph. 5:23), and the saved are in the church (Acts 2:47). You can see that the statement "*the church is not necessary*

*to salvation,*” when applied to the Lord’s church, is false.

We read, “*For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and he is the savior of the body*” (Eph. 5:23). If you will read the verses that follow in this chapter, you will readily see the term “*body*” refers to the church. So Christ is Savior of the church. This statement could not be true if men are saved out of the church, and before they enter the church. If such were true, then Christ would be the Savior of men out of the church, and therefore, while in the world, but not the Savior of men in the church. Yet Paul says that Christ is the Savior of the church.

If the Lord saves people out of the church, every person who goes into the church would be saved before he enters. We know that this is definitely not true, for Ephesians 5:23 shows us that the Lord saves those who enter the church—not those on the outside! While the church is not the Savior, it is the saved! Men must be in the church in order to be saved (Acts 2:47; Eph. 5:23). Their membership in the Lord’s church is an absolute necessity in order to be saved.

There is a way that is right and cannot be wrong regarding living a faithful Christian life. Peter writes to Christians:

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to

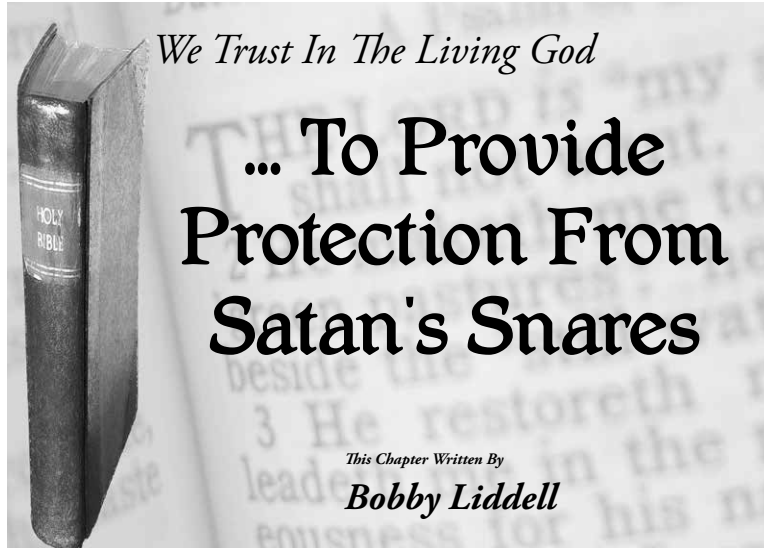
godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly  
kindness charity (2 Peter 1:5-7).

If these Christian graces be in you and abound, one  
will receive an abundant entrance into heaven.

TO DEFINE THE WAY THAT LEADS TO HEAVEN

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In this twenty-first century, do we actually need protection from Satan's snares? Some deny Satan exists. Others assert that he is just an imaginary character dreamed up by preachers to scare people. Is there a real danger to us today? Is it the case that we face a deadly, serious threat from a real enemy, who would entice us, entrap us, and endanger our souls? All we need to do to answer this question is to listen to the sober warning for us to be watchful and awake that Peter, by inspiration, penned: "*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*" (1 Peter 5:8). The devil walks all around, plotting against whom he may devour, and desiring to gulp down entirely, or to swallow up, every one. We dare not underestimate our foe.

As our adversary, Satan (a name which indicates

he is our opponent) is opposed to us, because he is opposed to all that is good, and to all who are good. This is the case because he is opposed to God. Our adversary is also known as the devil; that is, the slanderer who falsely accuses brethren. God reveals that Satan is subtle (Gen. 3:1ff), making his approach all the more dangerous. Paul wrote:

But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ (2 Cor. 11:3).

The “*enemy*” (one who is hateful and hostile—as our adversary); that is, OUR archenemy, is the devil, as shown by the parable of the tares set forth by Jesus.

Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them:

but gather the wheat into my barn (Matt. 13:24-30).

Satan sows his evil seed, and he accomplishes his wicked plans by using his snares to bait and entice us. He spreads his net (like a fowler) to catch us. He sets his traps, but disguises them (cf. Heb. 3:13). He would make good appear to be evil, and evil appear to be good (Isa. 5:20). Should we be surprised? The evil one even fought against the Son of God, man's Savior (Matt. 2:16; Luke 4:2), seeking to entrap Him, and, no doubt, considered the crucifixion of Christ as victory, if even temporary. Yet, Christ is the victor.

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil (Heb. 2:14).

Likewise, we can be victorious, through Christ. We can evade and escape Satan's snares. Our God protects us. There are many ways in which our God protects His children, but we will focus upon the Christian's armor.

### **God's Protection: The Christian's Armor**

God provides protection from Satan's snares by supplying the Christian's armor and weaponry. Just as no soldier would enter the battle without his armor, so, in our battle with Satan, we must "*put on the whole armour [the panoply] of God*" if we would

fight and win. “*Put on,*” indicates both necessity and urgency. After the enemy has overrun us, it is too late to put on armor. Responding by faith, availing ourselves of God’s protection, we will be able (have both the ability and power) to stand (to take a stand, be steadfast and unmovable) against the wiles (the cunning craftiness) of the devil (cf. Eph. 4:14).

The apostle Paul wrote, as the Holy Spirit revealed to him:

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints (Eph. 6:10-18).

Note the Christian’s armor comes from God: it is “*of God.*” Every part of it comes from Him, and all parts work together to provide complete protection.

We dare not leave off any piece. Likewise, we are to be strong *“in the Lord.”* There is no strength outside of Christ. We believe, with Paul, *“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me”* (Phil. 4:13). *“And in the power of his might”* indicates we can be strong because He is mighty, the power is His, and we are *“in”* Him. We are not fighting against *“flesh and blood,”* but a spiritual foe. Neither are our weapons *“carnal”* (of the flesh), but even mightier than the weapons of carnal warfare (2 Cor. 10:4). God provides protection against the wiles of the devil, and against all evil in all places. So, if we take upon us the *“whole armor,”* we are fortified to stand, withstand, stand, and stand. We *“stand against the wiles of the devil,”* *“withstand in the evil day,”* *“having done all, to stand,”* and we *“stand therefore”* protected by the Christian’s armor.

### **The Girdle Of Truth**

*“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth”* (Eph. 6:14). Before we can stand, we must put on the girdle of truth. The word *“having”* indicates a continuous possession; that is, having always. There is no time, place, or circumstance when we should put off the girdle of truth. The girdle, tied around the waist and hips, secured the ends of the loose clothing tucked within it, allowing freedom of movement, while also securing the clothing, breastplate, and sword in place. It is truth that girds the soldier of God. Satan attacks with blatant lies, lies mixed with truth, and misrepresentations of truth. He lied TO

Eve, he lied ABOUT God (Gen. 3), and he lies to us. Jesus told certain Jews of His day:

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it (John 8:44).

There is no truth in Satan! Were we to listen to Satan's lies, we might believe a little sin is okay, or that one church, one worship, one faith, one name, one way of salvation, or one doctrine, is as good as another. We might be persuaded to think that God is not fair to us, and God does not love us. The devil would convince us that even if we decide to obey God, there is no need to be in a hurry, for there is plenty of time, and, after all, our sins are not nearly as bad as the sins of some others. Again, should we be surprised? Hear this warning: *"And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light"* (2 Cor. 11:14). In disguise, Satan would entice us to love this world and the things of it (1 John 2:15-17; James 4:4), not to set our affections on things above (Col. 3:1-2). We can know the truth, but Satan would entrap us—if we are ignorant of his deceptive devices (2 Cor. 2:11).

God's Word, the Truth, makes us free—free from Satan's snares, sin's bondage, guilt, and eternal consequences (John 17:17; 8:32). Satan would deceive us, leading us to believe that the doctrines of men save (Matt. 15:9), or that the philosophy

of men is the real truth (Col. 2:8), or that truth is only relative, subject to culture, situation, and circumstance (Titus 2:11-12). Without truth, man is lost (1 Tim. 2:4), for those who reject truth are deceived, deluded, and damned, and if that were not enough, will die in their sin. Paul warned the brethren in Thessalonica:

And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness (2 Thess. 2:10-12).

God, the loving God of Truth (Deut. 32:4), has promised protection to His children. What great encouragement we get from passages like Romans 8:35-39:

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Remember what Jesus, the Good Shepherd, Who is the Truth (John 14:6), declared:

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand (John 10:27-28).

Satan CANNOT cause us to be lost against our wills. He cannot snatch us away from God without our consent. While Satan cannot force men to sin, by wielding his cunning tool of deception, he leads men away from truth. He cannot overcome man against his will, but he, far too easily, deceives the multitudes, and ensnares them. Although he has no power to tempt God's children above that which we are able, he still tempts us, but God provides a way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13). Our prayer to the Father should be, "*Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,*" yet we dare not think praying alone will prevent our deciding to give in to Satan's wiles (Matt. 6:13). Put on the girdle of truth and never remove it.

### **The Breastplate Of Righteousness**

*"Stand therefore...having on the breastplate of righteousness"* (Eph. 6:14). The breastplate covered all the main organs, and the whole body except for the head, arms, and legs. This armor, wrapped around the child of God, is not the breastplate of sinfulness, nor of self-righteousness, nor of man's misconceived righteousness, but of the righteousness "*which is of*



*God by faith.*” Hear God’s Word:

But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith (Phil. 3:7-9).

Righteousness simply means right doing—by one who has been cleansed of his sin by the precious blood of Christ (Rev. 1:5; Acts 22:16; 1 Peter 1:18-19). John wrote, “*Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous*” (1 John 3:7; cf. Psm. 119:172).

Satan would convince the saved that we can never be “*righteous*,” and that we are not saved. If he could have us to believe that we could never be good enough to be “*righteous*,” he would entrap us. We must realize that when we have been forgiven—we have been forgiven, and that God no longer remembers those sins against us (Heb. 8:12). The breastplate of righteousness protects us from the discouraging and debilitating guilt of sins forgiven in the past, as well as the temptations of sin in the present. Notice what Paul wrote:

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers,

nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

### **The Shoes Of Peace**

*“And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace”* (Eph. 6:15). Shoes are important in the Christian armor. Shoes provide protection to the feet, and mobility, traction, and stability to the wearer. One so equipped can stand unmoved, and unmovable. He can tread down and over the obstacles in his way. Secure, God’s children can stand, not stumble. We can go forward, not fall. We can hold our ground, not give way to the enemy.

Peace indicates tranquility and security; thus, for the child of God, peace is a calm assurance of who we are, and Whose we are. We are at peace with God; therefore, knowing the God of peace, we know the peace of God. *“And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”* (Phil. 4:7). Again, *“Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you”* (Phil. 4:9). Satan would attack our peace, and ensnare us in doubt, discord, and division. God would have us to know that we *“have peace with God.”*

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God (Rom. 5:1-2).

Having peace, we can stand, for we need not fear any person, or power—not even Satan himself. God will protect us. We will win!

### **The Shield Of Faith**

*“Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked”* (Eph. 6:16). The shield provided protection over all, and was so designed as to extinguish the flaming arrows of the enemy. This is the shield of faith, the faith that removes fear, and engenders confidence (cf. 1 Sam. 17:37, 45). Faith overcomes fear, temptation, the enticing appeal of sin, and the traps of the wicked one (cf. Matt. 6:13). Satan would remove us from the faith by removing faith from us.

Faith involves both our trust in God, and our obedience to Him. When we hear the faith (the gospel), we should have faith (belief; that is trust conjoined with obedience). Paul wrote: *“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”* (Rom. 10:17). Without faith, *“it is impossible to please”* God (Heb. 11:6). Faith is the undergirding of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Heb. 11:1).

This shield of faith is for protection between us, and the fiery darts of the devil. Satan’s continual

attacks would persuade us to give in, and to give up our trust in God, but we must keep the shield of faith raised. If we allow it to fall, if we forget God's precious promises, if we lose our faith, we will be overcome. If we hold to the faith, and our faith, we will overcome. *"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith"* (1 John 5:4). Notice the little word "all" in *"all the fiery darts of the wicked"* (Eph. 6:16). There is not one fiery dart sent against us by Satan that we cannot quench with the shield of faith—because of God's providing for our protection.

### **The Helmet Of Salvation**

*"And take the helmet of salvation"* (Eph. 6:17). This part of the Christian's armor protects the head from spiritual attacks. Satan's attacks are all, directly or indirectly, aimed at the head, for he knows if he can wound the head, he can disable the body. For example, if he could take away our hope, we would be disabled by despair. Paul wrote: *"In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began"* (Titus 1:2).

That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil (Heb. 6:18-19).

For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? (Rom. 8:24).

To the brethren in Thessalonica, the inspired message reads: *“But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation”* (1 Thess. 5:8). The *“hope of salvation”* keeps us going, reassures, gives us confidence. Satan would set the traps that would ensnare us in doubt, fear, and negative thinking. He would have us to be anxious about the past, afraid in the present, and apprehensive about the future. The devil would deceive us to believe that we cannot win, so why fight. If we keep our heads protected, if we have hope in salvation in Christ now, we can have hope in eternal salvation, and that will protect us in the fight against our enemy. We can have such hope: *“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace”* (Eph. 1:7).

The father of lies seeks to trap us into thinking that the problems of life (illness, loss, financial setbacks, disappointment, etc.) are proof that God does not love us, He does not care, and maybe He is not there at all. We must protect our heads, and focus upon things above (Col. 3:1-2), thinking on, *“...whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there*

*be any praise, think on these things*" (Phil. 4:8). God provides protection for our thinking.

### **The Sword Of The Spirit**

*"And take...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God"* (Eph. 6:17). This is the Christian's only offensive weapon, for it is the only one needed. The Word of God was the only weapon used by our Lord when assailed by the devil.

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt

worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him (Matt. 4:1-11).

Every answer to Satan began with, *“It is written.”* Each answer defeated Satan’s attempt to ensnare the Savior. So may we answer Satan today, with the Word of God, and with every answer defeat our enemy, escape his snares, and win the battle.

### **Prayer**

*“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints”* (Eph. 6:18). If we would stand, protected by God, we must pray. Note the four *“all’s.”* We must pray always (in every time, place, or state), with all prayer (every kind/type of prayer), with all perseverance (without growing weary) and supplication (entreaty), for all saints (all our brethren, our fellow soldiers). Prayer is a vital part of our prevailing—and of our standing. Therefore, we watch (remaining awake) in prayer.

Surely, Christians believe in the power of prayer. Certainly, we believe that our Father answers the prayers of His children. In our fight against the wiles of the devil, prayer is a great force. Again, note the *“all’s”* of prayer: *“Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Eph. 5:20). When we pray, to the Father, in the name of Jesus, we have confidence that God will hear and answer: *“And this is the confidence that we*

*have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us*" (1 John 5:14). Even though God knows our need, before we ask, He still commands: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matt. 7:7). Not asking, or asking improperly keeps us from having the answer we need and desire: "Ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (James 4:2-3); however, through prayer, we obtain the protection, from God, to escape the snares of Satan.

### **Conclusion**

We could wish that, when we have obeyed the gospel by being immersed in water, in order to have our sins remitted (2 Thess. 1:7-9; Rom. 6:3-4; Acts 2:38), there would be only peace, without trouble, or temptation. Such is not the case. Christians start every day on the battlefield, fighting against the greatest enemy ever known to man. Satan hates us, and plots against us, seeking to entrap us in his snares. What can we do? We are in a deadly serious spiritual battle, but not without the best armor and weaponry available, proven to be able to equip us to stand against every onslaught brought against it. God provides the armor, but we must put on the "whole armor of God." We must keep watch, ever ready for the attack. We wear the Christian's armor all day long—we even sleep in our armor, with our weapons at hand.

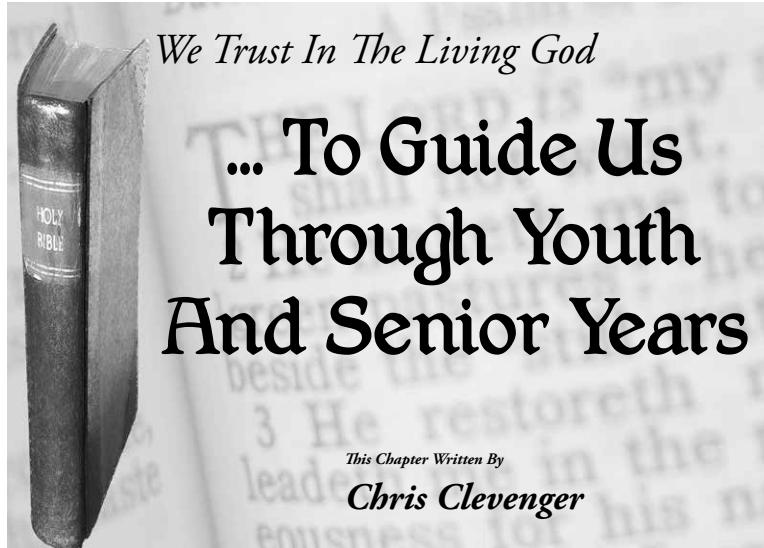
We trust in the living God to provide protection



from Satan's snares—and He does. As a loving father protects his child from danger, so our Heavenly Father provides protection for His children. Thus, to know His love and protection, we must be His children, and to be His children, we must obey His will (2 Cor. 6:14-18; Gal. 3:26; 1 Peter 1:14; 1 John 3:10).

TO PROVIDE PROTECTION FROM SATAN'S SNARES

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### **Introduction**

I couldn't help but notice the familiar features on my grandfather's face and the comforting strength in his hands as he laid in a generic hospital bed in Gadsden, Alabama. His fall had taken a toll on his body physically—seven fractured ribs, pressure around his heart, and liquid in his lungs. His lucidity came in waves. One moment he was capable of identifying everyone in the room, but the next moment found him recounting events that we could not even verify as remotely accurate. At 82 years of age, an incapacitating cocktail of Parkinson's, morphine, and vivid hallucinations brought on by a lack of regulated medicine had left him in a state of mental flux.

As I stood beside his bed and listened, I marveled at the spirituality that his injured mind could not contain. "*Our Father, who art in Heaven,*" he prayed.

*“Hallowed by thy name. Please bless Chris and his family with strength that he may have a long life in thy service.”* As he continued to pray, the weight of emotion contorted my face and brought tears streaming to my eyes. I was reminded that, for the child of God, prayer is almost as involuntary and natural as the act of breathing itself.

After he finished praying, the two of us continued our broken conversation. He spoke of purchasing a motorcycle, trading for a truck, and eventually buying a boat. He kept the boat for a while and eventually sold it. He brought his seemingly incoherent personal account to a conclusion by saying, *“To everything there is a season.”*

I immediately realized that we, though doubly connected by blood, were in two drastically different periods of life. My Pa was 82-years-old, the majority of his years past and his eternal reward closer than ever. In comparison, I was still a youth. Though married for six years, much of my life is still to be lived. Nevertheless, both of us, one in his youth and the other in the twilight of his senior years, had been redeemed by the blood of Christ, were led by the Spirit of God, and were in the process of climbing toward the summit of spiritual maturity found in Christ.

Whether we are presently in our youth or in our senior years, our God has the ability to guide us if we will trust in Him. Contrary to conventional belief, younger Christians and senior Christians have much in common. They trust in the same God, are guided by the same faith, and are led to the same reward. Interestingly enough, Paul, when writing to Titus,

paints a beautiful portrait of a faithful church wherein older Christians and younger Christians labor together in a spiritual symbiotic relationship wherein each benefits from the spiritual successes of the other.

### **We Trust In God**

Christians young and old trust in God. This trust or faith is only cultivated through a reception of the Gospel of Christ. Twice in his short epistle to Titus, Paul recounts the redemptive non-fiction narrative of the life of Christ. This permeation of his writing with the Gospel message leads to faith, a firm conviction in God and a reliance upon Him. In the second chapter, a portion of text wherein much is said about the interactions of older and younger Christians, Paul writes:

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works (Titus 2:11-14).

#### ***Incarnation (Titus 2:11)***

God openly manifested His grace by giving His Son to the world. This grace, none other than Jesus Christ, brought salvation from sin and peace with God. Jesus “*appeared*” when He was born of a virgin

in the Judean city of Bethlehem (Luke 1:76-79; Matt. 1:18-25). Incarnated, Jesus appeared in the midnight of man's sin with the brilliance of a thousand suns (Matt. 4:16).

***Education (Titus 2:12)***

Jesus, the grace of God incarnate, came in order to teach. By His words and His life, Christ taught those who believed in Him to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts while living soberly, righteously and godly. The “*Master Teacher*” communicated to His pupils that His descent into time demeaned that they lead a reformed life here upon the earth—a life characterized by faith that magnified God.

***Expectation (Titus 2:13)***

The faith of these disciples lead them to live a life of anticipation. The same Lord who intervened for their salvation would also return to bring it to a conclusion. His first appearing was one of humility; His second appearing will be one of glory. Jesus will forever prove His divinity and His power when He returns, even in the minds of those who reject His authority.

***Redemption (Titus 2:14)***

In light of His triumphant return, we should constantly reflect on the sacrificial death of Christ who gave Himself instead of us. He bore our sins upon the cross (1 Peter 2:24) so that we could be redeemed and purified. Because of His past actions, we are now able to be His own special people, a church chosen to glorify the name of God.

Later in the epistle, after emphasizing the Gospel once more, Paul encourages his young protégé to constantly affirm the same things (Titus 3:8). Why? A constant affirmation of the simple facts of the Gospel aids in the creation of a consistent conviction in God. Faith, another biblical word denoting trust in God, is only cultivated through a hearing of the Gospel (Rom. 10:17). Even those who are children of God learn to trust in the living God on ever-deepening levels through a careful consideration of their own salvation.

### **To Guide Us**

God guides us through the Gospel. In other writings, Paul uses “*the faith*” as a synonym for “*the Gospel*” (Gal. 3:2, 23-26). Earlier in his letter to Titus, Paul revealed that their relationship—one likened to the relationship of a father and a son—was possible through “*the common faith*” (Titus 1:4). The Gospel represented the realm wherein Paul, an older Christian gentleman, shared a deep, meaningful relationship with Titus, a younger child of God. Paul, Titus, and all other Christians are guided by God through His word. Without the light of the Gospel, those who claim to follow Christ would be groping in darkness; nevertheless, through the wonders of written revelation we are guided ever closer to the Father (2 Peter 1:19). This map for Christian living is not concealed and hidden from human sight. Instead it is easily discerned in the Scripture. Throughout his epistle to Titus, Paul emphasizes sound doctrine and sincere speech (cf. Titus 1:9; 1:3; 2:1; 2:7-8; 3:8). “*Sound doctrine*” is

teaching that conforms to the pattern of God's word, instruction that will lead one down the correct path.

Man's inability to guide himself is ever apparent. Jeremiah recognized that man was incapable of even directing his own steps (Jer. 10:23). If man is so insufficient to guide himself, there is little doubt that he is unable to chart the course for another's life. Comforting to the Christian is the assurance that God guides His children from the cradle to the grave. He gives them spiritual nourishment to bring them to maturity (1 Peter 2:2; Heb. 5:12-13) and provides ample opportunities for them to grow (James 1:2-5).

Paul wrote of the message of the Spirit early in his epistle to Titus (cf. Titus 1:3). The same Holy Spirit that revealed the New Testament to the original penmen (2 Tim. 3:16-17) still indwells each Christian (Rom. 8:9) and guides them through His word (Rom. 8:4, 14). Since the Holy Spirit guided the apostles and other writers into all truth (John 16:13), we can be sure that He has to guide us through our youth and our senior years by the Gospel.

### **In Our Youth**

Since our God has the ability to sufficiently guide us through youth and old age, it would be reasonable to assume that He would communicate His desires to us in an understandable way. Interestingly enough, Paul reveals to Titus that God has special desires both for those who are younger and those who are older. In a chapter dedicated to righteous relationships (Titus 2), Paul focuses upon four common demographics in



every local church—younger women, younger men, older women, older men.

***Security (Titus 2:4-5)***

In the local church, God guides younger women to provide security. These sisters are often mothers and young wives whose domestic duties are unimaginably important to spiritual and social success. Older women are given the charge to teach the younger women to love their husbands and their children. While putting the interests of their spouse and their progeny first, the young Christian gal is to be level headed and innocent. If she is a wife, she is to be a guardian of the home—one who works to make her home a safe haven for her family. She is to be a good woman who is obedient to her own husband. By accomplishing her domestic duties, she brings glory and honor to her husband, her church, and her heavenly Father. Her obedience to these commands of God well illustrate whether or not she truly trusts in God to guide her by His word—an item referenced in the final phrase of this passage.

***Strength (Titus 2:6)***

The vitality and virility of young men can be harnesses for the glory of God if young Christian gentlemen will trust in God to guide them. Unlike the younger women (cf. Titus 2:4-5), the Holy Spirit sees fit to only include one divine injunction when addressing younger men—sober-mindedness. The potential that young men have must be brought under subjection to Christ if they will be able to be productive

in the service of the Master. Titus was specifically instructed to exhort or encourage these young men to practice meekness by the manner in which he lived (cf. Titus 2:7-8). The impulsive tendencies of newfound manhood must be surrendered to the Lord.

### ***In Our Old Age***

Much of what Paul says to younger men and women leans toward learning. In contrast, he commands older men and older women to assume the role of teachers among the people of God. Humbly, God guides these senior saints to be model citizens of the kingdom of Christ and vessels of wisdom and practical Christianity which can be gained by no other means but experience. While young women provide security in the home and the church and young men are a wellspring of vitality and strength, the living God guides older men and women to provide two other characteristics that would be lacking.

### ***Sophistication (Titus 2:3)***

Every congregation of God's people needs several older Christian women to provide a certain palpable air of sophistication. This sophistication stems from sobriety and Christian stateliness. Austerity and chastity are fitting for a woman who professes to be godly. These older Christian women are to be holy and pure. As such, they abstain completely from gossip and alcohol. More importantly, these seasoned sisters do not withhold their wisdom, experience, and holy wit from their younger sisters. They are to impart their

spiritual insights on to their younger counterparts both by word and by example. God's guidance to these elder sisters is for them to serve as guides themselves by teaching young Christian women.

***Stability (Titus 2:2)***

Every family needs an emotional and spiritual foundation. In the home, God intends for the father to fill this role; in the church, God instructs the aged men to provide the mooring that provides the spiritual stability for the rest of the congregation. They are to be sober—completely vigilant and watchful for false doctrine (Titus 1:9-16). These older Christian men are to approach spiritual matters seriously and practice Christian temperance, or self-control. A true Christian gentleman is to be sound in faith, charity, and patience. His faith and conviction in God is to rest completely upon God alone. All of his dealings with others are to be characterized by love. Furthermore, he is to be long-suffering and patient with younger Christians, especially his counterpart, the younger Christian man.

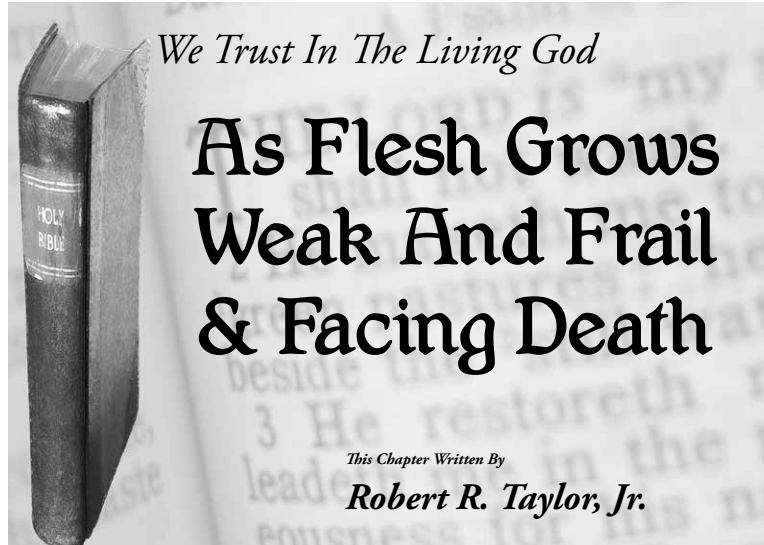
**Conclusion**

We trust in the living God to guide us through our youth and senior years. He guides us through our youth by surrounding us with faithful, godly, and loving aged saints who are willing to communicate and capable of sharing wise counsel and insight. Likewise, the Father leads us through our waning years by allowing us to share in His work, providing purpose to a life with much to offer. How marvelous are the

TO GUIDE US THROUGH YOUTH AND SENIOR YEARS

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works of God! He guides us by His word to be guided by others in youth and to guide others when we are of age. In whatever season of life we find ourselves, God sufficiently guides us.



### **Introduction**

Springtime in beautiful Pulaski, Tennessee, is enhanced by the East Hill Lectureship in May annually. It is always a delight and pleasure to participate as I have done in all but two.

My gratitude is expressed to the elders, Paul, Robert and all the precious saints at East Hill for this current invitation. Paul is a master craftsman in putting together annually an enriching series of relevant and timely themes. The theme this year is good and great—*“We Trust In The Living God.”*

### **Beginning Observations**

Since the first couple, Adam and Eve, sinned in Genesis 3, they and all their descendants have been subject to aging and dying. Of the multiplied billions who have lived on mother earth, only two, Enoch and

Elijah, have escaped physical death. Man is body and spirit or a dual being. Life is when they are united; death is when they separate (James 2:26). In Genesis 35 Rachel died as her soul was in departing (v. 18). The body goes from infancy through youth, adulthood and declines in old age followed by death (Heb. 9:27; 1 Cor. 15:22).

Genesis 5 is a very intriguing chapter filled with one expression, *“And he died.”* Only one portrait hangs in this patriarchal gallery of the ancients as an exception—Enoch. *“And he died”* is repeated again and again in this chapter of longevity. Unless Jesus comes in our lifetime, these three words apply to all the living today with just a pronoun change inclusive of women. The cradle to the cemetery is of short order for all of us whether we die in the bloom of health or old age enfeebles us and we go the way of the earth much like Joshua and David expressed in Joshua 23:14 and 1 Kings 2:2. Joshua died at age 110 and David at 70.

Abraham at age 175 *“gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years, and was gathered to his people”* (Gen. 25:8). This latter expression is stated of a number of men who died in Old Testament times. It has **no** reference to their burial spots but their going in to the realm of departed spirits. Abraham was not buried in Haran or Ur—his earlier homes. Isaac died at age 180, Jacob at 147, Joseph at 110, Aaron at 123, Moses at 120 and David at 70. Death hovered over young Hezekiah at age 39. He prayed for additional years and Jehovah graciously gave him 15 more years, meaning he died at age 54 and

not at 39. Sarah died at 123, the only Old Testament woman whose age at death is given. Peter died as an old man (John 21:18-19). Paul died perhaps in his late 60's. The apostle John was nearly 100 when he closed his eyes in the sweet slumber of dying in the Lord. He had written of this in the second listed beatitude gracing the wonderful, worthy Book of Revelation, a Book I love deeply and dearly (Rev. 14:13).

### **Wisdom From Ecclesiastes 3**

This was one of the three books written by *“the wisest of the ages”*—Solomon. The other two were Proverbs and Song of Solomon.

The expression, *“A time to be”*... adorns Ecclesiastes 3:2-8. The opening is, *“A time to be born and a time to die.”* The Bible treats frequently the births of babies such as Isaac with Abraham and Sarah, Esau and Jacob with Isaac and Rebekah, Moses with Amram and Jochebed and Jesus to Mary. Yet all these lived and died—one, Jesus, at younger age—33 and the remainder in advanced ages. Birth is no more certain than death that comes subsequently and often with rapidity. But far greater times do Sacred Scripture mention death. Men, for ages, have searched for the fountain of life promising immunity to death. These very searches have died with all their searching in vain! You and I, plus all our peers, will die unless Jesus makes His second advent in our lifetime. The rich, successful farmer in Luke 12:16-21 thought he had many years in which to enjoy the fruits of his abundant harvest. He died that very day. A prominent man once said, *“I*

*think I have about 15 more years to live.*” He died that very day.

Isaac told Esau, his older son, “*Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death*” (Gen. 27:1-2). He deemed death to be at hand. He lived a number of years after he uttered this, dying at age 180. Jacob knew death was at hand when he convened his 12 sons in Genesis 49. He died at the end of this chapter (Gen. 49:28-33). David knew the day of his departure was at hand when he counseled Solomon in 1 Kings 2. The opening chapter of 1 Kings reveals the ailing monarch and what his servants did thinking to extend his life. Paul in 2 Timothy 4 knew the sands in his hourglass were running out quickly and surely. His coming martyrdom would be at the hands of cold and cruel Rome. This is why he urged Timothy to come to him with all haste (2 Tim. 4:9, 21).

### **From Youth To Old Age, Death And Beyond (Eccl. 12:1ff)**

This final chapter of Ecclesiastes is an inspired picture of the very subject title assigned to me. Personally, I have experienced birth, youth, middle age and now, at 82, the arrival of bodily weakness and inability to do now what I once did with ease.

In my early 40’s I wrote a book, *Christ In The Home*. One of my chapters dealt with “*Growing Old Gracefully*.” My dear mother was in her early 60’s at the time and in failing health. She always called me “*Sonny*.” After she read that chapter she said to Irene,



*“I hope I live long enough to see if ‘Sonny’ grows old gracefully!”* She died in her late 60’s. I realize now it was easier to write of that then, than practicing it now. It is challenging now the older I get!

Now to wisdom from Solomon in Ecclesiastes. In chapter 12 youth is portrayed in verses 1-2. Solomon charges young people to remember their Creator in this period of their lives. There are many reasons for such a clarion call to young people. (1) It is a commandment of God with its counterpart being in 1 Timothy 4:12. (2) It is a seasonal command. Do it in youth not waiting till one foot is in the grave and other about to enter such. (3) It may well be the only time one has to remember Him. Many young people die long before leaving this season of their lives. (4) Others need to see in youth an eloquent example of devotion to Deity. Paul urged youthful Timothy to be an example of believers *“in word, in faith, in conversation (manner of life), in charity (love), in spirit, in faith, in purity”* (1 Tim. 4:12). (5) This may be the only time one has to remember God when He is still in the picture. (6) This is before one is hardened in heart, set in sin and minus any interest in serving God. (7) If one lives to a ripe old age, he/she should be enthusiastically eager to remember God all of accountable life—not when one is at the very brink of death and then the great beyond. (8) Youth surely must face the Great Judge of the quick and the death in Final Judgment. Now is the time of preparation for that sure-to-come meeting that no one will miss. (9) The days of ill-fortune will surely come and that should be sobering to all youthful, reflective

minds. (10) Postponing obedience in youth is fraught with eternal danger.

Verse 2 talks about the seasons of life: spring, summer, autumn and winter. Applied to one's journey through life, spring in early youth, summer and fall are more mature, adult years. Winter is symbolic of advancing age with weaker constitutions and feebler energies. The older I get, I dread more and more the kind of winter through which we have just passed. For senior citizens walking on snow or ice is not conducive to remaining erect in mobility. Falling is so easy for weaker frames.

Verse 3 speaks of the "*keepers of the house*" which references arms and hands as they reach the trembling stage. Flexing muscles for laborious tasks are now in the past. The strong men refers to legs, knees, ankles and feet once so strong and versatile now experience feebleness and inability to do what once was done with the greatest of ease. Their powers of mobility are greatly curtailed. Backs will sag, shoulders will stoop and legs will find it difficult to maneuver especially if transporting heavy objects. This is advancing age. Also, in this verse mention is made of grinders ceasing. The teeth fall out. Ancient people did not have all the dental advantages we possess today. Teeth loss to them did not mean substitutes (dentures) as we now possess.

Verse 3 also mentions that those who look out the window shall be darkened. This is a graphic reference to failing eyesight. Objects become less clear. Blindness is often the end. Be it recalled relative to blind Isaac in Genesis 27:1-2.

In verse 4 we read of the doors being shut in the streets when the grinding is low. This portrays lips that are kept together because there are no teeth. Food may drop from the mouth with no rows of upper and lower teeth retaining food inside the mouth. They have to gum their food which reduces the pleasure of eating delicious food.

Verse 4 also speaks of the change that comes in sleeping habits. The chirping of a bird outside his window may awake the aged person when earlier it took a loud alarm clock to disturb his sweet slumber. As a rule aged people do not sleep as well as they did in younger days.

The latter part of verse 4 speaks of "*the daughters of musick*" being brought low. Failing voices no longer sing so well and ears with failing hearing will no longer be able to enjoy music as earlier days provided.

Verse 5 portrays the aged as fearing heights, that earlier, they ascended and descended with youthful ease. There is a constant fear of falling and breaking brittle bones such as hips. Irene and I often visit homes where there are steps to climb, minus railings, to aid our coming up to the door of entrance. Places I go to speak now cause me to examine how many steps to the podium and whether there are rails to aid. This was never a problem in earlier life.

In verse 5 we read of older people who fear journeys contemplating dangers, both real and imagined. Such fears do not bother young people at all.

Also in verse 5 we take note of the almond tree linked with hair that turns grey or white. The man

yesterday who had a head filled with black or red hair today finds it white. Some years back I met a former college friend. We had not seen each other in years. His first response to me was, “*Taylor, your hair is falling out!*” My mirror already had supplied that information! I told a close friend of mine that when one loses most of his hair, it does not take nearly as much shampoo when showering!

Portrayed also in verse 5 describes the grasshopper becoming a burden. This means even small objects are harder to lift and especially to transport.

In verse 5 we have the failing of desires. Less and less food is desired. Within recent days I visited a dear lady in our local hospital. It was about mealtime. She told the attending nurse and me that she had little relish for food. Sexual activity fails for aged couples. It often is hampered or even ceases.

In the latter part of this verse we have portrayed the coming of death. It is a universal debt we all must pay (1 Cor. 15:22; Heb. 4:9). This is the coming of the Grim Reaper or the coming of the pale horse and his rider death (Rev. 6:8). Hades, the realm of departed spirits, follows death. Family and friends go about the streets mourning the loss of a dear family member or a close and dear friend. Death is in the picture for all of us unless Jesus comes in our lifetime. For the aged it cannot be far distant but soon will arrive. In our daily paper we usually have a page or more of obituaries listed for West Tennessee, Eastern Arkansas and Northern Mississippi.

Verse 6 delineates the silver cord loosed. This is

a very vivid way of describing the spinal cord which is so very essential to human activities. “*Down in my back*” is a modern expression of serious back ailments. Serious back problems are more common among aged people than among younger people in their prime. I have been in the book writing and selling business for more than forty years. Boxes of books are much more difficult now that they were only a few years back.

Verse 6 describes the golden bowl being broken. This refers to minds fading and failing. Minds, once so brilliant and alert, are often beset with dementia or Alzheimer’s disease. In former times it was called “*the hardening of the arteries*.” This disease has been in our families—both Irene’s and mine—for many years. It is a most debilitating malady. Husbands no longer know their wives; wives no longer know their husbands; parents no longer know their own children.

Also in verse 6 we have the broken pitcher at the fountain or the broken cistern referencing serious heart problems. Both my parents died with congestive heart failures. My father died at age 70 and my mother at age 69. Before water came to many of our homes, we older ones can remember the well with the round wheel attached to a rope and bucket let down into the water several feet drop. In my early days on the farm I drew hundreds of gallons of water from our well on the farm. On cold, rainy days this was far from an enjoyable task. About the only way we had running water was if members of our family **ran** with a pail of water. Wells were common in Bible times. Look at how many wells were digged in the time of Abraham and Isaac. Jacob

digged a well people used in New Testament times (John 4:12). Cisterns were also common in a land always short on water supply. Broken cisterns were of serious concern to these ancient people due to water's link with life. Perhaps this is why the wise Solomon linked a broken cistern with heart failure.

Death is pictured in verse 7 with the body returning to dust and the spirit returning to God—its Giver (cf. Gen. 3:19). From other parts of the Bible, such as Luke 16:19-31, we can learn that the righteous go into the Hadean realm of comfort and joy. Wicked spirits go into the Hadean portion where there is constant anguish and endless pain. By our free will we determine our destiny prior to death and subsequent to final judgment (Matt. 25:31-46). The righteous, at this point, go **into** eternal life and the wicked **into** everlasting punishment. “*Into*” is a term of transition—from Hades into eternal destinies.

Solomon has described in brief, yet comprehensively, our journey from the cradle to the cemetery and on into the great beyond. He was no materialist. We do not cease to exist at our demise. We have a soul that will live forever in one of two destinies.

### **Paul And The Corinthians**

In 2 Corinthians 4:16 Paul wrote,

For which cause we faint not: but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

Paul was no Sadducee or materialist. He knew man was a dual being—body and spirit. Ancient Sadducees

and modern materialists are in the same boat saying, “*When man dies, he dies all over. He is just as dead as the cow in the field. Nothing, absolutely nothing, survives man’s demise.*” What a cold and cruel philosophy to pawn off on humanity. Without exception every time the Sadducees are mentioned in the New Testament they are on the wrong side of truth. See their portrait in Matthew 3:7-8; 16:1,16; 22:23-24; Acts 23:8. In Matthew 22:23-24, Jesus deflated them in a most embarrassing way.

It is Bible paradox that the body can become weak, frail and die, yet the inner man grows stronger and never will die. One of our earlier Presidents, John Adams, was a religious man. One Sunday he attended services. In his diary he wrote, in essence, “*The weather was cold, the building had no heat, the prayer lasted for an hour and the sermon lasted two hours.*” It is reported that he was once asked about his health to which he responded that his body was declining rapidly but his inner man was growing stronger all the time. That was Paul’s sentiment. It should be ours as we grow old and frail in bodily strength while the inner man is renewed on a daily basis.

### **Paul And His Coming Departure**

Paul’s final book in the New Testament was 2 Timothy with its 4 chapters and 83 verses. His days were numbered of which he was fully aware. He wrote these sobering, yet sublime, words to his faithful son in the gospel, Timothy:

For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

In these trio of wonderful, worthy words we have the Pauline viewpoints of his life. They are eminently worthy of our attention. Paul was of Jewish extraction. He was a Roman citizen. He lived in a Grecian world. Fighting the good fight was the Roman viewpoint, finishing the course was the Grecian viewpoint and having kept the faith was the Jewish or Hebrew viewpoint.

Now the sands in his hourglass were running out with rapidity. Death hovered over him 24/7. But he was ready. Diligent had been his past preparation for death and the hereafter. He was persuaded fully that heavenly habitations awaited him after his stay in Abraham's bosom or the realm of departed spirits (2 Tim. 1:12). Note that he did not expect to go to heaven the day he died at the hands of Romans. He expected to receive his crown of righteousness the very same day others would obtain theirs. Many things did not move Paul as per Acts 20:24 but heavenly hope did move him mightily. Hope was that ever present magnet drawing him closer and closer to Christ and the great beyond. His dedication knew no abatement. The body of the battle scarred warrior grew weaker with advancing age but his spirit was renewed day by day as



per 2 Corinthians 4:16. If he were born about the time Jesus became the Babe in Bethlehem's manger, then he was in his late 60's at this writing. He had grown old in his work of faith, labor of love and patience of hope (1 Thess. 1:3).

### **Conclusion**

An excellent way to end this lesson is a reference to one of the seven bright and beautiful beatitudes gracing the precious and magnificent Book of Revelation. This is number 2 in that lovely list and reads:

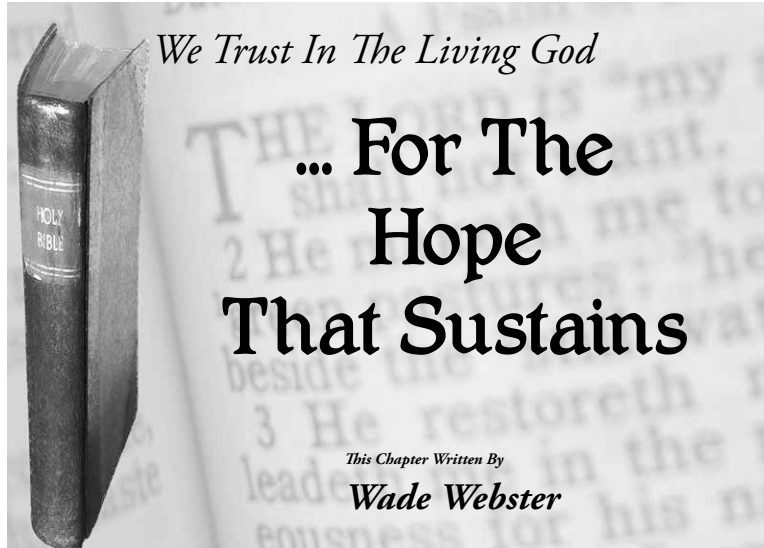
And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write. Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

The aged John wrote Revelation in A.D. 96. Quite likely, he was in his 90's at this time. He knew what it meant to grow weak and frail and to face death shortly.

While in the flesh we need to live IN the Lord and then die IN the Lord as John emphasized in this bright and beautiful beatitude. The outward man (his body) perishes but the inner man (his spirit) is renewed every day. This should be our permanent resolve.

FLESH GROWS WEAK AND FRAIL—FACING DEATH

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Someone has noted that a “man can live about 40 days without food, about 3 days without water, about 8 minutes without air, but only a second without hope.” As Christians, we have hope. We have that which will save us and sustain us. To the saints at Rome, Paul wrote, “**For we are saved by hope:** but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?” (Rom. 8:24, emphasis added). Sozo, the word translated as “saved” in this passage, means “to save, keep safe and sound, to rescue from danger or destruction; one (from injury or peril); to save a suffering one (from perishing), i.e. one suffering from disease, to make well, heal, restore to health; to preserve one who is in danger of destruction, to save or rescue; to save in the technical biblical sense.” Please notice that hope saves us and keeps us safe and sound. In other words, it sustains us.

It is encouraging to consider all that the New Testament says about our hope. Our hope is:

- Steadfast (patience—1 Thess. 1:3).
- Sure (Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:11).
- Singular (one—Eph. 4:4).
- Strong (Heb. 6:18; 1 Peter 1:3).
- Sensible (reasonable—1 Peter 3:15).
- Supreme (better—Heb. 7:19; cf. 2 Thess. 2:16; Titus 2:13).

For sure, it would be a great study to just develop these thoughts. However, we will have to save that study for another time. In this lesson, we want to focus on five pictures that are given of hope in the Bible.

### **Hope Is A Light Against The Darkness Of Life**

Life can be dark. Paul spoke of a time when he had not seen “*sun nor stars in many days*” (Acts 27:20). Perhaps, you have been through one of these dark patches in life also. Although we as Christians face the dark problems of life, we have been provided with a light to help us to see through them. You might say that God has left a light on for us.

In the book of 1 Kings we find the following statement, “*Nevertheless for David’s sake did the Lord his God give him a lamp in Jerusalem, to set up his son after him, and to establish Jerusalem*” (1 Kings 15:4; cf. Lev. 24:2-4; 1 Sam. 3:2-3; Psm. 132:17). In the context, we learn that times were dark in Israel. Wicked King Jereboam was on the throne and God’s people were engulfed in a dark cloud. However, for the sake of David, God left a lamp of hope on for them.

### **Hope Is A Nail Against The Pressures Of Life**

Have you ever felt like everything in your life was coming apart? Probably, we will all admit that there are times when we don't know if we can hold things together or not. The pressures of life can threaten to tear us apart. Although we as Christians sometimes face some of the same pressures that those around us face, hope serves as a nail to hold things in place for us.

Ezra, the great priest and restorer, asked God simply for a "*nail in His holy place*" (Ezra 9:8). Asking for a nail doesn't seem like much does it? Yet, Ezra realized that all that he needed was a little reason to hope. This nail would serve as a reminder that the temple could be rebuilt and that the people could be restored.

### **Hope Is A Door Against The Temptations Of Life**

Have you ever felt trapped by temptation or problems? Have you ever wished for a way of escape? Hope provides a way of escape.

To the saints at Corinth, Paul wrote,

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it (1 Cor. 10:13).

In like manner, through Hosea, God promised to provide His people with the valley of Achor, for a door

of hope (Hosea 2:15; cf. 2 Kings 9:3, 10; 1 Cor. 10:13). In the midst of persecution and captivity, God's people must have felt like they were enclosed in a vault with no way out. To relieve these feelings, God provided them with a door to brighter days.

### **Hope Is A Helmet Against The Blows Of Life**

Have you ever felt bloody and bruised from the blows of life? Although we as Christians suffer some of the same blows that others face, hope serves as a helmet to protect us.

In addressing the Christians at Thessalonica, Paul told them to put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet, the hope of salvation (1 Thess. 5:8; cf. Eph. 6:10-17). No doubt, Paul knew how cruel life could be. More than once, he had felt life's blows (2 Cor. 11:23-25). Had it not been for the helmet of hope, he would not have made it.

### **Hope Is An Anchor Against The Storms Of Life**

Have you ever felt as if the storms of life were going to blow you away? No doubt, most of us have experienced a few stormy days and nights. Although we as Christians are not immune to the high winds of life, we do have an anchor to help us ride out the storm.

Paul spoke of hope as "*an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast*" (Heb. 6:19; cf. Col. 1:23). If you are

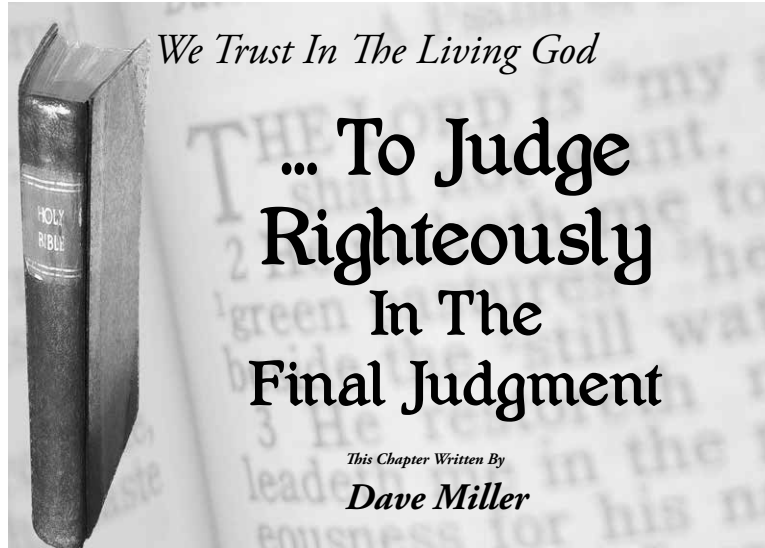
familiar with the book of Hebrews, then you know that the Hebrew saints were being persecuted on every side. Paul wanted them to know that they could weather the storms of life with the anchor of hope. He did not want them to be “*tossed to and fro*” and “*carried about with every wind of doctrine*” (Eph. 4:13-14). We know that he was speaking from experience because he had weathered a storm or two in this way (Acts 27:22-23, 29-30).

Are you living in hope (Titus 1:2) or without hope (Eph. 2:12)? God wants you to know that there is hope for you. There’s a light to help you see through the darkness of life, a nail to hold things together in the midst of the pressures of life, a door to help you escape from the temptations of life, a helmet to protect you from the blows of life, and an anchor to hold you through the storms of life. These things can be yours if you are willing to lay hold upon the hope set before you. Through God’s grace, your obedience will let you face each day with the hope of eternal life (Titus 2:11; Matt. 7:21). Hope is one of the key things that separates Christians from others (1 Thess. 4:13; 1 Peter 3:15; 1 Cor. 15:55-58). Do you have this key difference? Do you have this sustaining power?

FOR THE HOPE THAT SUSTAINS

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**O**ne great value of the Old Testament is the way it conveys to us the nature and attributes of God. It is in the Old Testament that we are given a clear depiction of God's character and what He is really like. Especially in the Pentateuch, where God's laws and ethical admonitions are given, we gain insight into the essence and personality of deity.

In Genesis 18, we have a record of a conversation between God and Abraham regarding the fate of Sodom. When Abraham learned that it was God's intention to evaluate the spiritual condition of the city with a view toward responding to its great wickedness (vs. 20), he initiated the interaction with God in the following words:

Would you also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there were fifty righteous within the city; would You also destroy the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous that were

in it? Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! **Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right** (Gen. 18:23-25, emphasis added).

Abraham pinpointed a central feature of God's character—His righteousness. God's righteousness refers to His fairness, His impartiality, His justice. The Bible repeatedly affirms that God is fair. He is no "*respector of persons*" (Rom. 2:11; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25; 1 Peter 1:17; Acts 10:34-35). Humans can always count on God to do the right thing. He would never mistreat anyone, favor one person above another, or conduct Himself in a way that would show Him to be unfair. God possesses the quality of fairness to a perfect degree. He is infinite in the attribute of justice. Hence, in all of His actions throughout human history, He has conducted Himself with complete integrity. No one can sustain a charge of unfairness against God.

Consider Adam and Eve. God spoke His word to them (Gen. 2:16-17). When they violated His instructions to them, they were expelled permanently from the garden. Question: **Did God Judge righteously?**

Consider Cain. Was God unfair to him? Did God show partiality toward Abel in accepting Abel's sacrifice and rejecting Cain's? Certainly not! God gave the same instructions to both boys. Cain chose to deviate from those instructions. Notice carefully God's question posed to Cain: "*If you do right, will you not be accepted?*" (Gen. 4:7). That question demonstrates that a standard of right and wrong existed to which

Cain and Abel were amenable. Cain had the same opportunity as Abel to do right. God was as willing to accept and approve Cain as He was Abel—if Cain would conform to the standard of right. God’s rejection of Cain was not arbitrary or capricious. It was due solely to the fact that Cain’s own *“deeds were evil and his brother’s righteous”* (1 John 3:12). He then further violated God’s will by murdering his own brother and was subsequently cursed and made a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth (Gen. 4:11-12). Question: **Did God Judge righteously?**

Consider the people of Noah’s day. The earth’s population numbered perhaps in the millions or billions. Yet people became so alienated from God that their wickedness was great and *“every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually”* (Gen. 6:5). God warned the population to repent through the preaching of Noah (2 Peter 2:5). He apparently delayed retribution for over a century (Gen. 6:3). Twice the Scriptures refer to this delay in terms of the longsuffering of God (1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 3:9). He literally *“waited”* (1 Peter 3:20). But the day came when that delay was terminated. God brought upon this planet a global deluge that completely flooded the entire earth. *“He destroyed all living things which were on the face of the ground: both man and cattle, creeping thing and bird of the air. They were destroyed from the earth”* (Gen. 8:23). That means that God caused billions of people to be drowned! **Did God Judge righteously?**

In Genesis 19, when not even 10 righteous people could be found in Sodom, God rained down upon the

cities of the plain brimstone and fire. The cities were so thoroughly devastated, so completely exterminated, their precise location is still in dispute. **Did God Judge righteously?**

In the early chapters of Exodus, God sent Moses to Pharaoh to demand the release of the Israelites. He brought one cataclysmic plague after another upon the population: water to blood, frogs, lice, flies, death of livestock, boils, hail, locusts, darkness three days, and death of firstborn. He ultimately drowned the Egyptian army in the sea with their bodies washed up on the seashore (Exod. 14:30). **Did God Judge righteously?**

In Exodus 32, when Moses delayed his return from Mt. Sinai, the people began partying and indulging in pagan revelry. When Moses arrived in the camp, he ordered the formation of an execution detail composed of Levites who strapped on swords and began executing Israelites—about 3,000 that day. **Did God Judge righteously?**

In Leviticus 10, two nephews of Moses made an adjustment when they presented an offering of incense. God sent fire down out of the atmosphere and burned those two boys to death. His explanation—“*By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; and before all the people I must be glorified*” (Lev. 10:3). **Did God Judge righteously?**

### **Justice In Numbers**

The book of Numbers is an incredible parallel to the circumstances that we face as members of the church of Christ. We can learn a great deal about ourselves

and about who God is if we will pour over its contents. In Numbers chapter 11, the people complained and thereby elicited the anger of the Lord who caused fire to burn among them, consuming some. When the people became sick and tired of manna, yielded to intense craving and whining, and insisted on a supplement to their diet, they were guilty of despising the Lord (11:20). God inundated them with fresh meat and then struck them with a great plague (11:33). The resulting graveyard was designated Kibroth Hattaavah—graves of craving. **Did God Judge righteously?**

When Miriam and Aaron disapproved of Moses' marriage and so challenged his authority (12:1-2), the anger of the Lord was aroused (12:9). He struck Miriam with leprosy and subjected her to public humiliation for seven days. **Did God Judge righteously?**

When the reconnaissance team returned from investigating Palestinian land conditions for over a month, 10 of them issued a "*bad report*"—though factually accurate (13:32). The nation bought their viewpoint, gave up on their divinely designated objective and made plans to return to Egypt (14:4). God threatened to destroy the whole bunch (14:12)—the second time He threatened to start over (cf. Exod. 32:10). They were guilty of "*murmuring*" (14:27; 1 Cor. 10:10; Phil. 2:14; 1 Peter 4:9) and "*gathering against God*" (14:35). Due to the pleading of Moses, He relented and allowed them to live, but subjected them to 40 years of aimless desert meandering until the entire adult population died off. The innocent children had to bear the brunt of the ensuing hardships due to

the disobedience of their parents and grandparents. Ten of the 12 spies died by plague (14:37). **Did God Judge righteously?**

In Numbers chapter 16, Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and 250 popular leaders of the congregation conspired together to enhance their standing and their authority. Notice that these men would not have been coincidentally in agreement. They had to have engaged in collusion. Their motivation? The same that always characterizes those who try to sway a congregation in the wrong direction: pride, selfish ambition, a desire for power, control, and prestige.

Moses reacted by demonstrating strong spiritual leadership abilities (16:4-14). He manifested humility (16:4); courage to confront (16:5,12); a willingness to draw a line (16:6-7,16-17; Exod. 32:26); and the ability to teach and reason with people (16:8-10). But Moses was human like all of God's leaders and he experienced a gamut of feelings and emotions: loneliness, insecurity, anger and a sense of hurt, rejection and resentment (16:15).

Those with whom he was having to contend were guilty of "*gathering against the Lord*" (16:11). Notice the logic of the rebellious: a cocky attitude (16:12); a misrepresentation of the past (16:13a); a misrepresentation of the future (16:13b); jealousy and being guilty of the very motive attributed to others (16:13c); and blaming the leaders for the failures of the people (16:14). Depending upon how charismatic and persuasive such men are, they sometimes are capable of swaying large numbers of people to their side. Korah

was sufficiently slick and conniving that he managed to convince the entire congregation (16:19).

For the third time in the book of Numbers, God threatened to destroy the congregation (16:21)! But Moses demonstrated yet another leadership quality: concern for the wayward (16:22). The fervent prayer of the righteous can sway God. So God instructed Moses to tell the congregation to get away from the tents of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. Here again we see, even in the midst of God's fury and His judgment, grace and mercy. The instruction "*get away*" was gospel, i.e., good news! God was offering the people survival and escape from their sin!

You remember the outcome. The ground began vibrating and fracturing. The ground split apart underneath the tents of the three ringleaders of the rebellion and swallowed them and theirs up, and the earth closed over them. The population began running and screaming in all directions. God then sent fire down out of the atmosphere and burned to death the 250 leaders. **Did God Judge righteously?**

Incredibly, the very next day, the entire congregation began griping and complaining against Moses and Aaron, blaming them for the deaths that occurred the previous day! It's so easy in the midst of congregational turmoil to place erroneous blame and to fail to see who is defending the right and who is wrong. But there are no excuses. God expects each of us to exercise sufficient spiritual sense and perception to sort out the truth and to side with the ones who are promoting what is right (John 7:24). On this occasion,

God issued His fourth threat to exterminate the entire congregation (16:45). That divine wrath resulted in the immediate spread of plague within the population. Before Moses could scramble and implement atonement procedures, 14,700 people died! **Did God Judge righteously?**

In chapter 20, the congregation again gathered together against Moses and Aaron. The reason? Their comfort level was being challenged (20:3-5). Observe that how we handle our daily stresses and irritations is a measure of our spiritual stamina. Physical discomfort tests self-control, patience/endurance and, ultimately, faith itself (1 Cor. 10:1-13; Heb. 3). On this occasion, Moses allowed the constant carping of the people to get to him. He allowed himself to be goaded into sin: anger, distrust and disobedience, perhaps even a tinge of self-glorifying pride (20:9-11)—which was out of character for him (12:3). He struck the rock though God had told him to speak to it. God reacted with the words, “*you did not believe me*” (20:12). He also said Moses failed to hallow Him (20:12; 27:14; cf. Lev. 10:3). Though Moses worked with God to bring the people out of Egypt and though he had now survived 38 years of desert wandering, enduring both the hardships of desert life as well as the incessant rebellion of his countrymen, both Moses and his brother were banned from entering into the Promised Land. **Did God Judge righteously?**

In chapter 21, the people became discouraged. They again verbalized their dissatisfaction by speaking against God and against Moses. They even referred to



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the manna with which God had graciously sustained their lives for nearly four decades as “*worthless bread*” (21:5)—in contrast to the psalmist who styled it “*angel’s food*” (Psm. 78:25). So, God sent among the people poisonous, venomous snakes whose burning bite was lethal. The text says, “*many of the people of Israel died*” (21:6). **Did God Judge righteously?**

In Numbers 25, the people finally arrived at their last stop before Canaan (Josh. 2:1). The people were suckered into participating in false religious practice which included illicit sexual activity. Once again, in an ever-occurring pattern, “*the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel*” (25:3). God instructed Moses to perform a public execution of the offending leaders by hanging them out in the sun (25:4; cf. 1 Cor. 5:4; 1 Tim. 5:20; 2 Thess. 3:14). This action was designed to avert God’s wrath (Heb. 10:26-31; 12:29). While this event was transpiring, one Israelite man brought a Midianite woman into his tent for sexual purposes. The grandnephew of Moses, Phinehas, followed the couple into the tent and with one thrust of a spear impaled the pair. Here was a man who, without any thought for his own safety or the unpleasantness of the task, demonstrated a courageous, spiritually alert, and vigilant spirit (cf. 1 Peter 5:8). Here was a man who did not care to hash out the situation with endless discussions and multiple meetings. He assessed the situation quickly and was willing to stand up and act! Here is the kind of leadership which the church so desperately needs today!

One must surely stand in wonder at God’s own

assessment of the action of Phinehas (25:11-13). God mentioned three things: First, Phinehas was responsible for turning back God's wrath from the entire nation. We ought to sit up and pay attention. When we take godly, courageous action against members of the church who are conducting themselves sinfully, we are dispelling the wrath of God! Second, Phinehas was zealous with God's zeal. Can you imagine that? Here is God declaring that this mere man, this frail, imperfect human being, was in possession of a quality, a trait, that God Himself possesses! God was saying, *"Phinehas is just like Me. Phinehas understands Me. Phinehas possesses the same righteous regard for truth and good that I possess. Phinehas is permeated by the same jealous, zealous, intense desire for right that I have."* Wow! If only you and I can muster the gumption to be like that!

Thirdly, God also declared that Phinehas was responsible for protecting the nation from God's consuming fury by making atonement for them. Listen carefully folks: when courageous, godly members of the local congregation have the guts, the stamina and the spiritual insight to rise up and fight against sinister forces that are operating within the congregation, **they are helping to save that congregation!** We ought to show them gratitude and respect. We sure ought not to vilify them, or believe false rumors and gossip about them. Despite the valiant, righteous action of Phinehas, still 24,000 people died by plague that day. The census of the nation that followed this incident showed that 1.2 million people had died in the desert

wandering! Think of it: 1.2 million people! **Did God Judge righteously?**

In Numbers 32, Moses delivered a tremendous speech of warning to the Transjordanic Tribes in view of the fact that their tribal land assignments would entail a geographical separation from the rest of the nation. Among other admonitions, he reminded them of those moments in the past when the people conducted themselves in such a way that the Lord's anger was aroused against them (32:10). He stated that, in fact, their behavior that was responsible for arousing the Lord's anger resulted in the elimination of an entire generation (32:13). He declared that further disobedience would only increase still more the fierce anger of the Lord against Israel (32:14). If necessary, God would eliminate yet another generation if they failed to follow Him (32:15). **Did God Judge righteously?**

The Pentateuch is literally filled with incidents and occurrences that impel us to contemplate the righteousness of God. Beyond the Pentateuch, be reminded of a few additional incidents. You remember Elijah's great confrontation with the priests and prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18). After demonstrating in stunning fashion the reality of the one true God, the people suddenly "*got off the fence*" and sided with the correct viewpoint. Where they were silent and noncommittal before, they loudly declared, "*The Lord, He is God!*" Do you remember what Elijah then required of the people? He told them to seize the prophets of Baal, to take them down to the Brook Kishon and to execute

them. They did—850 men were slaughtered. **Did God Judge righteously?**

God continued to bear with His people even though they constantly and continually flaunted His will. But do you remember that after enduring the 10 northern tribes for just over two centuries, He brought upon them the fearsome force and cruelty of the Assyrian Empire? They were devastated and deported into Assyrian captivity. Listen to the inspired comment of the author of Kings: *“Therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them from His sight; there was none left but the tribe of Judah alone”* (2 Kings 17:18). **Did God Judge righteously?**

Judah lasted nearly four centuries. But the vast majority of the population of this southern tribal unit likewise lived life contrary to the will of God. God finally had His fill and brought the might of the Babylonian Empire against them. Those who were not killed outright were deported into foreign slavery for 70 years. Listen again to the inspired comment of the writer of Kings: *“And the Lord rejected all the descendants of Israel, afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of plunderers, until He had cast them from His sight”* (2 Kings 17:20). Notice that: *“all the descendants of Israel”!* We’re talking about **God’s people**—the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob! God lowered the boom on them and subjected them to untold miseries! **Did God Judge righteously?**

Does God change His behavior in the New Testament? Ask the first church of Christ on the planet. The church of Christ in Jerusalem had a dilemma to

face in caring for the physical needs of their members. Local Christians had the opportunity to liquidate some of their assets in order to care for fellow Christians who were away from their homes. A husband and wife decided to participate in the project by selling a piece of property they owned. They decided not to give the entire sum that resulted from the sale, which was certainly their choice. But they decided to tell the apostles that they were contributing the entire sale price. Peter accused Ananias of allowing Satan to fill his heart to lie. Peter said, “*You have not lied to men but to God*” (Acts 5:4). Look at that! When you lie to your fellow Christians, you are lying to God! Ananias fell down dead on the spot. **Did God Judge righteously?**

About three hours later, the wife of Ananias came in—unaware of what had transpired with her husband. Peter asked her directly if she sold the land for the amount that her husband claimed. She confirmed her husband’s lie. Peter said very simply, “*Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out*” (Acts 5:9). She, too, dropped dead on the spot. **Did God Judge righteously?**

Folks, God has not changed. We live at a time in which attitudes in and out of the church are flippant regarding the wrath of God. The liberal element in the church has bought into the notion that Christians are in the “*grip of grace*” and God’s just going to pretty much accept everyone. “*He loves us too much to send us to hell.*” Even in conservative churches, people will connive, scheme and lie, apparently oblivious to the fact that God is observing everything they do and say.

**Will God Judge righteously?** Absolutely! God cannot overlook and brush aside these flagrant infractions of His will. **He cannot do it—and still be God!** The righteousness of God, the justice of God, cannot overlook unresolved sin. God can be counted on to be consistent in His view of and treatment of sin.

The book of Romans demonstrates how God has made it possible for us humans to be forgiven of our trespasses in order to avert the wrath of God. We must obey the Gospel plan of salvation and then live the Christian life faithfully. In order for the wrath of God to be satisfied so that you do not suffer the ultimate penalty of your sin (i.e., eternal death in hell), you must hear the Gospel, believe it, repent of your sins, confess Christ with your mouth, and be immersed in water with the understanding that you contact the blood of Christ in baptism. All individuals who fail to comply with this simple plan of salvation will be rejected at the Judgment and, I assure you, **God will judge righteously** in implementing that eternal rejection.

As Christians, we may get to thinking that we can willfully violate God's rules and that God will show us more leniency or overlook our actions because of who we are. Have you, yourself, not seen Christians—even preachers and elders—saying and doing things that are outright evil and wicked? Have you known Christians who have told bald face lies? How can this be? How can they fail to see themselves as every bit as guilty as the alien sinner out here who lies without compunction? Can they be acceptable to God in that condition—or

**will God Judge righteously?**

In order to continue to receive the benefits of the propitiation afforded by Jesus Christ, we must ever strive to remain pure in our heart and motives. We must continually reaffirm by our words and our actions that we will correct our mistakes and repent when we slip. When we find we have been drawn into sin, we must not puff up and entrench ourselves in pride and self-interest. Instead, we must humble ourselves and get our thinking straight. There is no alternative. The character and nature of God are unalterable. He is just. He expects us to so conduct ourselves—especially elders (Titus 1:8). He is impartial and fair. We can count on Him to treat us right.

OBSERVE: If God has judged righteously all people throughout thousands of years of human history, **we can count on Him to judge righteously in the final judgment.**

When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him (Matt. 25:31-32).

And we can be assured that He will judge righteously. Let us agree with Jeremiah who declared: “*O LORD of hosts, You who judge righteously, testing the mind and the heart*” (11:20). Let us thank Him, praise Him and magnify Him for being the Supreme Judge Who will always do right!

TO JUDGE RIGHTEOUSLY IN THE FINAL JUDGMENT

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