



*What Does
The Bible
Say About
That?*

This is part two.
Devotions 78-153





What Does The Bible Say About That?

1. Is there life after death?
2. Where do we go after we die?
3. Is there a real Heaven or a Hell?
4. Does absolute truth exist?
5. Is there only one way to get to Heaven?
6. Is the Muslim Quran the word of God?
7. Are ghosts real?
8. Is there extraterrestrial life in the universe?
9. Are angels or demons real?
10. Does the Bible explain dinosaurs?
11. Does the Bible predict the future?
12. Should women preach the Gospel?
13. Can you be a Christian and be Gay?
14. Is Jesus coming back to earth?

Try reading this book just a little bit.

We promise you that you'll screw up and learn something about the Bible.

There are no rules about how to read this book.

You can jump around all over this book if you want.

You do not have to start at the beginning .

Give it a shot. You'll see.

Before you know it, a little "faith" will begin to grow in you.

You may not even know why. It just will.

You can learn Bible stuff!



78 Merciful To Those Who Doubt

Romans 15:1

"..for we must bear the burden of being considerate of the doubts and fears of others.."

Jude 1:22

"..Be merciful to those who doubt."

Mark 9:23-24

*"Jesus said, 'Anything is possible if you have faith'.
The father instantly replied, 'I believe, help my unbelief'."*
(Jesus then healed this father's son.)

+++++

Merciful: To forgive them. To not give them what they may deserve.

So I am supposed to be merciful to someone who is doubting God?!!
Or merciful to someone who is doubting the Bible?!!

.....Yea, you are.

And since when did you become Noah in your amount of faith?

It's not how much you believe that makes the ultimate difference;
it's WHO you believe in that determines eternity.
JESUS CHRIST is the only way to Heaven.

There are those who would like to believe more, but they struggle
with doubt. And we are to be merciful to them.

In the story related in Mark 9, Jesus did not reprimand the father for
his doubt. What faith this man had was in the Lord, and the Lord was
merciful to him. Jesus healed the man's son.

In other New Testament examples, Jesus did ask why His disciples
had such little faith, especially in light of the miracles Jesus had done.
Jesus was in teaching mode, and did confront their lack of faith.
He was trying to encourage them to take another look at the evidence
that had been offered.

Jesus was still merciful to them, and ultimately He went to the cross
for them, but Jesus wanted them to open their eyes to WHO HE IS.
The evidence was right in front of them.

If it wasn't possible for us to have faith, Jesus wouldn't expect it.

Be Merciful

As Jesus is merciful to us, and carries us, we must be merciful to others who lack faith, and carry them to Jesus. Praying for them that their eyes will open, and their hearts will fill with faith.

Just like Jesus presented the evidence to encourage belief and strengthen faith; we must use the Word to allow it to penetrate the hearts and minds of those around us. (Heb 4:12)

By our lives we must show them evidence of a living witness.

Faith comes from hearing the Word of God. (Romans 10:17)
and is a gift from the Holy Spirit (I Cor 12:9).

We can ask for this gift of faith from the Holy Spirit. (I Cor 14:1).

Therefore we can lead others in this prayer.

We can help them ask for faith.

What better way to be merciful, then to pray with someone over their issue of doubt, and to share the Word of God with them, which can strengthen what faith they have.



79 Does Your Face Shine?

I Corinthians 3: 6-8, 12-13, 18

“The old way, trying to be saved by keeping the Ten Commandments, ends in death; in the new way, the Holy Spirit gives them life. Yet that old system of law that led to death began with such glory that people could not bear to look at Moses’ face. For as he gave them God’s law to obey, his face shone out with the very glory of God—though the brightness was already fading away.

Shall we not expect far greater glory in these days when the Holy Spirit is giving life? Since we know that this new glory will never go away, we can preach with great boldness, and not as Moses did, who put a veil over his face so that the Israelis could not see the glory fade away.

WE CHRISTIANS HAVE NO VEIL OVER OUR FACES; WE CAN BE MIRRORS THAT BRIGHTLY REFLECT THE GLORY OF THE LORD.”

+++++

Does your face shine?
How about your life?

“Shall we not expect far greater glory in these days when the Holy Spirit is giving life?”

The answer to this question is YES.
We should expect far greater glory, “new glory”, “great boldness”, and shine without fading more brightly than Moses did.

Is that what people see when they are around you?
The glory of the Lord shining out? Shining greater than Moses.

We’re talking about Moses now. The man. Everybody knows him. Knows what great things he did. Everybody for the last 3500 years. Are you getting this?
This is big time.

Shining without fading, greater than Moses.
Whew.

The point is that we are in the last days, and Jesus Himself said we would do greater miracles than He.

The Holy Spirit is being poured out on us.
I wish you could grasp what is being said here.
If you do grasp this idea, you will not live the same any longer.
I pray that my life will show this.
That God will allow me this opportunity to shine.

This subject follows the past devotional email number 54 entitled,
“Be a Beacon”. It was about your life being a light others could see.
The Light of the World giving each of us a light inside that shines out
to the world.

*“Shine out among them like beacon lights, holding out to them the
Word of Life.”* Philippians 2:16

No veil over your face.
*“You are the world’s light..glowing in the night for all to see.
Don’t hide your light. Let it shine for all, let your good deeds glow for
all to see, so that they will praise your Heavenly Father.”*
Matthew 5:15-16

Shine baby, shine!

80 Rock Music and Satan



Colossians 3:15-16

*“Let the PEACE OF HEART which comes from Christ be always
present in your hearts and lives, for THIS IS YOUR RESPONSIBIL-
ITY and privilege as members of His body. And always be thankful.
Remember what Christ taught and let His words ENRICH YOUR
LIVES and make you wise; teach them to each other and SING THEM
OUT IN PSALMS AND HYMNS AND SPIRITUAL SONGS, singing to
the Lord with thankful hearts.”*

+++++

Ok, so I wrote the title just to get your attention.
I wonder how many won’t read this now?
Hmmm....
That says something, doesn’t it? A bias. A choice.
If you’re still reading this, then you passed the first test.

Am I going to destroy my music CD of Boston?

Nah, probably not, but to tell you the truth I haven't listened to it in years. Instead I find myself listening to the Christian radio station and loving those songs now. Phillips, Craig, and Dean; Point of Grace; Steven Curtis Chapman; Michael W Smith.

The more I listen to those songs that sing of Jesus, Heaven, the cross, and so on, the more my heart is lifted and the more I am able to receive the *"peace of heart which COMES FROM CHRIST"*.

1) This verse seems to say that this peace which Jesus gives us is our RESPONSIBILITY to always have present in our lives.
So what are you doing to acquire it?

2) The verse about peace of heart seems tied to God's instruction on singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.
Do you "SING THEM OUT" like the verse says to do?

3) The verse also confirms Philippians 4:6-9. Both passages stress the importance of thanking God for everything. This produces peace.
Thankful hearts are peaceful hearts.

Why?

When we rely on Him, and thank Him, we get that peace that passes human understanding. When we bring our cares to Him, we learn He never fails to meet our needs.

We are firm in our belief that God is in charge, and we settle into a peaceful rest that others can't even understand.

Our eyes rise above the turmoil to see the Lord in control.

We are calm in Him, because it all makes sense, and our hearts can't help but sing.

An eternal view which changes our present earthly perspective.

We sing to the Lord with thankful hearts. We focus our thoughts.

"Fix your thoughts on what is true and right and of good report. Think about things that are pure and lovely, and dwell on the fine, good things in others. Think about all you can praise God for and be glad about. Put the things you've learned into practice, and the God of peace will be with you." Philippians 4:8-9

God does know what is best for us.

How about it?

What are you listening to?

What do you spend time filling your mind with?

What do you focus your thoughts on?

What tunes do you find yourself humming?
I encourage you to take a moment today to thank Jesus by singing
Him something..... He can hear you.
Try it, and see what happens.



81 Sacrifices of Praise

Hebrews 10: 18

“Now that sin has once and forever been forgiven and forgotten, there is no need to offer more sacrifices for sin.”

Hebrews 13:15

“With Jesus’ help we will continually offer our sacrifice of praise to God by telling others of the glory of His name.”

+++++

There is no longer a need to offer animals on an altar, for a sacrifice, for sin. The cross was the ultimate altar.
Jesus Christ the ultimate sacrifice once and forever.

Now we offer our sacrifices of praise,
by telling others how good God is.
He has freely given us salvation in Jesus Christ.
He has met every need.
Jesus helps us to offer this praise.
That's why you have a song in your heart.
That's why you have an internal push to praise.
The Holy Spirit is there with this worship urge, this itch to witness,
and this desire to tell everyone of the glory of His name.

So we offer sacrifices of praise.
But wait a minute.
The words sacrifice and praise don't seem to go together. Do they?

The Old Testament meaning of the word sacrifice meant something was going to die. It meant the "loss" of one of your animals.
The loss of something valuable. Right?
So what is a SACRIFICE of praise?

I want you to read the passage right before the verse about sacrifices of praise. Here it is:
"Under the system of Jewish laws the high priest brought the blood of the slain animals into the sanctuary as a sacrifice for sin, and then the bodies of the animals were burned outside the city. That is why Jesus suffered and died outside the city, where His blood washed our sins away. So let us go out to Him beyond the city walls that is, outside the interests of this world, being willing to be despised to suffer with Him there, bearing His shame. For this world is not our home; we are looking forward to our everlasting home in Heaven."
Hebrews 13: 11-14

And then verse 15 is about sacrifice of praise.
OK, what's it all mean?

It means praise can bring sacrifice.

It means to tell others about God's plan of salvation may cost you.
Some may not like it, when you speak of the glory of God.
You may lose social status.
You might lose some friends.
Hurt your "reputation".
Be shunned, or ridiculed.

Someone at work may try to make life tough for you if you thank Jesus openly. You may lose your job, even though you are meek, respectful, and follow the rules.
There may be a price to honor Jesus with your words and your life.
To praise Him may come with a price tag.

Now do you get it?

Will you give Him, your sacrifice of praise?

82 You Are A Priest

I Peter 2: 5, 9.

"... You are His holy priests, so come to Him- you who are acceptable to Him because of Jesus Christ- and offer to God those things that please Him.

... You have been chosen by God Himself- you are priests of the King, you are holy and pure, you are God's very own- all this so that you may show to others how God called you out of the darkness into His wonderful light."

+++++

You are a priest. Act like it.

"offer to God those things that please Him"

Your life. Your service. Your sacrifice of praise.

Be ready to quote a verse. Pray out loud.

Focus someone back on an eternal perspective of their present life.

Be that person who others seek in times of crisis.

Give hope. Point them to Jesus Christ.

You can do this.

I saw Pope John Paul II several years ago in Rome.

There were thousands of priests there that day in the Vatican square.

They were dressed in different colored robes from every country of the world. An interesting experience.

I couldn't help but think later how the Bible says we are all priests.

We look as beautiful and multi-colored in God's eyes.

Ever watch a priest, or someone in religious attire?

Watch to see how they act, and how others act around them?

It's fascinating to see the atmosphere created around this person.

Just walking into a room can change the talk of those there.
Some, who were completely into the physical realm a second ago,
are all of a sudden refocused on an opportunity to try and get an
answer to a question,from God.

Do people react that way to you? See you as a pipeline to God?
Someone with the answers to life and death,
and everything in between?

You can be if you start studying your Bible,
and know who you are in Jesus.

*"You have been chosen by God Himself- you are priests of the King,
you are holy and pure, you are God's very own"... "so that you may
show to others how God called you out of the darkness into His
wonderful light."*

May I point out that it doesn't say you have to be a seminary
graduate. It says show others (by your life and words) how God has
called you out of darkness, and into His wonderful light.

I think you can handle that. So, one more time...

You are a priest. Act like it.



83 Jews and Jesus Christ

Yes there are many Jews through out the world accepting Jesus as the promised Messiah. Praise the Lord! We are to love them and witness to them in word and deed. We are in the last days. The Holy Spirit is saving many from every faith, race, and creed. And God has wonderful plans concerning the Jews.

But my perception in my own little world, is that Jews are still a tough crowd to witness to about Jesus Christ. Maybe I shouldn't say that. Prophecy may be clear about their future with the return of King Jesus. But presently, many Jewish people don't believe Yeshua(Jesus) is Messiah. And they don't mind telling you to be quiet about Him.

The other night as I drove home, I asked God a question. Why are so many of His chosen people so hard? It's seems easier to witness to a Muslim, or an atheist. Why are there so many Jews still against Jesus Christ?

I know many of the Jewish faith, and a few who are close friends. I personally know only one who is a "completed" Jew because she believes in Yeshua. The rest seem so hard. They just won't believe.....Why God?Why?

I've learned that God will answer you, if you ask Him expecting an answer. So the next day as I was reading my devotion, I read the passage below. I give this passage for you to think about. Please read it slowly and prayerfully.

+++++

Romans 9:1,4, 25-26, 11:7-8, 9:18-20, 22-24, 32, 11:28, 33, 36.

"Oh, Israel, my people! Oh, my Jewish brothers! How I long for you to come to Christ. My heart is heavy within me and I grieve bitterly day and night because of you....God has given you so much, but still you will not listen to Him...

Remember what the prophecy of Hosea says? There God says that He will find other children for Himself ,who are not from His Jewish family, and will love them, though no one had ever loved them before. And the heathen, of whom it once was said, "You are not my people", shall be called "sons of the Living God".

So this is the situation: Most of the Jews have not found the favor of God they are looking for.

A few have, but the eyes of the others have been blinded.

This is what our Scriptures refer to when they say that God has put them to sleep, shutting their eyes and ears so that they do not understand what we are talking about when we tell them of Christ. And so it is to this very day.

So you see, God is kind to some just because He wants to be, and He makes some refuse to listen.

Well then, why does God blame them for not listening?

Haven't they done what He made them do? No, don't say that.

Who are you to criticize God?

Does not God have a perfect right to show His fury and power against those who are fit only for destruction, those He has been patient with for all this time? And He has a right to take others such as ourselves, who have been made for pouring the riches of His glory into, whether we are Jews or Gentiles, and to be kind to us so that everyone can see how very great His glory is.

The Jews have stumbled over the great stumbling stone. God warned them of this in the Scriptures when He said, "I have put a Rock in the path of the Jews, and many will stumble over Him (Jesus). Those who believe in Him will never be disappointed"

(a quote from Isaiah 28:16)

"Now many of the Jews are enemies of the Gospel. They hate it. But this has been a benefit to you, for it has resulted in God's giving His gifts to you Gentiles. Yet the Jews are still beloved of God because of His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Oh, what a wonderful God we have! How great are His wisdom and knowledge and riches! How impossible it is for us to understand His decisions and His methods! For everything comes from God alone. Everything lives by His power, and everything is for His glory. To Him be glory evermore."

.....
So whether you or I like what this passage says, it is God's Word. We can wrestle with the interpretation, or it's implication for today, but it is Biblical truth.

Why then did I have you read this?

Because as you try to witness to the Jews remember, as with any non-believer, it is God who opens eyes and hearts.

Your job is clear.

Present the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in love and patience.
I would suggest you use the Old Testament to show them the truth of
promised Messiah, who is Jesus. And what He was prophesied to do.

I pray a blessing on the Jewish people.
May God quickly fulfill every promise made to them. Shalom.

84 Sheep Awaiting Slaughter

Romans 8: 36 “..*The Scriptures tell us that for His sake we must be ready to face death at every moment of the day—we are like sheep awaiting slaughter.*” (from Psalms 44:22)

James 4:14
“How do you know what is going to happen tomorrow? For the length of your lives is like a vapor that appears and then vanishes away.”

I Peter 1:24-25
“Our natural lives will fade as grass does when it becomes all brown and dry. All our greatness is like a flower that droops and falls, but the Word of the Lord will last forever”

Psalms 102:3
“For my days disappear like smoke.”

Job 7:7
“My life is but a breath...”

+++++

You know I like it when the Bible says we are soldiers putting on armor, and fighting in power against vast evil forces..... Yea!

But then this.
Sheep.
And not just sheep.

Sheep awaiting slaughter.

Whew.

That’s kind of rough on the ole ego, don’t ya think?

*“for His sake we must be ready to face death,
at every moment of the day”*

The point is that we are not to hold on to our lives.
We are not to be too connected to this life.

How connected are you?

Willing to die today if Jesus calls you home?
Ready to leave “everything”?

Even the question shows what we really think.
“Everything” here, ...instead of in Heaven. See what I mean?

But look again at these verses.
*Vapor. Smoke. Brown fading grass. Life is a breath.
“All our greatness is like a flower that droops and falls..”*

It's impossible to hold on to life.Hold on to Jesus, who is life.

Today you may be an armored soldier against the Devil.
Tomorrow the slaughtered sheep in the service of Jesus,
and bound for Heaven. Hallelujah!



85 The Fear of God

Hebrews 10:31

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Luke 12:4-5

"Dear friends, don't be afraid of those who want to murder you. They can only kill the body; they have no power over your souls. But I'll tell you whom to fear—fear God who has the power to kill and then cast into Hell."

Revelation 2:18 *"This is a message from the Son of God whose eyes are like flames of fire"*

+++++

The Fear of God.

When we say it now we use the phrase as a punch line.
Being audited by the IRS will put "the fear of God" in you.

God's Word doesn't mess around when talking about the fear of God.
God's Word is clear *".. I'll tell you whom to fear—fear God.."*

God's Word is clear on the need of salvation.
The need that put Christ on the cross.
Sin must be paid for one way,or another.
It's clear that anyone not accepting the free payment Jesus offers today, will pay later with their life.
And it's not talking just about physical death.
God's Word talks about
"Anyone whose name wasn't written in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire." *"...doom in the Lake that burns with fire and sulphur. This is the Second Death"* (Revelation 20:15, 21:8)



It doesn't seem to matter if you like this idea or not.
Metaphor or not, it sounds like God is going to have the last word.

Is God loving, merciful, and patient?Yes He is.

And II Peter 3:9 says:

"He is not willing that any should perish and is giving more time for sinners to repent."

But time is running out.

I, for one, want to accept what Jesus did because I have grown to love Him, and because I don't want anything to do with the White Throne Judgment. I don't want to go through a Second Death.
One death seems scary enough for me.

Just the thought that Hell is real still sends me into a panic for my family and friends who haven't said yes to Christ's offer of mercy and grace. They live under a daily risk of dying in some accident, and finding out whether Hell is indeed real.

I believe it is. I believe Jesus told us plainly.

I have tried not to do this particular devotion for weeks.

I've set aside this idea several times. No one likes this stuff.

Everyone wants to argue that God would not make a literal Hell.

They say: "God is love and He won't torture people."

"It's too disturbing to think about." "I won't believe in the kind of God that would force me to worship Him."

But who are we to think this way?.... Who are we to judge Him?

Who are we to deny what the Bible says?

It's like knowing the speed limit, going 190 mph, then wanting to close our eyes, not notice the cop, and whine

"You're limiting my free will so I refuse to listen to you."

"It's not fair."

What? Not fair?

I'll tell you what wasn't fair. A loving Jesus, God in flesh, beaten by thugs, stripped naked, nailed to a wooden cross, and left there hanging in torture. Why did He allow that?

Because He loves you, and wants to give you eternal life with Him.

He wants to give you Heaven.

How dare you not notice His sacrifice.

If you choose to turn up your nose and say no,
then you will pay the bill yourself.

How could anyone refuse the ultimate gift that Jesus gave at the cross?

He died. He rose.
That's what the Bible says, and we say we believe it.
What makes us think that we can pick and choose what scripture we like, and ignore the rest of God's Word?

Understand the cross, and you will understand Hell.

I have several friends who are believers in the Lord Jesus, and yet they do not believe in Hell.
Maybe the truth is that many of you don't either.
Not really.
Because if you did, you would live an entirely different life.

*"This is a message from the Son of God
whose eyes are like flames of fire"*

Heaven

*Both Places
are very real*

Hell

86 Who's Your Daddy?

Matthew 1:1 *“These are the ancestors of Jesus Christ,
a descendent of King David and of Abraham.”*

Luke 3: 23-38
*“Jesus.....David.....Judah.....Jacob.....Isaac.....Abraham.....Shem.....
Noah.....Enoch.....Seth.....Adam.....God.”*

Isaiah 9:7 *“For unto us a Child is born; unto us a Son is given;
...and shall be called: Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God,
THE EVERLASTING FATHER, The Prince of Peace...
He will rule with perfect fairness and justice from the throne
of his father David.”*

I Corinthians 15:45
*“The Scriptures tell us that the first man, Adam, was given a natural
human body, but the Last Adam, Christ, is more than that, for He is
life-giving Spirit.”*

+++++

Matthew 1 gives the genealogy of Jesus legally through Joseph.
Luke 3 gives the genealogy of Jesus through Mary.

Matthew was Jewish, and a tax collector interested in legal issues.
He starts logically with the first Jew, Abraham, and continues legally
through King David, to fulfill Messianic prophecy, and ends with
Jesus.

Luke was a Gentile, who was doctor interested in human issues.
He connects the entire human race by starting with Jesus and goes
back through Mary’s lineage through King David, and Abraham, and
then continues all the way to Adam, and then God.

This is not by coincidence.

Matthew gives the legal line from Abraham through King David,
to Jesus the Messiah.
Luke gives the physical line with God making Adam, and shows the
generations all the way down to Jesus, the “Last Adam”.

The Bible gives us detail after detail, fact after fact. A book written
over a period of 1500 years, which ties everything together.
One story, with connected information, written by different authors,
over 1500 years.

We know exactly who Jesus is. His “physical” and legal lineage.
The fulfilled prophecies.
From the Old Testament “I Am” spoken from a burning bush,
to Jesus saying “I Am”.
Isaiah predicting a Child to be born who would be called
“The Everlasting Father”.

Our Heavenly Father, Jesus our Lord, One God.

“Jesus said to Philip ‘He who has seen me, has seen the Father’.

John 14:9

“I and my Father are one.” John 10:30

There has never been a doubt of who Jesus is.
We know His lineage back to Adam.
And who made Adam?
God.

He made Adam, and through Adam He physically came to us.

Think about it.

Who’s your daddy?

I guess you can
choose one of two
options.
Your ultimate Father
being God,
or an evolutionary
monkey.



Come on now, which takes more faith to believe?

The Biblical stated facts so gloriously woven together,
.....or man made fantasy. ..You decide.

I can't help but stand amazed at what a supernatural book the Bible is.
It's God's book. And it's right in our hands.
God gave us this wonderful gift, as yet another proof of Him.
From the stars at night, to the complexity of a human brain,
to the pages of the Bible, God is looking right at us.
How could any fool say He doesn't exist?
That truly is chosen insanity.

I choose to acknowledge my Heavenly Father and Savior Jesus Christ.

87 The Guy With The Keys

Revelation 1: 17-18

"When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead; but He laid His right hand on me and said, 'Don't be afraid. Though I am the First and Last, the Living One who died, who is now alive forevermore, who has the keys of Hell and death,--don't be afraid.'"

+++++

Imagine being in prison, and the guy with the keys says:

"Don't be afraid."

...You ask: "Why are you saying that? I'm locked up!"

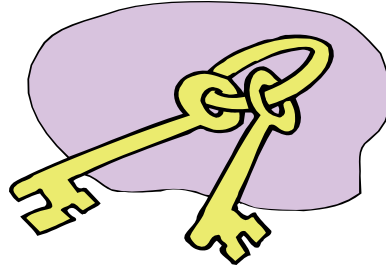
And he answers:

"Because I am here to unlock the door, and set you free."

That would be a good day, right?

Knowing the guy with the keys would be a good thing.

In fact if we didn't know him, we'd be trying to figure out who he is, wouldn't we? We'd try and get in tight with him, so he would open the door, and let us go.



Can you imagine the opposite situation?

You find yourself in a prison cell, and hear that you have been given a life sentence. Or worse yet, you've been sentenced to death. Ugh.

How about being told that you have been given a "forever sentence"?

A sentence that continues after you're physically dead.

You're kept there aware forever..

Whew.....That's more than my brain can handle.

The truth is that the Bible says such a sentence exists, because of sin.

Unfair as it may seem,.....
the day you were born you were given a death sentence.
Or, to be more precise, a “forever sentence”.

But there is hope.

The judge is ready to declare you not guilty,and set you free.
All you have to do...
... is accept the payment being offered on your behalf.
If you agree, then the guy with the keys will unlock the prison door.

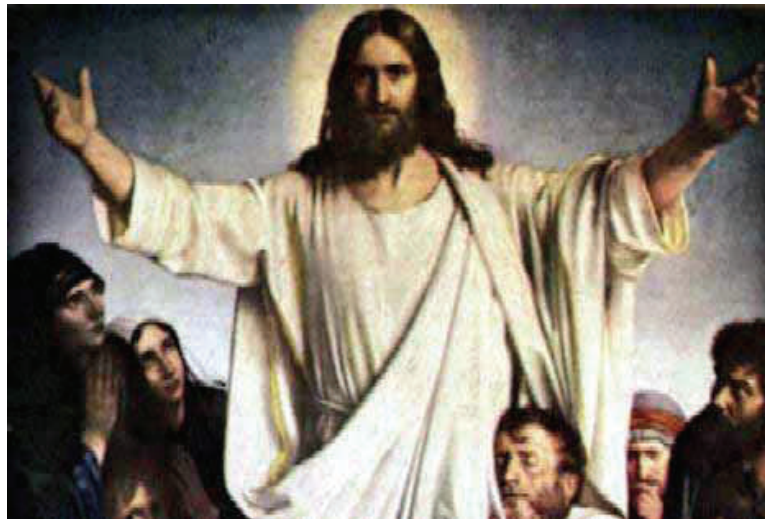
The chapter above tells us that the person with the keys is Jesus.
Aren't you glad you know the guy with the keys?

He is telling all who have made Him Lord,
that they do not have to be afraid. Though He has the keys to Hell and
death, AND THEREFORE SHOULD BE FEARED by those who
have rejected His “payment” at the cross; you have nothing to fear.

You've accepted His gift,
and He has promised you will live forever free.

When you are facing a death sentence
there's nothing like knowing
“the Living One.. who is now alive forevermore”.

I serve Him.
How about you?



88 Just a Fool?

Psalms 14:1

“A man is a fool who says to himself, ‘There is no God’. Anyone who talks like that is warped and evil and cannot be a good person at all.”

Psalm 53:1

“Only a fool would say there is no God. Any why does he say that? Because of his wicked heart, his dark and evil deeds. His life is corroded with sin.”

+++++

Whew! Tough language, don’t you think?

I’ve always heard the statement, “A fool says there is no God”, and thought the verse was stressing how brainless it is to say that.

There’s so much proof that God exists, that only someone dumber than a box of rocks would make the statement. But according to God’s Word there is more to this than stupidity.

Look at it again. *“warped”, “evil”, “cannot be a good person”, “wicked heart”, “dark and evil deeds” and “corroded with SIN”*. You can look it up in other translations, but you’ll get the same kind of stuff. God has another view of the person who says “There is no God”.

Sin is at the core of the issue. It always is. That’s why God’s plan for this universe centers around a cross.

It all boils down to sinners who have accepted Christ. And sinners who have not.

Which are you?

If you’ve said yes to Jesus Christ, and call yourself a Christian, then don’t live like there is no God.

It’s a foolish thing to do. It’s a sinful thing to do.

“You have let me experience the joys of life and the exquisite pleasures of your own eternal presence.” Psalms 16: 11

There is a God. Serve Him. Obey Him. Enjoy His presence.

89 Spoiled Rotten

Colossians 2:8

“Don’t let others spoil your faith and joy with their philosophies, their wrong and shallow answers built on men’s thoughts and ideas, instead of on what Christ has said.”

Romans 12:1

“Don’t copy the behavior or conform to the ideas of this world..”

+++++

I watched a genius on TV discussing his ideas on space travel to other planetary civilizations.

He got into the purpose of man, and how the universe works.

It was clear, he had no clue.

He seemed like a nice guy.

But no clue.

Just another blinded visionary.

The scripture says someone can spoil your faith and joy.

How?

“..with their philosophies, their wrong and shallow answers built on men’s thoughts and ideas, instead of on what Christ has said.”

When you start to accept the world’s answers on things, instead of what the Bible says, you’re heading for trouble.

One of the things that happens is your faith is undermined.

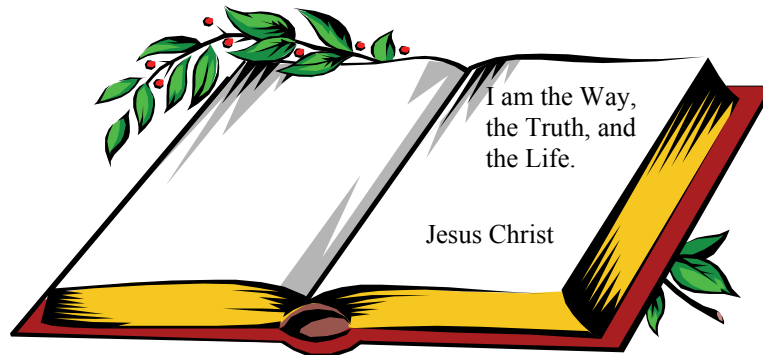
When that happens, your joy disappears.

Stand on what the Word of God has told you.

The promises the Lord God has given.

Don’t listen to their wrong answers.

Stay focused *“..on what Christ has said.”*



If that sounds narrow or closed minded,
remember what the preacher once said:
“When walking the narrow way,
a mind too broad, will have both sides in the gutter.”

It doesn't take much to spoil a gallon of milk.
A little bacterium can permeate the whole thing very quickly.
Don't let them do you the same way.
Don't let them spoil you rotten.

Obey the Word.
And your faith will stay strong. Your joy will be great.

90 Inherit then Retire, Yea!

Psalms 16:5-6

*“The Lord Himself is my inheritance, my prize. He is my food and
drink, my highest joy. He guards all that is mine. He sees that I am
given pleasant brooks and meadows as my share.
What a wonderful inheritance.”*

Acts 26: 15, 17-18

*“I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting....I am going to send you to
the Gentiles to open their eyes to their true condition so that they may
repent and live in the light of God instead of in Satan's darkness, so
that they may receive forgiveness for their sins and God's inheritance
along with all people everywhere whose sins are cleansed away, who
are set apart by faith in me.”*

Ephesians 1:18

*“I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light, so that you can see
something of the future He has called you to share.”*

+++++

I want to inherit 50 million dollars, and then retire to a beautiful place
on an island. How about you?

That would really be cool, wouldn't it?
Lots of money. No work. No worries. Feet up.
Sounds like a plan, huh?

May I point out that this planet is NOT your home?
Our retirement plan IS JESUS.
Our retirement place is Heaven.

Until then, we have been commanded to stay and work the “harvest fields”. Some may be lucky enough to do this work while on “earthly retirement”. But our true “planetary work” continues after we retire from our jobs. The work we do for Him continues until we go to our promised retirement mansion.

Get it?

The psalmist wrote,
“The Lord Himself is my inheritance, my prize.” , my highest joy.”

Are you as happy about Him as you were a moment ago thinking about the 50 million?

Heaven is going to be a wonderful place.

But only because Jesus will be there.

“The Lord Himself is my inheritance...
.....What a wonderful inheritance.”

91 Do YOU Have Followers?

I Thessalonians 1: 4-7, 9

*“We know that God has chosen you, much beloved of God.
For when we brought you the Gospel, you listened with great interest.
What we told you produced a powerful effect upon you, for the Holy Spirit gave you great and full assurance that what we said was true.*

And you know how our very lives were further proof to you of the truth of our message. So you became our followers and the Lord’s; for you received our message with joy from the Holy Spirit in spite of the trials and sorrows it brought you.

Then you yourselves became an example to all the other Christians in Greece...you turned away from your idols to God so that now the living and true God only is your Master”

+++++

One more time.

*“So you became our followers and the Lord’s...
Then you yourselves became an example to all the other Christians.”*

Question: Do you have followers? Answer: Yes.

We've heard of becoming fishers-of-men.
Are you a leader of men and women as well?
A spiritual leader that others follow to Jesus,
because of your faithful actions?
There are those around you who will follow you,
no matter how you lead.So lead well.

Whether read or listened to, the written Word of God, the Bible,
is powerful proof of God's existence.

Your life is also proof of God's present changing power.
Others can follow you, as you lead them to faith in Christ.

Don't try to avoid this amazing responsibility.
Look at the passage again.
Who does it say quiets our doubts?
Who answers the lingering questions?
Who gives us assurance by giving us internal proof?

Answer: the Holy Spirit.
*"the Holy Spirit gave you great and full assurance that what we said
was true."* And then it says:
"our very lives were further proof to you of the truth of our message"

Are you getting this?
You can be the proof someone is looking for that will turn them to
God and eternal life. Proof of God's existence can be seen in the stars.
The Bible. The Holy Spirit gives it. And your life can be proof.

You are proof of God's existence!
This is your highest calling. Your greatest purpose God here on earth.

I encourage you to accept Jesus, and become a follower of Christ.
I also encourage you to become a leader for others to follow.

You can't do that when your life's focus is on money, houses, and
things of this world. *"you turned away from your idols to God so
that now the living and true God only is your Master"*

People who come to know you will know whether this is true or not.

Please, see the importance of being a spiritual leader for God.
Be a faithful leader of your followers.

92 Speaking For God

I Thessalonians 2:13

“We will never stop thanking God for this: that when we preached to you, you didn’t think of the words we spoke as being just our own, but you accepted what we said as the very Word of God—which, of course, it was—and it changed your lives when you believed it.”

+++++

Speak for God?.....Who me?

Yea, you. It is your responsibility.

And if you know who you are in Christ this should not be a problem.

(Devotion #19 “Know Who You Are)

You are an heir of God, and His representative on this planet.

You are His arms, when you hug a child.

You are His hands, when you give a glass of water.

You are His feet,

when you walk over to the neighbor’s house to witness.

You speak His words, when you tell someone you care about them.

Last week we gave devotion #91 “Do YOU Have Followers?” about being the proof someone may need to find the Lord.

Your life, and the words you speak,
can lead someone to God and eternal life.

You are a leader, and you do have followers.

If you can grab a hold of what GOD IS TRYING TO SAY in these devotions you will greatly increase your effectiveness as a soldier, servant, and priest, of the Most High God.

I try to center every devotion I write on the written Word of God.

Not just my words and my thoughts,
but a message centered on scripture.

Sharing Biblical truth is an honor, and a trust.

I’m actually trying to speak for God.

And I take this idea very seriously.

Do you?

Do you think and pray before you speak a spiritual word of encouragement, instruction, or warning?

I understand that when I am writing and speaking, that I speak for God, whether I am quoting a scripture verse, or not.
You need to grasp this idea as well.

“you didn’t think of the words we spoke as being just our own, but you accepted what we said as the very Word of God—which, of course, it was..”

God used Paul to write the passage above to tell us something important. There is a pattern in today’s passage that is repeated through out scripture.

It is:

- 1)God’s Word is presented,
- 2) People Hear and
- 3)Believe,
- 4)Lives are changed.

YOU CAN’T HEAR WHAT ISN’T READ, OR SPOKEN.

That sounds profound doesn’t it? But think about it.
God wants people to HEAR Him.
That concept involves YOUR VOICE, as well as God’s written Word.

God still uses us today to speak His words, in addition to quoting His written Word. Don’t miss this idea.

God is alive, and still speaks in many ways.
Don’t try to put Him in a Bible box.

The Holy Spirit can speak directly to us,
and urge us to speak to another.
God would never contradict His written Word,
so neither would we under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

But we do speak His words,
just as if we were His personal ambassador here on earth.

The words you say today,
.....can help determine someone’s eternal future.

The words you speak,
can be used by God,
as HE ECHO’S HIS VOICE within their ears, and their hearts.

God's number one way to talk to us is His written Word,
so read it yourself, and read it aloud to others.
According to the book of Hebrews, His written Word is a living
power, so learn to use it, and rely on it.

But in addition, don't be afraid to speak to someone as God moves
you to speak. Your words, as directed by the Holy Spirit, carry weight
as GOD USES THEM. You maybe that voice that God will use to
speak His words. (Devotion #16 "Hear God's Voice")

Be ready, and in tune with the Holy Spirit, so you can speak up!
Speak for God!

93 Full Understanding. Same Holy Spirit.
Complete Obedience?

I Peter 1: 10-12

*"This salvation was something the prophets did not fully understand.
Though they wrote about it, they had many questions as to what it all
could mean. They wondered what the Spirit of Christ within them was
talking about, for He told them to write down the events which, since
then, have happened to Christ: His suffering, and His great glory
afterwards.*

*And they wondered when and to whom all this would happen. They
were finally told these things would not occur during their lifetime,
but many years later, during yours. And now at last this Good News
has been plainly announced to all of us. It was preached to us in the
power of the same heaven sent Holy Spirit who spoke to them.."*

+++++

*"This salvation was something the prophets did not fully understand."
"Though they wrote about it, they had many questions"*

Old Testament prophets only had part of the story,
with partial understanding, yet they completely obeyed God.

They wrote what He said to write.
They spoke His words, and His warnings to the people.
They believed God, and His promise to send the Messiah.

How about today, in our time?

In this day and age we have the complete story with complete understanding, yet we seem to have only partial obedience.

We know the Messiah. We know the full plan of salvation which *“has been plainly announced to all of us”*. *“preached to us in the power of the same heaven sent Holy Spirit who spoke to them..”*

Yet so many do not believe.

Many who say they do believe, are weak and doubtful.

So what’s the problem, huh?

Why do so many believers have so little impact? So little power?

So little “active” faith?

Many say they believe, but their lives don’t show it.

In a group discussion of philosophies of life, religion, or death, it’s hard to tell these believers from the non-believers.

Isn’t that sad?

We have the answers to life’s greatest questions,

....but we hesitate to speak.

We don’t know the Bible so we clam up.

Our faith is feeble.

We become lukewarm.

No wonder Jesus says to the latter day church written in Revelation:

“I know you well—you are neither hot nor cold;

I wish you were one or the other!

But since you are merely lukewarm, I will spit out of my mouth.”

Rev 3:15-16

Translation: Jesus Christ will have no use for us.

My prayer for you is that you will study and learn the Word of God.

That you will allow the Holy Spirit to use you in great power.

All it takes is a willing heart, your voice, and faith with feet.

Now that you understand the full story,

will you be completely obedient?

Faith with Feet

94 Laughed At And Insulted

I Peter 4:4,14,16

“Your former friends will be very surprised when you don’t eagerly join them any more in the wicked things they do, and they will laugh at you in contempt and scorn.

Be happy if you are cursed and insulted for being a Christian, for when that happens the Spirit of God will come upon you will great glory...It is no shame to suffer for being a Christian.

Praise God for the privilege of being in Christ’s family and being called by His wonderful name.”

+++++

So here it is:

Dear Mr. or Ms. Goody-two-shoes.

You will be laughed at.

You will be insulted.

Praise God for the privilege of being in Christ’s family.

Sincerely;

Peter.

What a letter.

“Be happy if you are cursed and insulted for being a Christian. It is no shame to suffer.”

This was written by a man who upon his execution did not think he was worthy to be crucified in the same manner as the Lord, so they reportedly crucified him upside down.

There are many things which confirm and prove the reality of Jesus for me. One of those things is the testimony of the early disciples.

With their own eyes they saw Jesus after His resurrection. None of them changed their story about this even when it came time to lay down their lives in a martyr’s death. Only John lived out his life, and was used by God to write the final book of the Bible, giving us the future prophecy in Revelation.

Think about this. None of them ever said they just made it all up. Nothing could make them change their mind,even at the point of death.

We get shaky faith, when someone laughs at us.

Jesus said: “
*Happy are those who are persecuted because they are good,
for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.
When you are reviled and persecuted and lied about because you are
my followers—how wonderful! Be happy about it. Be very glad.
For a tremendous reward awaits you up in heaven.*” (Matt. 5:10-12)

I hope you are living a life that someone insults you today for being a Christian. May you be KNOWN for living as a Christian.

May you keep your focus on the cross, and on Heaven.
May your faith be fixed on Jesus Christ who is alive, and with you every moment. Oh how He loves you.



95 All Is Well

Psalms 17:15

“As for me, my contentment is not in wealth, but in seeing you and knowing all is well between us. And when I awake in heaven, I will be fully satisfied, for I will see you face to face.”

John 6:40 Jesus replied:

“For this is my Father’s will that everyone who sees His Son and believes on Him will have eternal life—that I should raise him at the Last Day.”

Revelation 22:3-5

“There shall be nothing in the city which is evil; for the throne of God and of the Lamb will be there, and His servants will worship Him. And they shall see His face; and His name shall be written on their foreheads. And there will be no night there—no need for lamps or sun—for the Lord God will be their light; and they shall reign forever and ever.”

+++++

I hope you have a smile on your face after reading these verses.

“My contentment is in seeing you Jesus.
Seeing you move in my heart and life now.
And knowing I will see you face to face someday.”

“Feeling your Holy Spirit inside,
giving peace which can’t be explained.
Knowing all is well between us.
Knowing all is well between us is the definition of all is well.”

Everyone who sees the Lord Jesus, and believes on Him, will be in that city, where we will see Him face to face. What a day that will be.

“His servants will worship Him. And they shall see His face”.

Nothing else compares.
To see the Lord Jesus, and look into His eyes.
To see the smile on His face.

I can’t wait.
Are you with me?

You’re smiling again.

96 A Rainbow Is A Sign Of God's Promise

Genesis 9: 8-17

“Then God told Noah and his sons, ‘I solemnly promise you and your children and the animals you brought with you—all the birds and cattle and wild animals—that I will never again send another flood to destroy the earth. And I seal this promise with this sign: I have placed my rainbow in the clouds as a sign of my promise until the end of time, to you and to all the earth.

When I send clouds over the earth, the rainbow will be seen in the clouds, and I will remember my promise to you and to every being, that never again will the floods come and destroy all life. For I will see the rainbow in the cloud and remember my eternal promise to every living being on the earth.”

II Peter 3: 3-7

“I want to remind you that in the last days there will come scoffers who will do every wrong they can think of, and laugh at the truth. This will be their line of argument: ‘So Jesus promised to come back, did he? Then where is he? He’ll never come! Why, as far back as anyone can remember everything has remained exactly as it was since the first day of creation.’

They deliberately forget this fact: that God did destroy the world with a mighty flood, long after He had made the heavens by the word of His command, and had used the waters to form the earth and surround it. God has commanded that the earth and the heavens be stored away for a great bonfire at the judgment day, when all ungodly men will perish.”

+++++

When is the last time you saw a rainbow?



I saw one the other day, which is why I am writing this devotion.
There it was. Big and beautiful.
Stretching thousands of feet into the air.
A fantastic sight. I had to stop and look.



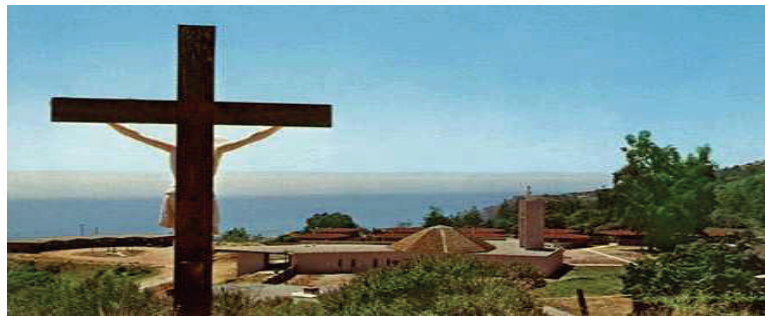
It caused me to say a word of thanks to my Heavenly Father for all
His faithfulness. It caused me to praise Him for His omnipotent
power. I think that's the reason I like thunderstorms.
They show a glimpse of God's power.

And when the dark clouds and lightening bolts have passed,
.....the rainbow shines out.

Out of the dangerous darkness,
....a visible multi-colored sign of promise.
The only way you can miss it, is to choose to close your eyes.

The salvation offered from a visible cross is the same.
You can't miss it.
I think that's why God chose the symbol of the cross.
There's nothing else like it. Everyone recognizes it immediately.

I pray you will look....
and choose the promise offered by Jesus on the cross.



God also gave us the symbol of the rainbow.

A rainbow is more than sunlight being refracted through rain drops.
A rainbow is a symbol of a promise.

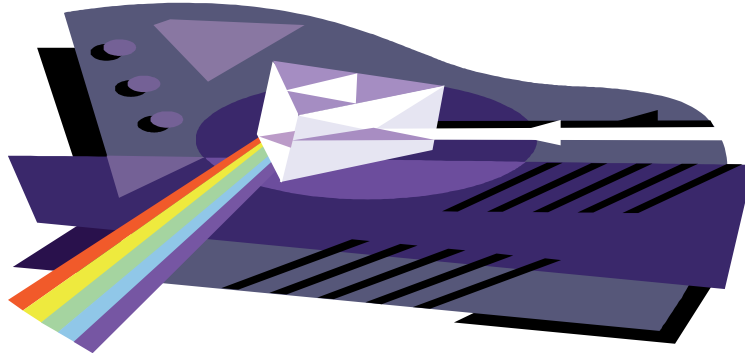
The promise that God will not flood the whole earth again.
When you see a rainbow, it should remind you of this promise.
That's what a symbol does. It reminds you of something, or someone.

A rainbow should visually remind you of God.
The rainbow can also serve as a reminder that God has judgment by fire planned ahead.
"God has commanded that the earth and the heavens be stored away for a great bonfire at the judgment day"

When you see this great visible sign in the sky, you can remember what God has said about the past, and the future of this earth.
Water in the past, fire in the future.
Remember, the God of judgment is still in charge.
Also, the God of salvation still loves you.

Like the symbol of the cross, the rainbow can help you remember the prophecy of judgment, and God's promise of eternal life to you.

Many do not believe that there was a worldwide flood.
They do not believe that the rainbow is a sign of God's promise.
They think that it's nothing more than white light broken into colors through the prism of water.



They see no visible promise.
They also don't believe what God has said about future judgment.
They do not believe what the Bible says.
They don't believe God.



>
>
>
>
>
>
>
>

Here's a big hint.

The widow's son in the village of Nain,
the 12 yo daughter of Jairus,
and a man named Lazarus.

Luke 7: 11-17

Mark 5: 35-43

John 11: 1-45

Right now,
go and look up these passages in the best book on the planet.

Spend a few moments with God's Word. You'll be glad you did.

98 Close Enough To Touch

Mark 6: 53-56

“When they arrived at Gennesaret on the other side of the lake they moored the boat and climbed out. The people standing around there recognized Him at once, and ran throughout the whole area to spread the news of His arrival, and began carrying sick folks to Him on mats and stretchers.

Wherever He went—in villages and cities, and out on the farms—they laid the sick in the market plazas and streets, and begged Him to let them at least touch the fringes of His clothes; and as many as touched Him were healed.”



Can you remember the last time God entered your life,
and something big happened?
You recognized that the event was a “God thing”,
and your eyes opened in awe?

God has a way of doing that to us. The event is unmistakable.

I covet those experiences, don't you?
I remember back on the really Big events,
and excitement still fills my heart.
I pray for future times like that,
when God moves the earth under my feet.

But I want to talk to you for a minute about recognizing His daily
presence. And about your daily effort to stay in touch with Him.

“as many as touched Him were healed.”

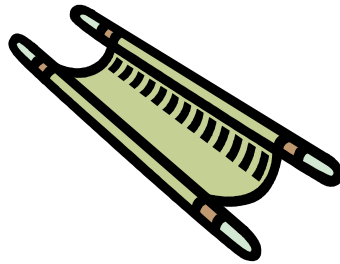
It's an interesting statement, isn't it? *“touched Him”*.
We normally think of Jesus reaching out with His hand to heal.
But have we considered the fact that we can reach out and touch Him?

Have we prayed with this image in mind?

The same results happen when we get in touch with Him today.
We are healed.

Yes there are days where I'm running
“throughout the whole area to spread the news of His arrival”,
and I am trying to carry others to Him.

But on many days, I'm on my own
spiritual stretcher at street level,
reaching for Him.



I've forgotten who I am in the Lord,
and how I can be strong in His Spirit.
Once again I've sinned and crippled
myself.

I lay on my mat weak and feeble.
I don't know about you, but I need to be healed daily.
I desire His presence, and His touch.
I'm thankful He is always closer than arm's length.
He's in my heart, and can hear a whisper.

So I reach out, and He's right there, and instantly I'm cleansed.
Bounding off the canvas,
I'm filled with power, strength, hope, and a song!!!
Do you feel the excitement?
Won't you join me?

Put some effort today into pulling closer to Him.
Reach out, and you will find that you are able to touch the Lord Jesus.

And He will heal you.

99 The Face Of God

John 1:18

"No one has ever actually seen God, but, of course, His only Son has, for He is the only begotten Son, who is the companion of the Father and has told us all about Him."

Exodus 33: 20

*"You may not see the glory of my face,
for man may not see me and live"*

John 14:9

Jesus said, *"Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father"*

John 10:30

Jesus said, *"I and the Father are one."*

+++++

.....
1)Question: (from Genesis 3:8)

Who came WALKING into the Garden of Eden,
looking for Adam and Eve, after the "serpent" had lied to them?

Answer: The Lord God. Adam and Eve SAW God.

.....
2)Question: (from Genesis 12:7)

Who APPEARED to Abram,
and promised him land and descendants?

Answer: The Lord God. Abram SAW God.

3)Question: (from Exodus 33:11)

Who spoke to Moses FACE TO FACE AS A MAN speaks to his friend?

Answer: The Lord God. Moses SAW God.

.....

So who did these people SEE?

The Bible says no one has seen Jehovah.
The Bible says that man may not see Jehovah and live.

On the other hand,
Jesus said when you see Jesus, you have seen Jehovah.

How about this question:
Did Jesus exist before His physical birth in Bethlehem?

I hope you all answered yes.
John chapter one answers yes.
Most translations of John chapter one say it this way:
The Word was with God, the Word was God,
and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

I like how the Living Way translation says it.
*“Before anything else existed there was Christ with God.
He has always been alive, and is Himself God.
He created everything there is—nothing exists that He didn’t make.
And Christ became a human being and lived here on earth among us.*
(John 1: 1-3, 14)

“Christ was alive before the world began.” (1 John 1:1)

*“Jesus said to them,
‘Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was born I AM.’*(Jn 8:58)

In a past CFA devotion (#17) “I AM Yahweh”,
we spoke on this issue.

Jesus used the same name that God used in speaking to Moses.
In other words,
Jesus said He was the same I AM who spoke from the burning bush.

He existed before Bethlehem.

In the Old Testament,
God sometimes showed Himself by taking on 'human form'.
He did this even though the Bible says "*God is Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth*" John 4:24

The Old Testament called this person, 'THE Angel of God'.
(Judges 13)

Not just an angel of God.

He was also called "a Man" in Joshua 5 and Genesis 32,
and was involved in events concerning Joshua and Jacob.
Joshua and Jacob knew who He was.

So who was it?.....Think about it.
People did see a human face.
Whose face?
I believe it was the face of Jesus, who else would it be?

In the New Testament, God took on human flesh to become a human being. We called Him Jesus. Son of Man. Son of God. As prophesied.

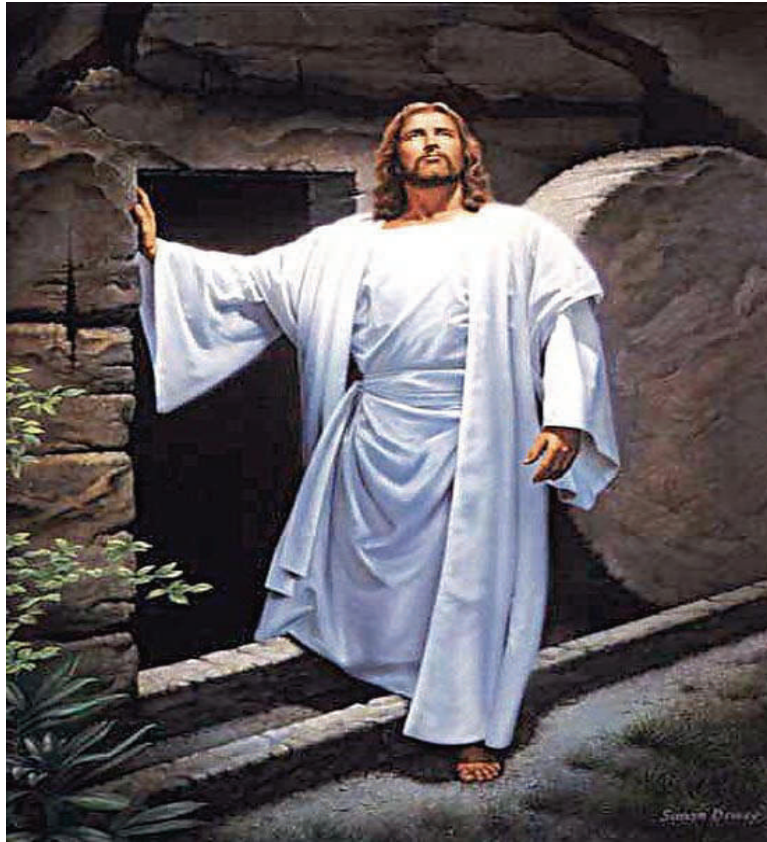
When you get to Heaven, and see God face to face (Rev 22:4),
you will see the face of Jesus, because He is God.

Old Testament, New Testament, Heaven.
From the Garden of Eden, to the cross, to the Throne of Heaven.
Same face.
The face of God, is the face of Jesus.









100 What a Week

Read Matthew 21, 27, 28

No other book in history has exact prophecy like the Bible. ...None.
The Chapters above show the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.
I want you to think about the events of the most important week,
...in history.

On Sunday, the crowds cheer as Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a
donkey,as prophesied.
Five days later, the crowds jeer to crucify Jesus.
Could you have been in that crowd?
Up one moment. Down the next.
From cheers to jeers in a five day turn around.

So they kill the “Lamb of God” on Passover.
The same day in history when God’s judgment “passed over” any
Israelite in Egypt who obeyed God’s instruction to place the blood of
the lamb on their door posts (in the motion of making a cross...)
..... Think about it.

During the crucifixion, there are 3 hours of darkness, in the middle of
the day. From noon to 3 p.m., it becomes like night time.

Upon His death, there is an earthquake, and many graves are opened.

After His death,
soldiers guard the tomb,
so He won’t fulfill resurrection prophecy.

The soldiers witness another earthquake,
and see an angel roll the stone aside.
The tomb is already empty.
They all see this.

Others also come and see the evidence of the empty tomb.
That morning Jesus is seen.
It is a miraculous day.

Many rise from the dead, leave the cemetery,
and enter the city to be seen by many.

(Let’s do that one again)
Many rise from the dead, leave the cemetery,
and enter the city to be seen by many.

The soldiers go and tell the Jewish leaders everything that happened.
The soldiers know.
The Jewish leaders know.
The disciples know.
We know.

Even after the soldiers report what happened,
the Jewish leaders pay them to lie.

It was also Jewish leaders who witnessed the raising of Lazarus from
the dead, and then discussed their plans on killing Jesus and Lazarus.
(John 12:10)

They know what happened, but they chose not to believe.

What a week.
Earthquakes, darkness, detailed prophecies fulfilled,
dead people coming back to life and walking around in the city,
and oh, that includes Jesus the Messiah.

Come on now!
HOW COULD ANYONE HAVE SEEN WHAT HAPPENED,
AND THEN MISS WHO JESUS CHRIST IS?

How much more evidence do you need?

Make the Choice. Believe on the Savior.

101 His Mercy Is Great

Psalms 103: 8-9, 11-16

*“He is merciful and tender toward those who don’t deserve it;
He is SLOW TO GET ANGRY and full of kindness and love.
He never bears a grudge, nor remains angry forever...
His mercy toward those who fear and honor Him is as great as the
height of the heavens above the earth.*

*He has removed our sins as far away from us as the east is from the
west. He is like a father to us, tender and sympathetic to those who
reverence Him. For He knows we are but dust, like grass, like flowers,
blown by the wind and gone forever.”*

+++++

Remember the last time you flew in an airplane?
When you looked out the window and there was so much sky?
It should remind you of how great God’s mercy is.
You can look down a long ways, and look up a long ways.
*“His mercy toward those who fear and honor Him is as great as the
height of the heavens above the earth.”*

For all the reasons that we deserve to be hammered on a daily and
eternal basis, He is merciful instead..... That’s a lot of mercy.
In other words, God loves you a whole bunch.

He knows you, and loves you anyway.
“He is merciful and tender toward those who don’t deserve it”

He knows you are weak,
that is why He is strong, and wants you to rely on Him.

"He knows we are but dust,,, blown by the wind and gone forever."
That's why He is life eternal.
We can do all things in Him, ...and live forever.

God is *"full of kindness and love"* towards you.
One translation says *"abounding in love"*.
What a great message. What a great feeling.

I don't know about you, but I need His mercy.
It has come to my attention that I'm a sinner.
Oh yea, and it's just me huh?

Even as believers, we sin.
I John 1:9 was written to believers, to tell us that God will forgive us
when we sin. As BELIEVERS, we need mercy. We need forgiveness.

"His mercy TOWARD THOSE WHO FEAR AND HONOR HIM.."
"He is like a father to us,
tender and sympathetic TO THOSE WHO REVERENCE HIM."

In other words, His great mercy is specific to those who believe.
Those who fear, honor, and reverence (worship) Him.

"He has removed our sins as far away from us,
as the east is from the west."

I seem to be able to cross that distance pretty quickly, don't you?
I try to go get things that my *"tender and sympathetic"* Father has
removed. I also struggle with replacing those sins with fresh new ones
that are right at home. Man O man, I need His mercy. Don't you?

I give this devotion to you praying that you will fear, honor,
and worship our God of great mercy.



102 Carried Into Heaven

Hebrews 12:1

“Since we have such a huge crowd of saints watching us from the grandstand in the clouds, let us strip off anything that slows us down or holds us back, and especially those sins that wrap themselves so tightly around our feet and trip us up; and let us run with patience the particular race that God has set before us.”

II Timothy 2:13

“Even when we are too weak to have any faith left, He remains faithful to us and will help us, for He cannot disown us who are part of Himself, and He will always carry out His promises to us.”

+++++

Imagine sitting in a grandstand,
and watching a race.



The fastest runners cross the finish line,
and you cheer.

Farther back you see a runner fall.....And stay down.

Then another person steps out,
and picks up the runner in his arms.

He starts running while carrying the
fallen contender.

Soon he crosses the finish line with
his friend in his arms.



The crowd goes wild.
People are shouting.
Clapping their hands.
Tears flow down their faces.

Can you feel this?

This is what Heaven is going to feel like.

Those who have received their crowns in reward for a great race,
will cast their crowns at His feet. (Rev 4:10)

Others will be carried into glory,
like a fireman carries a child from a burning building.

Believers will shout.
Believers will cheer.
Believers will jump up and down, and clap their hands.
Believers will have tears roll down their faces.

All will worship Jesus Christ, as Lord.
I hope you have entered this "race"
...with your decision to accept Jesus.

He will keep His promise to you,
even if your faith in Him fails.

Whether you are running strong today
in the power of the Holy Spirit,
or whether you are being carried.

The finish line draws close.



103 Let It Go

Hebrews 12: 15 *"Look after each other so that not one of you will fail to find God's best blessing. Watch out that no bitterness takes root in you, for as it springs up it causes deep trouble, hurting many in their spiritual lives."*

+++++

Been treated unfairly?
Let it go.

Been hurt by someone?
Let it go.

Betrayed?
Lied to?
Stolen from?
Used and abused?

Let it go.

Oh, that's easy to say, ...but a little tougher to do. Right?
But this is what the verse is talking about.
We are to help each other in this.
Why?
To help each other "*find God's best blessing*".

That sounds like a good thing doesn't it?

So what are we supposed to do?
"*Watch out that no bitterness takes root in you*".

When you see another believer getting angry over and over again,
because they can't let go of something, we are to love them, pray with
them, pray for them, and remind them of this instructional warning.
Don't let the bitterness take root.

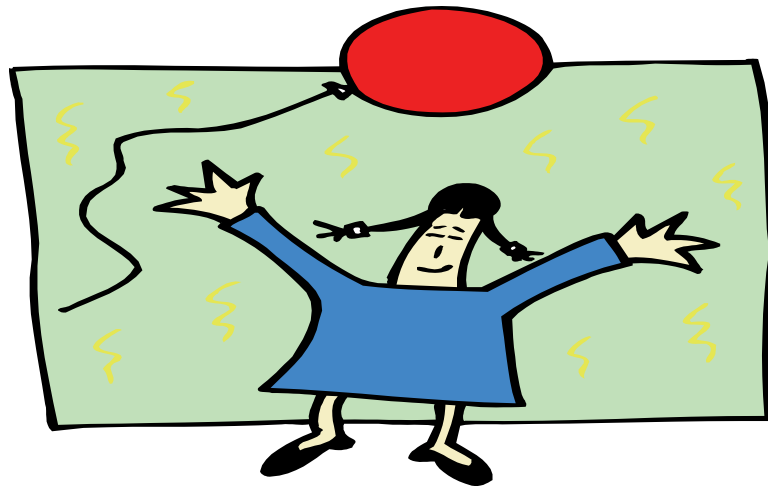
If it does take root, then the Bible says
it will grow bigger,
and hurt you and others.

It's like planting poison ivy INSIDE
your house, and letting it grow.
Soon it is everywhere.
Anyone who comes around you for a
visit gets injured.
You get repeatedly injured.



Why would we do that to ourselves?

My friend, listen to what God is saying. Let it go.



104 Praise of Men. Praise of God.

John 12: 42-43

“Many of the Jewish leaders believed Him to be the Messiah, but wouldn’t admit it to anyone, because of their fear that the Pharisees would excommunicate them from the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men, more than the praise of God.”

Matthew 25: 20-21 (Parable of the talents)

“The man who was given five talents, brought back ten talents. His master praised him for his good work saying: ‘ Well done good and faithful servant, you have been faithful over a few things, now I will make you a ruler over many things, enter into the joy of the Lord.’”

+++++

Think about it.

The big wigs of the established prominent religion enjoyed being important before men. Enjoyed others saying how great they were. They had prestige. Top rung of the ladder. They liked being seen and known.

Some believed Jesus to be their long awaited Messiah, but they wouldn’t admit it. Out of fear, they chose the temporary and shallow praise of men instead.

We all want to be “in” with the crowd. To be considered cool. We all need our egos stroked. To have people like us. We don’t want to be ignored, isolated, and left out.

But God has set up a dividing line in the sand of time. A “cross” road. Jesus stands there.

Jesus is the cross road. And you must choose. Will you choose to stay “in”, ...with the praise of men? Or risk being different?

“Choose you this day whom you serve...as for me and my family, we serve the Lord.” (Joshua 24:15)

We talked about this in devotion #31:
“How ya handling your division?”

Our passage for today is actually asking you a couple of questions:

- 1) Do you love *“the praise of men more than the praise of God”*?
- 2) Does fear keep you from telling others that you believe Jesus *“to be the Messiah”*?

Well?

While some of you are swallowing hard in consideration of your impending answers, let’s move on. I want to point out something else.

We always think in terms of praising God. Don’t we?

But are you aware that He wants to praise you?

Sounds like blasphemy doesn’t it?

But read these verses again.

It says:

“for they loved the praise of men MORE than the praise of God”

In other words, the praise of God exists towards us.

God wants to say: *“Well done good and faithful servant”*

God wants to notice us.

To praise our efforts.

To say we’re “in” with Him.

To reward us.

“If, as my representatives, you give even a cup of cold water to a little child, you will surely be rewarded.” (Matthew 10:42)



“Apollos and I are working as a team, with the same aim, though each of us will be rewarded for his own hard work” (I Cor 3: 8)

“No one can ever lay any other real foundation than that one we already have—Jesus Christ. But there are various kinds of materials that can be used to build on that foundation.

Some use gold and silver and jewels; and some build with sticks, and hay, or even straw. There is going to come a time of testing at Christ’s Judgment Day to see what kind of material each builder has used. Everyone’s work will be put through the fire so that all can see whether or not it keeps its value, and what was really accomplished.

Then every workman who has built on the foundation of Christ with the right materials, and whose work still stands, will be rewarded. If the house he has built burns up, he will have a great loss. He himself will be saved, but like a man escaping through a wall of flames.”
(I Corinthians 3: 11-14)

Salvation is a gift. We don’t work for that.

“For by grace are you saved through faith; and not of yourselves, it is the gift of God—not of works, lest any man should boast”

Ephesians 2: 8-9

But it is clear that the Lord will reward our work as believers.

How are you doing?

Are you blending “in” with the crowd?

Or are you building with “*gold and silver and jewels*”?

Do not fear what others think when you confess Jesus as your Lord and your Messiah.

Look forward to the praise of God,
when Jesus says to you on judgment day:

“Well done good and faithful servant”.

*Well done
good and faithful
servant.*

105 Your Rights vs Their Rights

Matthew 10:16 *“I am sending you out as sheep among the wolves. Be smart as a serpent but as harmless as a dove.”*

+++++

Jesus knew what it was like to minister in a tough mission field. He said these words for a reason.

As said in Devotion #11, we are missionaries cleverly disguised within our individual work place. It can be a tough mission field.

We must rely on Him, His Word, and the Holy Spirit within us to succeed in having an impact at work. We must also use the brains God gave us and be smart when we share our faith with others.

This devotion is about trying to find a balance between the New Testament command to share our faith in the Lord, and the requirements placed upon us by policy and law.

We may not harass others at the workplace, or engage in illegal proselytizing.

For example: If you walk up to a fellow employee you’re never met and without their agreement to discuss religion begin preaching to them to try to convert them, this is proselytizing. The courts of our land have made it rather clear in recent years that they will protect the rights of employees on the job from this type of proselytizing at work. So we suggest you don’t do it.

To ask someone if they are willing to discuss their views on faith is not illegal. If they say they’re willing to talk, then in this country you’re still allowed to discuss religious topics, on and off the job.

We do have the first amendment right of freedom of speech to offer our faith to others, and therefore can share our faith further with those who ARE WILLING to discuss things of the Bible.

This kind of offer to discuss faith issues works best when you’ve laid some ground work with a beginning friendship. Kent Humphreys, someone I met last year at a conference on workplace ministries, has a book entitled “Show and then Tell”. This seems to be good advice for sharing your faith in a workplace environment.

Here's another example:

If you offer to have a discussion of faith with someone who ends up saying "Do not ever approach me again concerning your religion!" This kind of response means we don't try again because we risk being seen as harassing another. Title VII law has made it clear to employers not to allow harassment of employees at work. So we'd put this person on our daily prayer list, and ask God to bring them back to us with an open mind and heart. We'd demonstrate God's love to that person in kind deed, but we would not harass them by trying to talk further about spiritual matters. They would have to initiate the discussion and give permission for you to continue a conversation about Jesus Christ or the Bible.

Ephesians 5: 15-17 *"So be careful how you act; these are difficult days. Don't be fools; be wise: make the most of every opportunity you have for doing good. Don't act thoughtlessly, but try to find out and do whatever the Lord wants you to."*

We hope that this devotion has been educational and will help you in your desire to serve your Lord. We hope you want to share your faith in Jesus with those around you. We also want you to be smart. Remember devotion #11 gave scripture saying you should: *"talk meekly and courteously"* as you share your faith, and to *"do it in a gentle and respectful way"*.

May the Lord Jesus be praised.

106 God Changes Lives

Colossians 1:6

"The Gospel that came to you is going out all over the world and is changing lives everywhere, just as it changed yours.."

Galatians 1:13, 15, 23-24

"You know what I was like when I followed the Jewish religion, how I went after the Christians mercilessly, hunting them down and doing my best to get rid of them all.

...But then something happened! For even before I was born God had chosen me to be His, and called me to serve Him. ...The Christians in Judea didn't even know what I looked like. All they knew was what people were saying, that 'our former enemy is now preaching the very faith he tried to destroy'. And they gave glory to God because of me."

“The Christians in Judea didn’t even know what I looked like. All they knew was what people were saying.... they gave glory to God because of me.”

What are people saying about you? Are they noticing the change?
Do they give glory to God, because of you?

Once Paul was against the cause of Jesus Christ, then he changed, and became an obedient servant of the Lord.

How about you?

“I remember a time in my past when I did not serve Jesus,
but now I am _____”

Fill in the blank.....Go on. Read it again, and fill it in.

I’d be embarrassed to tell you all the sinful things I was into ten years ago, before I came to Jesus to be forgiven. I would never have dreamt I’d be doing any of the things I am now doing in the service of Christ.

If I answered the fill in the blank, I would finish the statement with:

- 1)a Chaplain for the Atlanta airport.
- 2)writing a weekly devotion to hundreds in a Christian Fellowship;
that I started with inspiration from the Lord.
- 3)riding around with Gospel bumper stickers on my car as a witness.
- 4)trying to discuss Biblical subjects with my family and friends.
- 5)studying the Bible on a regular basis for spiritual strength.
- 6)talking to Jesus daily, and spending time with Him in worship.
- 7)giving my money to several Christian ministries.
- 8)doing my job as unto the Lord, because He will reward me.
- 9)writing and producing books of devotions to witness to the lost, and help strengthen and teach other believers.
- 10)painting landscapes as an avenue to share the Gospel in an art ministry.

And why am I saying all of this? I’m not on some ego trip. I’m telling you all of this to get you to think about what you are DOING. I want you to broaden your sphere of influence, and increase your spiritual activity. I want you to show the “change” so others will be talking about you, and giving glory to God for your life of obedience, and service.

So, how did you answer the fill in the blank?

“The Gospel that came to you is going out all over the world and is changing lives everywhere, just as it changed yours..”

107 Holding It Together

Psalms 104:5

"You bound the world together so that it would never fall apart."

Hebrews 1:3

"Christ holds the universe together by the power of His word."

Colossians 1:17

"Jesus Christ existed before any else was created and it is His power that holds everything together."

+++++

Did you know that scientists don't really know what holds an atom together? They really can't explain it.



The nucleus of the atom contains positively charged and neutral particles.

Mutual electrostatic repulsion between the like-positive protons would drive the nucleus apart, if it were not for an unexplained "strong force" which binds the nucleus together.

There is thus an active force which is imposed on the universe which actively holds the very atoms of the material world together.



"But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise and the elements will be dissolved with fire and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up." (2 Peter 3:10)

The Greek word translated "elements" in this passage from 2 Peter (a word also used in Colossians) is *stoicheion* which means "the ordered arrangement of things", or basically means the building blocks of the universe. In today's language it could mean "atomic elements."

The word translated "dissolved" is literally (in Greek) the word "unloosed." This verse suggests a future letting-go of the nuclear binding force that holds the nucleus together.

This passage strongly suggests that the active power of God is behind the mysterious strong force that holds every atomic nucleus together.

If this is a correct view, were God to merely relax His grasp on the universe every atom would come apart "by fire" (by nuclear fire).

God dynamically sustains the universe, including the atoms themselves.

They are "stable" only because of God.

Aren't you glad God is holding it together?



108 Worship God Only

Psalms 135: 13, 15-18

“O Jehovah, your name endures forever; your reputation is known to every generation... The heathen worship idols of gold and silver, made by men—idols with speechless mouths and sightless eyes, and ears that cannot hear; they cannot even breathe. Those who make them become like them. And so do all who trust in them.”

I John 5:21 *“Dear children, keep away from anything that might take God's place in your hearts.”*

Matthew 4:10

“Jesus said, ‘The Scriptures say, Worship only the Lord God. Obey only Him.’”

+++++

The idols can't speak, see, hear, or breathe.
So they're mute, blind, deaf, and dead.
Right?

And those who make idols, or trust in idols, will "*become like them*".
In other words, dead.

Are you getting this?

It's pretty serious stuff. You want to live, don't you?
Then quit worshipping idols.
Oh, I know what you're saying.
"I don't kneel and pray to a golden calf in my house!"
But how about that golden retirement fund?

Am I saying you shouldn't plan ahead?
No.
I'm saying you should place your security and trust in a living God,
not a dead fund.

We are not to place our trust, or our worship, in anything, or anyone,
other than God Himself.
We are to worship God only.
We know this. We know what God expects.
God's instruction and reputation leave no doubt.
We've known down through "*every generation*".
We're not supposed to place our trust in money, instead of God.
We all wrestle with this idol.
We think to ourselves: 'If I could just win a couple million dollars,
I wouldn't worry about the future.'

Really?

*'Helloooo. Heaven to earth, come in earth,
this is Jehovah God speaking,
the One whose "name endures forever".
Same name. Same God. Alpha. Omega.
Same Holy One.
Nothing has changed with My glory.
Worship Me ONLY. Trust in Me ONLY.
And **I WILL** meet your every need you have now,
and in the future.'*

Look at God's written Word:

"Because the Lord is my shepherd, I have EVERYTHING I need..."
Psalms 23:1

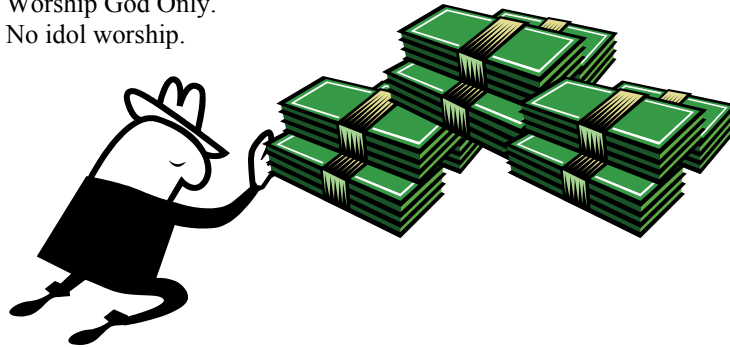
"If you belong to the Lord, reverence Him, for everyone who does this has EVERYTHING he needs.

Even strong lions sometimes go hungry, but those of us who reverence the Lord WILL NEVER LACK ANY GOOD THING." Psalms 34: 9-10

"Trust in the Lord with ALL YOUR HEART and lean not on your own understanding, in EVERYTHING YOU DO put God first, and HE WILL direct your path..." Proverbs 3:5-6

It is God who holds your future, not the mutual fund manager.
Place your trust in God. To put trust in anything else, is idol worship.
And God has been real clear on this one through out the Bible.
Down through time, His Word has been clear.

Worship God Only.
No idol worship.



109 Abraham and Faith

I have a Jewish friend who still closely follows Jewish customs.
They pray to God daily.
They try to obey the rules and regulations given to them.
They do what is expected of them by their Rabbi and synagogue.
They read the same Old Testament that I have in my Bible,
and pray to the same Jehovah.
They are so wonderfully religious.
They try to be faithful,..... but miss the focus of faith.
They do not believe Yeshua (Jesus) is the Messiah.
I pray a blessing on this person,
so that they may find true faith in Jesus Christ.
With this friend in mind, I would like to give the following passage
today as our devotion. Read it prayerfully.

Romans 4: 1-11, 23-25

“Abraham was, humanly speaking, the founder of our Jewish nation. What were his experiences concerning this question of being saved by faith? Was it because of his good deeds that God accepted him? If so, then he would have something to boast about.

But from God’s point of view Abraham had no basis at all for pride. For the Scriptures tell us Abraham believed God, and that is why God canceled his sins and declared him “not guilty”.

But didn’t he earn his right to heaven by all the good things he did? No, for being saved is a gift; if a person could earn it by being good, then it wouldn’t be free—but it is!

It is given to those who do not work for it. For God declares sinners to be good in His sight, if they have faith in Christ to save them from God’s wrath. King David spoke of this, describing the happiness of an undeserving sinner who is declared “not guilty” by God.

‘Blessed, and to be envied’, he said, ‘are those whose sins are forgiven and put out of sight. Yes, what joy there is for anyone whose sins are no longer counted against him by the Lord.’
(from Psalms 32:1-2)

Now then, the question: Is this blessing given only to those who have faith in Christ, but also keep the Jewish laws, or is the blessing also given to those who do not keep the Jewish rules, but only trust in Christ?

Well, what about Abraham? We say that he received these blessings through his faith. Was it faith alone? Or because he also kept the Jewish rules?

For the answer to that question, answer this one: When did God give this blessing to Abraham? It was before he became a Jew—before he went through the Jewish initiation ceremony of circumcision.

It wasn’t until later on, after God had promised to bless him because of his faith, that he was circumcised. The circumcision ceremony was a sign that Abraham had faith and that God had already accepted him, and declared him just and good in His sight—before the ceremony took place.

So Abraham is the spiritual father of those who believe and are saved without obeying Jewish laws. We see, then, that those who believe and are saved are justified by God through faith.....

That Abraham was accepted and approved through faith wasn't just for Abraham's benefit. It was for us, too, assuring us that God will accept us in the same way He accepted Abraham—when we believe the promises of God who brought back Jesus our Lord from the dead. He died for our sins and rose again to make us right with God."

+++++

110 Restrain Your Anger. Hold Your Tongue.

Proverbs 19:11 "A wise man restrains his anger and overlooks insults. This is to his credit."

Proverbs 17:27-28

"The man of few words and settled mind is wise; therefore, even a fool is thought to be wise when he is silent. It pays him to keep his mouth shut."

Proverbs 21:23

"Keep your mouth closed and you'll stay out of trouble."

Ephesians 4:29, 31-32

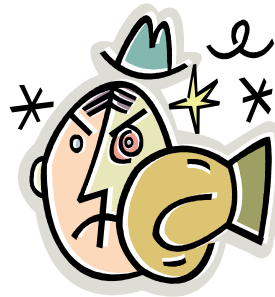
"Don't use bad language. Say only what is good and helpful to those you are talking to, and what will give them a blessing. Don't cause the Holy Spirit sorrow but the way you live ...Stop being mean, bad-tempered and angry. Quarreling, harsh words, and dislike of others should have no place in your lives. Instead, be kind to each other, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, just as God has forgiven you because you belong to Christ."

+++++

Being slow to speak sounds easy,
unless someone is standing on your face.

"A wise man.. overlooks insults"
Right. Nice verse. Tough to do.

I want to smack'em upside their fat head.
Oh yea, like I'm the only one again.
You never want to do that, right?



I know someone who is always saying things to me that “make” me mad. I want to defend myself, and I get angry.
A sarcastic word here; a snide remark there.
Makes me sound like I’m retarded.
Like I don’t know anything. Who do they think they are?

But then this scripture.
Restrain my anger.
Overlook the insult.
Be kind and tender-hearted.
Forgive them.
And if you have trouble with any of this,
...at least keep your mouth shut.

Ok. Ok. I’ll try. Better yet, I’ll ask the Holy Spirit to help me.
Maybe that’s why the verse above talks about the Holy Spirit.
It’s HIM I need to get in tight with. HE can help me!

“No man can tame the tongue.” James 3:8

But God can!

“Jesus said,

‘the things which are impossible with men, are possible with God.’”

Luke 18:27

Restrain Your Anger

Hold Your Tongue

111 Who Are Your Heroes?

Psalms 101: 6 *“I will make the godly of the land my heroes,
and invite them into my home.”*

Hebrews 11: 2
“Men of God in days of old were famous for their faith.”

+++++

Who are our heroes today?
Football players who can throw an 80 yard touchdown pass.
Basketball players who can dunk the ball.
Movie stars who have a lot of money.
Singers, guitar players, even a politician or two.

How many of you have a minister or missionary as your hero?

And why does asking that question sound so weird today?
What’s happened to us?



Is there anyone who considers you to be their hero,
...because of your faith in Jesus Christ?

Is your godly life, or your faith of “hero proportion”?

I’m asking some interesting questions, aren’t I?

In a past devotion, we talked of how people will follow you no matter
how you lead. Devotion #91, “Do You Have Followers?”

The answer was yes. So lead well.

When you walk into a room,
you are the temple of God in their presence.
Because He lives inside of you.
They can meet with God, because you arrived.

When you speak, you speak for Him.
(Devotion #92, "Speaking For God.")
As His representative, when you do anything in His name,
it is as if He is doing it. (Devotion #19, "Know Who You Are.")
(Devotion #82, "You Are A Priest.")

Am I on a theme again? You bet I am, and I pray you are listening.

It's time to "hero up".

This year might be your last.
Time to act like the hero God has made you to be.

+++++

112 Groaning Within Ourselves

Romans 7:18-25 8:23-26

*"..No matter which way I turn I can't make myself do right.
I want to, but I can't. When I want to do good, I don't;
and when I try not to do wrong, I do it anyway.
Now if I am doing what I don't want to,
it is plain where the trouble is: sin still has me in its grasp.*

*It seems to be a fact of life that when I want to do what is right,
I inevitably do what is wrong. I love to do God's will so far as my new
nature is concerned, but there is something else deep within me, in my
lower nature, that is at war with my mind and wins the fight.
I am a slave to the sin that is still within me. In my mind I want to be
God's willing servant, but instead, I find myself still enslaved to sin.*

*So you see how it is: my new life tells me to do right,
but the old nature that is still within me loves to sin.
Oh what a terrible predicament I'm in!
Who will free me from my slavery to this deadly lower nature?
I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

*...And even we Christians, although we have the Holy Spirit within us
as a foretaste of future glory, we also groan within ourselves, waiting
anxiously for that day when God will give us our full rights as His
children, including the new bodies He has promised us, bodies that
will never be sick again and will never die.*

*We are saved by trusting. And trusting means looking forward to
getting something we don't have yet, for a man who already has
something doesn't need to hope and trust that he will get it.*

*But if we trust God for something that hasn't happened yet,
it teaches us to wait patiently and confidently.
And in the same way—by our faith—the Holy Spirit helps us with our
daily problems and in our praying.
For we don't even know what we should pray for,
nor how to pray as we should;
but the Holy Spirit makes intercession for us with groaning that can't
even be expressed in words."*

+++++

No disrespect meant, but it sounds like a lot of groaning going on.
I'm groaning. The Holy Spirit is groaning.
Whew.

Oh I know you are just sailing along with Jesus,
and you're happy as a clam.
But as for me, I have a war going on.

Some days I have the armor of God on,
and my shield is up, and sword is fighting.

Other days, I'm flat on the ground with my face in the mud.

I groan with the frustration of having to wrestle with my sin nature.
As they say, we have met the enemy, ...and he is us.

How about you today?
Sailing, or groaning?



113 God's Judgment. God's Salvation.

The Bible tells the story of God parting the Red Sea,
and the Israelites crossing on dry land.

The Egyptians were chasing the Israelites and
followed them onto the floor of the Red Sea.

After the Israelites came out, the sea closed on top of the Egyptians.

.....
Quiz question number one:

- 1) Were there any Egyptian survivors
from those who entered into the Red Sea?

.
Ok, I heard you answer no.
Are you guessing?
Or do you know how the Bible answers this question?

.....
Let's try another.

Quiz question number two:

- 2) How many Israelites were saved by crossing the Red Sea?

.
Yes it's a trick question.The answer : All of them.

.....
Now enjoy today's scripture passage and think about these questions.

- 1) Of those who reject Jesus Christ, will any avoid Hell?
- 2) Of those who accept Jesus Christ, will God save them all?

+++++

Psalms 106: 6-11

*"Both we and our fathers have sinned so much.
They weren't impressed by the wonder of your miracles in Egypt,
and soon forgot your many acts of kindness to them.*

*Instead they rebelled against you at the Red Sea.
EVEN SO YOU SAVED THEM—
TO DEFEND THE HONOR OF YOUR NAME AND DEMONSTRATE
YOUR POWER TO ALL THE WORLD.*

*You commanded the Red Sea to divide,
forming a dry road across its bottom.
Yes, as dry as any desert. Thus you rescued them from their enemies.
Then the water returned, and covered the road, and drowned their
foes; NOT ONE SURVIVED.”*

+++++

- 1) Of those who reject Jesus Christ, will any avoid Hell?.....No
- 2) Of those who accept Jesus Christ, will God save them all?.....Yes

God’s Judgment..... God’s Salvation.





114 Any Day Now

Luke 17: 26-30

“When I return, the world will be as indifferent to the things of God as the people were in Noah’s day. They ate and drank and married—everything just as usual right up to the day when Noah went into the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all.

And the world will be as it was in the days of Lot: people went about their daily business—eating and drinking, buying and selling, farming and building—until the morning Lot left Sodom. Then fire and brimstone rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. Yes, it will be business as usual right up to the hour of my return.”

Matthew 24: 32

“Now learn the parable of the fig tree. When it buds and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So likewise when you see all these things happen you know that my return is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, this generation will not pass till all these things are fulfilled.”

Psalms 90:10

“Seventy years are given to us! And some may even live to eighty...”

If you are a believer, you know within your spirit that we are in the last days. You don't have to be a seminary graduate to know this. Just open your eyes.

Some think the budding of the fig tree was Israel becoming a nation again in 1948. I happen to agree.

Ten very specific prophecies were fulfilled on May 14, 1948 when the Jews declared independence for Israel.

No other nation has done what Israel has done by "budding again" as a nation. Read your Bible about Egypt, Moses, Canaan, The Divided Kingdoms, and Exile. (Jeremiah 16 & 31, Ezekiel 34 & 37, Isaiah 66)

After a few thousand years of not being an independent nation, the Jews came back to their home land, after the horrors of World War II, and became a nation again.

Did Satan use Hitler to try to eliminate the Jews so they wouldn't reorganize as a nation? I don't know. Maybe.

But what happened in 1948 was earth shaking.

What about the verse;

" this generation will not pass till all these things are fulfilled." ?

Bible scholars say a Biblical generation is 40 years, which is demonstrated within the Scriptures.

But I would invite you to consider an idea.

Think about how long we live on the average.

What does the Bible say?

"Seventy years are given to us! And some may even live to eighty..."

Just for the fun of it, add 70 or 80 years to the date of 1948, and you get 2018 or 2028.

I'll be 63 years old in 2018. It's not that far away.

How old would you be in 2018? Come on, count it out.

Now think about this.

If 1948 is the "budding" beginning date,

then the generation of 1948 will not pass until Jesus comes back.

Interesting to contemplate, isn't it?

In other words, it may be any day now.

Jesus made it clear that no man knows the date of His return.

(Matthew 24:36)

But there is a design to things. God is not the author of confusion.

(I Corinthians 14: 33)

If they are right about the budding fig tree parable,
then Jesus may return at any time.

I personally think it will happen on Rosh Hashanah,
the Jewish New Year, which is the Jewish feast of trumpets.
(the trumpet blast when Jesus appears? – I Cor. 15:52, I Thess 4:16)

Look Rosh Hashanah up on the Internet to keep up with which day
and date it is. Rosh Hashanah falls within September or October each
year. Isn't it fun to think about the return of Jesus?

Now spend one more moment with me. I want to show you why I
think Jesus may come back during Rosh Hashanah.
Let's look at some of these Jewish holidays in relation to Jesus Christ.

Passover--(Deut 16:1)

Exodus 12:13 *"When I see the blood, I will pass over you."*
Christ died on the same day on the Jewish calendar,
as the original date of Passover, Jesus is our Passover Lamb.

Firstfruits--(Lev 23:9-11)

Christ rose from the dead becoming *"the first fruits of them that
sleep"* I Corinthians 15:20

Pentecost--(Lev 23: 15-17)

Pentecost means fifty. Pentecost was the fiftieth day after the feast of
Firstfruits. It was exactly fifty days from the resurrection of our Lord
Jesus Christ, to the day of Pentecost and the coming of the Holy
Spirit. Acts 2:1-4 (Again, these days are tied together in history)

Feast of Trumpets--(Lev 23: 23-25) Rosh Hashanah.

This feast portrays the coming of Christ.

I Cor 15:52 says: *"It will all happen in a moment, in the twinkling of
an eye, when the last trumpet is blown."*

This is why I think the rapture will happen on this date in the future.

Feast of Tabernacles--(Lev 23:39-43)

This feast portrays when the Lord Jesus Christ comes to set up His
kingdom on this earth. (Zechariah 14:16)

This tells us that the day is coming when all the people in the world
will go to Jerusalem once each year to celebrate this holiday.

Just like during the 1000 year reign of Christ.

There is a design my friends, and Jesus is in charge of this design.

Jesus Christ is coming back soon.....Are you ready?

115 Fall To The Ground

Matthew 2:11

“After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother, and they fell to the ground and worshiped Him.”

John 18:3-6

“The chief priests and Pharisees had given Judas a squad of soldiers and police to accompany him. Now with blazing torches, lanterns, and weapons they arrived at the olive grove. Jesus knowing all things that would happen, stepped forward to meet them asking, “Who are you looking for?” “Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “I am he,” Jesus said. And as he said it, they all fell backwards to the ground!”

Acts 26:14

“We all fell down, and I heard a voice speaking to me in Hebrew, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’”

Revelation 1:17

“When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead, but He laid His right hand on me and said, ‘Do not be afraid, I am the first and the last...’”

+++++

Until the other day I had never seen that passage above in John 18 where the soldiers fell backwards to the ground. So I studied it further, and wrote this devotional thought.

This demonstration of Jesus' power explains why the arresting party consented to permit the apostles to leave without being arrested.

It was perfectly clear to that entire company that Jesus could do anything, and therefore they allowed his arrest upon his own terms, not theirs.

I am (he) ...

It should be noted that "he" is not in the Greek. Therefore, what Jesus said was, "I AM," thus saying He was God (see Exodus 3:14 and John 8:58). CFA devotion #17 "I AM Yahweh".

*“they all **fell** backwards to the ground!”* (Greek -- epesan xamai)
Definition: to fall, to be thrust down, to be prostrated, to prostrate oneself overcome by terror or astonishment, used by persons rendering homage or worship of one, to fall from i.e. shall perish or be lost.

*“I am he,” Jesus said.
And as he said it, they all fell backwards to the ground!”*

His words, *I am*,
had revived his disciples, and raised them up (Mt. 14:27);
but the same words, strike his enemies down.

Hereby he showed plainly, what he could have done with them.
When he struck them down,
he could have struck them dead;
when he spoke them *to the ground*,
he could have spoken them to hell. (ww.searchgodsword.org)

You can fall forwards to worship.

Or you can fall backwards in recoil.

Either way, you will be prostrate before the great “I AM”.



116 *Serve In Weakness*

II Corinthians 11:30, 12:5, 12:9-10

“If I must brag,

I would rather brag about the things that show how weak I am”

“Each time God said, ‘I am with you; that is all you need.

*My power shows up best in weak people.’ Now I am glad to boast
about how weak I am; I am glad to be a living demonstration of
Christ’s power, instead of showing off my own power and abili-
ties.....for when I am weak, then I am strong.”*

I Corinthians 2:3,5

*"I came to you in weakness—timid and trembling.....
I did this because I wanted your faith to stand firmly upon God,
not on man's great ideas."*

I have to admit something to you.... I am weak.
Of the devotions I've written over the last several years,
this one is my truest testimony.
The world may see a talented man, but I know the truth.
I am disturbingly aware that my heart is full of lust, greed, and rage.
I ask myself on a regular basis,
"How the heck can I do anything for the Lord?"
The answer?
*"For I can do everything God asks me to with the help of Christ who
gives me the strength and power."* (Philippians 4:13)

Good verse.How do we take a verse like this, and live it?
My answer?
You just "do it".

'Oh, ok mister genius. Why didn't I think of that profound answer?
You're so smart.
Just do it, huh?'

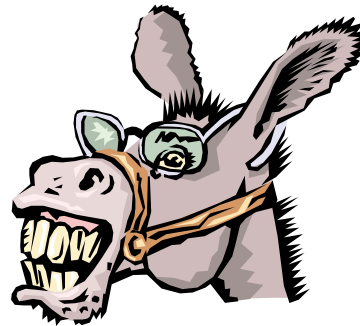
Yes. Just live each day like you know what you're doing,
and leave the rest to God.
Don't stop. If you get knocked down, get up.
If you're in the deep woods, come back to the narrow path.
And keep your heart on its knees.

Every time I get to wondering if God can use me, I remember an Old
Testament story found in the book of Numbers chapter 22.
It's about Balaam and his donkey.
Read it. You'll like the story.
In the story, God used a donkey,
to talk to Balaam.
That's right. A talking donkey.
And the thought that always comes
back to me is this.

If God can use a talking jackass,
He can certainly use me.

Will you let Him use you too?

Join me. Serve in weakness.



117 It's All Greek To Me

Acts 23:11

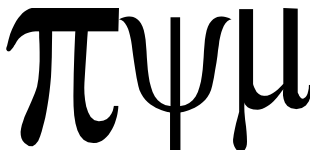
“That night the Lord stood beside Paul and said, ‘Don’t worry Paul, just as you have told the people about me here in Jerusalem, so you must also in Rome’”

Acts 18:9

“And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, ‘Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent.’”

+++++

Now don’t get scared,
and try not to run,
but I want you to try
reading some Greek.



You are way over due to try this.

Sometimes it is not only necessary, but also fun, to take a look at the written Word of God in the original language.

(and that does not mean the King James Version)

There is a web site that can help you with this. It’s what I use.

www.searchgodsword.org

(Search a verse using New American Standard and it will give you the Original Greek link on each verse.)

This site can help you with the Hebrew of the Old Testament, and the Greek of the New Testament.

It also has access to multiple commentaries at a touch of a button.

You can also compare different Biblical versions to each other.

And it’s all free.

I mention this site because I want you to study your Bible, and seek out the truth of scripture.

To become more educated in the Word,

and to start researching subjects on your own.

I feel the Lord is behind this idea.

Please consider this request in the name of Christ.

Concerning this week’s devotion,

I read a verse that I didn’t understand.

It was the verse from Acts 23:11, that said the Lord “stood beside” Paul.

I wanted to know what that meant, since at this point in history, Jesus is in Heaven.

So I researched the verse, and it caused me to write this devotion. My study brought me to the verse in Acts 18:9. OK, here we go. Let's do that verse (Acts 18:9) in Greek.

ειπεν δε ο κυριος **δι οραματος** εν νυκτι τω παυλω
μη φοβου αλλα λαλει και μη σιωπησης

Transliteration:

"eipen de o kuriov en nukti di oramatov twI PaulwI, Mh fobou, alla lalei kai mh siwphshIv"

Whew. You made it.
Now let's look at each word translated.

eipen (speak,say) **de**(now,then,therefore) **o**(that) **kuriov**(Lord, Messiah, title given to God) **en**(in,at,by) **nukti**(night) **di**(with, by, by means of) **oramatov**(spectacle, a vision, sight divinely granted) **twI** (this, that) **PaulwI**(Paul), **Mh**(no, not lest) **fobou**(fear, afraid), **alla** (but, nevertheless, therefore) **lalei**(talk, say, preach) **kai**(also, even, so) **mh**(no, not least) **siwphshIv**(be silent, quiet, calm)

"And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, 'Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent.'"

So in 21st century language,
the Lord Jesus appeared to Paul in a holographic image.

Alright, alright, raise your eyebrows back up, and think about this. After His resurrection, Jesus spent 40 days showing people that He was alive. During this time Jesus appeared to many people in His glorified body, and was here on earth. He then went back to Heaven with the promise of His return someday. This second coming of Christ has not happened yet.

At this point in the book of Acts, and in the life of Paul,
Jesus is in Heaven.

But Paul sees a vision of Jesus, and Jesus talks to him.

Basically Paul sees a hologram.

Isn't that what holograms are supposed to do?

You can see and talk to the person, even though they may be somewhere else. You can communicate just like the person was standing there. They see you. You see them.

Cool.I want to see a vision of Jesus, don't you?

What's sad is our 21st century attitude towards spiritual activity.
We'll watch a medium talk to the "spirit" of a "deceased person",
and that's ok;
But we'll think any one who says the Lord has spoken to them is nuts.

We'll accept the scientific possibility that a hologram could exist,
and then turn around and say a vision of the Lord can't happen.

But the Lord is alive, and is real.
And He can still communicate in any method He wants.

He has given us a solid basis in which to test everything.
The written Word..... The Bible.
And we need to read it, study it, and search its meanings.
If any message, or messenger, gives information contrary to the Bible,
they are not of God.

My encouragement to you is this;don't put God in a box.

God may have a special blessing to give to you,
if you would open your ears and eyes.
Listen for His voice.

Look for His involvement in your surroundings.
His angels are still at work around us also.

And the Holy Spirit inside us directs us, talks to us, empowers us.
It's God talking to you. It's God leading you.
God can lead in the smallest details of your life,.. if you let Him.

*“ ‘In the last days,’ God said, ‘I will pour out my Holy Spirit upon all
mankind, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, and your
young men shall see visions, and your old men dream dreams.’ ”*
Acts 2:17



118 Be A Gold Dish

II Timothy 2:20-22

“In a wealthy home there are dishes made of gold and silver as well as some made of wood and clay.

The expensive dishes are used for guests, and the cheap ones are used in the kitchen.



If you stay away from sin you will be like one of these dishes made of purest gold—the very best in the house—so that Christ Himself can use you for His highest purposes.



Run from youthful lusts and anything that gives you evil thoughts, but stay close to anything that makes you want to do right. Have faith and love, and enjoy the companionship of those who love the Lord and have pure hearts.”“...so that Christ Himself can use you for His highest purposes.”

+++++

That’s what I want. I want Jesus to use me for His highest purpose.
I don’t want to be the trash can on the back porch.
I want to be the gold dish used to honor the owner.
I want to be the best, to reflect the best of God.

So how do we do this?
“If you stay away from sin, you will be like one of these dishes made of purest gold”

It’s interesting that the next verse talks about running;
“from youthful lusts and anything that gives you evil thoughts”.
I don’t think that is a coincidence.
I think God knows what He is talking about.

We are to run from internet porn.
We are to run from TV shows that reveal the nude and the crude.
We are to run from radio stations whose goal is to shock.
We are to run from the dirty jokes,
and that which brings us down spiritually.

Instead, we are to,
“*stay close to anything that makes you want to do right*”.
Like the Word of God. Christian songs.
The church.
The preaching of Scripture.

And we are to “*enjoy the companionship of those who love the Lord and have pure hearts.*”
That means that our best friends should be believers.
Our companions should be those who love Jesus.

How about the “pure heart” issue? Aren’t we all sinners?

WE ALL HAVE PURE HEARTS,
IF WE ARE CONNECTED TO CHRIST.

Let’s do that one again.

As believers, none of us live without sinning;
we all wrestle with all kinds of stuff,
but as we daily confess sin,
daily seek the Lord,
and daily live filled with His Spirit,
WE ALL HAVE PURE HEARTS IN GOD’S SIGHT.
That’s how He sees us, because of the cross of Calvary.

So, as believers, remember this as you enjoy each other’s friendship.
God sees you as perfect in Christ, and loves you so.
Lift each other up.
Let’s help each other be the gold dish in the house of God.



119 Rooted In Love

Ephesians 3: 17-19 “May your roots go down deep into the soil of God’s marvelous love; and may you be able to feel and understand, as all God’s children should, how long, how wide, how deep, and how high His love really is; and to experience this love yourselves, though it is so great that you will never see the end of it, or fully know or understand it..”

Romans 8:38

“For I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from His love. Death can’t, and life can’t. Neither angels nor all the powers of hell itself can keep God’s love away. No other creation can stop God from loving us. Our fears for today, our worries about tomorrow, or where we are—high above the sky, or in the deepest ocean—nothing will ever be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

+++++

Keep your roots deep into the love of God.
Like a tree, it’s your foundation for living.
It means “live in His love” daily. Accept His grace and forgiveness.
Daily remind yourself that God loves you.

“May you be able to FEEL and understand” His love.
May you *“EXPERIENCE this love yourselves”*
This is not just an intellectual exercise.
God wants you to have the overwhelming emotional reaction that is inevitable when you realize how much He loves you.

Nothing can separate you from His love.
Including you.
“No other creation can stop God from loving us.”
We are part of creation.
We can’t do anything to separate us from the love of God.
If you sin, God still loves you.

No matter where you are, *“high above the sky”* in an airplane,
“or in the deepest ocean”, *“nothing will EVER be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

I don’t know about you, but I need this devotion.
I need to remember how much God loves me.

The best moments of tears that I remember, have been during those times when I caught a glimpse of the love of the Lord Jesus for me.

Those times when I had sinned against God,
and I felt His love for me, even before I asked for forgiveness.
His love for me has always brought me to my knees.
It's overwhelming.
Just when I am expecting Him to punish me,
He shows me love instead. I've never been able to explain that.
God's love "*is so great that you will never see the end of it or fully know or understand it..*"



+++++

120 How To Discipline A Child

So many books on the subject of how to raise a child. What do we do? As a psychiatric counselor, I am certainly aware of the many ways to positively reward behaviors, and how to set up reinforcing measurements of a child's actions. When they misbehave, we take away things the child wants. We use "time out" when they get out of line. We give rewards when they obey, so they will repeat the behavior. All good stuff.

Our society seems to go from extremes of physically abused kids, to spoiled rotten brats. As intelligent parents, we try to find the healthy medium.

So does God have any input?

Have His ideas gone by the wayside,
as with most of the Old Testament Jewish laws?
We don't sacrifice animals on the altar, we don't stone people for adultery, and we don't spank our children anymore.

Is that what you think?

(I bet we just got a bunch of different answers to that one)

As our devotion for this week, I want to give some verses for your consideration. And I want to ask you several questions.

In this 21st century, do you think God is Biblically silent on such an important issue as raising and disciplining children?

In the Bible, God has given us specific information on so many issues, but on this subject, does He have current instruction for us?

Do you think we're smarter than God, when it comes to the wisdom of raising a child? (If we're not, then we should seek His answers!)

All the verses below come from Proverbs, the Bible book of wisdom. ...So think about that.

+++++

Proverbs 23:13-14

*"Don't fail to correct your children; discipline won't kill them.
They won't die if you use a rod on them.
Punishment could keep them out of Hell."*

Proverbs 22:15

*"Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child,
but the rod of correction will drive it out of him."*

Proverbs 13:24

"If you refuse to discipline your child with the rod, it proves you don't love them, for if you love them you will be prompt to punish them."

Proverbs 19:18

*"Discipline your child in their early years while there is hope.
Don't neglect this just because they cry."*

Proverbs 29:15

*"Scolding and spanking a child helps them to learn.
Left to themselves, they bring shame to their mother."*



121 God's Boomerang

Proverbs 11:17 *“Your own soul is nourished when you are kind;
it is destroyed when you are cruel.”*

Psalms 18:25
“Lord, how merciful you are to those who are merciful..”

Matthew 5:7
“Happy are the kind and merciful, for they shall be shown mercy.”

Luke 6:36
*“Try to show as much compassion as your Father does.
Never criticize or condemn—or it will all come back on you.
Forgive and you will be forgiven.
For if you give, it will be given to you.
Your gift will return to you in full and overflowing measure, pressed
down, shaken together to make room for more, and running over..”*

+++++

Throw a marshmallow baby!

Because if you throw one with
spikes and razor blades,
you're dead.

And what am I talking about?
God's Boomerang!



Eastern religions call it Karma. What goes around comes around.

Whatever you give, you get back. And not just in equal amount!
*“For if you give, it will be given to you. Your gift will return to you in
full and overflowing measure, pressed down, shaken together to make
room for more, and running over..”*

Want a thousand?.....Give a hundred.

Want a hundred thousand?.....Give a thousand.

Want to be forgiven for being a bum.....Forgive the bum.

So,.... you got the idea?

Wind up and throw well.

122 Fear Not

II Timothy 1: 7
*“For God has not given us the spirit of fear,
but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”*

Matthew 10:26
*“Don’t be afraid of those who threaten you.
For the time is coming when the truth will be revealed;
their secret plots will become public information.”*

Psalms 23 *“...I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me,
guarding, guiding all the way.”*

Hebrews 6:18 *“It is impossible for God to tell a lie.”*

+++++

God calls each of us to engage in spiritual warfare at times.
Our enemy, Satan, comes to intimidate us through fear.

Learn to look at your situation and evaluate it with “combat eyes”.
Are your circumstances merely tactics of the enemy,
....designed to instill fear?

As children of the Most High God, we don’t need to be afraid.
We wear the armor of God, and stand firm in God’s power.
We claim His promises. GOD CAN NOT LIE.
What He has said, He will do.

Don’t fear sudden calamity. It may be the setting stage for a great
victory that will bring praise and honor to God.
These battles are training grounds for greater victories to come.

Notice the verse above says that a spirit of fear does not come from
God. *“For God has not given us the spirit of fear..”*
So where does it come from?
.....Satan.

Notice also, that the verse says we have been given a sound mind.
In other words, you’re not nuts.
What you sense, what you feel, what you see happening is real.
And with your sound mind, you can figure out,
and fight against the enemy’s tactics.

The verse says you have been given the Spirit of power.
You can defeat any weapon Satan uses against you.
“No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper...” Is 54:17
Remember, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” Rom 8:31

.....
“Excerpted with permission from the book TGIF Today God Is First
by Os Hillman. Copyright 2003. Reprinted by permission.
For free daily email subscription to TGIF Today God Is First,
visit www.TodayGodIsFirst.com or www.MarketplaceLeaders.org”

+++++

123 God in a human body

Colossians 2: 9-10
“For in Christ there is ALL OF GOD IN A HUMAN BODY;
so you have everything when you have Christ,
and you are FILLED WITH GOD through your union with Christ.
He is the highest Ruler, with authority over every other power.”

Romans 8:9-11 “...You are controlled by your new nature if you have
the SPIRIT OF GOD living IN you. Remember that if anyone doesn't
have the SPIRIT OF CHRIST living IN him, he is not a Christian at
all. Even though CHRIST LIVES WITHIN YOU, your body will die
because of sin; but your spirit will live, for Christ has pardoned it.
And if the SPIRIT OF GOD WHO RAISED UP JESUS from the dead,
LIVES IN YOU, He will make your dying bodies live again after you
die, by means of this same HOLY SPIRIT LIVING WITHIN YOU.”

+++++

Jehovah, who is Spirit.
The baby Jesus in a manger.
The Holy Spirit indwelling us.

Understand the concept of God in a human body,
and you will come closer to understanding the Trinity.
That may sound like double talk, or more accurately “triple talk”,
but it is sound theology.

The Bible says “God is a Spirit ...” (John 4:24)

“The Scriptures tell us that the first man, Adam, was given a natural
human body, but the Last Adam, Christ, is MORE than that, for He is
life-giving Spirit.” (I Corinthians 15:45)

Devotion #86, "Who's Your Daddy?", we talked about who Jesus is.
There has never been a doubt of who Jesus is.
We know His lineage back to Adam.
And who made Adam?
God.

He made Adam, and through Adam, He physically came to us.

I am doing this thought again, because I want you to see Jesus.
I want you to know who He is.
Everything centers on what you think about Jesus.
There is no other issue more important than this.
Please hear me.
There is NO other issue more important than this one.

*"For in Christ there is **ALL OF GOD IN A HUMAN BODY...**"*

*"It is quite true that the way to live a godly life is not an easy matter.
But the answer lies in **God who came to earth as a man**, was spotless
and pure in the Holy Spirit, was served by angels, was preached
among the nations, was accepted by men everywhere and was
received up again to His glory in heaven." (I Timothy 3:16)*

A little baby in a manger, who is Omnipotent God.
It is hard to understand this, but this is the message.

"Jesus said to Philip...He who has seen me has seen the Father".
John 14:9

"I and my Father are one." John 10:30

*"Jesus said, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, no one can get to
the Father except by means of me." (John 14: 6)*

You want to find God?
Find Jesus.

You want to go to Heaven?
Accept Jesus as Savior, Lord, God.
His death as your sacrificial payment for your sins.

You must accept this payment as YOUR payment.
Nothing else will work.

Let's say that again. Nothing else will work.

"For Jesus the Messiah is the one referred to in the Scriptures when they speak of a 'stone discarded by the builders which became the cornerstone'. THERE IS SALVATION IN NO ONE ELSE. Under all Heaven THERE IS NO OTHER NAME FOR MEN TO CALL UPON TO SAVE THEM." Acts 4: 10-12

His resurrection will give you life eternal.

He has given you the truth.

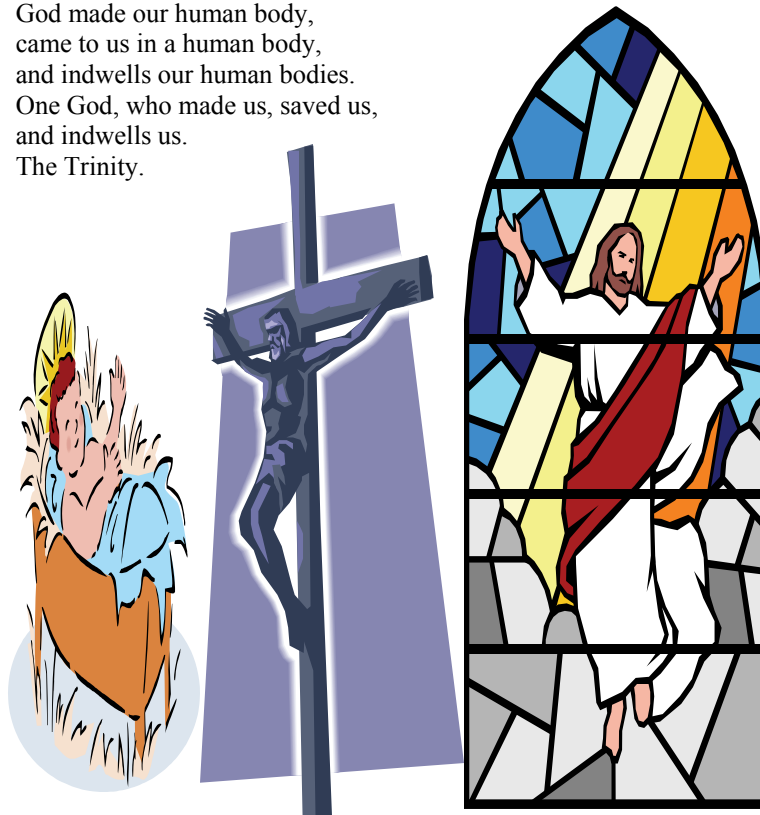
The only way.

"Remember that if anyone doesn't have the SPIRIT OF CHRIST living IN him, he is not a Christian at all." (Romans 8:9)

"God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him MUST worship Him in spirit, and in truth." (John 4:24)

They that worship God, must have the Spirit of Christ in them, for He is the truth. You can't worship God, without knowing Jesus Christ.

God made our human body,
came to us in a human body,
and indwells our human bodies.
One God, who made us, saved us,
and indwells us.
The Trinity.



124 God Wants Your Hands

John chapter 21 is an interesting story.
In devotion # 3, "Want To Understand?", we discuss it.
Jesus has risen, and has appeared twice to His disciples at this point.
This chapter tells us about seven disciples who go fishing,
and catch nothing all night.

Jesus then steps into the picture, and tells them to try again from the
right side of the boat. They catch 153 fish.
Peter sees that it's Jesus on the beach,
and dives overboard and swims ashore.

Now here we go:

John 21:8-10,12-13

*"The rest of us stayed in the boat and pulled the loaded net to the
beach, about 300 feet away. When we got there, we saw that a fire
was kindled and fish were frying over it, and there was bread.*

*"Bring some of the fish you've just caught," Jesus said.
So Simon Peter went out and dragged the net ashore..
"Now come and have some breakfast." Jesus said...
Then Jesus went around serving us the bread and the fish.
This was the third time Jesus had appeared to us since His return
from the dead."*

+++++



Why does John give us this
information about the fish that
are ALREADY frying?



Why does Jesus ask for some of the
fish they have just caught?

The Bible doesn't waste words.
God gives us these details for a reason.

During His ministry, Jesus takes two fish, and five loaves of bread,
...and feeds 5000.

If you look at this passage, it does not say 'a fish was frying',
instead it says 'fish were frying',
which means there were at least two fish already frying.

So in this story, Jesus presently has at least the same number of fish
frying, that He had when He fed the 5000.

Therefore,
Jesus has enough fish already to easily feed these 7 disciples.

Why doesn't He just use the fish He has?

Instead, He helps them catch a bunch of fish,
and then uses some of those fish to feed them.

Hmm.....

I have a thought.
Jesus could do this all Himself, but
HE WANTS US INVOLVED IN THE ACTIVITY.

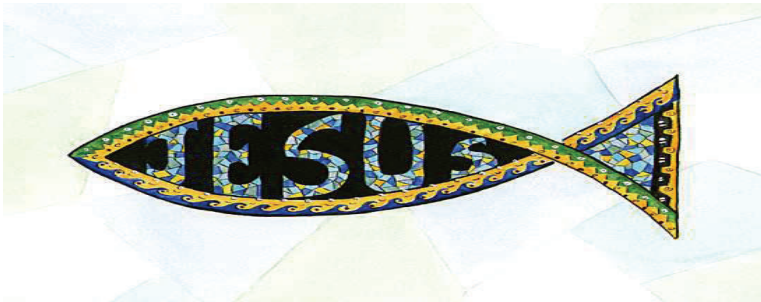
“..faith without works is dead.” (James 2:20)

God wants our effort in Christ-directed service.
God wants us to work in connection with Him.
“..I will show you my faith by my works.” (James 2:18)

God wants our hands to be busy in the ministry.
(and all of you have a ministry while you work and live on this planet)

God promises to bountifully supply our needs.
If we fish as directed from the right side of our boat,
we will catch many fish.

*“God will supply all your needs out of His riches in glory through
Jesus Christ.”*(Phil 4:19)



125 Wear Your Visitor's Badge

Hebrews 11: 8-10, 13-17

*“Abraham trusted God,
and when God told him to leave home and go far away to another
land which He promised to give him, Abraham obeyed.
Away he went, not even knowing where he was going.*

*And even when he reached God’s promise land, he lived in tents like a
mere visitor, as did Isaac and Jacob, to whom God gave the same
promise. Abraham did this because he was confidently waiting for
God to bring him to that strong heavenly city whose designer and
builder is God.*

*These men of faith I have mentioned died without ever receiving all
that God had promised them; but they saw it all awaiting them on
ahead and were glad, for they agreed that this earth was not their real
home; they were just strangers visiting down here.
And quite obviously when they talked like that,
they were looking forward to their real home in heaven.”*

+++++

*“like a mere visitor this earth was not their real home;
they were just strangers visiting down here.”*

If you’ve ever taken a vacation in another country, you can remember
how it felt. You really were a stranger in a foreign land.
Being there took you out of your comfort zone.
Your environment was a definite challenge.
Minor and major inconveniences were ignored.
They didn’t matter since it was just a short visit.
In fact, they were seen as “part of the experience”.

You didn’t speak their language.
When you walked into group situations, you felt like you didn’t fit in.
It was obvious that you were different.
As the “tourist”, you were easy to spot.

Some of the issues that the locals were arguing over didn’t matter to
you, since you didn’t live there.
In fact, the main arguing point didn’t even make sense to you.
You were able to see an unusual point of view,
since you were from another country.
You were able to see things differently,
since you were from another culture.

What others were so focused on didn't seem that important to you.
You had other priorities.

That's what being a child of God is like
when you are living on planet earth.
You realize your real home is heaven.
It's like living your life with a visitor's badge on.

The fame, the money, the house, the car, the perfect youthful body,
the clothes you wear, or the kind of grass you have growing in your
yard; they all don't really matter.

What does matter is eternal in nature.

Where will you spend eternity?
Have you found the The Way to heaven?
Do you know Jesus as your Savior?

After that life and death issue is settled for yourself,
then what about others you know?
Have your children and family found Jesus Christ?
Do you know whether your best friend is a believer?
Are you learning the Bible to be able to share the Word of God with
others? Are you spending your money on ministering to others?

When you're "from" heaven, your view point changes everything.
The world is seen in a different outlook
when you wear your visitor's badge.

*"You are only a visitor here. Since your real home is in heaven I beg
you to keep away from the evil pleasures of this world; they are not
for you, for they fight against your very souls."*(1 Peter 2: 11)

I'm a Visitor
here on earth



126 The Snatch Method and The Be Kind Method

Jude 1:23

“Save some by snatching them as from the very flames of hell itself. And as for others, help them to find the Lord by being kind to them, but be careful that you yourselves aren't pulled along into their sins. Hate every trace of their sin, while being merciful to them as sinners.”

II Corinthians 5:20, 6:1-2

“We are Christ’s ambassadors. God is using us to speak to you: we beg you, as though Christ Himself were here pleading with you, receive the love He offers you—be reconciled to God....As God’s workers we beg you not to toss aside this marvelous message of God’s great kindness....Right now God is ready to welcome you. Today He is ready to save you.”

II Timothy 4:2

“Preach the Word of God urgently at all times...”

+++++

Which Gospel presenting method will the Holy Spirit require of you today? The “snatch method” with begging, pleading, and preaching? **Or** The “be kind method” by showing compassion in a milder and gentler way?

Will it be a death bed conversion? **Or** “Just” another gentle visit to a budding friend?

How will you know when you should show intensity and haste? Maybe the person is walking out the door to step through “death’s door” this afternoon? **Or** Maybe you’re working on a 10 year project of watering the seed you’ve planted?

“...the Holy Spirit lives within you.”(I Cor. 6:19). “Jesus has far more glory than Moses....and since Christ is so much superior, the Holy Spirit warns us to listen to Him, to be careful to hear His voice today” (Hebrews 3:3,7)

Listen for Him, to tell you what to do.
You don’t have to worry about saving the world.
It is God who saves. You just follow His lead.
Be willing to obey whatever He tells you to do. He’ll do the rest.

“For no one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him to Me, and at the Last Day I will cause all such to rise again from the dead” (John 6:44).

Be ready to snatch, be ready to be kind, be ready to obey.
And watch God at work.

127 Suicidal and Codependent

Philippians 1:20-25 *“..I will always be an honor to Christ,
whether I live, or whether I must die.*

*For to me, living means opportunities for Christ,
and dying—well, that’s better yet!
But if living will give me more opportunities to win people to Christ,
then I really don’t know which is better, to live or die!*

*Sometimes I want to live, and at other times I don’t,
for I long to go and be with Christ.
How much happier for me than being here!*

*But the fact is that I can be of more help to you by staying.
Yes, I am still needed down here,
and so I feel certain I will be staying on earth a little longer,
to help you grow and become happy in your faith.”*

+++++

I write this devotion because I want you to use the Bible to challenge worldly ideas.

Maybe it’s not crazy to look forward,
to being on the other side of death’s door in Heaven.

Maybe it’s not crazy to live your life in the service of others,
instead of money.

Maybe it’s not crazy to leave a plush Atlanta home, and go to live in a
mud and straw hut in China, as a missionary for the Lord.

Maybe it’s not crazy to choose to serve with a ministry in a war torn
country, where you might be killed.

Maybe it’s not crazy to give all of your money to God’s work.

Maybe it's not crazy to work hard for free,
in the service of your King.

Maybe all of this is examples of obedience.

Obedience

Now, let's take a look at the passage.

*"Sometimes I want to live and at other times I don't,
for I long to go and be with Christ."*

Some may say this is passive suicidal ideation.
It's not supposed to be a healthy thing.

And listen to this: *"I can be of more help TO YOU by staying.
Yes, I am still needed down here... TO HELP YOU grow and become
happy"*

What's wrong with this guy?

Notice Paul doesn't say I want to live so I can be happy,
so I can enjoy MY LIFE.
I want to "do it **my** way". **I**'ll follow **my** own path.

One of the definitions of being codependent is this:
'Doing things for another to your own detriment'.
From the humanistic point of view,
this also is not a healthy thing to do.

But maybe we need to "*not be conformed to this world, but be
transformed by the renewing of your minds*" (Romans 12:1).

Maybe we need to redefine some of our "unhealthy" psychological
ideas, in light of the Bible, and God's point of view.

If being suicidal means that you can hardly wait to LIVE in Heaven,
....then I'm suicidal. Because I can't wait to be in Heaven

If codependent means being an obedient self-sacrificing servant of the
Most High God,....then I'm striving to be more codependent.

Instead of me, me, me,
It should be Him, Him, Him.

Of course I'm not saying that it is ok to take your own life.
I hope you know that.

The key to this devotion is the concept of **Obedience**.
To live your life as a selfless slave of God,
or to die in the service of Jesus Christ,
is to honor God with obedience.

I challenge you to live your life with an overwhelming pursuit to
honor and obey the Lord God.



128 God Chose You

John 3: 15-16

“Whosoever will believe in Me will have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son so that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

Titus 1:1-2 *“I have been sent to bring faith to those God has chosen and to teach them to know God’s truth—the kind of truth that changes lives—so that they can have eternal life, which God promised them before the world began—and He cannot lie.”*

+++++

You have been chosen. It’s the biggest pick-up game in the universe, and you’ve been chosen to play on the guaranteed winning team. You can not lose. Just say yes to Christ, and you are assured victory.

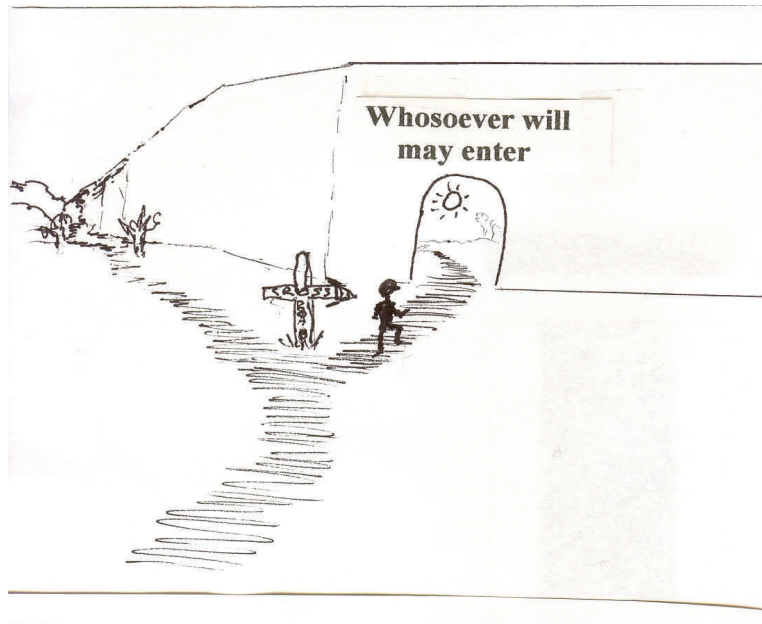
The idea of God choosing us (and/or) us choosing Him, is a tough debate.

This difficult concept was explained to me with this illustration.

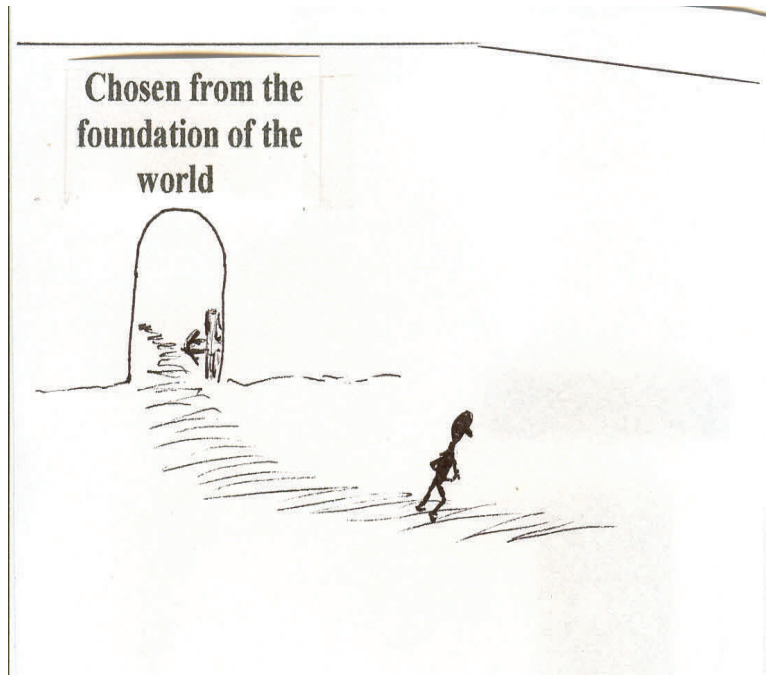
There is a door in front of you.

Over the door there is a sign that says: ‘Whosoever will, may enter’.

So you choose to walk through the door.



Now on the other side you look back and see a sign over the same door that says: 'Chosen from the foundation of the world'.



Is it Free will, or just foreknowledge of God,
or chosen predestination?

I don't know.

I can't explain it all.

But what I do know is this.

"God so loved the world that He gave"

Gave what?

Life.

Jesus is *"the way, the truth, and THE LIFE"*(John 14:6)

God cannot lie.

"they can have eternal life,

which GOD PROMISED them before the world began"

So I'll trust Him.

I'll accept the salvation He has given,
and put my faith in Jesus Christ.

I choose to join the winning team,
and am thankful that God chose me.

129 The Cure For Insomnia

Psalms 3: 5-6

"I lay down and slept in peace and woke up safely, for the Lord was watching over me. And now, although ten thousand enemies surround me on every side, I am not afraid."

Psalms 4: 8

*"I will lie down in peace and sleep,
for you alone, O Lord, you will keep me safe."*

Psalms 127:2 *"It is senseless for you to work so hard from early morning until late at night, fearing you will starve to death; for God gives His beloved ones their sleep."*

+++++

So the Bible can help you sleep.

No, not just reading the book of Numbers saying he begat, he begat,
he begat, ZZzzzz...

That's not what I'm talking about.

The Bible tells you that you are loved and protected by God, so you can sleep in peace. *"I lay down and slept in peace and woke up safely, for the Lord was watching over me."*

What a great picture.

Have you ever watched your child sleep?

You can't do it without having a contented smile on your face.

That's what our Father does. He loves us.

He smiles as He protects us, and watches us sleep.



That is why we can be unafraid.
Psalms 23 "...I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me..."

When the God of the universe sits on the end of your bed,
you are safe indeed. No demon from Hell can lay a fang on you.

"for God gives His beloved ones their sleep"

When you have trouble going to sleep, stop and talk to your Father
about it. Perhaps there is something He is trying to tell you.

*"I will lie down in peace and sleep,
for you alone, O Lord, you will keep me safe."*

It is the Lord who protects.
It is the Lord who can give peace.
And as with anything you lack, including sleep,
"ask, and it will be given" (Mt 7:7)

130 Hooray! You Get To Suffer!

Philippians 1:29
*"For you have been given the privilege not only to believe in Him,
but also to suffer for Him."*

II Corinthians 4:17-18
*"These troubles and sufferings of ours are, after all, quite small and
won't last very long. Yet this short time of distress will result in God's
richest blessing upon us forever and ever!"*

*So we do not look at what we can see right now, the troubles all
around us, but we look forward to the joys in heaven which we have
not yet seen. The troubles will soon be over, but the joys to come will
last forever."*

+++++

"For you have been given the privilege... to suffer for Him."

Oh, thanks.
You shouldn't have.

Let me ask you something.
Do you think the apostle Paul was out of his mind?

Why would Paul think that this message is good news?

Answer:
Because he has seen it from God's point of view.
An eternal view point.



Our life, and our death, are only a moment in time.
That's why making the salvation decision to follow Jesus Christ as Lord is so important. It has eternal impact.

Same thing with the idea of suffering for Christ.
The suffering lasts only for a moment in time, but then....
"this short time of distress will result in God's richest blessing upon us forever and ever!" "we look forward to the joys in heaven... the joys to come will last forever."

So, it truly is a privilege we've been given.
An honor to be allowed to suffer briefly,
which will result in eternal joy and blessing.

It's hard to deal with any suffering when it is happening.
"So we do not look at what we can see right now, the troubles all around us, but we look forward to the joys in heaven"
Some may say this is "living in denial",
I call it being "eternally far-sighted".

Will you obey God, and do whatever He says to do,
even if it gets you "into trouble"?

Are you willing to suffer for a moment,
to gain “*God’s richest blessing...forever*”?

Can you see that far ahead?
I encourage you to view your life from an eternal point of view.



131 Watch This! Here's Proof!

Mark 16:20

“And the disciples went everywhere preaching, and the Lord was with them and confirmed what they said by the miracles that followed their messages.”

Hebrews 2:4

“God always has shown us that these messages are true by signs and wonders and various miracles, and by giving certain special abilities from the Holy Spirit to those who believe; yes, God has assigned such gifts to each of us.”

+++++

“miracles that FOLLOWED their messages.”

Are you getting this?

It says that

AFTER the disciples preached THEN the miracles FOLLOWED.

Talk about hanging it all out for the Lord.
They stuck their necks out, and then things happened.

My friend, the same is true today.....Nothing has changed.

God wants to see if you will obey Him.Period.

If He shows up and wonderful things occur, then praise the Lord!

And if it appears that nothing great and miraculous happened,
then praise the Lord!

“For God can not tell a lie.” (Hebrews 6:7)

“Every promise from God shall surely come true.” (Luke 1:37)

“For my Word will not return void. I send it out, and it always produces fruit. It shall accomplish all I want it to, and prospers everywhere I send it.” (Isaiah 55:11)

When you speak God’s written Word, things happen.... Every time.

You may not see everything, but God is at work.

Sometimes the message you give to another will produce faith that shows at a later date. Faith that is started by hearing the Word.

“faith comes by hearing the Word of God.” (Romans 10:17)

Then the miracle follows. *“God always has shown us that these messages are true by giving certain special abilities from the Holy Spirit to those who believe”*



132 It's Simple. Bring Them To Jesus

John 1:41-42

*“Andrew then went to find his brother Peter and told him,
‘We have found the Messiah!’ And he brought Peter to meet Jesus.”*

+++++

It's that simple.

You don't have to explain the Trinity.
You don't have to be a seminary graduate.
You don't have to preach the perfect three-point sermon.

Just bring them to Jesus.

Don't worry about the results.
It's not up to you to make anything happen.
Just bring them to Jesus.

If you know Him, it's natural to want to introduce Him.
You can do this.
Practice it right now.
Try this....

‘Hey, I just wanted to tell you something important.
I found the Lord Jesus.
I want you to know Him too.
I prayed and asked Him to come into my life.
And He changed my life.

He's given me peace that I can't even explain.
I'm so excited that I've found Him, that I want you to meet Him.

He has the answers to all your questions.
He can meet your every need.

He can turn the fear of death, into an exciting hope of eternal life.
He can turn depression into joy, and anxiety into peace of heart.
He can cover all your doubts with unbreakable promises.
He will heal every wound.

Are you interested in meeting Him?
If you are, say the following prayer to Him right now.

Lord Jesus please hear me, and help me hear you.
I want to meet you. I want to sense your presence.
I ask you right now to come into my heart and life.
I do believe. Help my unbelief.
And forgive me for my sins.
Save me Lord. Amen.'

It's all about Jesus.
He is real. He is alive.
When you discover Him, you need no other proof.

*“Andrew then (1) **went to find** his brother Peter
and (2) **told him**. ‘We have found the Messiah!’
(3) **And he brought Peter to meet** Jesus.”*

Go find your brother, sister, and friend,
and tell them about Jesus (read this to them!),
and bring them to meet the Lord (ask them to repeat this prayer).

You can do this.
Try it.



CHILDLIKE FAITH

“Except you be converted, and become as little children, you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 18:3

133 Is the term Born Again outdated?

John 3: 3-7

“Jesus replied, ‘I will tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you can never get into the Kingdom of God.’

‘Born again?’, asked Nicodemus, ‘What do you mean? How can an old man go back into his mother’s womb, and be born again?’

Jesus replied, ‘What I am truthfully telling you is this: Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God. Men can only reproduce human life, but the Holy Spirit gives new spiritual life from heaven. So don’t be surprised at my statement that you must be born again.’”

+++++



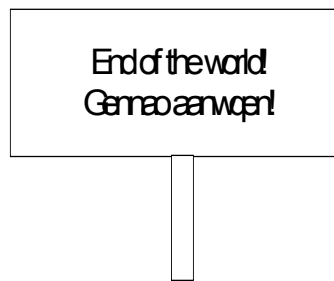
‘Born again?’, asked Nicodemus, ‘What do you mean?’

The term “born again” has fallen out of use, hasn’t it?

When was the last time you used it, when witnessing to someone?
Isn’t it true, that in this day and age, people generally think you’re outdated, and therefore weird, if you use this term?

Movies and TV will portray anyone saying this phrase as a crazy person. The view we’re given, is one of a grubby-looking man on the street corner, holding a sign that says,

‘End of the world!
Are you Born Again?!’



Even within evangelistic circles, we want to speak in an updated way.
We want to be hip,
and use 21st century language,
to more effectively communicate.

Now in my opinion, there’s nothing wrong with using current
technology and language to win the lost.
In fact, that’s why I quote from the Living Way version of the Bible.

But there’s something important about the fact that this term is in the
Word of God.

(Greek: gennaon- be born, regenerate, beget, conceive.
aanwqen- anew, over again)

Jesus told us something 2000 years ago that hasn’t changed.
*“unless you are born again,
you can never get into the Kingdom of God”*

Are we telling others what Jesus said?

It’s seems rather important, don’t you think?

Notes in the Scofield Bible written in 1909 by C.I. Scofield say this:

(1)The necessity of the new birth grows out of the incapacity of the natural man to ‘see’ or ‘enter into’ the kingdom of God. However gifted, moral, or refined he may be, the natural man is absolutely blind to spiritual truth and impotent to enter the kingdom; for he can neither obey, understand, nor please God.

(2)The new birth is not a reformation of the old nature, but a creative act of the Holy Spirit.

“All who receive Jesus Christ will become children of God. All they need to do is trust Him to save them. Everyone who believes this is reborn—not of physical birth resulting from human passion or plan—but from the will of God.” (Jn 1: 12-13)

So I ask you,
who are we to say the term “born again” is outdated, or weird?

We should use the term, no matter what the world says.

We should explain the term,
no matter what the Devil does to try to stop us.

“Jesus replied,you must be born again!”

134 With Your Own Eyes

I Peter 5:1

“...with my own eyes I saw Christ dying on the cross..”

Acts 2:32

“...we are all are witnesses that Jesus rose from the dead”

Acts 1:3

“During the forty days after His crucifixion He appeared to the apostles from time to time, actually alive, and proved to them in many ways that it was really He Himself they were seeing.”

I Corinthians 15:6

“After that He was seen by more than five hundred Christian brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive...”

II Peter 1:16

“For we have not been telling you fairy tales when we explained to you the power of our Lord Jesus Christ and His coming again. My own eyes have seen His splendor and His glory.”

I John 1:1,3

“...I myself have seen Him with my own eyes and listened to Him speak. I have touched Him with my own hands.....Again I say, we are telling you about what we ourselves have actually seen and heard, so that you may share the fellowship and the joys we have with the Father and Jesus Christ His Son.”

+++++

Why do you believe that George Washington lived as our first president?

Did you ever meet him?
Ever see him?

Did you ever meet anyone who met him?
No?

So how do you know George was a real person, and not just a fairy tale?

You say because other people knew him and wrote about him, right?
And yes, we have photos of him, with his image on our one dollar bill.



Now we don't have an official image, or sculpture of Jesus for a reason.

He is still alive,
and He wants us to worship Him,
not an image, or an idol.

How do we know about His death and resurrection?

Because people saw Jesus with their own eyes. They saw the events. And they wrote about them. They wrote about Him.

Even if you don't believe that the Holy Spirit of God moved men to write the actual words of the Bible, you still have to deal with the facts that they did write about.

In previous devotions #2, “So That You May Know”,
and #15, “Were They Lying”, we wrote about all of this.
The subject is so good; we had to do it again.

“...we are all are witnesses that Jesus rose from the dead”

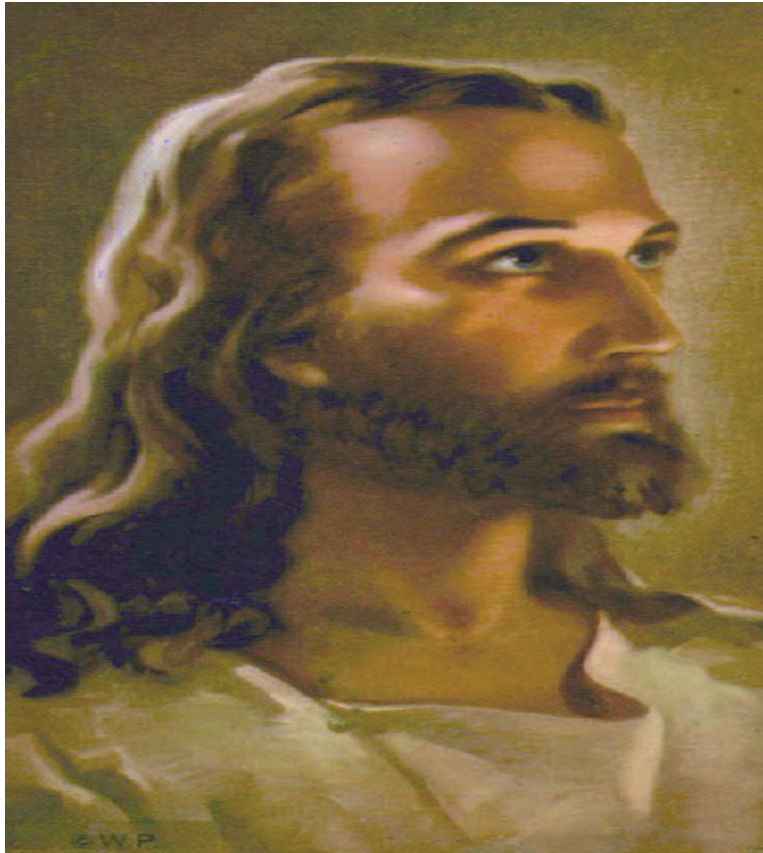
Just think about what these verses above are saying.

The writers saw Jesus with their own eyes.

They saw Him after He rose from the dead.
And they are trying to tell you about it.

Are you listening?

Yes, I believe what they wrote. I believe He lives.
I have seen Him change my life. And sensed His presence.
Someday, I can't wait to see Him with my own eyes.



135 Lovers of Pleasure

2 Timothy 3:1-2, 4-5

“...In the last days it is going to be very difficult to be a Christian. For people will love only themselves and their money, ...and prefer to please themselves being lovers of pleasure instead of lovers of God. They will go to church, yes, but they won't really believe anything they hear. Don't be taken in by people like that.”

Philippians 3:18-19

“For I have told you often before, and I say it again now with tears in my eyes, there are many who walk along the Christian road who are really enemies of the cross of Christ... All they think about is this life here on earth.”

Luke 8:11,14 (Parable of the Sower)

“This is it's meaning: The seed is God's Word...The seed among the thorns represents those who listen and believe God's Word, but whose faith afterwards is choked out by worry, and riches, and the pleasures of life. And so they are never able to help anyone else to believe the gospel.”

Proverbs 21:17 *“Anyone who loves pleasure will become poor, wine and luxury are not the way to riches.”*

+++++

God tells us that in the last days, people will be lovers of pleasure. And God includes those who seem to be “church going Christians”. Those who have heard the Gospel, but now are totally ineffective. And why? Because their faith *“is choked out by worry, and riches, and the pleasures of life.”*

Jesus is the vine, and we are the branches, according to John 15. John 15:2 tells us what happens to branches of the vine that don't produce. Read it, it's kind of scary.

“Every branch that bears no fruit, God cuts off and takes away”

In fact, the whole idea that there are those around us who talk the talk, but don't walk the walk, is scary.

I certainly don't need that, do you?
I need someone to lift me up.
To help me walk the walk.

Scripture is clear that there are “*many who walk along the Christian road who are really enemies of the cross of Christ.*”

Whoa.

I have enough trouble from the non-believing scoffers who work and live around me. I don't need a snake in the grass.

Those who say that they believe, and want to help me with Christian things, but then end up harming me, or hindering the ministry.

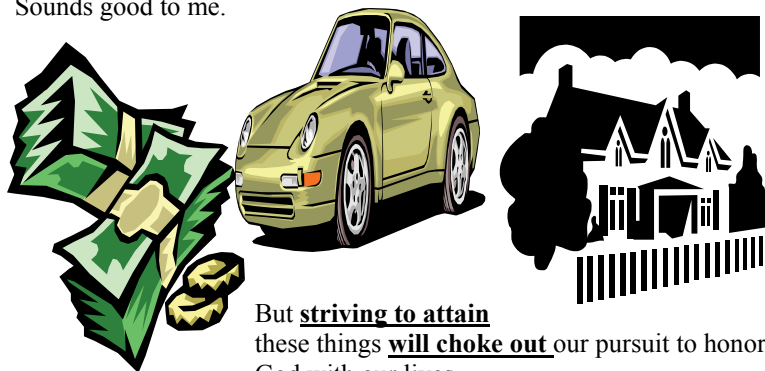
But this is what the Bible says.
It is the classical hypocrite in the church idea. Or worse.
It maybe the best laid plan of Satan to trip us up. To stop us.
We need to wake up.

There will be those who “*will love only themselves and their money, ...and prefer to please themselves being lovers of pleasure, instead of lovers of God.*”

All pleasures, even those that seem innocent and harmless, can choke us.
That's what the parable of the sower tells us, doesn't it?
The seed among the thorns, choked by the pleasures of life.
Only thinking about “*this life here on earth.*”

Now think about this. We all want the good life, don't we?
To enjoy the finer things.
Good food, fine wine, soft bed, nice car, fun toys, big house, pretty furniture, cool electronics, and breath taking vacations.

Sounds good to me.

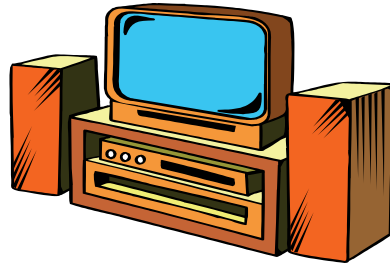


But **striving to attain** these things **will choke out** our pursuit to honor God with our lives.

Do you understand?

If the Holy Spirit whispers to you, to give away your hard earned money, that's in your savings account, to evangelize the lost, will you obey?
Or will you think of the better car that you've been saving for?
The special trip that "you deserve"?
Or the nicer clothes that you want to wear?

Could you give your hard earned money to a missionary?
Or would think about saving it for a bigger TV?



Do you get it?

Don't be a lover of pleasure.
Be a lover of God.
Worship and serve Him.

136 Yo. Bro.

Mark 6:3

"He's no better than we are,' they said. 'He's just a carpenter, Mary's boy, and a brother of James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon. And His sisters live right here among us. '"

John 7:3-5

"Go where people can see your miracles', they scoffed, 'You can't be famous when you hide like this. If you're so great, prove it to the world.' For even His brothers didn't believe in Him." (at this point!)

Acts 1: 3, 9, 12, 14

"During the forty days after His crucifixion He appeared to the apostles... It was not long afterwards that He rose into the sky and disappeared into a cloud,....

They were at the Mount of Olives when this happened, so now they walked the half mile back to Jerusalem and held a prayer meeting.... Present at the meeting: ... the brothers of Jesus...."

James 1:1

"From James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Jude 1:1

"From Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ, and a brother of James."

Let me get something straight with ya'all.
If my brother was God, you would definitely know that **I** was His brother. There would be no doubt.

Here's how my letter for the Bible would start.

Richard 1: 1-2

"Jesus is God in the flesh. Son of God. Son of Man.

And I'm Richard: **BROTHER** of THE man.

That's right, He's **MY bro.**"

But look at what James and Jude say. They call themselves servants.

Jude points out that he's the bother of James, not Jesus.

What's wrong with these guys?

Don't they understand how to be famous?

Ok, so they didn't believe at first. So what?..... Did you?

Think about it, if your brother went 30 years before He started His ministry as the Savior of the world, you might doubt too.

You see Him everyday, and He seems pretty normal.

Although growing up with Him you do notice some strange things.

For instance, He seems to know the Scriptures better than the Rabbis at the Temple.

In fact, as a boy He teaches them! That's a little strange.

On one particular day, everything changes.

He starts telling people that He is God.

He starts healing everybody. He touches the blind, and they can see.

Causes the crippled to walk, and the deaf to hear.

Walks on water.

He even raises three people from the dead.

And after He dies, **He** rises from the dead!

Wouldn't you change your mind?

I mean, come on, you see Him alive after He dies on a cross.

You talk to Him, so you know it's Him.

You watch Him float off into the sky, towards heaven.

That should be enough to convince you for the rest of your life!

And that is my point.

They never changed their minds again.

They never renounced Him.

Even though He is their brother, they called Him the Lord.

The Christ.

Messiah.

Savior.

They knew who He was.
They know who He is.
And they believed.
They lived out their lives as His servants.

How about you? Do you believe?
Are you a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ?

137 Death Is Not The End

I have buried both my Mom and Dad, and it was difficult.
There is sorrow, but not sorrow like those who have no hope.
Why?
Because both my parents knew the Lord Jesus as Savior,
and that makes all the difference. I will see them again.

During the last funeral, I realized that we read “those” scriptures differently. We hear with new ears, because of the casket.

For our devotion this week, I would like you to read the following scripture, just as if you were speaking to a group of Christians at grave site.

You’ve been asked to bring a word from the Bible. This is it.

+++++

I Thessalonians 4: 13-18

“And now, dear brothers, I want you to know what happens to a Christian when he dies so that when it happens, you will not be full of sorrow, as those are who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and then came back to life again, we can also believe that when Jesus returns, God will bring back with Him all the Christians who have died.

*I can tell you this directly from the Lord: that we who are still living when the Lord returns will not rise to meet Him ahead of those who are in their graves. For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven with a mighty shout and with the soul-stirring cry of the archangel and the great trumpet-call of God. And the believers who are dead will be the first to rise to meet the Lord. Then we who are still alive on the earth will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and remain with Him forever.
So comfort and encourage each other with this message.”*

I Corinthians 15:51-52

“I am telling you this strange and wonderful secret: we shall not all die, but we shall all be given new bodies! It will all happen in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For there will be a trumpet-call of God, and all the Christians who have died will suddenly become alive, with new bodies that will never die; and then we who are still alive shall suddenly have new bodies too.”

II Corinthians 5: 6,8

“So we look forward with confidence to our heavenly bodies, realizing that every moment we spend in these earthly bodies is time spent away from our eternal home in heaven with Jesus....We are not afraid, but are quite content to die, for being absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.”

+++++

So the message to believers is clear.
When we die we go to be with Jesus.
And our bodies will rise again, Just like Jesus.
We may die, but we will live again.
Because of Jesus, there is hope.

“So comfort and encourage each other with this message...”

“we look forward with confidence to our heavenly bodies...”

“absent from the body is to be present with the Lord..”

Death
is not the end

138 Which Gabriel Do You Believe?

The angel Gabriel of the Bible who spoke to the Virgin Mary, and to the Prophet Daniel?

Or

The angel who called himself Gabriel, and gave Muhammad the Qur'an?



My name is
Gabriel.



My name
is Gabriel.

FROM THE BIBLE:

Luke 1: 26-27,

“The following month God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, to a virgin named Mary,... ‘You will become pregnant and have a baby boy, and you are to name Him Jesus. He shall be very great and shall be called the Son of God. And God shall give Him the throne of His ancestor David and He shall reign over Israel forever. His kingdom shall never end!’ ... ‘The Holy Spirit shall come over you, and the power of God shall overshadow you; so the baby born to you will be utterly holy—the Son of God’.

Matthew 1:21-22

(An angel speaks to Joseph in a dream about his fiancée Mary.)

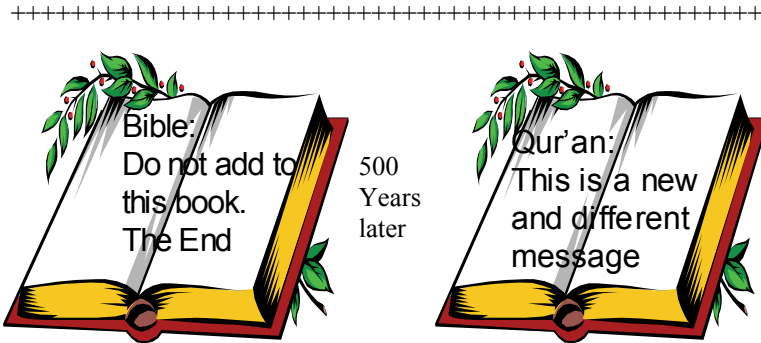
“...she will have a Son, and you shall name Him Jesus for He will save His people from their sins. This will fulfill God’s message through His prophets, ‘This shall be the sign, a virgin shall conceive a child. She shall give birth to a Son, and He will be known as Emmanuel which means God with us.’” (prophecy from Isaiah 7:14)

Daniel 9:21, 25-26

*“While I was praying the angel Gabriel came to me and spoke,
‘It will be 49 years plus 434 years from the time the command is given
to rebuild Jerusalem, until the Messiah comes... ‘After this period of
434 years, the Messiah will be killed, His kingdom still unrealized..’”*

Revelation 1:5

*“Jesus Christ who faithfully reveals all truth to us. He was the first to
rise from the death, to die no more. He is far greater than any king in
all the earth. All praise to Him who always loves us
and who set us free from our sins by pouring out His blood for us.”*



Now before we go on,

I want to give you a four more Bible verses to think about.

I'll give them in this order:

- 1)The Bible was complete when John finished the book of Revelation.
- 2)Satan can appear as an angel of light.
- 3)We know the devices of Satan.
- 4)If an angel comes to tell you another Gospel, let him be cursed.

Here we go:

Revelation 22: 18-19

*“If anyone adds anything to what is written here, God shall add to
him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone subtracts any
words of this book of prophecy, God will take away his share in the
Tree of Life, and in the Holy City just described.”*

2 Corinthians 11:14 *“Don't be surprised that Satan can change
himself into an angel of light”.*

2 Corinthians 2:11 *“We are not ignorant of Satan's devices.”*

Galatians 1:8

“Let God’s curses fall on anyone, including myself, who preaches any other way to be saved than the Gospel we have given you. If an angel comes and gives you any other message, let him be forever cursed.”

520 years after John wrote the warning in Revelation, history records that an angel appeared to Muhammad, and gave him another gospel. An “additional message” to the Bible.

According to the Islamic faith, an angel who said his name was ‘Gabriel’, started visiting Muhammad. This angel choked Muhammad until Muhammad agreed to memorize a new “message from God.”

At first Muhammad thought the angel was a devil, but Muhammad’s wife convinced him to obey this angel so he would be great. In many “revelations”, this angel gave Muhammad the Qur’an; which Muhammad memorized in sections, and then went and recited the section he had memorized to others who wrote it down, since Muhammad could not read or write. This is how we got the written Qur’an or Koran.

Now here are some key verses **FROM THE QUR’AN**:

^{5:76} **They misbelieve who say, ‘Verily, God is the Messiah the son of Mary;’ but the Messiah said, ‘O children of Israel, worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord;’ verily, he who associates aught with Allah, Allah hath forbidden him Paradise, and his resort is the Fire, and the unjust shall have none to help them.**

⁷⁷ **They misbelieve who say, ‘Verily, God is the third of three;’ for there is no God but one, and if they do not desist from what they say, there shall touch those who misbelieve amongst them grievous woe.** ⁷⁸ Will they not turn again towards Allah and ask pardon of Him? For Allah is forgiving and merciful.

⁷⁹ **The Messiah the son of Mary is only a prophet: prophets before him have passed away; and his mother was a confessor; they used both to eat food.- See how we explain to them the signs, yet see how they turn aside!**

^{3:52} **Verily the likeness of Jesus with God is as the likeness of Adam.**

Allah created him from earth, then He said to him Be, and he was;-

^{4:169} **O ye people of the Book! (Bible) Do not exceed in your religion, nor say against Allah aught save the truth.**

The Messiah, Jesus the son of Mary, is but the apostle of Allah and His Word, which He cast into Mary and a spirit from Him;

believe then in Allah and His apostles, and say not 'Three.' Have done! It were better for you. God is only one God,

4:156 'Verily, we have killed the Messiah, Jesus the son of Mary, the apostle of Allah,'

...but they did not kill him, and they did not crucify him, but a similitude was made for them. And verily, those who differ about him are in doubt concerning him; they have no knowledge concerning him, but only follow an opinion. **They did not kill him, for sure! Nay, Allah took him up unto Himself; for Allah is mighty and wise!**

19:86 **Dost thou not see that we have sent the devils against the mis-believers, to drive them on to sin? ⁸⁷ but, be not thou hasty with them.**

Verily, we will number them a number (of days), ⁸⁸ the day when we will gather the pious to the Merciful as ambassadors, ⁸⁹ and we will drive the sinners to hell like (herds) to water! ⁹⁰ They shall not possess intercession, save he who has taken a compact with the Merciful. ⁹¹ **They say, 'The Merciful has taken to Himself a son:'- ye have brought a monstrous thing!** ⁹² The heavens well-nigh burst asunder thereat, and the earth is riven, and the mountains fall down broken, ⁹³ that they attribute to the Merciful a son! **but it becomes not the Merciful to take to Himself a son!**

.....
Ok, so unlike Muhammad, you can read.
You have now read both the Bible, and the Qur'an.

You are a smart person,
and the Bible says you are not ignorant of Satan's devices.

Satan is a liar.
He likes to deceive by lying.
But you are able to sort out the truth.
You know the truth.
Jesus said He is the truth.
And the truth shall set you free.

So.....Which Gabriel do you believe?

Both can't be true.
You must choose.
Either the Bible is correct, and Jesus is the only way to Heaven.
Or the Qur'an is right, and you must believe in Allah alone.

139 Lost and Blind

2 Corinthians 4:3-4

“If the Gospel we preach is hidden to anyone, it is hidden from the one who is on the road to eternal death. Satan, who is the god of this evil world, has made him blind, unable to see the glorious light of the Gospel that is shining upon him, or to understand the amazing message we preach about the glory of Christ, who is God.”

John 9:39 *“Jesus said, ‘I have come into the world to give sight to those who are spiritually blind..’”*

John 14:12-14

“In solemn truth I tell you, anyone believing in me shall do the same miracles I have done, and even greater ones, because I am going to be with the Father. You can ask Him for anything, using my name, and I will do it, for this will bring praise to the Father because of what I, the Son, will do for you. Yes, ask anything, using my name, and I will do it.”

+++++

We wrote a past devotion entitled “Grace Abounds” # 56, in which we discussed the subject of whether Satan can CAUSE a person to go to hell.

Satan did start this whole mess by lying to Adam and Eve, with sin as the ultimate cause of anyone going to hell.

But in that past devotion, we wanted you to concentrate on God’s power to save, not on Satan’s lies, or the confusion he can cause.

“..where sin abounds, grace does much more abound.” Romans 5:20

As long as a person has breath, they can still choose to accept Jesus.

“The Lord isn’t really being slow about His promised return, even though it sometimes seems that way. He really doesn’t want anyone to perish so He is giving more time for sinners to repent.” 2 Peter 3:9

If you are reading this, you still have time to change your mind. Say yes to Jesus today.

The issue is that everyone has made a choice already.

“God will show His anger from Heaven against all sinful men who PUSH AWAY THE TRUTH from them. For the truth about God is known to them INSTINCTIVELY, GOD HAS PUT THIS KNOWLEDGE IN THEIR HEARTS...” Romans 1:18-21

Apparently once a choice is made to reject the God of the universe, Satan is given permission to spiritually blind some to the plan of salvation in Christ.

“If the Gospel we preach is hidden to anyone, it is hidden from the one who is on the road to eternal death.”

They have turned away from knowing God whom they instinctively know is present. They won't seek Him.
They won't search out the details of who He is.
If they did, God would reveal the plan of salvation.
They would see Jesus, and be saved.
But because of the choice to “..push away the truth..” ,
Satan is allowed to blind them,
so they do not see the light of the Gospel of Christ.
They are truly spiritually blind.

Your average blind person is aware that they are blind.
When they walk down the street and run into a telephone pole, or fall into a big hole, they quickly figure out that something is wrong.



But in the spiritual world,
people aren't aware that they are blind.
They constantly live with the results,
but don't understand the cause.

They feel the emptiness inside,
like falling into a big hole.

They fear death, which causes a pain far worse
then running into any telephone pole.

So they numb themselves.
It's too painful and scary.

But we have the answer!
We know Jesus can give them sight!
We know Jesus can fill that emptiness.
We know Jesus can give peace, and take away the pain.

So what am I saying to you in this devotion?

Two things.

Number 1.

We should encourage people to say yes to God now.

To say yes to whatever level of understanding they have of God, and to seek to know Him. To keep their minds open.

To see the design of the universe, and to seek to know the designer.

Number2.

We should pray for the lost.

And I mean specifically pray that their blindness be healed.

A prayer that their spiritual eyes will open. That the blind will see.

Jesus healed the blind, and His promise is “*anyone believing in me shall do the same miracles I have done, and even greater ones.*”

Don’t just take the easy path by inviting them to church once, ...and then give up.

We need to pray for spiritual healing as we do for physical healing.

Now, who are you going to pray for like that?

140 Begin Afresh Each Morning

Lamentations 3:21-23

“Yet there is a ray of hope. God’s compassion never ends. It is only the Lord’s mercies that have kept us from complete destruction.

Great is His faithfulness;

His loving-kindness begins afresh each morning.

My soul claims the Lord as my inheritance; therefore I will hope in him. The Lord is wonderfully good to those who wait for Him, to those who seek Him. It is good both to hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.”

+++++

What is the ray of hope mentioned above?

“Yet there is a ray of hope. God’s compassion never ends....”

That ray of hope is God’s love for us, right?

Without God's love for us, we're dead. We have no hope.

But the fact is that we do have hope, because God loves us.
The Bible is repetitively clear on this. God does love us.

"For God so loved the world" (John 3:16)
"We know how much God loves us because we have felt His love and because we believe Him when He tells us that He loves us dearly. God is love.." (1 John 4:16)

Because of His love, we can obtain mercy.
Because of His love, we can be forgiven.

"Great is His faithfulness; His loving-kindness begins afresh each morning." Every morning you can begin afresh; you can be forgiven.
Your past years are forgiven. Yesterday is forgiven.
Start again today.

God states within His Word that His *"compassion never ends"*.
It is because of this promise that we have hope.

It's that simple. Take hold of it. Take hold of Him.
Because God's love never fails and never ends,
we can have hope in Him.

With confidence we can seek Him, knowing He is faithful.
Sometimes we may have to wait upon an answer.
We may have to wait for Him.
But the Bible makes it clear that this is a good thing.

If you had plenty of money, good health, no trouble, no problems,
..then perhaps you would not seek Him.

God wants you to need Him.
He wants you to seek Him.
He wants you to worship Him.
He wants you to wait on Him, so He can show up and save you.
*"It is good both to hope
and wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord."*

I encourage you to claim His promise.
"The Lord is wonderfully good to those who wait for Him"

God loves you, and promises you hope, and forgiveness.

Start afresh today with Him.

141 Forget The Past

Philippians 3:13-14

"I am still not all I should be, but I am bringing all my energies to bear on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize for which God is calling us up to heaven because of what Christ Jesus did for us."

+++++

You know it's easy to say, 'Forget the past' or 'Let it go'.
But if it was so easy to do, then why is this passage in God's Word?

Why tell us about Paul, and how hard he had to work at accomplishing this task. Look at it again,
"I am bringing all my energies to bear on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead.."

Are you getting this?
Letting go of the past is hard work.
All of your energy may have to be focused on this one thing.

But focus you must, if you wish to succeed.

"I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize"
When you are running fast in a race,
you should focus your sight on what's ahead.
To be constantly looking behind,
will cause you to trip and fall flat on your face.

You must put forth the effort, to let things go.
It's an emotional and mental choice.
Sinful things that have happened to you.
Sinful things that you did, and have been forgiven for.
All of it. Don't let it trip you up.

Now I hear some of you arm chair psychologists grumbling.
I'm not saying that you should live your whole life in total denial.
But there is a big difference between:

- A) Getting some therapy in a contained effort to work on your past issues,
-**vs.**
- B) Allowing the past to continually pop up and wrap itself around your feet; keeping you from running the race as a Christian.

You don't have to perfect.
Remember how Paul started this verse,
“I am still not all I should be, but...”

Paul was throwing off everything that slowed him down in the race.
“Since we have such a huge crowd of saints watching us from the grandstand in the clouds, let us strip off anything that slows us down or holds us back, and especially those sins that wrap themselves so tightly around our feet and trip us up; and let us run with patience the particular race that God has set before us.” Hebrews 12:1

Don't let anything keep you from staying active in serving your Lord.
Serve God in Holy Spirit power, while living in Christ's love and forgiveness. Do what He has told you to do.

Put the effort forth to,
'Forget your past' and 'Strain to reach the end of the race'.

142 Don't Complain or Argue

Philippians 2: 14-16
“Do everything without complaining and arguing, so that no one can speak a word of blame against you. You are to live blameless and harmless lives as children of God in a dark world full of people who are crooked and perverse. Shine out among them like beacon lights, holding out to them the Word of Life.”

Romans 8:28 “All things work together for good to them who love God and are fitting into His plans.”

+++++

How do you like your job?
I actually like mine.
I now work a job that has regular scheduled hours.
The 9 to 5 kind of employment.
I'm also on a fixed salary, so any overtime is part of the job.
And there's the rub.

I have a confession to make to all of you.
Quite often, when I am required to work late,
I complain to anyone within ear shot.
I also want to argue the issue with management.
Of course I never say everything that I think,
but I have loudly argued the point, mentally.

I think to myself, how dare they give me a set schedule,
and then require me to work more hours.
I grumble to myself that they are insensitive.
They view only the profit margin. So I complain. I argue.

Therefore, according to the passage above,
I am acting in a way that others can say a word of blame against me.
And that's not what the Lord wants for me.

As a child and servant of God, I am His representative here on earth.
I strive to live blameless, and most certainly harmless, in this dark
world of crooks and perverse people.
I try to shine out, and give others the Word of Life.

God has given me a command in His Word, to live blameless.
But I seem to have a hard time doing that.
This stuff is easy to preach,
and a heck of a lot harder to put into practice.

Are you like me?
One minute saying a word of praise to our Lord, and the next minute
complaining and arguing against a perceived injustice?

Maybe we really don't believe Romans 8:28 ?
It says, "All things work together for good...",
including being taken advantage of by a corporation.

We've got to remember that God is in charge of our lives.
He can change your situation if He wants.
If God wants to remove a king or a CEO, He can.

We obey God, but obeying them.
*"Let every soul be subject unto the higher authorities. For there is no
authority but of God; all other authorities are placed into power by
God. Whoever therefore resists the authorities resists God who
ordained them to be, and they that resist will be judged."* Rom 13:1-2

So, I plan on doing better in this area, by not complaining, or arguing
about staying late. How about you?

Don't Complain or Argue

143 How Do You Like Your Preaching?

How do you like it served?
Regular, Honey Barbecued, Spicy, or Extra Crispy?
We'll divide the month up into four different messages for you.

First Sunday: Inspirational:
Joel Osteen being positive and uplifting. (Regular)

Second Sunday: Educational:
John Ankerberg teaching specific details. (Honey Barb)

Third Sunday: Fired Up:
T.D. Jakes shouting out a message. (Spicy)

Forth Sunday: Say It Straight:
Jack Van Impe preaching on Hell. (Extra Crispy)



So, if we give you a buffet style of preaching,
you can choose what you want to hear.
For those of you who don't like hearing messages about Hell,
then stick with Joel Osteen.
For those of you who get bored with John Ankerberg,
then stay fired up with TD Jakes.

Don't you think this is a good idea? Only listening to what you like?
You get to choose what to listen to, and what to not listen to?

But I have one small question for you.

Is this what GOD chooses for you?

I don't think there is a problem with listening to many different preachers. I think the problem is when you won't listen to God.

Boy, I just messed up a good plan, didn't I?

But how about this issue?

What if God wants you to hear and study the whole Bible?

The positive, 'You can do it because God loves you' messages,
as well as the negative, 'Hell is real and forever' messages.

It is GOD who gives you messages from HIS Word.

It is God's timing for when you to hear a message from HIM.

And HE can use a bunch of different "preachers" to accomplish that.

The real question we need to ask is this:

Will you open your ears, open your mind,

....and open your heart, to God?

The Apostle Paul wrote a letter to a young preacher named Timothy.

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul wrote this:

"All scripture was given to us by inspiration from God and is useful to teach us doctrine and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives; it straightens us out, and lifts us up to help us do what is right. It is God's way of making us well prepared at every point, fully equipped to do good to everyone.

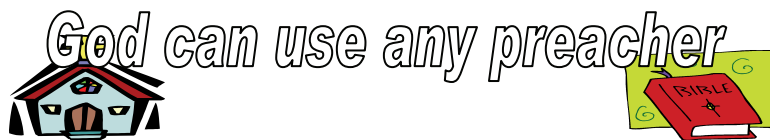
Preach the Word of God urgently at all times, whenever you get the chance, in season and out, when it is convenient and when it is not. Correct and rebuke your people when they need it, encourage them to do right, and all the time be feeding them patiently with God's Word.

For there is going to come a time when people won't listen to the truth, but will go around looking for teachers who will tell them just what they want to hear.

They won't listen to what the Bible says but will follow there own misguided ideas. Stand steady, and don't be afraid of suffering for the Lord. Do the work of an evangelist, and bring others to Christ. Leave nothing undone that you ought to do."

(2 Timothy 3:16-17, 4:2-5)

Listen to what the Bible says



144 What Is Your Legacy?

Matthew 16:26 *“What profit is there if you gain the whole world, but lose your own soul.”*

Luke 12:21
“Every man is a fool who gets rich on earth, but not in Heaven.”

I Corinthians 3:11-15
“No one can ever lay any other real foundation than that one we already have—Jesus Christ. But there are various kinds of materials that can be used to build on that foundation.

Some use gold and silver and jewels; and some build with sticks, and hay, or even straw. There is going to come a time of testing at Christ’s Judgment Day to see what kind of material each builder has used. Everyone’s work will be put through the fire so that all can see whether or not it keeps its value, and what was really accomplished.

Then every workman who has built on the foundation of Christ with the right materials, and whose work still stands, will be rewarded. If the house he has built burns up, he will have a great loss. He himself will be saved, but like a man escaping through a wall of flames.”

+++++

The definition of legacy is:
‘Money or property that is left to somebody in a will, or something that is handed down or remains from a previous generation.’

I think this is more than just leaving something behind when you die. Because the truth is, that you will leave everything behind.

It is one thing to give a million dollars to the church when you die, but I want to know how will you be remembered once you’re gone?

Giving money to the Lord’s work is a good thing, but the question is how did you live?
What reputation are you handing down?

Have you ever imagined your funeral service, and what would be said of you? You ought to try it. It’s an eye opener.

When they stand and speak during your funeral, hopefully they will describe your good qualities, remembering how you lived your life.

If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus,
will you be remembered as such?
Or will that information surprise some?
Will there be anyone in the crowd who will disagree with that
description of you?

Did your life show that you worshipped God,
or were you more interested in hanging on to your money?

Did you seek to obey God, or seek the easy life?
Will the activities of your life, match your words of faith in God?

Will anyone be able to stand and say that you lead them to Christ?
There can be no greater tribute.

Once you are in Heaven, will it be evident that the efforts of your life
brought someone to Christ?

In other words, that person who accepted Christ, because of some-
thing you did, is standing right there with a big smile on their face.

Can you imagine seeing them?

Perhaps that is what the passage is saying when it says,
*“Some use gold and silver and jewels;
and some build with sticks, and hay, or even straw.”*

Ecclesiastes 7:1-2

*“A good reputation is more valuable than precious ointment.
The day one dies is better than the day he is born.
It is better to spend your time at funerals than at festivals.
For you are going to die,
and it is a good thing to think about it while there is still time.”*

You are presently building your legacy.
If it is not going the way you would like,start changing it today.

What is your Legacy?

145 Use Your Flashlight

Psalms 119:105, 130, 43

*“Your word is a lamp to light the path ahead of me,
and keep me from stumbling.”*

“The entrance of your words give light..”

“May I never forget your words, for they are my only hope.”

+++++

It is midnight and raining.
You are alone in the middle of the forest, many miles from home.
You are climbing over large rocks, and there are cliffs all around.
You are slipping and falling, and bruised.
It is so dark.
You think you have found the narrow path, which is supposed to lead
you to safety. But it is impossible to see what is ahead.
Even your next step.

Then you remember, you have a flashlight in your backpack!
You take it out, and turn it on. It is bright with new batteries.
Now the path lights up, and you can easily see ahead.
You walk the path with renewed confidence towards home.

Now let me ask you something.
Why would anyone choose not to use the flashlight?
Instead, they choose to stumble and grope blindly through those
dangerous woods? That would be crazy, right?

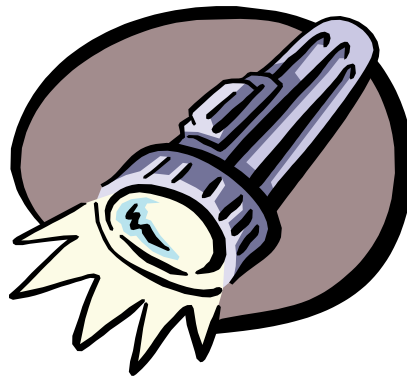
“May I never forget your words, for they are my only hope.”

I encourage you to please read,
and study God’s Word.

This is a choice.

So choose well.

Use your flashlight!



146 Faithful and Holy

1 Peter 1:15-16

*“Be holy in everything you do, just as the Lord is holy,
who invited you to be His child.
For it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy’.” (from Leviticus 11:44)*

2 Corinthians 5:21

*“Jesus Christ, who was sinless, had all of our sins poured into Him,
so that we could have all of God’s righteousness poured into us.”*

1 John 2:6, 3:2-3, 2:1-3, 1:9

*“Anyone who says he is a Christian should live as Christ did.”
“..We know this, that when Jesus Christ comes back we will be like
Him as a result of seeing Him as He really is. And everyone who has
this hope in Christ purifies himself even as Christ is pure.”*

*“My children, I am telling you this so that you will stay away from sin.
But if you sin, there is someone who is your advocate to plead for you
before the Father. His name is Jesus Christ, the one who is righteous.*

*He is the one who took God’s wrath against our sins upon Himself,
and brought us into fellowship with God..”*

*“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins,
and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness.”*

Luke 18:8

“..When I, the Messiah return, how many will I find who have faith?”

+++++

My pastor, Dr. David Cooper, wrote a book of devotions entitled,
‘Timeless Truths in Changing Times.’ On page 15, ‘The Final Chal-
lenge’, he wrote a statement, that when I read it, I stumbled over it.

I found myself disagreeing with it.

He wrote: ‘God doesn’t call us to perfection, but to faith...’

But I asked myself,
“Then what does, ‘Be holy as I am holy’, mean?”

To tell you the truth,
I struggled with the verse for days.

My train of thought went like this.

- 1) God wants us to be born again. (John 3:7)
- 2) In other words, He calls us to accept Jesus Christ as Savior.
(Romans 10:9)
- 3) We are to have faith in Christ which gives eternal life. (Rom 6:23)
- 4) In Christ, we are declared righteous,
because He paid for all of our sins with His blood,
- 5) Therefore our present position is that God sees us as holy.
(Ephesians 1:7, 2 Corinthians 5:21)
- 6) God sees our sinful nature as dead, and we are to reckon it to be so.
(Romans 6:6, Colossians 3:9-10)
- 7) But, that doesn't mean we won't be tempted to sin.
(I Corinthians 10:13)
- 8) It also does not mean we will live perfect sinless lives,
because in reality the war between the sinful nature,
and the new nature continues. (Romans 7:15-25)
- 9) It means we are already forgiven, and guaranteed heaven.
(Ephesians 4:32, Colossian 1:5)
- 10) Being saved and forgiven does not give us license to sin as much
as we want. (Romans 6:15)
- 11) So we are to stay away from sin. (I John 2:1)
- 12) Since we still have our sinful nature,
we can not live a perfect sinless life. We will sin, and do sin.
And when we do, God has a plan. (I John 1:9)
- 13) We confess those sins when they occur; our advocate Jesus pleads
our case; and God forgives because of the blood shed at the cross.
(I John 2:1-3)
- 14) Someday when we see Jesus, our corruptible bodies will be
changed in a twinkling of an eye into incorruptible new bodies.
(I Corinthians 15:51-54)
- 15) We will finally be sinless like Jesus. (I John 3:2)

16) Until then, what Jesus is looking for when He returns is our faith.
(Luke 18:8) A faith where we will strive to live holy.

So Dr Cooper is obviously correct.

RIGHT NOW, we are not called to perfection, but to FAITH.

God doesn't require us to be perfect, because only Jesus is.

We are required to have faith in Jesus.

"Without faith it is impossible to please God..." (Hebrews 11:6)
And someday, the Lord will complete the perfection process,
by removing our sinful natures, so we can be like Him.

Someone just sent me a devotion, while I was writing this, and I know
it's no coincidence. I close by sharing a part of it with you.

Wherever I am, whatever I am doing on any day,
I am on a journey. Life itself is about forward movement
in which circumstances and scenery are continually
changing. I never become overwhelmed in this continu-
ous, forward movement as I allow God's wisdom to
guide me to newer and greater opportunities for good.
(I am on a) journey of expressing my holiness and my
wholeness... (Rev. Leo Booth)



147 Three In One

Matthew 28:20

*“Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the **Father**, and of the **Son**, and of the **Holy Spirit**.”*

Deuteronomy 6:4-5

*“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is **one** Lord: and you should love the Lord thy God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.”*

Genesis 1:26

*“And **God said**, ‘Let **us** make man in **our** image, after **our** likeness..’”*

I Thessalonians 5:23

*“May the God of peace sanctify you **wholly**, and I pray that your whole **spirit** and **soul** and **body** be preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

+++++

So God made you in His image.
He is a tri-personal Being.
And He made you like Him.
Three in one.
Spirit, soul, and body.

You say this Trinity stuff hurts your head.
I know.
But don't get crazy.
Just believe what God has said.

Let me give you a classic Trinity example.
What is H2O?
Water, right?
But here is the thought.
H2O is one compound made of three separate things.
And H2O can present in three different forms.
1) Water in liquid form. (Holy Spirit)
2) Steam in gas form. (Father)
3) Ice in solid form. (Jesus)

And you can chisel ice, and form it into a face that can be recognized!

So water, steam, and ice are all H2O. (God)

You say,
'How did God the Father in heaven
speak to Jesus during His baptism?'

Or you say, "Who was Jesus praying to?"

My answer,
'You talk to yourself while you're driving the car don't you?'

So the Godhead can talk to (Himself).
But you say,
'Wait a minute, "He/They were in separate places doing this talking".'

Yea, and you being a three-in-one being can separate too.
You can leave your body behind in the morgue,
and your spirit and soul goes to heaven.

So if you think about it, this is the reason why we are promised to be
reunited with our bodies, so we can again be as we were made.
Three in one.

*"God the **Father**, chose you long ago and knew you would become
His children. And the **Holy Spirit** has been at work in your hearts,
cleansing you with the blood of **Jesus Christ** and making you please
Him. May God bless you richly and grant you increasing freedom
from all anxiety and fear." (1 Peter 1:2)*

May you experience that freedom from all anxiety and fear.

God made you in His image.

A three-in-one being.

Spirit, Soul, and Body.

148 Audio Evidence

The court trial has started.
You and a co-defendant have been charged with a crime.
In the court room they play a tape,
and the jury listens to incriminating words.

Your co-defendant is heard saying things,
which convict him with his own words.

With your own voice you acquit yourself.

The co-defendant is sentenced to death.

You are set free.

A verbal witness.
In Bible times, it was the law.
We must first hear from you to know what you have done.
“Our Law does not judge a man unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?” (John 7:51)

Now, expand this idea.
It is going to be a similar scene
when we stand in judgment before God.

Our lifetime has past, and now the “tapes” are going to be played.
What could you possibly say during this life that will cause you to be set free to heaven?..... Let’s listen.

‘Lord Jesus, forgive me of my sins. I believe you died on the cross and rose from the dead. Come into my heart and save me.’

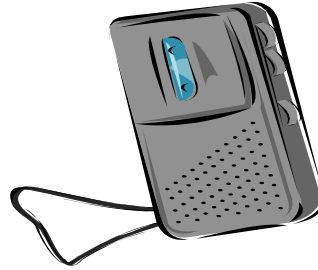
The crime: (Romans 3:23, 6:23)
*“All have sinned and come short of the glory of God...
.....the wages of sin is death.”*

Acquitted because: (Romans 10:9)
“If you confess with your own mouth that Jesus Christ is your Lord, and believe in your own heart that God has raised Jesus from the dead, you will be saved.”

And the evidence used to convict or acquit:
“Death and life are in the power of the tongue...For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”
(Proverbs 18:21, Matthew 12:37)

‘Judgment at the last day will proceed according to a man’s words.’
(The New John Gill Exposition of the Entire Bible)

It’s not too late
to make a better audio tape.



149 God's Chosen Amnesia

Hebrews 8:12
“..and their sins and iniquities, I will remember no more.”

+++++

How can Omniscient God,
who has infinite knowledge,forget anything?

Answer: He chooses to forget.

That is His promise given in the New Covenant to Israel. ...And to us.

Think about this.

As a believer, you are promised to live with Jesus forever in heaven.
You do not have to worry about Him recalling your sinful past.
He will look at you with eyes of endearing love,
and not even remember your sin.

Is that not a wonderful feeling?

To be so totally forgiven, that God doesn’t even recall what you did.

To live forever in freedom from all guilt,
with the Lord who loves us so.

Here is the verse again in Greek.

Take a moment to look at it.

οτι ιλεως εσομαι ταις αδικιαις αυτων και των
αμαρτιων αυτων και των ανομιων αυτων
ου μη μνησθω ετι

Transliterated:

“kai twn amartiwn autwn kai twn anomiwn autwn ou mh
mnhsqhsomai eti”

Translated:

“kai **(and)** twn **(these)** amartiwn **(sins)** autwn **(themselves)** kai **(and)**
twn **(these)** anomiwn **(iniquities)** autwn **(themselves)** ou **(no)**
mh **(none)** mnhsqhsomai **(to recall, to return to one’s mind,**
to remember) eti **(no longer)**”

In case you missed it, it says no, none, no longer TIMES THREE.

God will not remember your sins,

and will not recall your iniquities times three. (Trinity?)

God doesn’t want you to miss His promise.

Your sins will not return to His mind.

Eternity with Christ will be wonderful.

“I heard a loud shout from the throne saying,

‘Behold, the home of God is now among men, and He will live with them and they will be His people; yes, God Himself will be among them. He will wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain.

All of that has gone forever.” Revelation 21:3-4



150 You Need Your Kneecaps

I Corinthians 12: 12, 14-27

“Our bodies have many parts, but the many parts make up only one body when they are all put together. So it is with the ‘body’ of Christ.

Each of us is a part of the one body of Christ. ...Yes, the body has many parts, not just one part. If the foot says, ‘I am not a part of the body because I am not the hand,’ that does not make it any less a part of the body.

And what would you think if you heard an ear say, ‘I am not a part of the body because I am only an ear, and not an eye’? Would that make it any less a part of the body? Suppose the whole body were an eye—then how would you hear? Or if your whole body were just one big ear, how could you smell anything?

But that isn’t the way God has made us. He has made many parts for our bodies and has put each part just where He wants it.

(So much for evolution!)

The eye can never say to the hand, ‘I don’t need you.’ The head can’t say to the feet, ‘I don’t need you.’ ..Now here is what I am trying to say: All of you together are the one body of Christ and each one of you is a separate and necessary part of it.”

+++++

The other day I found a note on my windshield that said:

‘People will probably go to Hell because of you!’

I thought to myself,

‘Whoa! I wasn’t even in the Garden of Eden!’

My vehicle was parked at the AACC World Conference for Christian Counselors. So I assume a Christian colleague of mine placed the note. And why you ask?

Apparently someone didn’t like the bumper sticker on my van that warns people that Hell is a real place. (It IS you know).

The bumper sticker also encourages the reader to ask Jesus Christ to forgive them of their sins, and to ask Jesus to come into their heart and life, so they can go to heaven.

It points out that Jesus is alive, and can hear them.

(see devotion #28, “Marked As Belonging To Christ”)

God lead me to make that particular bumper sticker with those specific words. So I obeyed Him.

Call me a nut if you want, but at least I'm a nut for the Lord.

The note on my windshield
was an attempt to make me change my mind.

Whoever wrote it wants me to take the bumper sticker off my van.
They are saying that my warning about hell will drive people away
from God. Therefore, it will be my fault, if a lost person goes to Hell.

The note was a spiritual attack.

I felt myself wrestling for hours with the force behind those words.
I felt upset and disturbed.

'Am I wrong to have a bumper sticker like that?'
'Will it be my fault?'
'I don't want to do anything to push someone away from God.'
'Maybe I am mistaken about what God said.'
'Maybe I should take it off my van.'

I hear other words,
'People don't like you when you bring up hell.'
'They think you're a weird and crazy fool.'
'Stop talking about hell.'

But then I started to remember scripture.
I started to quote certain verses to myself.

*"For God has not given us a spirit of fear,
but of power, love, and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7)*

I remembered Old Testament prophets,
and the warnings that God gave them to give to His people.

I remembered verses in Revelation about the Great White Throne
Judgment, and the Lake of Fire. (Revelation 20:11, 14-15)

I remembered that Jesus is the one who spoke the most about everlasting
fire, and the reality of Hell. (Matthew 18:8-9) (Mark 9:43-49)

Not strong-preaching Paul. Not emotional and impulsive Peter.
But kind, gentle, and loving Jesus.
Thirteen times He spoke on the subject.

Was Jesus wrong to do that?
Was He driving people away from God?
If He wanted to warn people about Hell, shouldn't I?

Well the answer is obvious.
Of course I should.

So I finally battled back, and came to grips with this thing.

I got to thinking about the note,
and it caused me to imagine the following answer.
I imagined myself saying to the writer who most likely is a Christian:
'You make it sound like you don't need your kneecaps!'

I imagined that they would look at me
...like I was an alien from outer space.

Truly I am an alien.
I am only visiting here.
My real home is Heaven.

I imagined saying: **'Read I Corinthians 12 if you don't understand
what I am saying.'** **'We need every part of the body!'**

I imagined that I saw them walking away, shaking their head,
trying to understand my answer.

Friends, let me be clear with you.
We need each other.
We need each other's spiritual gift.
We can not accomplish what God has commanded us to do,
without each other.

We need to encourage each other, in our respective, God given
personal ministries.

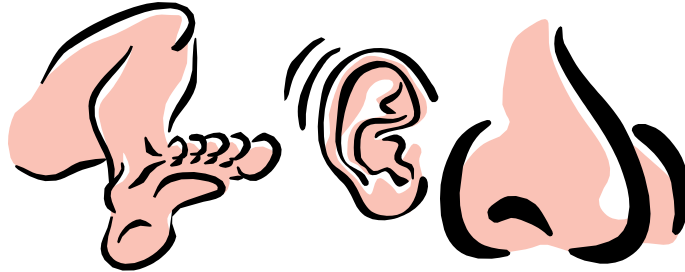
And guard against doing, or saying anything,
that can be used by Satan.

God loves us all, and wants to use us all.

He has given us all specific and special abilities to use in the work of
the Kingdom.

Find out what your spiritual gift is, and use it for the glory of God.

*“The eye can never say to the hand, ‘I don’t need you.’
The head can’t say to the feet, ‘I don’t need you.’ ..
All of you together are the one body of Christ and each one of you is a
separate and necessary part of it.”*



Remember, you do need your kneecaps!

151 Weeping and Waving

Psalms 126: 5-6

*“Those who sow tears shall reap joy. Yes, they go out weeping, carry-
ing seed for sowing, and return singing, carrying their sheaves.”*

Proverbs 11:30

*“Godly men are growing a tree that bears life-giving fruit,
and all who win souls are wise.”*

John 4: 35-36

*“Do you think the work of harvesting will not begin until the summer
ends four months from now? Look around you! Vast fields of human
souls are ripening all around us, and are ready now for reaping.
The reapers will be paid good wages and will be gathering eternal
souls into the granaries of heaven.
What joys await the sower and the reaper, both together!*

Romans 10:15

*“And how will anyone go and tell them unless someone sends him?
That is what the Scriptures are talking about when they say,
‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the Gospel of peace
with God and bring glad tidings of good things.’ (from Isaiah 52:7)
In other words, how welcome are those,
who come preaching God’s Good News!”*

Why would you weep, when telling someone good news?

I had these scriptures marked to give as a devotion,
but I was placed on hold.
I couldn't connect the scriptures in a way that made sense to me.

So I waited.

Days went by.

I started another devotional thought which I presented last week.
While I was writing last week's devotion,
the Holy Spirit gave me the answer.

Imagine yourself standing beside an eight lane highway.
The freeway is packed with cars slowly going by.
People are driving about 20 mph.

It's bumper to bumper, but traffic is moving.
Some have their windows up with music playing.
Some have their windows down, and can hear you,
if you shout to them.

You are standing next to the exit lane,
and you're holding a red flag.

If people take the exit, it leads them to a rest area,
where there is food and safety.

Here is the problem.
You are aware that the eight lane highway ends in one mile,
just around the next bend.
At that point, there is a drop-off, which is a mile deep.

You've learned that when anyone approaches the edge,
it is too late to stop.
Everyone is driving off the cliff at the end of the highway,
to their deaths.

So you start waving your red flag,
and shouting a warning.

Most don't even hear you, and drive on.
Some start yelling back that you're nuts.
They say everyone is going the same way,
so it seems obvious that everything is ok.

They yell out, 'How could there be such a huge problem with so many people not knowing about it?'

So they drive on following the large multitude of cars.

Some do heed your warning, and take the exit.
But many do not.

And the magnitude of what is happening settles on you.

So many people are dying.

You begin to cry.
You're waving your red flag, giving the warning,... and weeping.

That is exactly what I feel, when I think about the reality of Hell.

It's so overwhelming, that it's no wonder, that Christians don't even talk about it. Certainly non-believers don't.

Can you now understand the enormity of this subject?
If you read last weeks' devotion, do you see why I was so impacted?

There is no other issue more important in life,
than what we are talking about right now.

If you leave this life without knowing Jesus Christ, all is lost.
And there is no coming back.
I can't even process that fully.

Thank God there is hope
for anyone willing to open their heart to Jesus.

That is why we witness, and try to win someone to Christ.

"Those who sow tears shall reap joy... and return singing, carrying their sheaves." "What joys await the sower and the reaper"

Please join me,
in this most significant,
and essential duty.

Weeping and waving.



152 The Greatest Author Of All Time

*Hebrews 12:2 "Keeping our eyes on Jesus Christ,
the author and finisher of our faith."*

Revelation 1:8

*"I am the Alpha and Omega, (the A and Z), the Beginning and the
Ending of all things says the Lord, who is, who was, and who is to
come, the Almighty."*

+++++

Read any good novel, and the author immediately takes control of the story. Getting your attention, taking you for a journey, building the characters of the book, having a few twists and turns, and of course, having a blockbuster ending.

Consider the greatest author of all time.
Jesus Christ, who is God.

He authored the greatest book ever written.
By the power of the Holy Spirit, men were used as "pen names".
The book is called, The Bible.
Best seller for a couple millennia.
Millions upon billions of copies sold.
Still number one.

Here's the story line:

- 1) God makes the universe, and makes mankind.
- 2) Lucifer lies, and mankind sins,
causing death and separation for mankind from God.
- 3) God promises a Messiah to redeem mankind back.
- 4) God starts a new nation,
and chooses the Jews through which to send this Savior.
- 5) God gives the Law,
and instructs the Jews in sacrifices and worship.
- 6) Everything points to the coming Chosen One.
- 7) God gives men prophetic messages
to give specific details of this Messiah.
- 8) All of these prophets
speak hundreds of years before Messiah is born.
- 9) No other book on the planet has prophecy like this.
- 10) Jesus is born. Jesus has a ministry like no other.
Miracles happen every day.
- 11) Jesus gives his life at Calvary on a rugged cross to, once and for all, pay for sin.

- 12) Jesus rises from the dead, and offers everyone eternal life in Him.
- 13) Everything prophets predicted concerning the first coming of Christ comes true.
- 14) More is predicted concerning His Second Coming.
- 15) The church age explodes into a worldwide revival that lasts 2000 years.

And the end of this book is a blockbuster. You can't miss it!

- 1) Jesus Christ returns to earth, and sets up His Kingdom for a 1000 years.
- 2) Judgment Day does come.
- 3) Every human being who ever lived, stands before God.
- 4) Heaven or Hell in the balance!

What a book! Get your copy today!

*“Keeping our eyes on Jesus Christ, the author and **finisher** of our faith.”*

The Lord God who is *“the Beginning and the Ending of all things”*

Praise the Lord,
the greatest author,
of the greatest book on planet earth.
The Bible.
There is no sequel.



The one and only. The Bible!

153 We Will All Kneel

Psalms 95:6
“Come kneel before the Lord our Maker.”

Romans 14:10-12
“..For we shall all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So, then, every one of us shall give an account of himself to God.”

Philippians 2:10-11
“At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow in Heaven and on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

If you notice, the verse in Psalms is an invitation.
You are invited to come to the Lord God your Maker,
.....and kneel before Him.

In Him is life. In Him is our salvation. He is our God.
We bend our knees, because we bend our hearts, to His commands.
We kneel, because we worship Him.

This invitation is still open.

The next passage from Romans is talking to Christians at the
Judgment Seat of Christ.
Christians will kneel before Him, and give an account of ourselves.
It's our judgment day. (I Corinthians 3:11-14)
What have you done for Christ? Have you won anyone to Jesus?
"every one of us shall give an account of himself to God."

Are you getting ready for that day?
Are you preparing a good report to give as you are on your knees?

The last passage doesn't tell us the time frame of this kneeling,
but it includes **every knee**.

That means every believer, and every non-believer.
Every one who has ever lived.
"in Heaven and on earth, and under the earth"

I don't know what all this means, but I can tell you this:
I would rather kneel in Heaven, than kneel in Hell.

EVERY KNEE will bow,
and EVERY TONGUE will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.
So if you have a tongue or a knee, you are included.

Maybe you should practice some
kneeling now.

How often do you kneel before
your Lord?
You should try it.
You might find it helps with your
perception of your life and the
condition of your heart.

A lot of kneeling will keep you in
good standing!

