

The Invitation

The Invitation

*TERRY SMITH, LEROY GARDENIER,
ELOISE GARDENIER, JOANNE SMITH,
JOELLE GAGNON, ROXANNE BEDARD,
HOLLY BEDARD, NICOLE GAGNON, LUC
BEDARD, CLINTON WHITE, AND KEITH
NEWMAN*

THE CHRISTIAN SPIRIT, INC. PUBLISHERS
PEPPERELL MA

No part of this book may be published without written permission of the publisher.

Contents

<u>How One Can Accept The Invitation For 'The Marriage Supper of The Lamb'</u>	1
 <u>Part I. Sanctified</u>	
1. <u>Salvation Free for the Asking, A Person Must Ask Then Receive</u> <u>The Prophet Amos Tells Us</u>	7
2. <u>Rahab: We Must all Repent</u> <u>Anyone Can Be Saved From Being a Sinner</u>	13
3. <u>What is a Christian?</u> <u>The Spirit Not Just The Flesh</u>	18
4. <u>Three Little Words...</u> <u>And I understood the Truth about life</u>	25
5. <u>You Must Be Born Again</u> <u>Any Journey Begins With A First Step</u>	30
6. <u>You Can Have a Whole New Heritage in Christ</u> <u>We Must be Born-Again to See the Kingdom of God</u>	33
7. <u>My Father's Bible Woke Me to God's Marvelous Word</u> <u>And I Was Born-Again</u>	36
8. <u>He Came To Set The Captives Free!!</u> <u>Freedom's Land</u>	39
9. <u>The Day the King's Son Died</u>	43

10.	<u>Without a Vision the People Perish</u> <u><i>The Insidiousness of the spirits of Depression and Suicide</i></u>	46
11.	<u>The Acceptable Year of The Lord</u> <u><i>Spiritual Exercise is Profitable</i></u>	54
12.	<u>Why Should I Offer My Praises to Him?</u> <u><i>A Poem and A Song</i></u>	59
13.	<u>An Accident, A Dream, and The Word</u> <u><i>Manhole Cover Hits Woman</i></u>	61
14.	<u>A Story of Two Fires</u>	64
15.	<u>The Laying On Of Hands</u> <u><i>The Power of God in the Body of Christ</i></u>	69
16.	<u>The Spiritual Advantage of Praying in Tongues</u>	76
17.	<u>Now I'm Clinging to Him</u>	80
18.	<u>A Father's Heart</u> <u><i>A Heart Vision of</i></u>	87
19.	<u>"O Ye Of Little Faith"</u> <u><i>Get to Know and Love Him</i></u>	90
20.	<u>The Nativity Meant There Could Be New Birth For Man</u> <u><i>You Can Be A New Creation</i></u>	97
21.	<u>How Can You Be a Christian If You Are Not Born Again?</u>	101
22.	<u>The Three Baptisms</u> <u><i>Repentance – Holy Spirit – Water</i></u>	104
23.	<u>There Is Still A Hell</u>	109
24.	<u>Barabbas: The Sinful Son' Freed</u> <u><i>The Two Goats</i></u>	112
25.	<u>Once Saved Always Saved???</u> <u><i>No So Fast !!</i></u>	115

26.	<u>Godly Living Becomes the Philadelphia Faith Sound Doctrine</u>	121
27.	<u>To Be Healthy Requires That We Always Seek The Truth A Christian's Duty</u>	124
28.	<u>What is the Gospel?</u>	130
29.	<u>What the Gospel Actually Is Scriptures Tell The Story</u>	146
30.	<u>Is God A Mathematician?</u>	151
31.	<u>Ivan Panin 1855-1941 Harvard Professor</u>	158
32.	<u>About the Bible</u>	162
33.	<u>The Book of Books All Scripture is Given By Inspiration</u>	168
34.	<u>There are Many Versions of the Bible But Are They All God's Word?</u>	173
35.	<u>A Highly Interesting Case for Divine Inspiration of the Bible Overwhelming Mathematical Evidence for Inspiration of Scripture</u>	177
36.	<u>For I would not, brethren, that you should be ignorant.... The Seven Pillars of Knowledge</u>	195
37.	<u>#1 The True Nature Of Our Salvation The Seven Pillars of Knowledge</u>	200
38.	<u>#2 The Jews: God's Chosen People The Seven Pillars of Knowledge</u>	206
39.	<u>#3 Fellowship: The Sharing Of Fruit The Seven Pillars of Knowledge</u>	213
40.	<u>#4 The Gifts: Given by the Spirit The Seven Pillars of Knowledge</u>	218

41. <u>#5 Taking Up Our Cross</u>	223
<u>The Seven Pillars of Knowledge</u>	
42. <u>#6 Fast Approaching: Judgment Day</u>	228
<u>The Seven Pillars of Knowledge</u>	
43. <u>#7 The Rapture: The Bride Waits</u>	233
<u>The Seven Pillars of Knowledge</u>	

Part II. Prepared

44. <u>In Search of The Church</u>	241
45. <u>His Sheep Will Hear His Voice</u>	248
46. <u>Just Who Is The Philadelphia Church?</u>	251
47. <u>The Church?</u>	264
<u>Who, What and How She Came To Be</u>	
48. <u>What About Sainthood?</u>	272
49. <u>Christ's Death Is A Jubilee</u>	275
50. <u>Doctrine Should Never Be a 'Dirty Word' in the Church</u>	280
51. <u>How the Trinity Works</u>	288
<u>By – Through – and – To</u>	
52. <u>Be Still: Listen to the God of All Creation</u>	295
<u>We are Now At The Foot Of God's Throne</u>	
53. <u>A Vision of The Trinity Powerfully At Work</u>	297
<u>Life is good and active in the house of God.</u>	
54. <u>Faith For the Gift of 'Laying on of Hands'</u>	300
55. <u>The Trinity Revealed In The Tabernacle</u>	306
56. <u>The Holy Ghost is the Transformer and Power</u>	312
57. <u>The Path To Walking In The Spirit</u>	316
<u>Introduction to Series on: Perfected in The Spirit</u>	

58.	<u>Believing in The Holy Ghost</u> <u>Jesus Ascended to Heaven so we could receive and believe in the Holy Ghost</u>	320
59.	<u>A Lesson Learned From The Law of The Leper</u> <u>Yielding to the Holy Ghost</u>	326
60.	<u>Obey The Spirit - And Live!</u> <u>Beware! The Unpardonable Sin</u>	339
61.	<u>In the Care of The Holy Ghost</u> <u>Trusting The Holy Spirit</u>	344
62.	<u>We Can be Strong in Christ</u> <u>Stand Up in the Spirit</u>	348
63.	<u>Our Lives Ought To Be Centered in Christ</u> <u>Living in the Spirit</u>	352
64.	<u>Walking Perfect in the Spirit</u> <u>An Analogy of the Trinity</u>	359
65.	<u>Man Is Wise To Obey God's Voice</u> <u>The Three Wise Men Listened</u>	370
66.	<u>The Gift That Keeps On Listening</u> <u>The Holy Spirit:</u>	374
67.	<u>The Woman Who Hid Leaven In Three Measures of Meal</u> <u>The Leaven of Heaven: Understanding the parable of:</u>	380
68.	<u>Jesus' Testimony From The Cross</u>	387
69.	<u>Dead Man Walking; Well, Limping...</u>	393
70.	<u>I Am Crucified With Christ</u> <u>Nevertheless I Now Live</u>	398
71.	<u>Through the Eye of a Needle</u> <u>Extraordinary story of Death and Life Gained</u>	404
72.	<u>Intro to: Repentance from Dead Works</u> <u>Come out of the night</u>	411

73.	<u>Step Into the Light</u>	414
74.	<u>Discipleship: Seeking God's Righteousness</u> <u>Turning From Dead Works</u>	416
75.	<u>Heading into Deep Water</u>	427
76.	<u>Presumption is not Faith</u>	435
77.	<u>Altar of Burning Flesh</u> <u>Repenting From Ourselves</u>	441
78.	<u>There are Many Kinds of Faith but Only One is Important</u>	450
79.	<u>God's Ways Are Not Our Ways</u>	452
80.	<u>"I've Got The Power"</u>	454
81.	<u>Security Guards For Your Faith</u>	458
82.	<u>The Seven Pillars of Knowledge</u>	463
83.	<u>The Lord is Our Righteousness</u> <u>Jehovah-'Tsidkenu'</u>	503
84.	<u>We Can Be Perfect and Complete in Christ</u>	507
85.	<u>We're Not Alone When It Comes to Believing In Christian Perfect</u> <u>John Wesley – On Christian Perfection</u>	516
86.	<u>Always Seek The TRUTH</u> <u>A Christian's Duty</u>	545
87.	<u>Our Cross Means Denying Self</u> <u>Sacrificing Self on the Wheel of Perfection</u>	551
88.	<u>The Triad Circle of Perfection</u> <u>The Way of The Bride</u>	562
89.	<u>Walking Perfect In The Spirit</u> <u>An Analogy of the Trinity</u>	579
90.	<u>All Aboard the Cruiser: Disciple</u> <u>The Journey of A Disciple</u>	587

91.	<u>"How's it Goin'"; said the Man to the Spirit</u>	591
	<u>"Maybe Not So Well", said the Spirit to the Man</u>	
92.	<u>Judgment Day is Fast Approaching</u>	596
93.	<u>Who, What, Where, When and Why of The Rapture</u>	601
	<u>Its Scriptural Foundation</u>	
94.	<u>Caught Up in a Chariot of Clouds</u>	611
	<u>Chariot of the bride: Solomon's Chariot</u>	
95.	<u>Belief in The Rapture</u>	619
	<u>A Purifying Agent on The Wheel of Perfection</u>	
96.	<u>The Divine Nature</u>	628
	<u>Introduction</u>	
97.	<u>Experience The Divine Nature</u>	635
	<u>Peter Told Us Of God's Offer To:</u>	
98.	<u>Biblical Twin Peaks</u>	637
	<u>Divine Knowledge</u>	
99.	<u>Joshua Teaches Us To Be Courageous</u>	642
	<u>Virtue: Take courage and Stand</u>	
100.	<u>Gifts & Fruits</u>	644
	<u>Also for the Unifying of the Body</u>	
101.	<u>Deliver Us from Ourselves</u>	649
	<u>Let Him Be Our Leader</u>	
102.	<u>Aren't We Always The Last to Know!</u>	655
	<u>Deliverance from demanding my own way</u>	
103.	<u>God's Love: A Temperate Balance of Truth and Mercy</u>	662
	<u>Ultimate show of Temperance</u>	
104.	<u>Temperance: Is Love's Enabler</u>	666
105.	<u>Patience: That Bittersweet Thing</u>	668
	<u>We Must Endure The Bitter To Have The Sweet</u>	

106.	<u>The Spiritual DNA of Godliness</u>	674
	<u>5th Part – Virtue, Knowledge, Temperance, Patience</u> <u>– Brotherly Kindness – Love</u>	
107.	<u>The Mysteries of Heaven</u>	684
	<u>more about godliness: Seek to Know Them</u>	
108.	<u>With The Bowels of Mercies</u>	707
	<u>Brotherly Kindness: (Or True Friendship)</u>	
109.	<u>Keep Two Commandments and The Law Can Be</u>	717
	<u>Fulfilled</u> <u>Divine Love</u>	
110.	<u>Perfect Love Casts Out Fear</u>	720
	<u>The Worst Things We Fear Are Spiritual</u>	
111.	<u>Who Sets the conditions? Man or God</u>	726
	<u>Is there such a thing as unconditional love?</u>	
	 <u>Part III. Perfected</u>	
112.	<u>It is More Than Proper It is Highly Advisable...</u>	733
113.	<u>The Journey to Brideship...</u>	737
	<u>You Must Be Born-Again</u>	
114.	<u>Looking For the Bride</u>	740
	<u>Son of Man To Be Married</u>	
115.	<u>God's Divorce From His Unfaithful Wife</u>	744
	<u>A Parable</u>	
116.	<u>God's Greatest and Number One Quest</u>	753
	<u>Is For the Perfect Bride</u>	
117.	<u>The Song of Solomon</u>	759
	<u>A.K.A. The Song of Songs</u>	
118.	<u>Christ and The Church</u>	765
	<u>The Faithful Bride Hidden Within</u>	

119.	<u>Christ, The Bride, and Her Entourage</u> <u>Only One Bride</u>	772
120.	<u>Greatest Mystery of Creation</u> <u>The Perfect Wife</u>	778
121.	<u>A Composite Portrait of: The Devoted Bride</u>	794
122.	<u>Visit Fatherless and Widows; Keep Yourself</u> <u>Unspotted From the World</u> <u>Try Pure religion on for Size</u>	832
123.	<u>Arise O' Bride! – Put On Thy Strength</u>	836
124.	<u>Sacrifices of The New Testament Priests</u> <u>Actual New Testament Priesthood</u>	840
125.	<u>An Addict Of God</u> <u>Will You Dare To Become</u>	845
126.	<u>Our Ego Ought Not Eclipse the Son</u>	850
127.	<u>The Priestly Life: Exclusive To Holy Spirit's Call of</u> <u>Duty</u> <u>Available To Those Who Are Alive To Christ</u>	857
128.	<u>Great Cloud of Witnesses</u> <u>In Hebrews 11</u>	868
129.	<u>"Godliness with Contentment is Great Gain"</u>	873
130.	<u>Overcoming Satan, The World, and Our Own Flesh</u> <u>By The Atoning Blood of Christ</u>	877
131.	<u>The Armor of God</u> <u>How it Directly Affects the Last-days Christian</u>	900
132.	<u>The Fruits of The Spirit</u> <u>A Little Summary</u>	924
133.	<u>A Prayer in the Garden</u> <u>Desiring Spiritual Fruit</u>	929
134.	<u>Glorifying the Great Gardener with a Cornucopia</u> <u>of the Fruits of the Spirit</u> <u>Cultivating the Fruits of the Spirit</u>	936

135.	<u>By Prayer, By Separation From World</u> <u>A New Testament Spiritual Priest</u>	940
136.	<u>The Rechabites: A Separated People</u> <u>Cultivation of the Fruits of the Spirit</u>	946
137.	<u>The Mysteries of the Gospel</u> <u>Aids to Perfection of the Bride</u>	952
138.	<u>Intro to Church History</u> <u>A brief history of the Church renders us Signs of</u> <u>Christ's Return and the rise of the ministry of the</u> <u>Bride and her hour of waiting.</u>	974
139.	<u>Just Who Is The Philadelphia Church?</u> <u>The Philadelphia Church – Holy and True</u>	981
140.	<u>False Religion Lurks Within the Walls of the</u> <u>Church</u>	994
141.	<u>Follow the Signs Follow the Lamb Now</u> <u>The elite company of elect believers They were</u> <u>'rapture-ready' looking to the Signs of Christ's</u> <u>Return Taking all the advice of their espoused</u> <u>husband to be prepared</u>	1002
142.	<u>Where the Eagles are Gathered</u> <u>That's Where Christ Will Be</u>	1008
143.	<u>The Philadelphian Will Be Willing to Pick Up Their</u> <u>Cross</u>	1014
144.	<u>Some Do's & Don'ts for the Bride</u>	1018
145.	<u>An Open Letter to Our Readers from Elisha's</u> <u>Outcast Eagles</u> <u>The What When, Who and Why of the Rapture</u>	1026
146.	<u>The Bride's Mission Is For Perfect Unity With</u> <u>Christ</u> <u>The Ultimate Christian Unity</u>	1036
147.	<u>An End-Times Call to the Bride</u> <u>A Dialogue</u>	1056

148.	<u>The Church Would Become Corrupt</u>	1068
	<u>Prophecies in Joel Warn The Bride</u>	
149.	<u>Simeon and Anna Symbols of Waiting</u>	1072
	<u>Waiting for the Messiah is Same as awaiting The Bridegroom</u>	
150.	<u>The Church(es)</u>	1080
	<u>Who, What & How She Came To Be</u>	
151.	<u>“And Then There Is The Bride”</u>	1088
152.	<u>Urban Nutcracker</u>	1090
	<u>A Pageant of The Bride</u>	
153.	<u>The Constellation Foretells the Story of a Bride Prepared & Ready</u>	1093
	<u>CASSIOPEIA:</u>	
154.	<u>The Bride is to be God’s Jewels</u>	1098
155.	<u>The Bride in All Her Glory</u>	1115
	<u>The Bride: At The End in The book of Revelation</u>	
156.	<u>Spirit and Bride Say, “Come”</u>	1128
	<u>The Marriage Supper of the Lamb</u>	
157.	<u>Heaven and Earth Will Be One</u>	1132

How One Can Accept The Invitation For ‘The Marriage Supper of The Lamb’

About Us – Elisha’s Outcast Eagles

Elements of what should be done at the marriage supper

“If you love me ¹ keep my commandments.

And I will pray the Father, and ² he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever.

Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it cannot see him, neither can it know him: but ³ you will know him; for he will dwell with you, and shall be in you.

... If a man loves me, ⁴ he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” Jn 14:15-17&23

PUTTING ON THE GARMENTS

The above are the spiritual things we must accept, the things which the invited guest must ‘put on’, if you will. The guest must be willing to know God and do what he requests. One must let Him comfort them. Loving and trusting in God with your whole being is the first and most essential of all the aspects of what is spiritually implied in the symbolic use of ‘garment’.

Another crucial part of the garment will be to want God’s Will to be done, above and beyond anything else, first and foremost conceding your own will to the father’s Will. Hearing and doing what the father wants is the only proof that one loves God and the only proof that the father will accept. After all, it is the reason he is upset with the original guests, the fickle church-people of this hour. This is what has brought on his ire, causing him to tell his servants to

take to the streets in order to make full and complete the bride and groom's wedding party, to fill up his festive hall.

Pleasing God and accepting the invitation is rather simple. We must 'put on' his Word, so to speak, while finding his Will for us. It starts with believing His word, the Bible. The word used for "commandments" in the statement at the top of this page is not defined as a law as such, or in the usual sense as a demand, but rather it implies: an injunction or a precept, and more aptly: as an authoritative prescription recommended by a qualified physician as issued with trusted authority to a sick and needy patient.

We strongly recommend that those who are interested in accepting the invitation to the wedding supper investigate for themselves how they ought to be clothed. How they ought to view it as a prescription for health. Health being the meaning of the greek word salvation (Soterio). Essentially God is asking those who accept the invite to love him, and to do the right thing as he shows them what that is. In order for this to occur an invitee needs two essential things: ongoing contact with his Spirit and contact with his voice via the 'Word', which is readily found via the Bible. There one may find all of God's wisdom about how to have one's spirit richly clothed with life. Loving God and keeping his suggestions, teachings and wise counsels are found in His prophecies, allegories; as well as testimonies of His obedient men and women who are clothed in His Word. These are the clothes which allow those that seek God to walk with him in faith and confidence to adhere to God's will in this life.

In the process, God is able to give that person a new identity, a new start and a new set of clothes for their new spirit, so that you will be loved and that they will be able to love God with assurity. You may ask us through the website more about the garments in which the guests must be adorned. They are not matters of mystical occult things. They are spiritual. Jesus' 'commandments' (more like imperatives of health and wisdom) lead into richness which clothe his friends in health and strength, they provide shelter from the cold harsh cruelties of this world, against every onslaught and attack

which life's coldness may dish out. Clothe yourself in God's love by obedience to his advice and counsel and you will not only have put on strength and courage to move along life's pathway, but you will have secured a place at the wedding table and an eternal friend of God the Father.

PART I
SANCTIFIED

I. Salvation Free for the Asking, A Person Must Ask Then Receive

The Prophet Amos Tells Us

by Eloise Gardenier

God assured Man through his prophet Amos, Amos 3:7 this wonderful truth, “Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets.”, and the most fundamental of all God’s plans is the fact that He wants everyone to be saved. He wants everyone to be spared from the judgments that periodically descend on the world and will shortly come slamming down on the entire earth with unprecedented force and power. He wants all who will come to Him to be able to spend eternity with Him. In 1 Timothy 2:4–5 Paul wrote, “God will have all men to be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” In 2 Peter 3:9 we are reminded again; “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” So because God would like all men to come to repentance (even though he knows all men won’t) He is very careful to give us all a chance.

God's Plan of the Ages is a Plan of Covering Sin

In order to get a full understanding of God's desire for men to be saved we must take an even broader view, by something called "God's plan of the ages". This "plan of the ages", has been revealed through His servants the prophets and made available to all who want to know the truth, and are willing to take the time to search the Scriptures, know God's Word, and be taught by the Holy Spirit. The story begins in the Old Testament.

The Old Testament is a pageant, physically acted out by the Jews as a nation, and certain individual Gentiles to show God's dealings with man. From the beginning, God wanted fellowship with man, a two-way relationship, but man rejected this through his disobedience and self-will. With this, he (man) broke his perfect fellowship with God. But God in His love, mercy and wisdom had made provision for Man's fall.

Provision was made to cover sin by making innocent sacrifice and God had it acted out in the flesh, what would become a spiritual covering later. God physically covered Adam and Eve by the shedding of innocent animal's blood, that their skins might be used as clothing. Genesis 3:21 Generations later, in chapter 22 of Genesis, Abraham and his son Isaac "acted out" what God and His Son Jesus would do later. Abraham in obedience to God was willing to sacrifice his son, but the time had not yet come, and there would be only one Son sacrificed, so God once more provided a covering, through an innocent animal.

"And He said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son." Genesis 22:12 -13

Abraham's part in the plan was simply to believe God. He did and his belief endeared him to God. Through Moses, God gave the Jews the Law, and the Levitical priesthood. As the Jews lived out their attempts to keep the Law, their resulting frustration only proves that Man cannot keep the Law, or in other words, there is no way he can be righteous – in right standing – with God on his own.

Throughout the time of the Levitical priesthood, Man's sin had to be atoned for by the blood, his sin still had to be "covered". (see chapter 16 of Leviticus for atonement) This act performed by the priest once a year made the individual Jew right before God and made him righteous for one more year. This didn't mean he would not sin in the year to come, only that when he did he would appear righteous in the sight of God, because of the SACRIFICE made on his behalf through the shedding of innocent blood.

What all this acting-out established was that Man needed a savior, that he could never become righteous on his own. (See James 2:9–10, and Romans 3:23) Job 9:33–34 (Amplified Bible) shows how, Job, acting in behalf of Mankind in general, cried out for that savior: *"There is no umpire between us, who might lay his hand upon us both (would that there were)! He might take His rod away from (threatening) me, and that fear of Him might not terrify me."* Through Job we see that Man's heart cries out for a mediator, a savior, to intercede with God for him. The Law, an important cog in God's overall plan, did not save Man but it did force him to recognize the need to be saved.

God repeatedly had Man act out that he could not keep the Law, but in spite of our inability to keep the Law, God still has mercy and provides us a way out. The ultimate covering or way out is JESUS and the innocent blood He shed for all men. His was the covering ONCE and for ALL. This final and perfect covering took the place of the temporary provisions for Adam and Eve, Abraham, and the atonement and Passover for the Jews.

The Redeemer is the Way of Salvation

The next part of “God’s plan of the ages” provides exactly that, a way out!

After four thousand years of trying to make it on his own, or living under the Law, God sent Man the promised Savior, His only Son Jesus Christ. It is declared in 1 Timothy 2:5, *“That there (is only) one God, and (only) one mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.”* (Amplified Bible) And verse 6 goes on to say, *“Who gave Himself a ransom for all (people, a fact that was) attested to at the right and proper time.”*

Hebrews 9:24–25 and 10:14 says, *“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with the blood of others” ... “For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. (set apart)”*

The above verses show the transition between the Levitical Priesthood, the Law, and the true redemption of Man by the blood of the Lamb: ONCE AND FOR ALL. All according to God’s perfectly constructed plan of the ages. The catch is that Man must accept His death as having been for him personally, in his stead, just as a Jew believed and accepted that the atonement by the blood, performed by the priest, wiped away his sins and put him right with God for another year.

Now we need only to accept that ONE sacrifice of Christ, ONE TIME.

God could now gather a company of people to His Son, people who answer His call to participate in His plan of redemption. This plan always points toward the restoration of that perfect fellowship, and companionship with Him. For this period of nearly 2,000 years, God has been calling, teaching, and refining a people from among the Gentiles, and this part of His plan He has dubbed the “time of the Gentiles”.

Luke 21:24 and Romans 11:25 tell us: *“And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.”* And... *“For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in.”* This is not to say the Jews are forever excluded from God’s plan. The Scriptures tell us the contrary. Romans 11:11–12 tells us, *“I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fullness?”*

I would urge the reader to read the entire chapter 11 of Romans on this subject to understand how God’s plan makes provision for both Jew and Gentile.

Current Age is Drawing to a Close

The past two thousand years are known to students of prophecy as the age or dispensation of Grace. This age or dispensation is rapidly coming to a close. We know that even now God’s judgment is going on in the house of God as we are told in 1 Peter 4:17, *“For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?”* Following the age of Grace, will begin a period or dispensation of judgment, made clear to us in the prophetic Scriptures. Among the most exciting, yet sobering of these prophecies is from Jesus Himself, often referred to as the “Olivet Discourse” and so important it appears in three of the four gospels; Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21. Matthew 24:3 says, *“And as He sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately,*

saying, *Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (or age).*

In these three chapters Jesus is instructing us concerning the signs of the end, warning us, and even commanding us what to do. He sets certain times and tells of rewards and penalties. By these prophecies of Jesus, and many other prophecies in both the Old and New Testament, we know this age or dispensation is rapidly coming to a close, which will bring us into the next dispensation, one of trial and judgment!

The purpose of this judgment, as revealed by God's Word and by His prophets, is to purge the earth in preparation for its restoration, and to judge men for their open rebellion. It is coming soon! Matthew 24:7 warns us that, *"nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places."* We are seeing previews of these things even now. What was promised in the past has all come true, what is promised in the future will surely come to pass also.

One thing I can promise, there is a happy ending.

2. Rahab: We Must all Repent

Anyone Can Be Saved From Being a Sinner

by T Myers Smith

The story of Rahab, the harlot woman of Jericho, told to us in the second chapter of the book of Joshua, gives the discerning reader an exciting foreshadow of the saving blood of Jesus Christ and how all true believers can go from harlot to potential bride in Jesus Christ. There are many points of great and wonderful spiritual significance weaved within the account of Rahab, a great woman of faith.

We All Become Unfaithful

One of the most important is that Joshua, whose life and deeds foreshadowed Jesus, sent messengers, who were symbolic of the Holy Ghost, to spy within the city of Jericho, which was representative of the world. In the city, or the world, the spies, or the Holy Ghost, found one who would receive the important message involving salvation. This is much like the work of the Holy Spirit whom Jesus sends into the world to seek out the hearts of potentially faithful men and women today. Once again the Jews and those people directly involved with them acted out in the flesh what would one day be fulfilled in the Spirit. Rahab, we are shown was a woman in great need. It is interesting to note that she is immediately identified in the Word as a harlot. I believe God intended it this way so that we all could identify with her.

How could I identify with a harlot, you may wonder? Well, the first of the Ten Commandments given by God to Moses and the people of Israel states, “*I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou*

shalt have no other Gods before me.” Ex 20:2-3. Anyone that has ever placed anything before God that makes him less than first in their lives is guilty of breaking this commandment and has breached the intended relationship God wants to have with them. Doing this to God makes one a spiritual adulterer and in that sense we all are like Rahab the harlot. What honest person cannot identify with Rahab at some time during their life.

We Are All in Need

As all humans, Rahab was a woman in great need. She did not recognize the gravity of her own situation until the day she was confronted by the messengers of God’s people. Since the victorious work of Jesus Christ was completed nearly 2,000 years ago God has been sending forth his Spirit to spy within the great walled cities of men’s hearts to deliver the message of truth, judgment and salvation. The two spies sent into Jericho brought the truth of God’s mighty works which he had performed throughout the land. When Rahab spoke with these two spies who carried an important message it was confirmed in her heart that the many things of which she had heard about God’s mighty works in the land were indeed true. The two men sent by Joshua into the walled city of Jericho were acting as ‘representatives’ of the Holy Ghost and the salvation message that He brings to the ears and hearts of men, even in the most desperate of situations. Anyone who has felt an hour of desperation in their life can be taught by Rahab’s story and what she needed to do in order to receive her salvation.

We All Must repent

Her salvation is not without stipulation and warning of destruction

to those who ignore it. Like the two spies, the Spirit also delivers the message of impending judgment against all that remain unrighteous. It reveals that God's plan of salvation and redemption includes the overthrow and destruction of everything that is unfit for his Kingdom. The people who hear and believe the message brought to them by the Holy Ghost, as he 'spies' into their hearts, are offered the way out of the doomed city they dwell in; and shown that they can enter into a promised land of peace and safety and dwell with their Savior. When confronted with the truth, Rahab confessed God as Lord before the messengers and when she understood that God had a plan to destroy the city of Jericho and all the inhabitants within it she pleaded for mercy. Rahab's confession and request is like the cry from a repentant heart of one who acknowledges God for who He is and realizes their own deserved demise and seeks His mercy.

Rahab Indicative of All Gentiles

For Rahab to escape death and enter into life in a new land, a land promised to another people, she had to believe the messengers that a devastating judgment was coming, and that the messenger of God would be true to the promise to save her. She had to believe that judgment would come and that she could be saved. As an act of belief she was required to place a scarlet colored cord from out of her window, one that could be seen at judgment time. The spiritual metaphor should be apparent. The window is a means of identity for Rahab and from it must be seen the scarlet cord which is symbolic of the shed blood of Jesus and its power to have the angel of death pass us by that we can be saved unto eternal life. The messengers made it clear that this was the only means by which she and any of her relatives who assembled in the place marked by the red colored cord would be delivered out of the condemned city and brought into the company of God's people to live with them in the Promised

Land. Rahab and her family were not Jews. They were not at this time a part of the chosen nation of people whom God had promised would one day dwell in the Promised Land, flowing with milk and honey, but were heathen people known as Gentiles. God's plan, however, included even outsiders and sinners, even sexual deviants; anyone willing to believe and enter in and this is who Rahab and her family represent.

A lot can be gleaned here of the promises made under the new covenant to the Gentiles and of their ability through Christ to be grafted into the olive tree (Rom. 11:11-25) and of the promises that salvation is offered to whole households through the obedience of one individual. (Acts 11:14 & 16:31) Rahab was richly blessed in her obedience unto salvation; she was even given place in the genealogy of Jesus with her name listed in Matthew 1:5. She became the great-great-grandmother of King David; a distant ancestor of Christ Himself. This story of Rahab and how she and her loved ones were saved from the destruction of Jericho and given a place with God's chosen people can be a rich blessing of encouragement for the saved and unsaved alike. For when we all stand before the judgment throne of God the one decisive factor that all things will hinge upon is going to be whether or not the scarlet cord of Jesus' shed blood for the remission of our sins is seen hanging from the window of our being. If that blood covering is tied around our identity then we will hear those wonderful welcoming words from God our Father inviting us to enter into the Kingdom and our stay in that Heavenly eternal Promised Land will be granted. (Rev. 21:27 & 22:14)

Won't you, if you haven't already, invite Jesus into your heart to be your Lord and personal Savior and hang that precious scarlet cord from your window for all to see so that you may gain access into the Promised Land.

About Being Born Again

John 3

[1] *There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:*

[2] *The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.*

[3] *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

[4] *Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?*

[5] *Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

It should not be overlooked that Rahab saved the lives of the messengers by hiding them on the rooftop of her house and then telling them to lay low for three days until the men looking for them had given up the search. For taking in these men and asking for mercy she and her willing relatives were saved. She, and all of Jericho (which stands for the world), had heard of the Lord's mighty power and she had believed in it and acted upon that belief. We, too, must believe in our hearts and then act on that belief. The book of Romans says: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Romans 10:9-13.

3. What is a Christian?

The Spirit Not Just The Flesh

by T Myers Smith

When the name Christian is invoked today it usually means anyone who has been born into a Christian family, or any person that in any way may have a past link to a Christian heritage, or perhaps a casual Evangelical who once answered an altar-call and visits a church once a week. But truly: What is a Christian?

For example, a political brand of 'Christian' fought a civil war in the 70s and 80s in Lebanon against the Muslims. Political parties with the moniker "Christian," or carrying placards with the usual Christian slogans and symbols, have been the party of choice for scads of despotic and tyrannical regimes in South America over the last one hundred and fifty years. Tens of thousands of Americans, who devote only the most meager of time and thought to Jesus Christ, regularly report their religion as: Christian – rather than, say, Scientologist, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu or Rastafarian.

Throughout the history of our country we have witnessed a steady stream of presidents and high ranking political figures shamelessly pander to the public for votes on the basis of their faith in God. Sometimes they have claimed to be born-again just to gain absolution for their "high crimes and misdemeanors." Should true Christians be taken in by these political testimonies which reduce the cause of Christ to public relations gimmicks? Should Christians accept anyone's version of Christianity? Should we give the benefit of the doubt to any old cook who comes along with a new fast food recipe that tastes good but is unhealthy for our eternal souls? I was told by a preacher once that "there are many different 'Jesus Christs' being slung about and cooked up, as many as men can invent. But you best not dine on them; you'll die either of hunger or poison. And you won't know which one will get you first."

If we accept any version of Christ and neglect to examine the fruits then we make a mockery of what it means to be a Christian. Instead of seeking political power or social influence, leaders of the Evangelicals, Pentecostals and all Spirit-led, born-again believers ought to quit their obsession with cleaning up the world and muster up the courage to preach The Full Gospel, trusting that the truth of the cross of Christ will have God's desired effect. It may not fill the pews on Sunday the way we wish or want, but there is power in God's Word. Why can't they believe that the Word will not return to the Kingdom of God void or frustrated?

They can begin by telling everyone the true definition of a Christian, the sanctity of the Ten Commandments and that the truth is not relative or vague, but is constant and real, because Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. They can start to insist on this in their fellowships and congregations and resist the pernicious lies of Ecumenism that smudge the very walls of our Church today like graffiti scribbled over a Rembrandt masterpiece. The letters to the churches in the last book of the Bible touch on some of the lethal lies that infest Christianity and turn it into something other than Christ. To begin with, a Christian is only a Christian after he or she has been born-again. Darkness does not have fellowship with light, Belial with Christ. We must not pretend to have unity of fellowship with those who have not been born anew; We are from two different worlds. There are a glorious number of ways to become born-again. The so-called four spiritual laws requiring belief and repentance and confession in that order is not the only way to bow to the cross of Christ and be reborn, born not only of 'water' (natural flesh), but of spirit too. (See: The Six-fold mission statement of Jesus as outlined by Him in Luke 4.) As an example, the six-fold ministry of Christ, declared by the prophets and summed up by Jesus as His mission statement (Lk. 4:18-19), makes provision for the fatherless, the widows, the suffering and downtrodden to enter into His love by being born-again first, by accepting His love.

The epistle to the Romans tells us that by our heart we believe

unto righteousness, but with the mouth we make confession unto salvation. It does not make restriction only to immediate repentance of sin, only to belief in the heart and confession before man. Repentance and deliverance surely, without exception will follow. You can legalize the born-again experience the way you can mandate traffic laws and good works but don't be deceived, there are many ways in which people accept Christ and become new creations. Sometimes it is just believing God exists and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. Sometimes He is received in the heart because He is the healer and the bringer of salvation and love to a lonely and unloved soul. No matter how it is done, receiving Christ and becoming a new creature (born-again) is the essence and starting point of all fellowship in Christ, the Church, His body or whatever one may choose to call it.

Instead of the vain hope of making this world (which according to God's Word, is at enmity with God) a sanitary place for "good" Christian families, we ought to be telling the nation, at every opportunity, what a true Christian is and what God's preference is for each of His born-again children. A Christian is not a Christian unless he is a follower of Jesus Christ. Not really a Christian, I mean. That is what the word Christian stands for. The word, or name, Christian was first coined after the first persecution had taken place in Jerusalem when Christianity had begun to spread to some local cities of Asia Minor (Acts 11:19-26). Breakdown the word Christian for yourself. Christ – 'ian': Christ like. The believers of Antioch were recognized as this off-beat spiritual sect because they lived like Christ – totally unlike the world. One of the Roman leaders said that these Christians had turned the world upside down. A Christian is not one by name, or label, but one who follows Christ wherever Christ leads. They will have turned their backs on the World, their Flesh and Demonic forces of Satan. They will have departed from their former life which has been dictated to and dominated by those three enemies of the spirit. A person must be born-again if one is to have any hope of departing from the allies and departing from the gutters of these three menacing enemies. We must be extricated,

taken away, separated and sanctified for God's use. By being born-again in the spirit we may begin the journey to an intimate relation with God and His Son by the Spirit. If we are wise we will strive for the 'mark of the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus,' as the apostle Paul so aptly put it. We will be walking in the opposite way of Man and the World, having fled the wrath that is to come, not in conjunction with it. In this way, going in the way of the pilgrimage of Christian life, Christians ought to be perfect. Ideally, they will follow Jesus with a full, perfect discipline of spirit, honest and true, striving for and cleaving to this, desiring to be at His flank, always walking with Him wherever He chooses to lead. The Bible alludes to this as walking in the spirit. As Enoch walked with God and was no more (raptured) because he had a testimony that he pleased God, so ought we to walk. *"He that says he abides in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked."* 1 John 2:6 As the popular slogan goes: WWJD – What Would Jesus Do?

Notice the Bible says that the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. My dictionary says that a disciple is a 'disciplined' follower of the doctrine of a teacher or leader. Jesus said, *"And whosoever doth not bear this cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."* Luke 14:27 And talking about Himself as the Good Shepherd He said, *"And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice."* John 10:4 And He taught a number of devout Greeks, who had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, *"If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour."* John 12:26 To be a true Christian one must be a dedicated follower of Christ.

Jesus also taught this, *"Ye shall know them by their fruits."* Matt 7:16 Anyone who accepts the title: "Christian" with any understanding of the truth, must accept that it presumes a disciplined following of Jesus Christ to the bearing forth of godly fruits for the glory of God. Anything short of that mission by a Christian is a sham and a misrepresentation of what it means to be a Christian. As the Bible teaches: Let all those who name the name

of Christ depart from iniquity! That's straight enough I think. Mere words or sprinkling of water, or religious vows, or altar calls cannot transform a man or woman into a Christian or constitute a walk. Discipleship is both active and passive. Passive in self and active in spirit. Not doing one's own will but denying self and walking, picking up the cross, obedience to the voice of God. The receiving of sacraments does not make a follower. Disciples are proven in their footsteps, their actions, following after the cross of Christ with their own cross upon their shoulders. Hypocrisy does the cross of Christ a great disservice and persuades people, who otherwise might find faith to believe, to scoff at Christianity so that they wither up and die in the dark shadows along the wayside of life.

The epithet of "Christian" is used only twice more in Scripture, once when Paul stood in chains before King Agrippa and gave a stirring testimony to the power of Christ. Agrippa responded by saying, *"Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."* Even this worldly king understood the implications of calling oneself a Christian. The other instance appears in Peter's first letter. Peter is talking about the gravity of being a follower of Christ and that it should not be a life solely of abundant blessing, excitement and convenience, but one displaying right living and godly virtue. *"But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?"* 1 Peter 4:14-17

True Christians must be living proof of God's power to make new creatures of any person who will come to Him. They should be open books of the power and need for change is the human condition. His power to change that person into a vessel filled with the goodness of God. It is not the believer's own power or discipline, and this should be evident too, but it is the power of God in him or her, made possible by the living glory of Christ residing in that person's changed and new spiritual heart. Then the law can and

will be fulfilled, which could not be fulfilled in a man until Christ came, but can now be fulfilled by those who *“walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.”* Therefore, the Scripture declares that the law can now be fulfilled by the power of God in a true Christian. If one is truly a Christian the good fruit of God’s love will slowly, but surely, manifest itself. This is a fact of truth, an indispensable part of Christian doctrine. The reason that the apostle John makes the otherwise outrageous statement:

“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.

And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.

Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.

Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.

He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” 1

John 3:4-9

The Ten Commandments are so rudimentary that they will be taught and “naturally” followed when we are sensitive to the Spirit’s urgings and power in us. There is no gray area or room for debate concerning them. It is wrong to commit adultery. It is wrong to covet our neighbor’s’ belongings or his or her spouse. It is wrong to bear false witness (or commit perjury) against our fellow human beings. But be sure of this: it is even more wrong not to fulfill in our life the first commandment to love God with all our strength, our heart and soul and body. The second is vital as well; we must love our neighbors as we love ourselves.

It is not wrong to judge these things in the Church. I say things – not so much people. We must judge righteous judgment, those

things which are done and discourage ungodliness. Judgment begins at the house of God. If we judge ourselves we shall not have to be judged later. We shall know who our Christian brothers and sisters are because, *"We shall know them by their fruit"* Matt 7:16. By examining ourselves we shall also know and comprehend if we have actually been freed by Christ from our life and ways of sin and are actually living a life pleasing to God by faith. If we know we are a true disciple, picking up our cross and following Christ because we are changed and are being continually saved and changed, then we are confident that we are pleasing God. Only if our relationship is well with God can we with assurance call ourselves Christian. Only then does the name Christian, by which we call ourselves, become God's honest truth.

4. Three Little Words...

And I understood the Truth about life

I can still remember the exact moment when it happened. The scene stands alone forever in my mind, a freeze-frame that I can recall to memory at will. The two of us were standing in a doorway that led down to the cellar stairs. The door was open, my stepfather leaning, slightly swaying against the jamb. We were engaged in a deep spiritual talk when suddenly the moment became encased in the special energy and electricity that is conducted only by truth. I can't recall what led up to this moment so significant in my life, nor do I remember what we talked about afterward, but in three words my soul was forever changed. My stepfather simply said: "Jesus is alive." It may not sound like much now. Many will even say, "What an obvious statement". But, for me, in that moment the earth and wind stood still, the skies were torn apart, and my eyes and my ears were opened. It was as if God had said "Ephphatha", like he did to the deaf man in Mark 7 and instantly I heard the sublime and ultimate truth.

Just three little words. And, for one man, the earth stopped turning on its axis, the heavens unfolded, bowed and opened.

Three little words, "Jesus is alive", and a quest for truth was completed, gloriously ended.

Three little words and my life was severed from its former world of lonely darkness. I had come from the outer reaches of the cold asteroid of un-knowledge of a place like Pluto. Down to Earth. Three words and the Truth ruled. I heard the truth, saw the truth, knew the truth. Three words and my world could never be the same. I had played around with the occult, and in ignorance toyed with the pseudo-spiritual world. Some of the things I did for pleasure and had unwittingly opened myself to spiritual influences. Other things I actively sought after so I could gain power and control over my own destiny. Drinking was a big spiritual trip, and drugs even bigger. These trips into alcohol and drug abuse were not vacation trips

either, they were daily excursions to a spiritual well, where I guzzled in the influence of any and all spirits that might come to me. In that moment I did not know or realize that these things brought me into contact with spirits. I only knew that I knew the naked truth.

I was ignorant of the true nature of the spiritual world and the activities of Satan's demonic forces. I just thought booze gave me pleasure and drugs "expanded" my mind. Little did I know I had been letting spirits into my life, let them into my mind and most importantly into my heart, giving them room to influence my thoughts, beliefs, and my entire behavior. Through the "doorways" provided by alcohol and drugs these deceiving spirits had lured me into the fantastic world of occult lies. They had diverted me from real truth by various right sounding philosophies, feeding me with lies and promising me power and knowledge. The sky was the limit, the reality was the depths of lies and despair. The spirits of drugs easily manipulated me with their subtle lying sorceries of lust. I was lured into Tarot Cards, I dabbled in the notion of separate realities, had my astrological chart made up, looked into witchcraft and ancient religions. I sought after knowledge of any sort. I continued to investigate the love of my life – history – and looked for any confirmation of the power and reality of the world of the paranormal.

All the while I looked for TRUTH. Always I looked in the wrong places with hopelessly blind eyes. Where was it? What would I do when I found it?

In everything I explored there was some truth, some reality. That's how spirits, demons, chimera, whatever you might call them, set the trap. But it was always partial truth; with some evil or lying twist to it. Angels of light flattering me with promises and tickling my fancy with promises of love, success and victories over every foe that might work against my happiness, though nothing could deliver the whole, pure, unadulterated, untainted, incorruptible truth. That is, not until Jesus revealed to me that He, a living person, is the Truth. From that time on, I understood that Easter was real.

Since that moment, often in my mind's eye I have seen this

picture. I see my stepfather's face, brilliant, alive with color, eyes alert with the knowledge of God and me standing in black and white before him, backlit by nothing but the Truth, all half-truths out of the frame, everything else black and white like one of those graduation pictures of olden days. All vision of the world or any dimension outside the spirit cropped, colorings of man washed out, just light and dark. I see my step-father speaking those three dynamic words, his lips do not need to move, his eyes tell the story that will forever change my outlook of the universe and life itself – the words “Jesus is alive!” softly boom and resound in my heart.

This eternally resounding moment did not “save” me. It changed me. Salvation is a working, doing thing. It must be living just the way a heartbeat creates life by the perpetual motion of one beat at a time. Salvation is a living thing not something that once happens, living must follow, must perpetually be on this side of the veil and on the other, it is not a thing once done, it is a thing going on. Those three little words however, were exactly the same as what had happened to the women that had come to the tomb of Jesus on that first Easter morning. It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that ran to tell the world the good news that Jesus is alive, that He is risen. The basic revelation of all life hit upon the human heart when those women heard the glorious words “He is risen” spoken for the first time. These were three words of salvation, ‘he is risen’ (Jesus is alive!) spoken by a messenger from God, reverberated throughout the universe like a shock wave. The most majestic and marvelous of the accounts of this moment of victory, this VU Day, Victory in the Universe Day; reserved for those who know Jesus for all eternity.

“In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.

And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.

His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow:

And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.

He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.

And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word.” Matt. 28:1-8

The angel of the Lord had spoken three words, “He is risen”, and everything was changed. The world and the universe knew the truth. Jesus is alive! That is what Easter is, and always has been about. Because Christ lives I can get to know Him personally. I can now meet my Maker in this life and be saved from sin and death, healed of blindness to THE TRUTH, healed of deafness of his voice.

It was now my choice. I could either receive this living Jesus into my life or reject Him. But I knew He was there, alive and waiting to have a relationship with me. I did not receive Jesus, the living Truth, into my heart at that moment. I did not make Him the Lord, the King, the Master of my life and the controller of my destiny. I did not turn control over to Him that day. It would not be for some time before I would give up myself to THE Truth, enter into the celebration of an eternal Easter.

I was shocked to find out that THE Truth was actually a name for a person and that I had nothing to do with it. I guess it hurt my pride and offended my spirit that I had nothing to do with the TRUTH. It was not in me. It had nothing to do with me. I had to admit I was not part of it and that it did not need me to become whole or complete. It was outside me and I had to concede to it completely. I did not repent on the spot. I did not even repent, per se, the day I finally accepted Christ as my Savior, I only conceded to Him that he was

God, THE Truth, The All Knowing. My full repentance took some doing. But I knew. Oh, I knew!!! I knew THE TRUTH and I was freed from my wanderings, and I could now submit to God's omnipotent being when I so desired. There was no place else to look, nowhere to go, no more wondering. In that way I was set free. It was up to me, what I was going to do with the TRUTH. Jesus said of Himself, "*I am the way, the TRUTH, and the life: no man cometh to the Father but by me.*" John 14:6

THE TRUTH is a person. THE TRUTH is God. THE TRUTH is Jesus. And I knew I could get to know the TRUTH personally because Jesus is alive. Jesus lives in heaven. He lives on earth by way of His being one with the Holy Ghost. Thank God for "Easter" and those three words – "Jesus is risen!" I thank God for saying to me in a way I could understand, those three little words that changed my soul, my being, forever – "Jesus is alive!"

5. You Must Be Born Again

Any Journey Begins With A First Step

By Terry Myers Smith

“I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness.” Micah 7:9

Every journey begins with a first step. The first step in *The Journey to Brideship* and an intimate and purer walk with God begins with being born into the Kingdom of God – being born again. Jesus coined the phrase himself in the following exchange with one of the religious leaders of His day.

“There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:

The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?

Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

*Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?
Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and
knowest not these things?*

*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify
that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.*

*If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye
believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?*

*And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down
from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.*

*And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must
the Son of man be lifted up:*

*That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have
eternal life.*

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that
whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting
life.” John 3:1-16.*

The operative words are **you must**, **to see** and **to enter**. There can be no equivocating about entrance into the kingdom of God. You cannot see or enter the kingdom of God if you are not born supernaturally into the spiritual realm by some miraculous act of the Spirit of God. Obviously, no one can begin the journey within the kingdom of God if they can neither see, nor enter it. This was simply and forthrightly stated by Jesus, but Man and the Church have been guilty of disregarding this most fundamental truth, or arguing spuriously against it. Elements in the Church have often been guilty of manufacturing some false and carnal way of entering the kingdom of God, by sacraments or vows or some such humanistic or legalistic way.

These are the usual religious geriatrics which is unable to revive and heal the patient because we must enter into salvation by the Spirit in the spirit. We must simply believe and be willing to confess that Jesus is our personal Savior and the Lord of all things. Jesus even showed his amazement at the ignorance of one of the prime spiritual leaders of God's people (Nicodemus) on this decisive matter of salvation. Nicodemus showed his carnality as a literalist by asking if he should crawl back into

his mother's womb to be born-again. Jesus showed His amazing grace by not laughing Nicodemus out of town, or 'outing' him as an ignorant boob to the common people. Nicodemus had come to Jesus under the cover of night because he was afraid to be seen with the prophet, though he knew Jesus had the true answer for all the questions in his fuzzy mind.

At any rate, a person must break through into the spiritual realm by being born anew and being made a new creature in Christ. *"Therefore if any man be in Christ he is **a new creature**, old things are passed away, behold all things are become new."* 2 Cor 5:17 This is just another way of saying that a bona-fide true believer is one that is *born-again*. This is only the first step toward having salvation (meaning *health*: from Greek word *Sozio*) permeate us through and through. Salvation permeates by experience, by continuing faith, by walking with the Spirit and by being separated from the World.

The first step is one giant step for a man, but still it is only one small step along one's journey in the kingdom of God. You must be born-again... any way you slice it ... we must be born again if we are to see and enter the kingdom of God.

6. You Can Have a Whole New Heritage in Christ

We Must be Born-Again to See the Kingdom of God

By Terry Myers Smith

For a generation or so there has been a big move among ethnic groups and minorities to get back to their “roots”. The black community, for instance, looking back to its African culture and ancestry, are adamant about being called African Americans. In an ever increasing, fast-paced world where people feel they are getting lost in a blitz of conformity, people cling to ethnic pride for identity and security. We look into our family trees hoping to pluck out some famous personality or an example of a sterling individual that we can associate ourselves with, and say, “This is in my blood, this is what I’m like, this is who I am.” But for the born-again Christian, truly converted and made a new creature in Christ, this should all change.

We are given a whole new family heritage. Our roots can be found in the Bible. Our forefathers are men like Abraham, David, Daniel, Peter and Paul. The Bible tells us “*Therefore if any man be in Christ; he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*” 2 Cor. 5:17 The most precious of these new things is a new heart, or spirit. We become, and in all actuality, are a totally new creation, a new creature. That is why the term ‘born-again’ is most appropriate. With our new birth we also get new roots, a new lineage for we become a true member of the family of God. It is a grave misconception fostered by humanism in the Church that says we are all the family of God. The Bible says that when we are born-again it amounts to an adoption of that person by God

the Father. Our family tree instantly changes. Old things pass away, the Scripture says; all things are become new. Our genealogy in the spirit changes from Afro-American, Scottish, Irish, Italian, Indian or Japanese, to the genealogy of our brother and Savior, Jesus Christ. We are of the family and household of God now. Therefore our “roots” are in God, in Christ the Savior. Our family history, our family tree is laid out before us in the Bible.

This is not supposition, theological gymnastics, speculation, or presumption. A man I know once had a dream where God showed him the genealogy in Matthew which ends with Jesus, the Son of God. The voice of the Lord said to him, “Now you can put your name right next to His in that genealogy. You are of the family of God”.

We should get excited about the Bible once we see it as the history of our family – this is our family tree now. In it there is an abundance of ‘aunts’, ‘uncles’, parents and grandparents of faith so we may be able to see true faith. They stand as shining examples for those who wish to live exemplary spiritual lives by faith. They are representative of that encouragement of excellence which we all long to find as a bright light in our past through our ancestry. The excellency of our ancestry, or lack thereof, never can produce the proper inspiration to live godly lives, unless we find that they had lived the exemplary life. But God’s record of our faithful ‘relatives of the spirit’ can inspire us, because they testify to the reality and possibility of living by extraordinary faith. The Bible calls them a “cloud of witnesses”.

Even in the flesh we are all descendants of Adam and Noah. We were all “in the same boat” in a manner of speaking. We are all related by Noah. But, when born-again, the Ethiopian, the Hindi, the Native American, become one in the family of the circumcised in heart. Now we are the children of Abraham in truth and he is the ‘father of faith’. If we are Jesus’ brother, then we are also of His lineage. The New Testament (the new deal or new covenant) begins with this verse, “*These are the generations of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham.*” Matt 1:1 A Jew is not, as it says in Romans 2:28-29, *one who is outwardly a Jew, but one on the inside.* We are

all of Abraham's seed. "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."

Look to the Bible as your source. This is where we find the roots and heritage of our new life which is in Christ. Your family tree can be found within the pages of the Bible. You can place your name in its tree. For if you are truly born of the spirit and are now a child of God, then the Bible contains your true and spiritual roots.

7. My Father's Bible Woke Me to God's Marvelous Word

And I Was Born-Again

By Eloise Gardenier

When did I know the Bible was the Word of God? Having had church-going, Bible-believing parents and grandmothers, in the “Bible Belt”, I never really questioned that. I simply took it for granted. But when did that truth become alive, when was it set on fire? When did I begin to forever defend it as the truth and nothing but the truth?

I believe it was somewhere between my determination to seek God with all my heart and find Him, and when I was actually born-again according to Jesus' answer to Nicodemus in John chapter three (or when I was born of the Spirit). No, I couldn't and didn't go back into my mother's womb to be “born again”. Jesus told Nicodemus; *“That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit, marvel not that I say unto thee, Ye must be born again.”*

After a long stretch of being depressed, hopeless and near suicide, I was prompted to search to know more about God. I even wrote Him a note asking Him to help me make the right decisions. For a number of months I had been seeking God because I wanted to know Him in a personal way. (I HAD incorrectly believed that I had known Him all my life.)

I started attending a Charismatic worship group and began reading my Bible as never before. I was so hungry for His Word I would stay up until 2 or 3 A.M. reading the Bible. At this time I was attending to a class on how to receive the Holy Ghost – or as they said in those days, the Holy Spirit. It was basically a meeting run by the Catholic Church.

The week before I was to have someone lay hands on me to receive the Spirit something in my spirit had compelled me to read my father's bible which he had marked several passages. It was given to me by my mother seventeen years earlier at my father's death. I stayed up until 3 A.M. reading what was of importance to my father.

Among those things highlighted in his Bible were John chapter 3 and three verses from Ezekiel 36 which said:

"Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." vs 25-27

Inside the Bible was a scrap from an old check with Psalm 107 and four verses written on it. I read the verses and found they were all the same, *"Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness and His wonderful works to the children of men."*

There were many, many more, too numerous to go into. But I know each one pierced my heart to stay there forever. I didn't understand all of it that night, but my heart had been changed. As Ezekiel said; *"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you."*

That new spirit within me caused me to sing in my sleep. The singing, of my own voice, awakened me. I was singing a very familiar prayer, often sung from the Episcopal prayer book. I just now realized after twenty-four years that it was the best way I knew to sing praises to God. It begins with *"Glory be to God on high"* and ends with; *"For thou only art holy; thou only art the Lord; thou only Oh Christ, with the Holy Ghost, are most high in the glory of God the Father."*

I believe that morning I awoke a completely new person, NOW

born of the Spirit, the Spirit of God. I believe this was promised to me the night before without my realizing it as I read from both John 3 and Ezekiel 36. Those words had sunk into my spirit and came true as I slept in the arms of my Saviour. He even spoke the confirmation of my rebirth to me soon after I awakened. He said; “This is the first day of your life – not the rest of your life – but the first day of your new life.” I was literally passing over a bridge en route to church when He spoke this to me. As I had done spiritually in my sleep, I was crossing over to Salvation.

I believe it was that very day when I became fully aware that the Bible was indeed the Word of God. I knew the power and might of God’s Word like never before!!! And it has only grown stronger every day of my life since.

8. He Came To Set The Captives Free!!

Freedom's Land

By Eloise Gardenier

One of the main reasons the Father's plan included sending Jesus, His Son, to earth was to set the captives free! He came to bring prisoners of sin, the law, fear, confusion etc., into freedom. This freedom is of the spirit and is possible only through Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost, who was promised to us when Jesus went to the Father. God knew that, left to their own ways, men would be bound by every thinkable kind of oppressing spirit. These spirits would wreak havoc with us – body, soul and spirit. In His wisdom, God drew up plans for us to be freed from all this bondage.

When my conversion to Christ took place, chances are I looked relatively normal to most people. The truth was that I was a slave to so many possessing spirits that I was on the brink of no longer being able to function in this life. Praise God! Jesus came to set the captives free! He began at once to set me free.

There are many ways we can acquire those spirits that desire to hold us hostage. The first opportunity for this is inheritance. “... *visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and upon the children's children, unto the third and fourth generation.*” Exodus 34:7 Over the years, since my personal life with Jesus began, He has shown me numerous stumbling blocks to my freedom, handed down to me from ancestors. One of the most powerful and all-encompassing was a spirit of fear I received from my mother. Some of the many other oppressions were; alcohol, depression, insomnia, sexual lust, selfishness and loneliness, to name a few.

As we continue on in life we soon begin to add to the oppression we were born with, including our fallen nature. We can see it

happening in very young children, even babies. Their stubbornness and willfulness starts very early on. As we grow and mature our willfulness can grow into rebellion as we pick up more wrong ideas through our friends, at school, college, TV, books, music, movies, drugs, and our own choices. As these spiritual bullies control our actions and reactions we become more and more out of control. Some of the benign and personal oppressions can grow and be added to so they are no longer just problems for us, alone, but others are now affected and perhaps threatened by our behavior.

Here is how some of those things grew for me; an alcohol problem became an addiction, lust turned into an amoral attitude, disappointment fear and resentment brought on anger, hate and neurotic actions. I became a hypochondriac along with an obsession concerning a broken relationship. Then desperation and hopelessness set in and demons of suicide rushed in to destroy me completely before I could belong to Jesus Christ. I know those suicide demons personally, and they can be relentless. Insomnia was always there doing her part in each of these progressions, keeping me awake plotting and planning. Praise God, the reality of 2 Timothy 2:26 came to my rescue in the nick of time. *“And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.”*

These spirits I have called by name are only the tip of the iceberg of what the Lord had to deal with when I came to Him. He started at once to set me free. (If I seem over-zealous or fanatic in His behalf, it is because I know how merciful His deliverance has been for me!) *“He whom the Son sets free is free indeed.”* John 8:36 He has His priorities which are not always the same as ours. He started by giving me the hope and peace I had never known before, which delivered me from those demons of suicide, desperation and hopelessness. Soon came the disappearance of anger and hate ... especially for my ex -husband. This was followed by freedom from addictions, namely alcohol, cigarettes, lust etc. etc. With the disappearance of undesirable spirits, I was filled more and more with His Spirit, the Holy Spirit and the fruits that He brings. *“Being*

then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.” Romans 6:18 Just the opposite of the old life as Jesus says; “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever commits sin is the servant of sin.” John 8:34 Jesus also said; “You will know the truth and the truth will set you free.” John 8:32

Where the matter of deliverance is concerned, when we have been walking with the Lord for some time, we must face the truth about ourselves and desire to be set free. Sometimes God sees our hearts and has mercy and delivers us quickly, quietly and without our asking, especially when we are babes in Him. In severe cases deliverance can be quite dramatic and with all sorts of manifestations. Most of the time, though, it is a quiet word from the Lord through a wide variety of ways. He lets us know of our need for deliverance in dreams, His Word, music, something someone else might say or do, or a testimony. His ways of showing us that we need help in some areas are limitless. Usually, it is good to ask believers for prayer. It is also good to rebuke and take authority over Satan, even call the name of the problem demon if you know what it is, in “Jesus’ Name”.

During the twenty years since I first began my deliverance, it has been an ongoing process. Praise God He didn’t show me what I was really like all at once. At first God, in His mercy, relieved me, almost automatically, of my severe and dramatic shackles that had kept me bound so long. At that time I had no idea what I needed or how badly off I really was. Having filled me with His love, peace and the Holy Ghost, He could now take His time in making me into that truly “new creature” He wanted me to be.

I urge you, believers, to continuously seek to be free from anything that might hinder your relationship with Jesus and the perfection He wants for you. I exhort you, church, never be ashamed to ask for the saints to lay hands on you for deliverance. Claim your inheritance! Always be eager to shed your shackles.

The following are a few scriptures referring to freedom:

Isaiah 61:1-4

[1] The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;

[2] To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;

[3] To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.

[4] And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations.

Luke 4:18-20

[18] The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

[19] To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

[20] And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.

John 8:32 & 36

[32] And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

[36] If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

Galatians 5:1

[1] Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

9. The Day the King's Son Died

By Clinton White

Suppose you lived in a beautiful kingdom where the sun always shone and peace ruled continually. But then you did something very wrong to upset this peace. You killed a neighbor. The law of the kingdom said that a person who did this must be banished into darkness and then be executed. So you were taken into a very dark dungeon far beneath the king's palace to await your death. You were shackled to a damp wall with heavy chains. Rats scurried around your feet to scavenge a few of the meager crusts which were your daily diet. Your only drink was lukewarm water from a filthy cup. Then came the day for you to hang on the gallows for your crime. You could hear the executioner's feet drawing closer and closer to your dungeon cell. It was the custom of the kingdom to throw a sack over the victim's head and lead him to the slaughter. One of the executioners called your name ... but before you could respond a voice in the next cell, said "I am here." You heard a key turn in the lock. The heavy door cracked open. They groped about in the dim light thrown into the cell by their lamps and they cast the sack over his head and led him out.

A huge crowd gathered before the high gallows and the king was present. The prisoner was led up the steps and the noose was slipped over his head.

You are still in your cell... in your darkness. Who is this man standing where you were sentenced to be?

The moment has come. The lever is pulled and his body plummets down through the gallows trap door. The rope snaps tight. There is a heavy gasp and a loud crack. His neck is broken and life is gone.

A trumpet sounds from the royal box. The king stands up and speaks:

“Cut him down and take the hood from his head. I want all the people to look at his face and understand that the wages of broken laws is death.”

Several men went beneath the gallows and cut the body down. They carried it out before all the people and laid it on the ground before the royal box. The hood was untied and pulled off.

A cry came from the king, “My son! My son!”

Astonishment stunned the crown ... “It is the king’s son,” they gasped.

“Oh, my son is dead,” mourned the king, “Where is the criminal who was sentenced to die? Find him! He shall die a thousand deaths because of this!” Then one of the executioners spoke, “Your Majesty, we found this note on his person.” He handed the king a piece of paper. The king read, “Father, please forgive him. I gave my life for him. The law demands death for his crime ... but I have died that death for him. The price that I pay for his freedom is my life. If my life is dear to you ... then accept it as full price for this Crime. Restore to him all the benefits of your favor. Let him go completely free.”

The king lifted up his voice and decreed, “Open the prison doors. Let that man be fully restored to freedom with no charges against him. Let him live in the royal household. I shall receive him as my own because of the precious price that was given for his life. From this moment on, I shall look upon him not for who he is, nor what he has done ... but rather as someone very dear to me because my son ransomed him with his life. What is more valuable in my entire kingdom than that which has been purchased with my son’s life?”

On the cross Jesus Christ shouted through bloody, swollen lips, “Father, forgive them”.

On the cross His fingers curled around spike heads and blood poured from His palms. His feet throbbed with searing pain and blood drooled into the Golgotha dirt, making scarlet mud. Flesh hung in ragged tatters from His back where the Roman scourge had taken huge bites of skin and muscle. Thorn points stung His head and sent more tricklets of blood down into the red river which

flowed from His body. Finally the agony reached a crescendo and the shudder of death coursed through His crimsoned limbs ... It is finished!"

The price had been paid.

Open the doors of wretchedness. Swing wide the gates of guilt and shame. Let the prisoners loose. The King's Son has died.

Who caused this tragic death? The Bible says, "*Christ died to save sinners*" 1 Tim.1:15. It was sinners who sent Him to that cross. Who are the sinners? Scripture says, "*All have sinned!*" Rom 3:23. You and I. He went there in our place!

So then, this is how you and I become the children of God... not by natural birth, not by religious precepts and principles we keep, not because we have made ourselves worthy... but because the King's innocent Son took the death we deserve, and the King regards the life of His Son above anything, anything at all.

He has accepted this as the complete price for our redemption.

If you accept Him as your Savior, you will have eternal life. You can do this today. In fact, you can receive Him right now!

Turn away from sin and selfishness... turn to Him. Ask Him to come into your life, and tell Him that you want to enter into spiritual life. Confess your sin. Ask for forgiveness. Tell God, in your own words, that you want to be saved, and you are willing to accept Christ as your Savior.

10. Without a Vision the People Perish

The Insidiousness of the spirits of Depression and Suicide

By Roxanne Bedard

“Where [there is] no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy [is] he.” Prov. 29:18

When I was in high school we had to pick a topic to write about in English class and I picked “The meaning of life”. I can still remember my teacher’s response as she looked at me with raised brows and a surprised look saying “I’m really looking forward to reading that”. But it was actually something I had been searching for and thought if I picked that topic I would somehow find some answers. Only, as we all know, that’s not how it works nor is it what happened with me. Much to my dismay, I never did find any answers to the meaning of life and was forced to pick another topic to write about.

I was 16 years old at the time and had been depressed and suicidal for a while with flashbacks of abuse I had suffered at a very young age. Suffice it to say that I, like a lot of others, had been bruised and battered by the world and learned that people couldn’t be trusted. I could find no purpose or meaning in my life up to this point and life at times felt like a dream to me. I felt detached from everything. This should have been a time of hopes and dreams, ambitions and goals, but I had nothing but emotional pain, self-loathing, anger, depression and was very suicidal. I started drinking and using drugs to escape everything, but the only thing that I succeeded in doing was amplifying what I had already been feeling, and piled on the hopelessness of it all.

It wasn't until I was 26 years old that I felt like I had woken up from this nightmare that was my life and decided enough was enough. I was on the road to self-destruction and had to get off of it quickly, before I succeeded. Initially, I knew it was up to me to make the decision to stop living my life that way, little did I know of the true help that awaited me in Christ Jesus.

So, deciding to get clean and sober, I went through detox twice in two years. The first time I was too embarrassed to tell anyone or to go to meetings, so my sobriety didn't last long. The second time was different, I didn't realize it at the time but I believe it was the Lord that put it on my heart to go stay in a halfway house. I had cried out to the Lord and thought He didn't hear me, but He did and He knew what I needed. I knew that if I left this year-long program at the halfway house I would die. During that time I was still depressed and suicidal so they allowed me to see a therapist from an outside agency. My therapist was wonderful and I'll always appreciate the help that she was to me in the 5 years that I saw her, but there was still something missing because I was still depressed and suicidal.

Then, one day while alone in my room I remembered something my sister told me a while ago, she said you should invite Jesus Christ into your heart, ask him to be your Lord and Saviour and repent from all your sins. I did just that. As soon as I spoke the words, "Jesus, I invite you into my heart, please be my Lord and Saviour. I really need you." I had a vision of Jesus standing before me with his arms opened wide ready to receive me, and I was a 5 year old child running into his arms. Jesus picked me up and hugged me so tight and told me He'd take care of me. I believed him, and was instantly changed. I felt like someone had just removed the world from off of my shoulders and I was on a honeymoon with the Lord after that. People couldn't help but notice the new change in me, so much so that the counselors at the halfway house had me drug tested because they thought I must be on drugs again. I told people of the vision of Jesus and I tried to describe to people the way I felt, and the only thing I could say was I felt so much peace. If someone were to have slapped me in the face it wouldn't have even bothered me.

It was the peace spoken of in Philippians 4:7 *“And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”* I didn’t walk with the Lord at the time, so it was inevitable that I would stop feeling the peace of Christ, and it was all my fault.

In my second year of recovery, after leaving the halfway house, my friend from AA/NA came to visit me at my apartment confiding in me that he had almost killed himself the day before and proceeded to tell me how he had planned to do it. I was at a loss, and didn’t know what to say. He was on psych meds for depression and confessed these made him feel worse and hopeless. I remember asking him about his wife and child, what it would do to them? He said he had made arrangements for them and they’d be better off without him. I asked about calling his therapist for him, but he refused. I felt helpless in saying or doing anything for him, understanding the hopelessness he was feeling, but nothing I said could change his mind. I found out a few days later that he killed himself exactly the way he told me. I was devastated, feeling guilty I hadn’t done more for him.

Two years later I found myself in the exact same position again, only this time it was my best friend Julie who was now telling me she had almost killed herself the day before. She had been into the occult since I had known her and communicated with spirits of which she knew nothing about. She had become depressed and suicidal, which was actually shocking to me because I had always been the one that wanted to die and by this point had attempted to take my own life too many times to count. Julie wasn’t normally suicidal. I didn’t know what to say or do for my best friend except to express my concern and tell her how much I loved her and how much I would truly miss her if she killed herself. I reminded her of her mother and nephew, whom she loved dearly and they loved her, including the rest of her family, but nothing and no one mattered. She was also on antidepressants and all the pills that go along with side effects of those pills and also suffered from Fibromyalgia so she was on medication for that too. She had started suffering from

severe mood swings because her psychiatrist kept “adjusting” her meds to find a “balance” for her. She had told me she knew exactly how many of each pill to take to kill herself. Then, on July 31, 1994, my best friend killed herself by taking all the pills that she told me she would take. Whether she realized it or not it just happened to be on my birthday that she took her own life. It was another confirmation that *“Where there is no vision, the people perish...”*

My best friend's suicide threw me into a tailspin and I started feeling detached again, like nothing was real. I wandered around aimlessly for awhile, and realized that life still goes on with or without her. Her mother came to me seeking answers as to why her daughter would take her own life, and I had no answers for her. Her 16 year old nephew was the one that came and told me about her death. I felt so bad for him because he was close to his aunt. But I had no answers for anyone including myself.

At Julie's funeral, everyone that I spoke to said the same thing after taking one look at her in the coffin, they all said she doesn't look like she's at peace at all, and I had to agree. We all drove to the cemetery after the funeral and I still remember how hard it hit me when they lowered her coffin into the hole and started filling it with dirt. I started sobbing. Heartbroken and devastated, I felt like it should have been me in that grave and at the same time, for some reason, a part of me felt like she took my place.

Not long after my best friend's death, I had decided that enough was enough, I was so sick of feeling suicidal and I knew a big part of my failed suicide attempts were because I was afraid of going to hell. But now I was mad and sick of feeling depressed and suicidal and I was sick of trying to “work through it”. I even insisted my therapist put me on antidepressants, thinking that would help, even though I lost two friends who were on them and I felt it really did make me worse. Enough was enough, I decided I was going to see to it that I finally did kill myself and got it right this time. So I drove to a town that had a small mountain in it, I knew there was a fire tower on the top, so I climbed up the mountain and to the top of the fire tower, then climbed the railing. As I stood on the railing I remember

shaking uncontrollably because I knew this was it and I just cried out to the Lord and asked for his forgiveness for what I was about to do.

All of a sudden I heard voices from below and when I looked down there were four kids who had skipped school that day and they were climbing up the path below and I knew I couldn't kill myself in front of them and mess up their lives too. So I quickly got off of the railing before they saw me and climbed down the mountain. I remember driving home screaming my head off and crying my eyes out the whole way home. I was so mad that I still didn't do it. After I was done with my temper tantrum I began to realize that God had saved my life that day and even though I didn't know why, I realized he probably spared me on all the other attempts I had made too, and I couldn't even imagine why He would bother with someone like me.

A few months later, on Thanksgiving day, I stayed at my sister's house, knowing they would go over to their pastor's house for dessert later that day. I had already decided that I would not go unless my sister made a fuss. That's exactly what happened. When they were ready to go I said I didn't want to go, but she almost insisted that I go, so I went.

At the pastor's home we were seated at a large round table in the dining room, and Terry (the pastor) was reading from the Bible to his father on how to become born again. Romans 10:9 "*That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation*". Terry's father wanted to accept the Lord that day and wanted to make sure he did everything right. I was sitting just a few seats away, listening intently to what was being said and although there were a lot of other people around I didn't hear or see anyone but the pastor, it was so supernatural, even time stood still. Then I started to feel an inner turmoil, which I now realize was a spiritual battle going on within me. A part of me wanted to run screaming from the room, and another part of me couldn't move. I finally broke down crying on my sister's shoulder who was seated right next to me and said I want that. She asked

me what it was that I wanted, and I told her I wanted Jesus. She then asked me if I believed that Jesus came and that he died for me and my sins and is now raised from the dead. I said “yes, I believe that”. I believe I was delivered instantly of evil spirits that day, like in Luke 8:2 where it talks about Mary Magdalene and how she had been delivered of spirits “...and certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils...” I cried tears of joy for three days straight. A true miracle from God had taken place in me that day, I had truly become a new creature in Christ. It was exactly as written in 2 Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore if any man [be] in Christ, [he is] a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” My old life had passed away, I now had a new life in Christ. My slate had been wiped clean and I had hope.

“Wherefore remember, that ye [being] in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.” Eph 2: 11-13

I moved closer to the fellowship where I became born again, because I knew the Spirit of God was there and they had the testimonies to prove it. I still struggled with depression and suicide after fellowshipping there for a short time. I had the whole fellowship lay hands on me and pray for deliverance of the “spirits of depression and suicide” and I was instantly delivered of those spirits and have never felt depressed or suicidal ever since. That’s when I came to truly know and believe that depression and suicide are spirits that bind us and have a right to us, whether inherited or if we open the door to them. They are insidious and ruthless and would love nothing more than to take people to hell with them. Some of the other things I was delivered from were drugs and alcohol

addiction, smoking, swearing etc. I no longer consider myself a drug addict or alcoholic in recovery, because God delivered me of those spirits. It is exactly what AA/NA is missing, Jesus Christ.

My friend Julie was into the occult and calling on spirits that she knew nothing about and I can't help but wonder if they could have contributed to her death. I also had dabbled in the occult when I was younger by going to a fortune teller and had messed with a ouija board as a child, all of which was done in ignorance and does open the door to those spirits, so I had to renounce those spirits and repent of all those things. I didn't stay on the antidepressants for long after I became born again. The mood swings, sleeplessness, thoughts of suicide and other side effects were taking their toll and the bottom line was that they didn't help me at all, they made me worse.

Everybody's experience with becoming born again is different; some people didn't feel any different because it was a more gradual experience for them. For me, everything good that has happened to me, with me and in me has all been from God. I cannot take any credit for any of it. I lived my life the way I wanted to and it led me to hell, destruction and almost death. I only survived because of God's loving mercy on me. It's only by His son Jesus Christ that I have salvation and hope. Jesus healed my broken heart of stone and gave me a heart of flesh. I can actually feel love, which is something that had eluded me for years. He broke the chains of alcohol & drug addiction, depression, suicide and so many other things that had me bound. All that Jesus has done for me is best reflected in his six fold ministry found in Luke 1:18-19;

*"The Spirit of the Lord [is] upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,
To preach the acceptable year of the Lord."*

He told me he'd take care of me and he has been so faithful to do

just that. I now have hope and purpose through Christ Jesus, and I now know that the meaning of life is to first and foremost have a personal relationship with God through his Son Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. As stated in Rev 4:11, *"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."* I know that if I don't have Jesus, I don't have anything because He truly is everything to me. There's Jesus, then there's everything else, nothing compares to Him...nothing.

"Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

For my thoughts [are] not your thoughts, neither [are] your ways my ways, saith the LORD.

For [as] the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:

So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper [in the thing] whereto I sent it."
Isaiah 55:6-11

II. The Acceptable Year of The Lord

Spiritual Exercise is Profitable

By Holly Bedard

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

To preach the Acceptable Year of the Lord.” Luke 4:18-19

If you are unfamiliar with the Old Testament, or the significance of the phrase, “*The Acceptable Year of the Lord*” I would like to share with you what I learned about what this means. I have read the Old Testament and the prophetic scriptures of the New Testament, but I was uncertain at the time I noticed the scripture and I was moved to look into what Jesus meant by “*The Acceptable Year of the Lord*”. While I considered the phrase from Luke, I sought the Lord about it, but had no clear word, initially. Yet, I could not stop thinking about that phrase from the Bible, as it was heavy on my heart. I was sure the Lord had something to reveal to me about it, but I hadn’t tapped all available resources for looking into it. When the Lord has something important to show us about His Word, he may require we do some digging and research before he will make it clear to us. It is also good to seek out those who are mature Christians who are of like faith to get some support. After all, the scriptures exhort us to labor in the Word so we can gain understanding.

Upon consulting my concordance and a few Bible dictionaries, I found two references to the “*acceptable year*”; the one cited above in Luke and one from Isaiah 61:2 which also goes on to speak of “*the*

day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;” This mention is key to understanding what God was saying about “*The Acceptable Year*” at the time of the end and worthy of consideration.

Apart from the two scriptural references, a little insight can be found in the available reference materials. But to really gain understanding, how does one receive the fullness of this truth in their heart? It requires a willingness to receive instruction from the Holy Ghost. That is necessary to receive inspiration and insight from the Holy Ghost, who is the one that will lead you into all truth for all of God’s inspired Word. At the time of my search, I shared my desire to look into this particular truth about Jesus with my stepfather and my husband and we discussed it. My stepfather, who has since gone on to his reward, was an avid reader and scholar of Biblical works and commentaries and other spiritual writings. He told me that he had read some scholars believe that “*The Acceptable Year*” implies the year in which Jesus began his ministry because as it happened, it was also a Jubilee year in Israel, (This happened every 50 years in Israel to give the land a rest and to give the Jews a chance to restore their relationships and their brethren by forgiving debts and restoring land to those who had become oppressed or indebted.) and many people were not working during the Jubilee at Jesus’ time in Israel as they normally did, in observance. This enabled many to follow John the Baptist and later Jesus in that first year of his ministry on Earth. My stepfather mentioned that some teachers have proposed that Jesus ministered for only one year because of this. We agreed at the time, that it would be a mistake to take it as a single year of ministry for Jesus on Earth, literally. It would contradict the scriptural account of Jesus’ ministry while he was here and it sets limitations on what Jesus was preaching in “*The Acceptable Year of the Lord*”. Evidence at hand points to a more far reaching interpretation, if one searches it out.

When my husband and I talked about it, he believed that personally, it implied the year in which you receive Jesus into your heart. Without putting it into those terms, I had gotten a similar leading about it, in part because of what I read as the definition

of “acceptable” in my Bible Dictionary. I will quote from, *Unger’s Bible Dictionary*. “To accept is to receive with pleasure or with kindness and is the opposite of to reject, which is a direct refusal with disapprobation. An accepted or acceptable time is the time of favor, a favorable opportunity.” I believe that the following scripture supports this interpretation, as well. (II Corinthians 6:2) “For I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation.”

In prophetic terms, as referenced in Isaiah, “The Acceptable Year” is that time in which Jesus fulfills God’s prophecies about the salvation of Israel at the end of the Great Tribulation. Rev. 1:7 “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.” At last, Israel recognizes their Messiah for who he really is. In Zechariah 12 it goes on to say they will mourn for what they did to Jesus as one who mourns for his firstborn.

Today, as when he was on Earth, only an elect group recognize the truth about Jesus, the Messiah. At his first coming, people could see that he preached with power and authority, never seen before or since. He performed miracle upon miracle, in healing the sick and afflicted and delivering those bound in sin. But even after witnessing all of these things, many still were blinded in their hearts to who Jesus really was, not unlike today. (People often want the blessings or healings or other consumable things from Jesus but not a real living relationship. e.g. An example of this, is the account of the ten lepers, only one came back to express gratitude.) Luke 17:12 “And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood far off: And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go show yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and

he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?"

The religious leaders of Israel attributed Jesus' power to some satanic force because his preaching and teaching convicted them of their own hypocrisy. His own family thought him to be insane in declaring who he is, because of the hardness of their hearts. However, he was able to make converts and devoted disciples of The Gospel, one heart at a time. I found the conversion of Nathaniel to be a beautiful illustration of this.

*"Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.
Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write.
Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.
And Nathanael said unto him, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?
Philip saith unto him, Come and see.
Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith unto him,
Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!
Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.
Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." John 1:44-49*

If we really consider Nathaniel's conversion, it is like so many other's testimonies of conversion. In the beginning, Jesus uses something very personal to reveal that he knows us. In the revelation to our heart, the conversion process can begin, that leads to our acceptance of our Messiah (Savior) and begins our true conversion to Jesus Christ. "The Acceptable Year" for an individual believer is two-fold. First is our believing in Jesus' emergence as the fulfillment of prophecy as Messiah or savior, and second, when we truly accept him into our heart as such, and allow him to convert us from corruption and conform us to his image.

In truth, the greater meaning is the prophetic significance to it. It

is the year in which Jesus makes his return to reveal that he is the fulfillment to every one of the things that were his mission on Earth, the things prophesied about him, including those things previously mentioned from Isaiah 61.2.

In sharing this process with you, it has become a testimony about how the Lord will enlighten those who will ask him for knowledge and understanding. When my interest was peaked about what the significance was in Jesus preaching *“The Acceptable Year of the Lord”* I had to do some work in searching it out. Then, I had to receive those teachings the Holy Ghost wanted me to really apprehend in a prophetic sense. Exercising your spirit through delving into God’s Word and seeking instruction and understanding from the Holy Ghost will bless you and enrich you.

“For Bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” I Timothy 4:8

12. Why Should I Offer My Praises to Him?

A Poem and A Song

By Terry Myers Smith

Why should I offer my praises to Him though silent and inward
they be?

Why should my murmuring lips give praise for the truth which I now
see?

Why dare I record these lowly praises with pen,
or speak of His glories out loud with strong men?

'Cause I was born a thief, baptized by the night.
I mocked the meek and threw rocks at the light.
Soured by self-love, and gutted by the world's hate.
Fleshly friends in the gutter left me abandoned to fate.

And those lying spirits cruel raped me,
those companions they call drug and drink.
Then they pirated my soul, cast me adrift,
beaten, stoned naked to sink.

And still He called me-- He called me,
From a distance at first.
He beckoned to me at my unholy worst.
Then he plucked me out of Old Scratch's cold clutch,
And healed me with salvation's warm touch.

Why should I offer my praises to him, with my hands and heart
lifted high?

Why should these hands of clay clap for him, 'til his Holy Spirit draw
nigh?

Why should I let stand salty tears on my cheek
that praise God in ways that mortals can't speak?

'Cause when I was foul, without decency's spark

I fought and wrestled with Him in the dark.
And my pride hurt the brethren 'cuz of all the baggage I had
and as a bully I made Him often weep sad.

Or as Solomon I knew not how to go out or come in
and at times it seemed I might never beat sin.

And still He came to me--- He came to me,
He always reached down to lift me up.
He carried my burden and let me drink from his cup,
And he whispered His secrets that only a saved mortal may hear,
And molded me... and freed me... and healed me of fear.

Why should I offer raucous praises to him
through song and dances of wondrous new life?
Why should I sing with my whole spirit and soul,
as if I were to be Christ's beautiful wife?
Why should I offer my thanks so loud and so clear,
to Him who has planted God in my heart ever near?

'Cause He promised me forever a future in him.
Promised the light in my heart would not dim.

He prepared my life's work
from the foundation of earth.
And spawned a miracle in me,
an unworthy soul has found worth.
And though I don't deserve even a glance from an eye
He has promised He'll meet me on that day in the sky,

And still He invited me-- He invited me.
Because without bound he has always loved me
He died in my place when He hung on that tree,
And in paradise He has promised to make me His gem,

So now will I never question again
Why should I offer my praises to Him!

13. An Accident, A Dream, and The Word

Manhole Cover Hits Woman

By Holly Bedard

On this week (February 14, 2016) a woman was killed on Interstate 93 near Boston when a flying manhole cover randomly blew off of its place on the side of the highway. The cover flew across traffic to hit and enter a woman's car on the driver's side and she was killed at impact. She was doing something as mundane as driving to work in the morning and she met her death in a very freakish accident. An unusual occurrence by any standard.

I was moved by the unusual occurrence and realized from what I have read in the scriptures that it is very much a phenomenon of the times in which we live. In the last days, death will come suddenly in ways unimagined in the past. This is being unleashed upon the Earth even now, and the people in it are being impacted by spiritual forces spoken of in Revelation. There are natural disasters, episodes of sudden violence, attacks by wild animals, and unusual accidents which are becoming the norms, not to mention famines and virulent attacks on the food supply and in the air making people sick, even to death.

The night after I saw that news story, I had a dream that illustrates this very thing, and I believe the Lord gave it to me to emphasize it so I do not take anything for granted. My husband and I were taking a ride in our vehicle, something commonplace for us, when we spotted a very unusual Cadillac Limousine. It was all white and in fact, the car was illuminated when in operation. That had a very supernatural air about it not easily explained but more felt. We watched it start up and take off very quickly ahead of us down the street we were traveling on. We didn't think much of it except for its

unusual appearance, and a sense of menace about it. A short time later we were driving on a winding mountainous road with cliffs on the left side of us. As we began to climb the mountain, we saw a little turnout place to the left and the Cadillac was parked there all dark. As we passed by, it lit up and began to follow us. At that point, my husband put pedal to the metal and was driving very quickly. I asked what he was doing? He said that the car was going to kill us. We drove off one of the cliffs and our death was eminent, so I said “You just did”, as we were falling from a great height. I cried out Lord, and I woke up. Later I recalled the account from Luke 13 of eighteen people who were killed suddenly when the tower of Siloam fell on them. Jesus took the opportunity to caution the people that those who met their death were no more sinners than anyone else in Jerusalem.

But anyone who remains unrepentant is in jeopardy of meeting a similar end. I believe that in these last days we will see more and more accounts like the woman with the manhole cover, to get the attention of anyone who has eyes to see the times in which we live.

“Of those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?

I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” Luke 13:4-5

It is imperative that those who long to be with Jesus be alert, awake to the spiritual conditions of this world, relying very closely on Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost if they hope to avoid becoming one of the latest fatalities of these perilous days in which we live. Satan and his minions are determined to strike anyone and everyone who is in Christ. He would like nothing better than to silence anyone who is bold enough to speak of the truth, which is Jesus. If we are walking closely with Jesus we will have his protection from Satan's machinations, but if we wander off we are in serious jeopardy, as those who were crushed by the tower in Israel.

The dream from the Lord was a serious warning not to be ignored,

for me and my husband. It's very good to walk with a contrite heart, being swift to repent at all times, as the Lord reveals details of our faults and sinfulness. God is merciful, He does give us warnings as in that account from Luke 13, and in the dream the Lord gave me. We must never take it for granted because there are limits to God's mercy, as the scriptures attest. Do not be resistant to repentance, seek it and receive it, joyfully. You have everything to gain and nothing to lose by doing so.

"And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.

And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see.

And there went out another horse that was red: and the power was given unto him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.

And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.

And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.

And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see.

And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed him. And Power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth." Revelation 6:1-8

14. A Story of Two Fires

By Terry Myers Smith

This is the story of two fires.

One burns dark in the world, the other illuminates it.

With Christ, it is never too late to say you are sorry. When we do say we are sorry, we can be born-again, get a fresh start, begin a totally new life; we can stand at a different fire, warming ourselves in the love of God. It is a story of Christ's preoccupation with mercy, mercy on each one of us, and how, if it is the last thing He does, just as it was on Calvary, He will extend His wonderful love to us, even to the depths of our cold hearts.

The story begins on a cold, dark night in the judgment hall of the city of Jerusalem in Israel. The day is a day of infamy, the day of Christ's betrayal. Peter, that impetuous apostle full of zeal for God, had just cut off the ear of one of the soldiers who came to the Garden to apprehend Jesus. Peter followed afar off as ruthless soldiers took Jesus to the judgment hall of the Sanhedrin where he was to be tried as a blasphemer against God. Jesus had already forewarned Peter by prophesying of the outcome of the kangaroo court, but Peter, confident in his own strength, has ignored Christ's prophecy and has rushed headlong into the proverbial "lion's den".

"Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off.

And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them.

But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him.

And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not.

And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not.

And about the space of one hour after another confidently

affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilean.

And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew.

And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice, And Peter went out and wept bitterly.” Luke 22:54-62

During Easter this story is recounted time and time again, as it should be. Peter’s denial of Jesus is one of only a select few stories which are recounted in all four gospels. It shows Jesus’ foreknowledge of everything that would happen concerning His death. It shows the weakness in man. This is the low point of the impetuous Peter’s existence. That moment, in which Jesus turned and looked at Peter after Peter had denied Him three times, is one the most chilling in all of Scripture. Peter could do nothing but go out and weep bitter tears. Peter, in an act of unconscious symbolism, had stopped next to the fire of the world to get warmed. In the gospel of John 18:18 it says, “*And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.*” In the hour of Jesus’s total isolation, Peter, like all of us, stood with the servants and officers of this world. He had stopped to warm himself over the coals of this earth to get comfort from the cold. It is easy to picture him huddled over the fire of coals rapidly rubbing his hands together, hunching his shoulders, and exhaling frosting sighs into the cold, damp night air. He had already denied Christ; it was only a matter of time before it manifested itself.

Now all of us, whether Christians from an early age, or saved in middle age, have sought to find refuge from life’s cold by warming ourselves at the coals of the fires that have been lit by the servants and officers of this world. Instead of seeking Jesus’s face, a face that was in the judgment hall that night, Peter, like us, had stood with the world and its servants. Having been overtaken by the moment,

having fallen into a great sin and condemnation of self, Peter left the hall and wept tears as bitter as any that have been wept in the history of Man.

But wait ...

This, remember, is a story, of two fires. A story of the wonders of Christ's determination and preoccupation for pouring out mercy and love on His people. In the final chapter of the four gospels, chapter 21 of John 9-17, Peter is drawn irresistibly to another fire of coals. This one prepared by Jesus. Jesus had already appeared twice to the disciples since his resurrection and now he was coming to them for the final time. Peter and five of the other apostles had been fishing all night and caught nothing. The story is familiar to us all. Jesus, (though they did not know it was him) appeared on the beach and told them to throw the net on the right side and they immediately gathered in 153 fish and dragged the net ashore. Peter, impetuous as ever, dove in the water and swam ashore, to meet his Lord. And the Scripture says,

"As soon as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.

Jesus said unto them, Bring the fish which ye have now caught...

Jesus said unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord.

Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise ...

So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon Son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?

He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love thee.

He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.

He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the

third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.” John 21:9-17

This is the last time Peter would see his Lord and Savior in this world. And though Peter was troubled because Jesus asked him to affirm his love for Him it was nothing more than His love for Peter that prompted the exchange. Just as Jesus had prophesied, Peter had denied Him three times in His moment of isolation. Jesus, whom Peter testified here on the beach, knows all things, and Jesus knew this was Peter’s lowest point, a point which he needed to have redeemed. For each time Peter denied the Lord, Jesus gave him a public opportunity to “buy it back” with open confirmation and testimony of his love. Each time Peter said that he loved Jesus, Jesus merely said, then feed my sheep. In other words, now that you have said it, all you have to do is prove it. Unlike the “fire of coals” that Peter had warmed his flesh at in that bleak moment of denial, this fire of coals was prepared by Jesus. Instead of humiliating him it fed Peter and redeemed his darkest moment. This was not a fire to warm oneself from the cold of the world, but it was a fire inviting a man to dine with God. The moment Peter dove into the waters to meet his Lord he was on his way to accepting the mercy that Jesus was preparing for him. Peter, as all men, did not understand Christ’s mercy at first, but later we are certain that he did. One by one, Jesus cancelled those three denials and let Peter say, openly, “I love you Lord”.

Jesus is so, so faithful. If it is the last thing He does, Jesus will redeem those people and things that need redemption. God is in the redemption business. His Son’s blood has bought us back from death and sin. Like a pawnbroker, Jesus has bought back our lives with the redemption price of His blood. As with Peter, Jesus wants to redeem our past mistakes and sins, if only we will allow Him to do it. All we have to do is be born-again and repent and come to dine with Him. Come to the “fire of coals” where Jesus feeds us and lifts the guilt

of the past away, allowing us to do good and righteous things that redeem our mistakes and sins and make us one of his true children.

15. The Laying On Of Hands

The Power of God in the Body of Christ

By Leroy Gardenier

In both Matthew 15:26 and in Mark 7:27, the Lord Jesus declares that deliverance from evil spirits is “the children’s’ bread”. One of the first recorded prayers of the early church is found in Acts 4:30 when the earliest company of believers lifted up their voice in one accord asking God to anoint them to speak His Word with boldness; and, confirming this mighty Word “*by stretching forth thy hand to heal: and that many signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.*” That that fervent prayer was answered is clear from Acts 5:12 – “*And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon’s porch.*”

I think it is worthy of note that both Scriptures emphasize the unity in prayer and purpose that existed among this primitive group of Christians.

Reference to the doctrine of the laying on of hands is found in Hebrews 6:2. “*Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.*” It is with such simple, straightforward heavenward looks and earthly gestures backed by sincere faith in the presence and the power of the Holy Ghost, that marvelous miracles of spiritual and physical healing, and demonic deliverance can happen. It is the blessing on little ones, of ordination to ministry and, most significantly, of the impartation of the gift of the Holy Ghost. All these supernatural gifts, signs and wonders are associated with and somehow connected to the laying on of hands.

Two brief, but important observations need to be made regarding this elemental but extensive doctrine. First, the laying on of hands is not some religious ritual that purports to cause effects or bring

about results through the voodoo of mere words and signs. Born again believers who lay hands on one another do so as a gesture, and expression of biblical faith. It is the same sort of faith that produces an utterance in tongues or its bold interpretation. Faith, founded on the “Scripture of truth” Dan 10:21 compels the believer to give a prophecy; act on a word of knowledge or wisdom, discern the kind of spirit that dominates a person holding them in spiritual captivity. Secondly, there is no special virtue or power in my own or any other human’s hands. Laying on of hands is, indeed, a gesture of faith, but behind this expression is the most precious, all-powerful, mighty name and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. When that holy hand is stretched forth to confirm His word, demons do flee, feeble knees are strengthened, mountains of obstacles and difficulties are removed; the spiritually dead are restored to life and the poor in spirit receive and cherish the good news of complete salvation. The One who came down from heaven and thence returned, still remains in the Person of the Holy Ghost. Through the laying on of hands and faith in the Power from on High; the children’s bread is still available and the forces of hell, even death itself, scatter and skulk away at the invocation of the all powerful name of Jesus!

Amended and Expanded from Matthew Henry’s Commentary on The Two Goats

Leviticus Chapter 16

The great day of atonement.

--1) The sacrifices on it. (1-14)

--2) The scapegoat. (15-34)

Without entering into particulars of the sacrifices on the great day of atonement, we may notice that it was to be a statute forever, till that dispensation be at an end. As long as we are continually

sinning, we continually need the atonement. The law of afflicting our souls for sin, is a statue which will continue in force till we arrive where all tears, even those of repentance, will be wiped from our eyes. The apostle observes it as a proof that the sacrifices could not take away sin, and cleanse the conscience from it, that in them there was a remembrance made of sin every year, upon the day of atonement, Heb. 10:1,3. Repeating the sacrifices showed there was in them but a feeble effort toward making atonement; this could be done only by offering up the body of Christ once for all; and that sacrifice needed not to be repeated.

With verses 15-34 begin a pageant which typifies the two great gospel privileges, of the remission of sin, and access to God, both of which we owe to our Lord Jesus. Christ is both the Maker and the Matter of the atonement; for he is the Priest, the High Priest, that makes reconciliation for the sins of the people. And as Christ is the High Priest, so he is the Sacrifice with which atonement is made; for he is all in all in our reconciliation to God. Thus he was figured by the two goats. The slain goat was a type of Christ dying for our sins; the scapegoat a type of Christ rising again for our justification. The atonement is said to be completed by putting the sins of Israel upon the head of the goat, which was sent away into a wilderness, a land not inhabited; and the sending away of the goat represented the free and full remission of their sins. (This was done by the laying on of hands on the scape-goats head by the High Priest) He shall bear upon him all their iniquities. Thus Christ, the Lamb of God, takes away the sin of the world, by taking it upon himself, John 1:29. (The laying on of hands transferring, by the power of God, our sins on to the Savior to set us free in His resurrected life.) The entrance into heaven, which Christ made for us, was typified by the high priest's entrance into the most holy place. (Heb 9:7). The high priest was to come out again; but our Lord Jesus ever lives, making intercession, and always appears in the presence of God for us. Here are typified the two great gospel duties of faith and repentance. By faith we put our hands upon the head of the offering; relying on Christ as the Lord our Righteousness, pleading his satisfaction, as that which

alone is able to atone for our sins, and procure us a pardon. By repentance we afflict our souls; not only fasting for a time from the delights of the body, but inwardly sorrowing for sin, and living a life of self-denial, assuring ourselves, that if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. By the atonement we obtain rest for our souls, and all the glorious liberties of the children of God, we are set free by the ‘Scape-Goat’ and become the Scape-goat at the same time, able to live freely in a strange land, not this earthly land, but in a new and heavenly place. Sinner, get the blood of Christ effectually applied to thy soul, or else thou canst never look God in the face with any comfort or acceptance. Take this blood of Christ, apply it by faith, and see how it atones with God and be set free.

THE SCAPEGOAT – Chapter 16 of Leviticus

[1] And the LORD spake unto Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they offered before the LORD, and died;

[2] And the LORD said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the vail before the mercy seat, which is upon the ark; that he die not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat.

[3] Thus shall Aaron come into the holy place: with a young bullock for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering.

[4] He shall put on the holy linen coat, and he shall have the linen breeches upon his flesh, and shall be girded with a linen girdle, and with the linen mitre shall he be attired: these are holy garments; therefore shall he wash his flesh in water, and so put them on.

[5] And he shall take of the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats for a sin offering, and one ram for

a burnt offering.

[6] And Aaron shall offer his bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make an atonement for himself, and for his house.

[7] And he shall take the two goats, and present them before the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

[8] And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scapegoat.

[9] And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the LORD's lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering.

[10] But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness.

[11] And Aaron shall bring the bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and shall make an atonement for himself, and for his house, and shall kill the bullock of the sin offering which is for himself:

[12] And he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the LORD, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the veil:

[13] And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not:

[14] And he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times.

[15] Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the vail, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat:

[16] And he shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth

among them in the midst of their uncleanness.

[17] And there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy place, until he come out, and have made an atonement for himself, and for his household, and for all the congregation of Israel.

[18] And he shall go out unto the altar that is before the LORD, and make an atonement for it; and shall take of the blood of the bullock, and of the blood of the goat, and put it upon the horns of the altar round about.

[19] And he shall sprinkle of the blood upon it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it, and hallow it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel.

[20] And when he hath made an end of reconciling the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat:

[21] And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness:

[22] And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.

[23] And Aaron shall come into the tabernacle of the congregation, and shall put off the linen garments, which he put on when he went into the holy place, and shall leave them there:

[24] And he shall wash his flesh with water in the holy place, and put on his garments, and come forth, and offer his burnt offering, and the burnt offering of the people, and make an atonement for himself, and for the people.

[25] And the fat of the sin offering shall he burn upon the altar.

[26] And he that let go the goat for the scapegoat shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward come

into the camp.

[27] And the bullock for the sin offering, and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the holy place, shall one carry forth without the camp; and they shall burn in the fire their skins, and their flesh, and their dung.

[28] And he that burneth them shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp.

[29] And this shall be a statute forever unto you: that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourneth among you:

[30] For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the LORD.

[31] It shall be a sabbath of rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls, by a statute for ever.

[32] And the priest, whom he shall anoint, and whom he shall consecrate to minister in the priest's office in his father's stead, shall make the atonement, and shall put on the linen clothes, even the holy garments:

[33] And he shall make an atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make an atonement for the tabernacle of the congregation, and for the altar, and he shall make an atonement for the priests, and for all the people of the congregation.

[34] And this shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year. And he did as the LORD commanded Moses.

16. The Spiritual Advantage of Praying in Tongues

By Leroy Gardenier

Some years ago I worked for a company that supplied substitute teachers. I tried to get work as near to home as possible, but one gloomy morning I got a call to teach at a distant technical school. Ordinarily, I would have turned down the job, but a boy from a local family attended that school. Relationships rank most high on the Lord's scale of values. At that time we were developing a connection with that particular family in hopes that we might share the Gospel with them. Since it was a one-shot deal, I felt strongly impressed of the Lord to put aside my "better judgment". I agreed to spend just one day at the school though this endeavor had all the earmarks of a "fool's errand". I arrived early. The only person in the faculty room was the lead teacher. I didn't realize his opening question: "Well, what the h— is your major?" was just a lead in to lacerate substitutes and flaunt their incompetence. When I naively, but honestly, answered "Philosophy", I almost expected his coffee mug to drop from his hands, fly off the wall or zoom towards me! This was a rough, tough-appearing man who barked orders all day long. He comported himself more like a drill instructor or prison guard rather than a school teacher. I had no time to explain that for a number of years I had headed a technical department in a secondary school much larger than his. I felt no need to explain or reply when he belched forth a curse and contemptuously exclaimed: "Philosophy! Now we've had everything!" It didn't seem like a very auspicious start to what appeared would be a very long day.

On the drive in that morning, I had prayed and sung "in the Spirit". Not long after I was baptized in the Holy Ghost I heard a lady testify that now that she could pray in tongues she had made it a habit to praise the Lord spiritually while driving. Her car had

turned into “a little chapel” was the way she put it. I was so edified by this testimony I determined to use this “down time” of driving to commune with the Lord by praying in the Spirit and fulfill the recommendation of Ephesians 5:19 *“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord”*. There have been heated controversies and deep misunderstandings about the scriptural gift of tongues. But, like her, I can confidently and assuredly affirm that tongues is a precious gift from the Holy Spirit. It must be received and exercised by faith. Tongues is an ongoing reminder and example of that faith without which it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). The primary, most evident and palpable fruit of the wonderful gift of tongues is described in the Epistle of Jude, verse 20: *“... building yourselves up in your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost”*.

Despite a rather rocky beginning at the trade school I felt confident, spiritually fortified and even joyful at the prospect of spending the day there. I had little contact with the other ten or twelve faculty members that would be teaching and training the students in their work areas. Whatever was going on in the regular classrooms my job was to circulate among the students working in “the pit” – a vast, open section that included a variety of “hands-on” projects. Amid a cacophony of noises from sawing, hammering, drilling and shouting; surrounded by a sea of unfamiliar faces I felt my best contribution to the school would be a set of sharp eyes, a pair of tight lips and a heart and tongue that was filled with heavenly prayer and praise. So I spent the school day circulating externally and spiritually percolating inside. While I kept my eyes peeled for safety hazards and passed a brief word with a student or fellow teacher, I mostly prayed in the Spirit, offering up to God the sacrifice of praise (Hebrews 13:15).

Although I met the one student that I knew and watched over his work project for a short time, I made no attempt to share the Gospel with him or anyone else. I felt the Lord had sent me there to pray. I tried to be obedient as possible to that primary assignment. I did my

best to earn an honest day's pay by following the instructions that the rather nasty lead teacher had given me.

The hours flew by. I must have taken a break for lunch but I can't remember even going to a cafeteria. I was very alert to what was going on around me, yet at the same time I felt suspended in the Spirit. What I thought might be a long, tedious, dull and even frustrating day passed smoothly, easily and quite cordially. But I was in no way prepared for what happened after the final bell rang and all the students left. As you know, teachers sometimes have to stay after classes for the extracurricular activities they've been assigned to moderate. Except for that responsibility, most teachers prefer to leave promptly after a demanding day knowing there are often preparations to be made for the following day which comes all too quickly. My time was up that day and I was eager to head for the parking lot. I felt sure the other faculty members would be following on the heels of the departing students. I hadn't made any friends that day; I hoped no enemies. I could barely call one student and possibly two teachers, acquaintances. My connection with any of the teachers was so fleeting I doubt they knew anything more about me than my first name. Yet, to my amazement, not one of the teachers left the area. Instead, they pulled up chairs in two rows and just sat there waiting for me to speak to them. No one said a word to me. No one introduced me. No one even invited me to speak. They just sat there looking at me. No one felt nervous or uncomfortable, least of all me.

I spoke to these men for nearly an hour. I can't remember the details of how I started or finished, but I know I told them about Jesus and the Holy Ghost. I gave my testimony about having been a religious leader and a priest. I told them I had known "about Jesus" for many years and was trained to talk "about God" rather eloquently and in three different languages. I said that although I had studied deeply about God, I had never known Him. As a professional clergyman, I didn't have a clue that I could have a personal relationship with God by believing on the Lord Jesus as my Savior and Lord. To those attentive men gathered before me I

confided the details of my conversion, repentance and submission to Jesus. I also filled them in on the extraordinary events that had transpired in my private life since God had come into my heart in a personal way. I told them of the comparative ease with which I left a religious home and family that I was tied to for a little more than twenty years. As best I could I explained the miracle of being extricated from a certified ministry and a public position that had been my professional life for fifteen years. When God intervened in my life He not only removed the people and positions that were impediments to an intimate relationship with Him, but He gave me a whole new existence in Christ. I told the men about my new wife, new family and even a new home that He had picked out for us. In all the time I spoke of these things only one teacher had to hurry away after 45 minutes. The rest stayed to hear me out and thanked me for sharing with them.

Some may doubt the reality of the gift of tongues. Others may believe in God's gifts but be fooled into thinking that tongues is a waste of time. I hope this true testimony will help allay any such errors or fears. May this simple story pierce our readers' hearts; edify them; and show that with the gift of tongues there is a definite spiritual advantage.

17. Now I'm Clinging to Him

By Nicole Gagnon

I was brought up in an Evangelical Congregational church in Massachusetts. Every week I remember going to Sunday school followed by, as I called it, 'the adult service'. I liked going to church every Sunday morning. I always enjoyed the things that made me feel good, singing solos in the cherub choir, lighting the candles at the beginning of the service, walking around with the collection plates, babysitting the young children downstairs, all of these things made me feel good.

As I began to mature, I started to question why I had to go to church. I don't remember much about the answers I received from my parents; or if I even asked at all, but I do remember starting to feel differently about it all. What tipped me off was Sunday School and Vacation Bible School. I wasn't learning anything anymore and I felt like I was being treated more like a child and less like someone my age, which was about 12. It was like the teachers didn't know what to do with children of different ages, they poorly taught the same popular Bible passages like Noah's ark and the Good Samaritan over and over again, year after year.

When I was 14 and a freshman in high school, my mom told my brothers and I that her and my dad were getting divorced. This was most devastating for me, a teenager. My parents were going to be divorced and I was about to be stuck in the middle. It was extremely difficult all around. I was hurt and completely lost. I didn't know which way was up anymore. After this all came down, it was interesting that my brothers and I had different reactions when it came to the decision of going to church and our belief in God. My oldest brother still went to church every week with my dad, my other older brother and I didn't know what to do. Basically, I became an atheist from what I now understand. I was so lost and confused I doubted if there even was a God.

The transition regarding my parents was long and difficult. It took about a year between the time we were told about the divorce and the time it became official. A month or so after the finalizing of the divorce and the judge's decision on custody rights, my mom began dating. I couldn't have been more upset with her. I could not stand my mom for years after this started and didn't treat the boyfriend great either.

As I entered college I was having a rough time to say the least. During my freshman year, my first ever boyfriend from my high school days broke up with me and I didn't know how to cope with it. I started drinking a lot at parties and definitely did some shameful things. I excused them by thinking I couldn't help myself. My sophomore year I had a new boyfriend for about a year, and he broke up with me because I was too clingy. I definitely was a clinger. I really didn't know how to have a relationship with a man, or anyone for that matter. I was such a mess, even my friends did some pretty nasty things to me, I'm guessing because I was an easy target at the time.

When I was a junior in college I got let go from the softball team and decided to transfer schools to continue playing ball. I couldn't live without playing softball, I thought. It was the most important part of my life without a doubt. I was obsessed. I transferred to another school (that happened to be closer to my soon to be boyfriend, Aaron). The Lord showed me later on how this was a huge part of His delivering me from my obsession with softball and moving me towards Him.

Aaron and I (sort of) had a relationship in high school. Now that I was at a school closer to him, he asked me out on a date and I was beyond excited. He took me to a bar, I had just turned 21. We listened to some live music and had a fun time. We ended up dating and it wasn't a sure thing for either of us at first. I did not know if I could trust Aaron because he had hurt me before, and I didn't know this at the time, but he wasn't sure if he could be with someone who was not born-again. We fell pretty hard for each other and I knew about his being born-again, but didn't know much of anything about

it. At this point in my life I was still in the unsure category when it came to my belief in God.

At the beginning of our relationship, the Lord gave us both dreams on the same night about getting married. We weren't marrying each other, but that didn't matter. The dreams made us both feel really inspired about the relationship that was beginning. I didn't know at this time, but Aaron knew the Lord was answering his prayers about being with me by giving him and I these dreams.'

It was about two years after Aaron and I started dating, right after my college graduation, I decided I wanted to attend a Sunday meeting at Aaron's church. Aaron had never pushed me to come but had always said I was welcome to if I felt led. He would answer questions if I had any, but never pushed anything on me in any way. He wanted me to come to the Lord on my own if I was going to at all. This was very important for him to do for my salvation's sake. I had to want to come to the Lord. Aaron pushing me could have been deadly for me. I couldn't just go to church because I wanted to please my boyfriend, I had to be curious for myself about what the real deal was if I was going to get anything out of it.

"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." John 6:44

I felt led to go with Aaron that Sunday. I don't think I had even really thought about it until that morning. I just kind of said I was going if it was OK with him and so I went.

I had been to the home where church is held before, but never to a meeting. The first thing that happened was everyone was at the front of the room getting ready to sing praises. I sat by myself on the side because I didn't really know what to do. After everyone started singing, someone came over and handed me a song book so that I could follow along. I felt so overwhelmed with emotion; words can't even describe what I was feeling. I couldn't even figure out how to find which page to go to in the book though it was all in alphabetical order!

Everything felt different to me, it didn't feel anything like singing

in church when I was growing up, this was completely different. It felt like my soul was being refreshed. I can't even put it into words exactly. After about an hour, there was a few minute break and then the rest of the meeting would begin. When the pastor was preaching, I was balling my eyes out. I don't remember what he was preaching about this day specifically, all I remember was that I knew I was hearing the truth for the first time in my life. I was so shocked at how the meeting was run too, everyone was not only able to speak, but encouraged to.

There were no robes, no altar, no fakeness. The meeting was allowed to be and was truly run by the Holy Ghost; It was in His hands completely. There was no specific order in which things had to be done like in any other church I had been to. The pastor didn't even have a prepared sermon written which was incredible to me. The Lord allowed me to see that this was not regular church, this was true church, run by the Holy Ghost, not man.

I know the Lord pointed out to me this incredible difference between Aaron's church and the church I had gone to because it was essential in my believing He is alive. I needed to see what true church, with the presence of God was actually like. The Lord spoke to me through that experience, showing me first hand that I had never really been in His presence at church until now. I had no idea that this day was really the beginning of my life! Everything I heard that day I knew was true. Though I did not give myself over to the Lord in that moment or in that day I knew something had changed in me. It may sound curious to the reader but I knew I had heard from the Lord something I could never unhear.

Then The Lord Spoke To My Heart

After a few weeks I was amazed by what the Holy Spirit did. I was driving from my dad's house to Aaron's one night when I knew the Lord was speaking to me in my heart. He said that I was going to be

living with Aaron and his family. I was completely surprised. I cried the entire ride to his house and when I got there I couldn't bring myself to tell Aaron what had happened. I was afraid of looking like a clingy girlfriend, something I had done in the past which had ruined relationships. I did, however, end up telling Aaron later that week because I had realized how silly it was not to tell him. (Satan would have loved it if I didn't have the courage to tell Aaron what the Lord told me out of fear of the reaction I would get. Satan is the master of deceit because he is all about the complete opposite of what God desires to accomplish in someone's life.)

The next step was to tell my dad and ask Aaron's parents if I could move in. Talking to Aaron's parents was easy, they were really excited about it because they were excited the Lord was speaking to me and that I was listening. I put a lot of pressure on myself about talking to my dad about it. My dad ended up being OK with it all and I was glad to be able to tell him why I was moving out. I was able to testify to something the Lord had done.

It took a few months before I gave my life over to the Lord. I wasn't ready to give up 'me' at first. Then on October 14, 2012 I received Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. I was a new creature. I knew that Jesus had called me to be his own. He called me out of the night and I know I didn't deserve it at all. The Lord started to deliver me of things and mature me in His time, which was very quick. I didn't know I needed to mature quickly, but He led me through gently and by faith I followed. There are so many things I learned very quickly after giving my heart to Him that couldn't have been learned on my own or from the world. You can see things through His eyes. Our eyes can't see past the walls of the room we're in! You can know His heart on things though, live in His Spirit, receive the truth.

I know His timing has been absolutely perfect. Now that I have a relationship with Jesus, I yearn to hear from Him every day, I have a true fear of the Lord. I ask him to build my faith and mature me and He only gives me as much as I can handle. He is the best teacher, comforter, friend, everything! He SAVED me from what I was so I could live eternally! PRAISE GOD!

Baptism of the Holy Ghost (August 2013)

I was able to go to the women's meeting for the first time in months. I knew I wanted to talk to T (the pastor of the home church I was now a part of) at some point so I decided this was probably a good day to do so. After the meeting, I talked to him about things that had been going on with me; financial instability, dreams I had been having about weddings (specifically one that was about Aaron and I getting married in November of that year). The dreams I had been having where I was singing the lyrics to songs I didn't know the lyrics to, uncomfortable relationships, etc. As I was walking out the door from talking to him, I saw on my phone a comment that had been posted on my facebook wall from a guy in my past asking, "Since when are you all hopped up on Jesus?" This caused a huge uneasiness in me and I knew it was an attack from Satan. Later on that night it caused some tension between Aaron and I but we both knew Satan was behind it and the situation de-escalated quickly. Only a few hours later I received an email from a relative stating that she's saying this because she loves me, but thinks I should keep my "Bible talk" private. I did not respond to her. This was the second attack in hours. The next morning I had a bad dream about the same relative and in the dream I was late for work, which would have me anxious. I knew once again I was being attacked and that it could only mean that I needed to stay close to the Lord. A few hours later, (Wednesday), Aaron's aunt told me she had two scriptures she believed were for me. Both of them pertained to receiving the baptism of the Holy Ghost. She felt as though this could be the day. Not ten minutes later, I was in my car driving along and the bead bracelet with the word "BELOVED" which I had made and was wearing suddenly fell apart. I wasn't even touching anything with it! I was kind of expecting more things to be happening to me though because when the Lord is doing things, Satan is always right there trying to discourage us because we are a threat to him.

Throughout the day I had two signs I felt were from the Lord. One

was a sign I saw outside of a church that read, “Do it now!” and the other was a painting of an eagle on the back of a pickup truck I was behind at one point. I tried asking the Lord for the baptism but it wasn’t the time yet.

The next morning, Thursday, I woke up from another bad dream that I was absolutely sure was an attack. The dream was about Aaron flirting with another girl right in front of me. I woke up right away all upset. I went to use the bathroom, came back, and prayed before falling asleep. I asked the Lord to help me through this, to give me comfort, and to help me fall asleep. I then asked Him to let me pray so that Satan couldn’t hear me. It was in that moment that I attempted to pray in tongues. I was whispering because Aaron was sleeping and I couldn’t tell if I was praying in tongues or not, but right when I had that thought I felt and heard my voice suddenly getting louder and I wasn’t speaking English! I wasn’t controlling my tongue, God was! My voice got louder and louder and eventually woke Aaron up. He put his hand on me and I continued praying in tongues for about twenty more seconds and then cried. I was so edified and excited and grateful to the Lord! We laid there for a while just praising Him, it was such an incredible moment. I wanted to go tell everyone in the house but it was 5:48 am so we decided to wait and tell them later that day.

Jesus is the Son of God. He is my personal savior. He saved me from who I was, what I thought I knew. You can have a real, personal relationship with Him and He will give you life. Come to Him, come to Him, and He will set you free!

18. A Father's Heart

A Heart Vision of

By Leroy Gardenier

It seemed at first like merely a fleeting glance; a brief but profound glimpse into the reality of the whole relationship. The vision so powerful in my heart went like this.

Imagine a father who loved his only son in a way that he loved no other person. He and his son had been inseparable since the very beginning. The son worshipped the very ground his father walked upon and made it clear in everything he spoke and did that he idolized his father and was concerned primarily about what his father was into and how he could best support him in all his endeavors and enterprises. The father loved this son not only for who he was but also for what he was. A more respectful, submissive, dutiful and loyal child and heir could never be found. As for the son, his father was everything to him, and from his viewpoint, the father could do anything and everything that needed to be done. What was incredible was that the father and son were exactly alike in every way. It was astonishing.

The son was not only the spitting image of his father in every way imaginable, but he was the embodiment of every word the father ever spoke, every bit of truth or command he had ever dished out. For the son there was no one he preferred to associate with; no one as satisfying to share with, to confide in. It was truly a beautiful thing to behold – this mutual affection and deep, deep caring between this father and son. As I say, I only caught a glimpse of it for what seemed just a fleeting moment. Yet, what I saw in that brief interval moved me to the depths of my being.

As in all relationships not absolutely everything is pure sweetness and light. There were always some difficulties and dangers. It seems in the nature of things that even when something is perfect,

especially when things are super satisfactory, there's always someone out to spoil it. But opposition grew and grew until it became life-threatening. The animosity against the son started out with probing questions, developed into belligerent confrontations. Antagonism against the one who merely represented the father and spoke in his name was interspersed with outbreaks of violence, built up to public reviling's and reached a crescendo with a mob scene hurling jeers, taunts and insults at a mortally wounded and broken man.

I have to repeat. All this just seemed to flash through my mind. There wasn't time to focus on any of the whys and wherefore involved here. I couldn't dwell on deep considerations or any kind of explanation. There was no reasoning in what I beheld; no puzzling out or weighing pros and cons. It was like an intuitive flash that nearly simultaneously illuminated two, and only two, realities: the ineffable sweet love and tenderness in the father/son relationship; and the horrible human hostility that culminated in a fever-pitch of hatred against the dutiful son who sought nothing more than to promote the personal peace and general goodwill that was his father's stock-in-trade.

The consequences and conclusions of these insights were just as swift and certain as the initial revelation. I "felt" the father's everlasting gratitude to his sacrificial son, generous beyond words, in his willingness, even eagerness, to carry out his father's plans and designs even to the cost of his very self. In this I was aware of a deeper aspect of the father's character that I had known but never really fully sensed before. Because of what his precious, only son was willing to undertake and carry out- JUST IMAGINE WHAT IT WOULD MEAN TO YOU TO SEE YOUR ONLY CHILD TREATED IN A SIMILAR MANNER BY PEOPLE YOU ONLY WISHED WELL TO AND WHOSE INTERESTS YOU WERE STRIVING TO SERVE, PROTECT AND PROMOTE ... It became clear to me as never before that there is nothing that that father would refuse to undertake; no expense or effort spared; no request would be refused if it were made in the

name of and to promote and enhance the glorious name of his most cherished child.

For nearly two thousand years now the Father's own chosen ones have blindly blasphemed the name of His Son. Over the centuries many Gentiles have either ignored the whole scenario or using the name of the Son, have arrogantly preferred a substitute scheme for salvation. Many of these matters I have stated are referred to and confirmed by the Scriptures. It was my intent not to go beyond, let alone contradict or distort anything that is contained in the very Word of God. If I have written the letters small and kept the story simple, it is only with the hope that the realities described will loom, large in the reader's heart and that the truth of the glorious gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ will entwine itself around that heart "more fervently still". May the great God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ bless this writing to encourage believers to come more boldly before the throne of grace!

19. “O Ye Of Little Faith”

Get to Know and Love Him

By Leroy Gardenier

On four different occasions the Lord Jesus sharply rebukes His disciples for the poor quality of their faith. The Savior does not accuse them of having no faith at all, but He does chide them for the weak condition of their trust and belief in Him. In reprimanding His followers the Lord uses the expression, “O ye of little faith”. Four of these incidents are recorded in the Gospel of Matthew. A rebuke that parallels the first situation of Matthew 6:30 is found in Luke 12:28. Before considering these separate censures let’s look into the implications of that piercing remark: “O ye of little faith”.

The Bible teachers tell us that the expression “little faith” is contained in just one Greek word, oligopistos. Oligo is the part that means little or a few. We find the same prefix in our word “oligarchy”, which means “the rule of a few”. Pistos is that all-important word for faith which means “to adhere to, cleave to, to trust, to have faith in; to rely on”. One translation of this meaningful work takes some liberties and is a bit awkward, but I think it can help us understand what our Lord was getting at. The translation renders the rebuke as “O ye of underdeveloped faith”!

Shall He Not Much More Clothe You, O Ye of Little Faith

Whether you consider the condition of the disciples’ faith as little, underdeveloped or just plain weak, circumstances surrounding the five recorded incidents should give us some insight into the negative emotions or attitudes that endanger true faith and hinder

its proper growth. The first episode is found in Matthew 6:30. This verse is part of the Sermon on the Mount. The Lord is giving us instructions about the right way to handle cares, worries and anxieties. He tells us not to be over anxious about our own life (or soul). As an antidote against ever threatening concern and lack of trust, He urges us to behold the Father's loving care of the birds of the air and to consider the glorious garments of the lowly lilies of the field. Birds and flowers; flocks and gardens. How fitting when so much of anxiety and mistrust stems from well-intentioned, but fallible, human counsel and advice that so often sends us on a "wild goose chase". Focusing of the harrowing, adverse circumstances of our daily lives, not to mention the critical consequences of a sudden serious illness or unforeseen financial failure we can easily become emotionally devastated. Relying on the sympathetic but unstable aid of uncomprehending relatives, ineffective friends and uncaring acquaintances can leave us feeling that we've been "led down the garden path". But in this particular portion of Jesus' sermon about the reality of heaven being realized right here on earth, He assures all His true disciples that worry and anxiety can be conquered and overcome. Actual, active, growing and maturing faith in His Father, in Him, in His unerring Word is the solution and the answer. We can be reckless in tossing out anxiety about ourselves. It is in no way irresponsible to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness truly believing that all the basic needs and necessities of life shall be added unto us. Describing such faith, one writer has affirmed that "we know if we care for God's cares that God will take care of our cares"!

It is not mere coincidence that our Lord repeats and confirms this foundational teaching about worry and anxiety right after concluding "The Parable of the Rich Fool" in Luke's Gospel ch 12:16-33 Here, Jesus specifies the birds as ravens, mentions again the lilies of the field and adds an important codicil to His commandment to "seek ye the kingdom of God". In the 32nd verse of that same chapter our Lord assures us that the Father is so delighted to give us the kingdom that we can let loose of all we possess, spend our

lives in doing good and enjoy treasure in the heavens. He prefaces this inspiring section with the command to “fear not”. This solemn injunction provides the perfect segue into a presentation of the second episode which is given in Matt. 8: 23-27.

Why Are Ye Fearful, O Ye of Little Faith?

This, and the two concluding incidents take place in a nautical setting. Here, our Lord is sleeping when a tempest brings ominous waves crashing over their boat. His disciples are filled with fear and alarm. The actual danger of perishing was more in the disciples’ imaginations than it actually existed in reality. But at least some were so fearful that they woke the Master. Before rebuffing the howling wind and heaving sea, Jesus first rebuked His companions asking, “*Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?*” This storm appears to be the same as the squall described in Mark 4:37-41, but a few important differences show that they were unrelated occurrences. One of the most telling variations is that here Jesus first rebukes the disciples and then the storm. There (in Mark), He attends to the more threatening squall first, and then reproaches His fearful friends. More pertinent than these details are the similar reactions most of us exhibit when facing the storms of life. We need not be traveling in an unstable boat on a wave tossed sea to find unwarranted fear chill our hearts and threaten our surroundings. Sometimes the storm clouds gather slowly and menacingly on the face of a disgruntled family member. Other times waves of abuse rise up in the form of an angry colleague or partner. How often an innocent remark fans the fury of a verbal whirlwind. Like Jesus’ earlier disciples we cry out in alarm: “Save me, I’m perishing!” And, praise God, if we can call on Him in faith, He is still there. Our saving Lord is “a very present help” right in the midst of that furious storm of anger, frustration, insecurity, misunderstanding and overreaction. If we do cry out to Him and rely on His power to

intervene, a gospel consequence is sure to follow “there was a great calm”. There is no guarantee that the offenses will never return, or that “the troubler of our souls” will be mollified. But if we remain in Christ our spirit will be soothed even in the midst of all the turmoil.

O Thou of Little Faith, Wherefore Didst Thou Doubt?

Matthew 14:31 pinpoints the third recorded threat to fully developed faith – doubt. Our Lord had recently fed a crowd of about five thousand. He left His disciples to cross the Sea of Galilee while He sought out a secluded mountain spot to spend some time with His Father in prayer. His friends ran into a sudden storm and had great difficulty in making the crossing. During the fourth watch of the night, somewhere between the hours of three and six in the early morning, Jesus appeared to them walking on the water. At first the disciples didn't know what to make of this phenomenon; they thought it was an apparition. But after he had spoken to them and calmed their fears, Peter boldly asked if he could come to Jesus. Peter did walk toward His Master and was sustained by the Lord's encouraging invitation to come. But, like so many of us instinctively do, Peter took his eyes off of Jesus and looked down at the angry waves. The Lord's very presence in the boat on that earlier occasion, His authoritative command of the wind and waves and the great calm that followed had shown Peter and the others that fear could be conquered. Now, despite Jesus' personal presence and His strong assurance of “Be not afraid”, Peter equivocated in his mind. Contrary to his desire to believe and to act on his faith; even after his experiential test of walking toward Jesus, Peter gave in to doubt. Fear gripped his heart when he questioned God's Word and its attendant spiritual realities. The fear that he had earlier been delivered from returned and he began to sink. Worry, anxiety, fear and doubt – these are the principle emotions and reactions that

militate against the attainment of a true and abiding faith. The world has its own techniques for handling and dispelling these and other negative dispositions. Sometimes their methods seem to work; most times they don't. One thing is certain: when real faith invites the Lord Jesus to intervene, things happen and people are truly saved and delivered. On this occasion our blessed Savior stretched forth His hand, caught Peter, saved him from drowning and delivered him from his doubtful self. Great good ensued from all this once again the turbulent sea was stilled. Peter with the others humbly worshiped their saving God saying, *"Of a truth Thou art the Son of God"*! Matt 14:33

O Ye of Little Faith, Why Reason Ye Among Yourselves?

"He that answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him." This 13th verse from the 18th chapter of Proverbs brings us to our final faith impeding incident. Once again Jesus and his disciples had taken a boat trip landing on the shores of Magdala. Similar to the second episode, our personal Provider had fed a crowd of four thousand with seven loaves and a few fishes. Although they had gathered seven baskets full of leftovers, it just happened that the disciples failed to have the foresight to take any of these loaves with them. A delegation of Pharisees and Sadducees had come to Jesus asking Him for a sign from heaven. After dismissing them and their insincere request, He warned His true disciples: *"Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees"*, Matt 16:6 Jesus said. His followers didn't understand what He meant, so they put their heads together and began to speculate and conjecture that the Master was upset because they had forgotten to bring bread. These men had heard what the Lord had said, but they really did not understand exactly what He meant. Jesus had issued a very important warning about the false teachings of the foremost

religious leaders of that day. His followers might have missed this essential information had our Lord not intervened, rebuked them for their presumptions, and cleared up the matter for them. There is nothing wrong with using our reason; it, too, is a precious gift from God. But when we rely on the ability of our own wits or instincts and formulate erroneous conclusions that can only cause confusion. As the precious proverb implies; if we answer or act on a matter before really understanding what is precisely meant, then we'll only reap a harvest of shame and folly.

In an era that promotes "virtual reality"; in a season when visualizing yourself out of some unpleasant or dangerous situation is professionally prescribed, I think that conclusions which arise from presumptuous interpretations or culpably misunderstood assertions should be exposed for what they are a threat and hindrance to true faith. Too many of us hear a term or statement and immediately mentally apprehend and run with it, reeling out a scenario that has little or nothing at all to do with the facts of the matter. The simple humility of admitting our ignorance and the patience of prayer can often avert a storm of confusion and misapprehension more destructive than the physical and social storms and strife's that surround us. The Lord Jesus affirms that He is the good shepherd; that He knows His sheep and they not only know Him, but they also hear His voice. What a privilege and blessing it is to hear from God! But we need to be alert to the mistake made by the disciples at Magdala. They, too, heard His voice but didn't take the time or trouble to be accurate about what the Master meant.

The example of two outstanding saints of God can be an aid and guide to us in this important matter. In Daniel, chapter seven, God gave the prophet vital information about the end-times. Daniel faithfully recorded every essential detail, confesses his own perplexity and tells what he did about his own uncertainty. *"As for me Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance was changed in me; but I kept the matter in my heart"*. Dan 7:28 At the time when the youthful Jesus purposely disappeared during

a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, his mother Mary was both upset and perplexed. She clearly heard His words of explanation when he was finally found, but it is obvious that she did not immediately grasp their impact and full meaning. Referring to her and her husband's confusion, verse 50 of Luke 2 says: *"And they understood not the saying which He spake unto them."* Somewhat baffled, like Daniel, the next verse reveals what Mary did about her lack of understanding: *"...but His mother kept all these sayings in her heart."* Lk 2:51 At a time when worldly people are making resolutions in order to better themselves, I hope God's people of faith will avoid the pitfalls of anxiety, fear, doubt and presumptuous reasoning's in order to better know, love, and serve Him.

20. The Nativity Meant There Could Be New Birth For Man

You Can Be A New Creation

By Leroy Gardenier

The nativity is about the historical birth of the central figure of all human history, the man Jesus Christ. For those who profess to be Christians, the Nativity is also about the religious reality of God condescending to become man; of the Father sending His Son into the world. For the born-again, Spirit-filled disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Nativity, the Christmas celebration, the defenseless, helpless little child in the lowly manger – this and all it implies is both a profound manifestation of the depth and breadth of God's pity on and compassion for a crazy, mixed-up world. But it is also a brilliant revelation of the beginnings of a whole new creation that will eventually not only straighten out this disjointed, hate-filled world but will, in the end, make everything right!

The new birth is linked to the nativity but is something else again. Like the nativity, the new birth is also a glorious manifestation and a brilliant revelation. Like the nativity, the new birth is an invisible birth into the Kingdom of God. The new birth is accomplished by faith. This birth may occur in the midst of vast multitudes or in the seclusion of one's bedroom. Either way or differently, the new birth is essentially a private experience – a spiritual communication between the individual soul and the forgiving, loving God who now becomes more real and personal to him than any other person or thing in the world. As at the nativity, the seeker secretly experiencing the new birth becomes a helpless spiritual babe (no matter what the chronological age may be). In spite of its weakness

and helplessness this “new creature” begins to rest with a supernatural assurance in the arms of its new spiritual “mother”, the Holy Ghost!

The new creation – this particular expression is used less than half a dozen times in the New Testament. But wherever in the Scriptures there is reference to what the Lord Jesus did or will do; wherever in the epistles there is a description of our spiritual character or a promise of what we can become in Christ. All these are spiritual realities which are part and parcel of The new creation manifested in the Person of the Savior at the nativity; applied to and gradually ingrained in the believer owing to the new birth; and shortly to appear outwardly as Roman 8:19 testifies: *“For the earnest expectation of the creature (i.e., all creation) waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.”*

At Bethlehem in the Roman province of Judea at a certain hour on a fixed day in human history Jesus Christ, the long-awaited Messiah, was born into this world. He was the child of Mary, yet the very Son of God. At a definite point in time, whether through an instantaneous revelation or the culmination of a lengthy spiritual process, the individual soul experiences THE NEW BIRTH and for the first time his spirit becomes alive to God. To be sure he was always God’s offspring. He may even have religiously celebrated both Christmas and Easter. But now, because the Father has drawn him to Jesus; because the Holy Ghost has convicted him of “the sin of the world”; because now the living Lord, Jesus Christ, has revealed the efficacy of His shed blood and made Himself known as this soul’s personal Savior the individual realizes he is, in very fact and deed, a son of God. Before very long; probably sooner than later, these powerful, far-reaching, earth-shattering consequences and implications of both THE NATIVITY and of THE NEW BIRTH will be gloriously unveiled and magnificently manifested in THE NEW CREATION which is now private and hidden but then will be corporate and conspicuous. This NEW CREATION, the very Kingdom of God, the mystical Body of Christ made manifest has

been in the process of formation for ages and will endure for all eternity.

Christmas traditions have often put an over-emphasis on the historical aspect of the nativity. But if we look carefully at some of our traditional Christmas carols we find both the new birth and the new creation (previewed at the Lord's Second Coming) play a significant part in the Yuletide festivities.

The third verse of Hark! The Herald Angels Sing concludes:

"Mild he lays his glory by/Born that man no more may die/Born to raise the sons of earth/Born to give them second birth."

The final stanza of It Came upon a Midnight Clear looks to the Second Coming and to the Millennium:

"For lo the days are hastening on/By prophets seen of old/When with the ever circling years/Shall come the time foretold/When peace shall over all the earth/Its ancient splendors fling/And the whole world send back the song/Which now the angels sing."

In my small booklet of carols, Joy to the World speaks of the new birth:

"Let earth receive her King/Let ev'ry heart prepare him room." But the last verse of this ever-popular anthem looks beyond the present age to the longed-for time of the thousand-year earthly reign of Christ: "He rules the world with truth and grace/And make the nations prove/The glories of his righteousness/And wonders of his love."

Of the three Scriptural events covered in this article, THE NATIVITY -THE NEW BIRTH – THE NEW CREATION, it is the new birth that is central. The new birth looks back upon Jesus' First Coming not just with nostalgic fondness and the remembrance of Christmases past, but with the spiritual eyes of deep discernment and a heart full of wondrous appreciation. A spiritual view of the nativity reveals the beginnings of a whole new creation. Bethlehem brings us back to those beginnings. Genesis states: *"In the beginning God..."* The Gospel of John, chapter one, says: *"In the beginning was the Word..."* 2 Peter 3:13 states: *"Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth*

righteousness.” Genesis hearkens back to the beginnings of creation. The nativity at Bethlehem shows us the reality of a whole new creation – the birth of a most special Human who is God and is to be endowed with the God-appointed and God-anointed position and power to make new not only individuals through the new birth but even the entire world we live in as well as worlds beyond, through the promise of the new creation.

One day the Lord Jesus Christ will return in the clouds and will be universally acknowledged as “*the King of Kings and Lord of Lords*” Rev. 19:16. During this present age God has exalted the Lord Jesus to be “*a Prince and a Savior*” Acts 5:31; the “*captain of our salvation*” Heb. 2:10. As we are reminded once again of the impotent little Babe lying in the crude cradle, let the occasion of His earthly birth recall for us the indescribable riches of the new birth as well as the inestimable price He paid to make new life available to us. Let us look on the Christ Child this year with spiritually far-sighted eyes viewing the promise of His Second Coming and the surety of the promised new creation. This Christmas and henceforth let us lay down our all-too-human weapons of pride and stubbornness, of intimidation and manipulation and, like our Savior find our present glory in the perfect will of the Father!

THE NATIVITY, the birth of the Christ Child; THE NEW BIRTH – these are “intimations of immortality.” THE NEW CREATION is being built upon these supernatural foundational truths. As A.W. Tozer, a respected Christian writer puts it: “If we believe the New Testament we must surely believe that THE NEW BIRTH is a major miracle, as truly a miracle of God as was the first creation; for THE NEW BIRTH is actually the creating of another man in the heart where another man had been”.

21. How Can You Be a Christian If You Are Not Born Again?

By Terry Myers Smith

While taking our son back to school for his senior year at George Washington University he asked my wife and me if he should continue going to Intersarsity Christian Fellowship meetings on campus if they were not preaching the whole truth. Without asking what the problem was I told him that it was a matter for him to decide. He had to find out what the Lord suggested to do and then do whatever he must by faith. Joanne was not so cautious though. She wanted to know what it was that troubled him about the campus fellowship group. He told us, for instance, week in and week out one unbelieving person dominated the meeting by insisting that the fellowship once again prove the existence of God. He thought it was a waste of valuable time for Christians to be sitting around discussing the existence or non-existence of their Savior every time they gathered together. But more than that he felt there was no spirit of discernment for the truth present.

Anyone who slapped a label of Christian on himself was presumed untouchable as a follower of Jesus Christ. Doctrine and Scriptural truth were handled with kid gloves lest they should prove to be politically incorrect and discriminatory. The bottom line was that the most respected and revered person in the group, an older student whose opinion held sway, was probably not even born-again. At the close of one meeting, Jeff had asked him about his conversion and wanted to know his personal testimony about being born-again. The person responded by saying, "As long as I can remember I've always believed."

Rightfully, my son was alarmed by this testimony and said to

us, “I always believed but that didn’t mean I was born again.” (We knew what he meant because we all remembered that it was not until an Easter morning when he was 20 years-old that he accepted Christ into his heart.) I told him he was absolutely right in all of his concerns and that if they were not preaching the fact that you must be born-again to see the kingdom of God then his decision whether or not to continue going to InterVarsity Fellowship might be easier than he thought. We all left it at that and are now waiting to see what direction God leads him. Will God call him to go and tell them? Will he direct him somewhere else? What God wants to do about this is still unclear, but one thing is certain, it is not enough simply to believe.

You Must Be Born-Again

Jesus coined the term “born-again” Himself and clearly said that this is not an optional thing or an experience that accompanies salvation. It is salvation. He said, *“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born-again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”* John 3:3

It is not enough to believe. James says; You believe! So what! The devils believe and because they know God’s power and the judgment awaiting them they tremble with fear. Nicodemus, the man who came to Jesus by stealth, was not only a religious leader but also a great and prominent teacher in all of Israel. It is safe to say that he believed in God – and probably always had. But he was not born-again; didn’t even know that you must be born-again to be saved otherwise he would not have asked how can such a thing be? Remember Jesus said you had to be born of the water (by the breaking of the water at natural birth) and of the spirit (by the passing from death into life by the conversion and rebirth of our heart). To be saved we must become new creatures, totally new persons. This is the miracle of the atoning blood of Jesus on the cross at Calvary. It gives us right of passage down the birth canal

of the spirit so we can be born into God's kingdom. It comes only by turning from trust and reliance on our old black heart, repenting from everything that is our first birth, no matter how good it may seem in the eyes of men, becoming newborn babes in Christ. We must become new creatures with new spirits. We must be born again.

There can be no moving away or backpedaling from this message, this truth. The Church should never allow the Devil to sidetrack them from establishing this fact. We sometimes take heat for this position. The world, and now much of the Christian Church says we, who hold these truths, are narrow-minded and bigoted. But our retort is that we are steadfast, not narrow-minded. We trust in the word of God and are epoxied to this belief and faith in the miraculous work done by the Father and Jesus Christ for our sakes. If that is narrow-minded, so be it. Any denomination, church, fellowship, group, or person that does not steadfastly insist that a Christian must be born-again to be truly labeled a Christian (disciplined follower of Christ) is missing the most fundamental message of Christianity. Being born-again is not an experience that is subordinate to being a Christian for without it you are not a Christian. It is not an experience that accompanies salvation. It is the salvation experience. To fudge on this would only create another religion other than Christian, though the popular move today is to do just this and still call it Christian.

Don't be persuaded otherwise. You must be born again to see and enter the kingdom of God! How can you be a Christian if you can't see the kingdom of God? How can you see the kingdom of God if you are not looking through the veil of this world born anew into another existence – born-again? Jesus said so, that should be enough.

22. The Three Baptisms

Repentance – Holy Spirit – Water

By Eloise Gardenier

While listening to a music tape I heard the words; “Go, go, go, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and Son and Holy Ghost,” Matt 28:19 I was reminded of a revelation the Lord gave me some years ago concerning the doctrine of baptisms referred to in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians. I have always known and believed that God’s Word does not contradict itself, even if it seems to at times. The doctrine of baptisms is just such a case.

When still a young Christian, two such verses that seemed to contradict one another were Ephesians 4:5 and Hebrews 6:2. Ephesians says there is “One Lord, one faith, one baptism”. Yet Hebrews 6 speaks of baptisms (plural), ... *not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and the laying on of hands, and of the resurrection of the dead and of eternal judgment.*” Because this is an important and serious matter, I longed to have the proper understanding about Scriptural Baptism and so be able to “go on unto perfection” as Heb. 6:1 exhorts us to do.

My husband and I began our “puzzlement in earnest” over these Scriptures when we were urged by some fellow believers to be water baptized. We hadn’t been born-again and baptized in the Spirit very long, and didn’t know what to think about the former baptism we had received in the churches of our parents. Roy had been baptized as an infant and I had been immersed at the age of 13 in my hometown Baptist church because it was both customary and all my friends were doing it. Concerned by the “one baptism” spoken of in Ephesians, we were at a loss about what to do. So we followed a good spiritual rule of thumb: when in doubt, do nothing. For the

next year, we sought the Lord and remained alert for the answer He would provide.

The first thing the Lord showed us was that our former baptisms were null and void, because we had not been born-again, did not have a personal relationship with Him at the time. We had not personally and of our free will repented, and made the choice to serve Jesus, and have our hearts circumcised by Him. No other person could stand in for us as in infant baptism, nor could it be a mere religious ritual or something we did because our friends were doing it. We both knew this was not the baptism spoken of in Ephesians 4.

In due time we came to understand that being immersed before the brethren was an act of faith, a public witness of our willingness to proclaim our desire to drink from the cup that Jesus drank from and be baptized with the baptism He was baptized with. That baptism is to die to ourselves, as He died on the cross and “by faith in the operation of God” be risen as He was ... a new creature. Colossians 2:12 makes this clear: “Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead.” So Roy and I, having been born-again by this time and baptized in the Holy Ghost, and open to receiving the gifts that accompany that baptism, were water baptized together being immersed in a lake by other believers who had done the same before us. My husband had been convicted that this was an act of obedience, through Jesus’ words in Matthew 3:13 when John the Baptist said; “*I have need to be baptized of thee*”. Jesus said; “*suffer it to be so now: for thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness.*” The Living Bible puts it this way; “*But Jesus said, Please do it for I must do all that is right*”.

A short time after we had been water baptized, while traveling home from a trip to the Midwest, I received another piece to this spiritual puzzle. As He often did, on a long journey, the Lord spoke to my heart that the. “One” baptism of Ephesians had three parts, and the sum of the three parts added up to the whole, the one complete baptism into the fullness of the body of Christ. At that time

I didn't fully understand the "doctrine of baptisms", but I knew it was the voice of God. Strong's concordance interprets the word baptism as; "to make whelmed". The New American College Dictionary says, "to whelm" means "to submerge; engulf, to overcome utterly, or overwhelm". But no man was utterly overcome or overwhelmed with forgiveness and cleanliness from sin until Jesus came and died and rose again. That is why the word "baptism" was never mentioned in the Old Testament, for Jesus had not been revealed as the Messiah. He had to be revealed first and now there is just one true baptism which is an overwhelming of Jesus by a three part process in which He is instrumental in all.

THREE BAPTISMS ALL POINTING TO JESUS!

1) Repentance

The Father draws us to Jesus (John 6:44; "*No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.*") He does this that we might partake of the baptism of repentance; leading us to being born again, by showing us we need a Savior – Jesus. Jesus also set the example by partaking of John's baptism in obedience to the Father, even though He did not need to repent, but we do.

"John did baptize in the wilderness and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." Mark 1:4. Other citations are; Luke 3:3, Acts 13:24, Acts 19:4.

When Jesus, in obedience to the Father, was baptized by John, they saw "*the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him: and there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*" Mark 1:10-11

2) Water Baptism

When we choose to yield and be water baptized in the name of Jesus, we are testifying publicly to our desire to die to self and become more and more like Him. Once more we see Jesus as the

central figure. By being baptized in His name and after His example of death and resurrection we have completed the three parts of that one baptism mentioned in Ephesians 4:5 *“One Lord (Jesus) one faith (in Jesus), one baptism (3 parts, but all depend on Jesus)”*, making it one, in the sense that He makes it all possible, for without Him none of the three parts can happen. Completion in Christ takes place by being immersed or baptized in the Father’s baptism of repentance, by being baptized in the name of Jesus and into a complete death and life in Him, and by being immersed in the Holy Ghost by Jesus. Again, I say completely furnished and able to go on unto perfection.

3) Baptism in the Holy Ghost

Jesus offers to baptize us in the Holy Ghost for He is the baptizer as John the Baptist announced in Matthew 3:2. He warned; *“Repent ye for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”* He also prophesied in verse 11; *“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, ... He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.”* As we call on the Holy Ghost to possess us or engulf us in God’s very Spirit, we can be sure that God’s Love, which is embodied in Jesus, will be faithful to baptize us. Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16, John 1:32-34 *“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place... And they all were all filled (whelmed) with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.”* Acts 22:1&4

It is The Trinity

Baptized in the Father, Son and Holy Ghost: Even though I understood this fundamental truth of the doctrine of baptisms I still occasionally came across three seemingly contradictory verses and wondered how God would reconcile them to the understanding He had given me concerning baptisms. *“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”* Matthew 28:19 seemed to contradict the two passages that say, *“For as yet He was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.”*; and, *“When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.”* Acts 8:16 & 19:5 respectively.

Over the years I have heard controversies about whether people should be water baptized in the name of Jesus or in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. (Thanks to some friends and a family member we have come to think it appropriate to use the name of Jesus when water baptizing). But in one brief moment, while listening to the song, “Go”, that I mentioned at the very beginning of this teaching, discovered the answer to the seemingly contradictory nature of these verses. When Jesus issued what has become known as “The Great Commission” he wasn’t speaking of the words to use when baptizing one in water. It is proper to baptize in the name of Jesus because that is the truth of what is taking place because the person being baptized is being baptized into a life of death and resurrection with Jesus as the example.

Now, I realized that “The Great Commission” was Jesus’ command to go forth and baptize in the name of: 1.) The Father, or the baptism of repentance; 2.) The Son, or water baptism in Jesus’ name; and, 3.) The Holy Ghost, or the baptism of the Spirit. His command was not about what words to use, but about three separate parts of this one baptism, the baptism of being utterly overcome and submerged into a life complete in and with Christ, being fully furnished to go on to maturity, being introduced and submerged in the Godhead: the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, being baptized one experience at a time as in the “doctrine of baptisms”. So, *“let us go on to perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms... And this will we do, if God permit.”* Heb. 6:1-3

23. There Is Still A Hell

By Terry Myers Smith

Jesus said, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Matt 10:28

People say that an all loving God can never be reconciled with the notion of Hell. These self assured critics protest that no loving God could be so vindictive as to relegate some poor human being to a place of torment and eternal damnation. Some folk even go so far as to say, "If God is that spiteful, then I don't want to spend eternity with him anyway." Regardless of a person's high indignation, or the rationale for rejecting Hell's existence, and no matter how opposed it may seem to our sense of fair play, there is in fact, a Hell. Though Hell was not made for man, but expressly for the Fallen Angels and Satan, in particular, the reasons for man's descent into Hell are two-fold.

Jesus' parable about two men, one gone to paradise and one left in Hell tell us why there is a Hell.

"There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:

And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores ...

And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;

And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivest thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

“And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father’s house:

For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

And he said, Nay father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”

Luke 16:19-31

Christ simply points out in his parable that men are relegated to Hell fairly and justly and that their faithlessness requires it. The rich man had ignored God and his teachings in favor of his own lusts and his own convenience. He had lived his life in selfish disregard for his fellow man and therefore was unfit for habitation in God’s kingdom. If he could not repent in this life, under the merciful influence of God upon his mind and flesh, then he could not repent and live godly after his demise.

Christ rejects the rich man’s request to go to his brothers to warn them about Hell’s torments saying, *“If they hear not Moses and the prophets (or God’s Word), neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”*

What irony lay in Jesus’ words. Shortly after speaking this parable of Hell and Paradise, Jesus would give the world the greatest witness of God’s power and love by, rising from the grave, but he knew even at the time of the parable that faithless men would not respond to his life, death and resurrection. He was forewarning Mankind that

people who are destined for Hell's everlasting fires are void of love and faith – two absolute requirements for entering eternity with God. Even someone returning from the dead cannot dissuade the faithless from their path of destruction; cannot convince them of a coming day of judgment when Hell's unquenchable fires will be lit with their torment. Paul points this out to believers when he recommends that we judge ourselves now in this life so we do not have to be judged in death.

On the other hand, Paradise, by definition, is a cool place of harmony, security, wonderful perfection, and bliss. It has to be a place of harmony or it would not be a paradise. The coming harmony of Paradise will not be in word only, nor can the blight of sin be allowed to infest Paradise the way sin has infested this world, otherwise what difference would there be between Paradise and this life. Jesus said there are two ways only: a narrow pathway to heaven and a huge Broadway to Hell:

“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” Matt 7:13-14

Don't listen to the baloney of faithless people. I'd listen to what Jesus says instead. Find that skinny way to Paradise and avoid the eternal fires of Hell at all costs.

24. Barabbas: The Sinful Son' Freed

The Two Goats

By Luc Bedard

“... And when he (Pilate) had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in Him no fault at all.

But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?

Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.” John 18:38-40

What an irony that this robber and murderer who stood with Jesus on that day, near the focal point of all creation, should have the name Barabbas. Barabbas, which literally translated means son (bar) of the father (abba), stood before the congregation of Israel on the same court as The Son of the Father. Soon the One in whom not only Pilate could find no fault but in whom God Himself was well pleased, would be delivered to the cross while the robber and murderer went free. How ironic, but God's ways are not our ways. With God, things don't just happen by chance. Every event, every circumstance, and every nuance is carefully planned and precisely executed. Many of these events have a foreshadowing in the rituals acted out in the law. Barabbas was not there by chance on that day when atonement would be made for all the sins of man. God was in control and had even given us a glimpse as to what was taking place now, way back in the days of Moses.

“And he (Aaron) shall take of the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats for a sin offering

And he shall take the two goats, and present them before the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the Lord, and the other lot for the scapegoat (the goat let loose).

And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the Lord's lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering.

But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented before the Lord, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness.” Lev 16:5-10

“And when he hath made an end of reconciling the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat:

And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel- and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness:

And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.” Lev 16:20-22

On that original Good Friday, two kids of the goats were presented before the Lord for a sin offering. One was Jesus of Nazareth, without blemish or spot; the other, Barabbas, convicted sinner. The Lord's lot fell on Jesus who was to be sacrificed and His perfect blood used for the atonement. The lot of “the scapegoat” fell on Barabbas who was to be released without having to pay the penalty for his crimes. The Innocent One would pay for the sins of the guilty. This is God's way. When the Lord's lot fell on Jesus, it was because He, being without sin, was the only acceptable sacrifice for the atonement of sin. No other sacrifice would ever do.

Barabbas, who just stood in for every man or woman that ever lived, and he was set free, even though he was guilty as sin (just as we are all guilty of sin). Just as the “scapegoat” had the sins of the

congregation confessed upon his head by the high priest, when we stand beside Jesus and realize who it is that's going to the cross, the Holy Ghost, like the high priest convicts us of our sin. We who are sinners go free, but Jesus who is innocent goes to the cross. No other price will ever atone for our sins. No amount of good works, no prayers, no hope in myths like purgatory or eternal security, no, nothing else will ever pay the price, provide the remedy. Only the Blood of the One on whom the Lord's lot fell.

In the movie Barabbas, which is a wonderful illustration of the two goat kids. Barabbas spends the rest of his life wandering in the "wilderness" with the conviction on his head of the sinner that he is, knowing that Jesus went to the cross in his place. He tries once to make peace with his conscience by accepting the Master's sign on his medallion but when it comes time to confess Him he fails. He tries again to make his peace with God by doing what he thinks is the Lord's work, but again he fails. Many people are like Barabbas. They can never get their conscience cleansed from sin. Even in the church this is true. There are many who do not fall back spiritually upon the "kid" that was slaughtered for the atonement. They wander in the wilderness that is the world knowing that Jesus died in their place but not ever being washed in His Blood. We, however, do not have to wander the wilderness that is the world with our conscience burning with sin. We can come to Jesus and receive the Blood He shed for us as the payment of all our transgressions. He shed His Blood for all the sins of the world but not everyone will receive it. Do not be among the ones that miss out.

Would you be free from the burden of sin?
There's pow'r in the blood, Pow'r in the blood;
Come for a cleansing to Calvary's tide;
There's wonderful pow'r in the blood.

25. Once Saved Always Saved???

No So Fast !!

By Eloise Gardenier

There is an abundance of false teaching in the church today concerning Hebrews 13:5 which says “...I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee”. This false doctrine has become known as the “once saved always saved” doctrine, stemming from early Calvinism and his doctrines of predestination. The true interpretation of the scripture is often misunderstood and taken out of context, leading to confusion which, in turn, may cause serious harm to those who accept this misuse of its meaning. I have come to believe it is bordering on, if not actually, heretical. Every time I have heard this teaching given the “teacher” insists on using only half of the verse. The other half isn’t even mentioned, never mind the entire context of the chapter. Chapter thirteen of Hebrews is filled with exhortations on how to “strive toward perfection”, that we might be “pleasing in the sight of Jesus Christ” vs 21. Before going any further let me establish that this part of verse five of Hebrews 13 is only spoken once in the entire Bible. When this often quoted part is used to back this teaching up, the first part of the verse is ignored. It often leaves the impression that we can do anything we want because He will never leave us or forsake us. The first verse starts with conditions as all of God’s promises to us do. That first part of the verse reads: “Let your conversation be without covetousness: and be content with such things as ye have...” Chapter thirteen closes the book of Hebrews, the book which tells us who God is, who Jesus is, and who *we can be*. Throughout the entire book, we are exhorted about what we must do and warned about what not to do. “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in

departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, **if** we hold the beginning of our confidence **steadfast unto the end.**" Heb 3:12-14 In chapter four we are warned not to fall into unbelief; "let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to **come short** of it." And this from Paul, of all people, says; "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, **I myself should be a castaway.**" 1 Cor 9:27

Let's refer back to the Old Testament...

Second Chronicles shows that God was the same in both epochs, old and new, that he is the same yesterday today and forever. "... thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the Lord, that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the Lord, He hath also forsaken you." 2 Chron. 24:20 This quote is a preview or a pageant, if you will, of when the Lord would 'forsake' His people. The key words here are; "because ye have forsaken the Lord, He hath also forsaken you." Saints, don't kid yourselves or allow Satan to deceive you. There are many subtle ways to forsake the Lord. Many they are who have, and others who yet will. In Hebrews thirteen we find a list of exhortations that work toward our perfection and His "never leaving us nor forsaking us". Verses one through four gives us the following: "let brotherly love continue, be not forgetful to entertain strangers, remember them that are in bonds, them which suffer adversity, the marriage bed is honorable, but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." Verse five has already been covered. We must trust the Lord to be our helper and not fear what man can do to us. Three times we are told to respect those who have the rule over us. The first time, in verse seven, we are exhorted to follow their faith. In verse 17 we are told to obey them that have the rule

over us, and verse 24 admonishes us to salute all them that have rule over us and, all the saints.

After verse seven we are reminded that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today and forever. (I believe this is an exhortation that we should strive to be the same.) We are warned about strange doctrines and exhorted to establish our hearts with grace. Verses nine through thirteen warn us not to get entangled with “religion”! We should seek (or have faith in) no continuing city (worldly city) but one to come (heavenly city.) We are to offer praise to God *continually* with the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name. We are told to do good, to communicate forget not: with such sacrifices God is well pleased. Paul says, *“Pray for us (one another), and be willing to live honestly”*. Then his prayer for us is; *“May God make you perfect in every good work to do his will (not your own). Let Him work in you that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ.”* The promise of *“I will never leave thee nor forsake thee”* is given with the condition that we do our part by having assurance this promise will take place in our lives. We might make the case that it can be expressed this way: God will not forsake us, but we can betray him and forsake his mercy by turning away from him or blaspheming the Holy Ghost. Blaspheming the Holy Ghost is saying in our hearts: *“I have seen the works of God and tasted them and I do not like them.”* Knowing God and not approving or liking him is forsaking God. And in His great mercy He has left us with the things we must not do, as well. Again, how could one twist and pervert the Scriptures by saying that just by having accepted Jesus as Saviour and walking in it to some small degree, we are saved for all eternity, no matter how we live this life on earth? (Example: Invention of Purgatory) That oft used excuse for sin and shortcoming, “I’m only human”, won’t cut it when we stand in the presence of the Son of God. He has laid out certain things that won’t be overlooked. We must want to be with Him and truly love him. No pretext or excuses can be made for anything other than this. It behooves us all to never forsake God, for in effect we will have left him, then what can he do? That is one of the main reasons I became compelled to write about

this. In these past 24 years, I have seen this shallow and erroneous doctrine spread and I felt a need to show the reality of its absurdity, by the Word of God, to those who have ears to hear.

In the verse from Chronicles in the Old Testament, referred to earlier, we see that God does, in fact, forsake his people when they forsake Him. Not only do we have other examples in the Old Testament of the truth about this, but He has warned us by His servants through His Word. Through Paul, Peter, John and Jesus, Himself, we are shown if we do not meet God's requirements there is a high price to pay. These things are boldly laid out in Scripture. Even though we have accepted Jesus as our Saviour and walked with Him for some time and in some measure of faith, there are some things God will **not tolerate**! Let's go back to Hebrews 6:4-6 once more. *"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame."* This is such a frightening thing, I can't even comment on it, except to say if it weren't possible it wouldn't be in God's Word. The sobering horrors continue: *"For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know Him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."* Hebrews 10:26-31 Verse 38 of chapter 10 also gives a sobering message. *"Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him."*

Peter also shows us that we would have been better off not to have known the Lord at all than to have first known Him, forsaken Him, and gone astray. If that wasn't a possible reality, would Peter have made an issue of it? *"For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been **better** for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb. The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to wallowing in the mire."* 2 Peter 2:20-22 And the argument that there is only one lonely verse to support this truth cannot be made by any stretch for there are many statements in both the New and Old Testaments supporting the matter that once saved always saved is a dangerous fallacy flirting with idolatry even; far too numerous are they to even mention.

Through John, we are told there is a certain segment that Jesus will spew out of His mouth. *"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."* Rev 3:15-16 Again, in Revelation, the Lord reveals to John that some will have their names removed from the Book of Life for tampering with the Book of Revelation. *"And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."* Rev. 22:19

The clearest instructions of all in this matter are given us by Jesus, himself, in Matthew. *"Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come!"* Matt 12:31-32 God forbid that anyone reading these words will ever do this!! Perhaps these

are the most sobering and frightening words of all from Jesus Christ Himself. *"Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my father which is in heaven. Many will say to me that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you, depart from me, ye that work iniquity."* Matt 7:20-23 (Dear Lord please never let that happen to me. Search me and chastise me, that I may never hear those words" in that day"!!!!) Praise God though, He has shown us through His Word, how to avoid ever hearing those words!!

Not only will He not leave us nor forsake us, **if** we are obedient to His will, but He also has rewards for us besides. Starting with Revelation 2:11 we find; *"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death."* ... To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." Rev 2:17 In Rev 2:26 – 27 we read this *"And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron..."* We have this wonderful time to look forward to written in Rev 22:14; *"Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."* But remember what we are told in Rev 22:19

These promises are only the tip of the iceberg concerning the things God hath prepared for those that love Him. I will close with Rev 1:3 a favorite of Elisha's Outcast Eagles: *"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy (Book of Revelation) and keep those things which are written therein; for the time is at hand."*

Just to know and believe in Him is not enough, we must **keep** His Word as well.

26. Godly Living Becomes the Philadelphia Faith

Sound Doctrine

By Terry Myers Smith

Without truth as his anchor, Man is a ship of ignorance drifting aimlessly on a sea of hurt. Until he is born again his contact with truth is coincidental, but once he receives Christ as his Savior, Man immediately reaps a bounty of joy and comfort because for the first time in his life he gets his bearings and can see a clear direction laid out before him. When the fog of life lifts he gets stability and he now knows, beyond any question, that there is right and wrong, true and false, good and evil black and white. At some point this man, anchored by a knowledge of truth's existence and navigated by its clear direction, comes to know that truth and Jesus are synonymous, that Jesus is the embodiment of truth, that what Jesus says, feels, and does, is truth and nothing but the truth.

One sure way that today's Philadelphia Church will manifest itself is in its unswerving love for the truth. In his letter to Philadelphia Jesus identifies himself as, "*He that is true.*" The Philadelphian can be sure that God's sound doctrine, revealed in the Holy Scriptures, will provide the anchor needed to keep his mind from being swept away and drown by the swift and confusing current of humanism. If the Christian learns to ignore the changing tides of humanism and instead allows himself to be caught up by the free flow of the Scriptures he learns that sin is sin and righteousness is righteousness and never the twain shall meet. He comes to believe and understand that the ways of godliness and the fruits of the Spirit are opposite the ways of the world, the ways of the flesh, and the ways of the Devil. But these truths must be held onto ferociously.

Inevitably the spirit of compromise and ecumenical concession try to creep into our faith to persuade us that doctrine and steadfastness are stumbling blocks placed in the way of Christian peace and unity. The spirit of compromise tries to convince us that godly doctrine and insisting on sound living is the invention of short-sighted, self-righteous, self-appointed judges who epitomize everything bad about religion. Left unchecked, this spirit of compromise leads us to endorsing half-truths and winking at sin. But the Philadelphia faithful will not give in to this spirit of compromise and humanism. Just as Jesus commended the original Philadelphians for keeping his word, so today's faithful Philadelphian will keep Jesus's word also.

The Philadelphian need never apologize for keeping sound doctrine. The book of Titus is a prime example of Christ's belief in this. The words in Titus encourage us to have loyalty, allegiance and steadfastness concerning God's Word not only in word but in deed also.

In his greeting to Titus Paul declares that he is an apostle according to the faith of God's elect and, "*the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness.*" The rest of Paul's letter to Titus is devoted to this truth in living which is after godliness. Paul tells Titus to ordain men, women, and youth who love "*good doctrine*", "*sound doctrine*", and "*the doctrine of God our Savior*". Laziness, greediness, violent behavior, drunkenness, etc., all the usual uncomely actions, are roundly condemned as unsound doctrine. Husbands and wives with stable lives and living a godly existence are commended and encouraged.

Paul goes on to lay down the character that a shepherd of souls must have and concludes by saying that a shepherd should, "*Hold(ing) fast the faithful word that he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.*" He talks about the unruly and those who deceive and "*that turn from the truth*" and he says these are the people who "*profess that they know God: but in works they deny him, being ... unto every good work reprobate.*"

Paul then reminds Titus to “*speaking the things which become sound doctrine.*” He instructs Titus to exhort the men and women, old and young, to sound living and reinforces the teaching by saying, “*In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity. Sound speech, that can not be condemned: that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.*”

In short, the Philadelphian will be instructed by the same instruction delivered to Titus by the Holy Ghost. The Philadelphian will know what the Scriptures say, know what the Spirit has taught him about God’s word, and will keep the word of truth with steadfast loyalty in a way that would be the envy of any army or political party. Remember, Jesus is “*He that is true*”, and we should cling to his truth without shame or apology for living godly lives in Christ.

27. To Be Healthy Requires That We Always Seek The Truth

A Christian's Duty

By Terry Myers Smith

On July 4th when we Americans celebrate independence from European domination and the iron grip of British oppression; politicians and educators always seize the opportunity to speak of the things which have made our country a powerhouse among nations. Not least of the “virtues” that are touted is the need for the people to have a sense of duty and the necessity of protecting our hard won privileges.

Amid the colorful displays, the band concerts, and the lighting of the sky with majestic fireworks, the contemporary fathers will make speeches about duty and the protecting of these precious privileges that were won on various battlefields, both domestic and foreign, by the courage and blood of our forefathers. It was their sense of duty that often gave them the wherewithal to risk their lives for neighbor and community. It is a sense of duty and the full allegiance to this obligation that makes any culture or civilization great. History teaches us that a people void of a sense of duty and respect for the general people are also unacquainted with communal and civil discipline. As a natural result they are dominated by some outside force, nation or people that is duty bound, committed, focused, and disciplined. When sense of duty begins to erode, and people only look to their own welfare, then that body which was made strong by commitment to its principles will surely begin a rapid decline into disaster, even oblivion. History is our witness to this “natural law” of societies. It has been the pattern followed by the

rise and fall of the world's empires and her great social, ideological and political movements. This principle also holds true in spiritual matters, and particularly is reflected in both the condition of the individual Christian believer and the Church at large. When there is an erosion of a sense of duty to others and a discarding of the privileges that were won by the shed blood of its courageous "forefather" (Jesus) then her strength is sapped and she will surely become dominated by some other outside force. Those forces that wait to dominate Christians lurk at the gate just as sure as the Vandals and the Goths lurked outside the city limits of Rome waiting to bring her to her knees. Just as certain as the Nazis skirted the heavy French defenses and easily overran Paris in 1940. It is a work of ravishment, once inside it carries weakness and cowardice and brother betraying brother, and inglorious death. They chip away at a people's heart, these monsters of neglect, they feed upon the soul until it is made to fall away from the backbone of their original purpose and principle. Their faith becomes confused, their faith atrophies then disappears, any spiritual mettle they had is gone. So God brings judgment on them, just as it happened with Israel.

THE TRUTH PERISHES

The enemies that wait at our doorstep are not only sin but those creeping serpents of humanism, ecumenism and false religion that turn lies into the truth and suggest that God's truth is a relative thing subject to our discretion and our cultural manners. Like enemies waiting at the gate, the World and the Devil seek to dominate every true believer they can get their hands on. If they can badger or deceive the believer into forgoing their duty to respectfully and obsessively seek the truth then they will be able to dominate them. The World says, "You aren't loving if you insist on and speak the truth." But it is the duty, as well as the blessed privilege, that was won by the blood of Jesus at Calvary, of every

Christian to pursue and seek the truth. Why else would Proverbs 23:23 say, **“Buy the Truth and sell it not.”** Every Christian is duty bound to relentlessly and aggressively pursue the truth and to just as aggressively hold on to that truth.

The Truth, however, is not what the World believes it to be. The Truth is not a set of principles, an ideology, or adherence to some system. It is not what a brilliant man may say or something which the eyes can attest. The Truth to a Christian is known and it is not debatable. The Truth is Christ. When we say we seek the truth and reverence the Truth, we are actually saying we seek Jesus. We seek His opinion, His assessment, His direction, His call to action, His advice to passively withdraw, His counsel, His desire, His hope and not ours, and His welfare. When he said, *“Ye must be born-again”* John 3:7, we know that is a fact that is irrefutable. Because Jesus is the Truth and He cannot lie. When he said, *“All others that came before me were robbers and thieves”* John 10:8 we know that is an absolute fact, inarguable, immutable. He declared *“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.”* Matt 7:13-15 We know that He is the only way by which a person can be saved.

Once a church, a Christian movement, a denomination, a leading Evangelist, or an individual born-again believer abandons their duty to seek and follow the truth in favor of making this a more palatable place for Christians to live, or because they will be rejected or shut off by the world, or they might look bad, they are being deceived and well on the road to being dominated by a “foreign power”, that road that is broad and well-traveled and leads directly to Hell.

This is one of the major reasons why we have objected to any leader in the Church who suggests that duty to truth is less important than living peaceably with everyone and mollifying their fears. We have nothing personal against these men or

their ministries, but we do take it seriously because of the harm it does to true believers. Without a sense of duty to follow after the truth we will be dominated by some other force than the Spirit of Jesus Christ. We are duty bound to refute and resist the selling of the truth for any kind of gain. Does God do this? Has he ever dishonored the Truth or ignored it just to placate man's indignation about the truth?

The truth is highly offensive to the unsaved soul. We are told we are a sweet smell to God but to the godless we have the stench of death. The truth is in opposition to the World, Humanism, False Religion or unrepentant Man. The Lord warned His disciples, *"Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake."* Matt 10:22 At the Last Supper he told them, *"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."* John 15:18-19

The religions of Mohammed, Buddha and Hindi are rightly called world religions. They do not confirm nor regard the Divinity of Jesus Christ as the ONLY begotten Son of God. They do not acknowledge that His shed blood on the cross, and only His shed blood on the cross, can save man. They spread the deception of the serpent that says there are many ways to come to God. They believe in reincarnation and salvation through good works and not by faith through the mercy of God. Any backpedaling from the truth of Jesus as the only Savior of Man is a denial of the entire gospel and a shirking of the duty to truth that makes a believer strong in Christ. Fudging on the truth simply will not do, even if we are doing it to have "fellowship" with all religions and leaders that might add to our power and importance.

Did Christ ever do that? Would He have said, "Yeah Caesar and the gods of Rome can help to save you too", just to get people to listen to Him? No. Of course not. Don't be ridiculous. Then how can a Christian do it?

We see the morals and ethics of our youth in decay. Students are capable of gunning down classmates and teachers without the

slightest remorse. Satanic worship is on the rise among the younger generation of narcissistic self-worshippers. Our nation falters because the generations that are ascending to power and position are all too committed to self-gratification rather than honest civil service. If you can get away with it then it must be OK. Our national sense of duty has been exchanged by an expectation that we should be served rather than serve others. Christians of every stripe, across this land, believe that God is their errand-boy or Satan Claus who came down and died on the cross just to supply their worldly needs and level out the roller-coaster ride of life to make it safe and amusing. During the holiday of the fourth of July there will be plenty of flag waving, at Christmas plenty of gift-giving, on Memorial Day plenty of remembering of heroes. Our Politicians make political hay and will insist on looking at the bright side of things. Rather than taking a hard look at the truth they will be looking hard for votes. Pastors and evangelists will tickle the ears of their congregants in search of votes and larger revenues. They will be seeking the safe ground, being careful to be politically correct, looking anxiously for nodding heads, smiling faces, approving amens and hallelujahs. While they lament the condition of our country and the direction in which she is heading, they will try to assure us that everything is going to be all right and that men ought to love one another and not stir up a fuss about their religion.

It Is The Christian's Duty to Love the Truth

The world will do what it will. It will continue to fight against Christ and everything that the cross of Calvary has done for men. Christ taught us to let the World do its thing. The World will not be converted. This is why Jesus, just before going to the cross, said, *"Father... I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine."* John 17:9 This is why we are taught, *"know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever*

therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.” James 4:4 And, “what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?” 2 Cor 6:15 We are chided to “come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” 2 Cor 6:17

It is our Christian duty to defend, honor and preserve the Truth that Christ purchased for us with His very own blood. It is this blood and only this blood that can wash us clean and make our sins, though they be as scarlet, white as snow. Mohammed, Buddha, and others cannot wash my sins away by anything they ever did or claimed. Only the Son of God, Jesus Christ, did this for me. How can we fudge on this? How can we give away such a gift of love? Though there are evangelists who sadly take this gift and sell it we shall be wise students of Proverbs. Every day is Independence Day for the Christian if they take serious vigil and maintain their freedom. For we are told we can know the truth and that it will set us free indeed. A wise Christians will be a fanatic about the Truth, take hold of the Truth, which was purchased for us by Jesus, and the wise Christian will sell it not, not at any price!

28. What is the Gospel?

The disciples never were told to preach the gospel; preach repentance yes, but not to preach the gospel, only that they should or would preach the gospel later – after the resurrection. It was after the gospel was revealed in Christ and by Christ that it could be preached in Acts and beyond.

Preaching the Gospel is therefore a large part of the authority and purpose of the Church: she is to publish, preach and disseminate the gospel: god's honest truth.

Initially, we should view the Gospels from the point of Christ's dual nature as both man and God. It can be said that the first three gospels represent Christ and his human nature and the Gospel of John is indicative more of our Savior's divine nature. Notwithstanding, each Gospel has its peculiar and special meaning that added together makes them a full revelation of the character, life and person of Jesus Christ, Son of God, Son of Man.

Traditionally, the four Gospels have been compared symbolically to the four rivers in the Garden of Eden, and most notably, to the cherubic representatives of the creation that surround the throne of God, assigning the man cherub to Matthew, the lion to Mark, the ox to Luke and the eagle to John. It has been observed by Christian historians that the apparent contradictions in the four separate accounts sufficiently solve themselves upon examination and rather than hindering credibility serve only to attest to their honesty, impartiality and the divine inspiration of their authorship. At the same time, the four Aversions or perspectives give the believer a varied approach to Christ and a variety of spiritual views that a single account could not have otherwise accomplished. The contrast and compliment supplied by this multifaceted look into Christ's earthly ministry serves to affirm, consolidate and bring to vivid clarity the kind of relationship God wishes to have with man through His only Son. In this way, each Gospel has independent

worth but each is only complete when received by their mutual relationship.

It has been further observed that Matthew wrote for the Jews, Mark for the Romans, Luke for the Greeks and John for advanced Christians; but all are suited for all Christians in every age and every nation. Perceiving the Gospels in this way Matthew exhibits Jesus as the Messiah and Lawgiver of the kingdom of heaven who challenges our obedience; Mark is the mighty conqueror and worker of miracles who excites our astonishment; Luke shows Jesus as our sympathizing Friend and Savior who commands our confidence; and John reveals Jesus, the eternal Son of God who became flesh for our salvation and claims our adoration and worship, that through believing in Him we can have eternal life.

Notice that this interpretive scope is bracketed in themes of obeying in Matthew and believing in John. For purposes of understanding, they show a remarkable and consistent flow from the Old Testament to the New. Matthew announces that God has brought a 'sampling' of the kingdom of heaven as a promise of the fullness to come when God will establish the Kingdom of God in full in the glory to come. The whole duty of man, put in simple and direct terms, has always been and still is to believe and obey. Christ's coming and its revelation in the Gospels shows us the way to belief and the obedience it requires for all those who wish to enter into its eternal utopian bliss.

While there have been many gyrations and scurrilous attempts by Antichrist elements, all under the name of modern critical speculation, over the last few centuries suggesting that the Gospels were written at various times through the first three centuries after Christ's death and resurrection, they all appear lame upon the most superficial examination of the facts. The first three Gospels, known as the Synoptic Gospels because of their agreement in form and story, were certainly written before the year 70 AD, for they describe the destruction of Jerusalem as an event yet in the future, and thing near to come and something that would kick off the

signs of the entire age leading up to the return of Christ. (Olivet Discourse: Matt. 24, Mark 13, Luke 21).

Had the three Synoptic Gospels been written after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD it surely would have been reported as a fulfilled event and its importance with the return of Christ would probably have been more than partly disconnected to its purpose of kicking off the signs. There is no way to know when the Gospels were penned, but they were probably all written between 50 and 60 AD, or earlier. All the authors, with the exception of John, were probably gone, as was Paul, before the destruction of the Temple and the downfall of Jerusalem and Israel in 70 AD. John lived another couple of decades until quite old and his gospel assignment is the only one which does not give an account of the Olivet Discourse which prophesied the destruction of the Temple, even though he was present on those occasions when Christ taught on the signs of His Return. It is easy to understand that his inspired gospel account does not cover the fall of Israel because it would have been ‘old’ news. He would have been talking of prophecy as prophecy when it had already been fulfilled, so it was not appropriate for John’s Gospel to cover the Olivet Discourse serving only to confuse its prophetic tone and integrity of His accounts of what Christ did and said..

The following is an article discussing what the word Gospel actually means; while also defining and describing the Gospel in a rudimentary sense.

ARTICLE ON GOSPEL:

GOSPEL is the English word used to translate the Greek word for “good news.” Christians use the word to designate the message and story of God’s saving activity through the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of God’s unique Son Jesus. Although “gospel” translates

a Greek word from the New Testament, the concept of good news itself finds its roots in the Hebrew language of the Old Testament.

Development in the Old Testament Bisar is the Hebrew verb which means “to proclaim good news.” Unlike the English language, Hebrew is able to convey the subject of the proclamation in the verb’s root; no direct object was needed with the verb bisar to make clear that the subject of an announcement was “good news.” Originally, the word was used to describe the report of victory in battle (2 Sam 4:10). Because the Israelites believed God was actively involved in their lives (including battles and wars) bisar came to have a religious connotation. To proclaim the good news of Israel’s success in battle was to proclaim God’s triumph over God’s enemies. Believing credit for the victory belonged to God, the Israelites’ proclamation of the good news of victory was, in fact, proclamation about God.

The transition from the use of bisar in a military setting to its use in a personal context is not difficult to envision. If Israel proclaimed good news when God delivered the nation from its enemies, individuals ought also to proclaim good news when God delivered them from personal distress (Ps 40:10). The nation’s victories in war and a person’s individual salvation both called for the announcement of what God had done.

The Book of Isaiah marks the full religious development of the term within the Old Testament. By this time the word is most often used to describe the anticipated deliverance and salvation which would come from the hand of God when the long-awaited Messiah appeared to deliver Israel (Isa 52:7). The military-political and personal connotations of the word were fully united in the hope of a Deliverer who would both triumph over the earthly enemies of God’s people and usher in a new age of salvation. The arrival of this Messiah would be good news.

In the Old Testament, the verbal form of bisar dominates in usage. A noun derived from the verb does appear on occasion, but the vast majority of references are to the verb itself. The good news of God’s saving work and the proclamation of that news cannot be separated.

Development in the New Testament

From approximately 300 B.C. until after the time of Christ, Greek was the dominant language of the biblical world. The Greek language crossed geographic and cultural barriers to provide a common tongue for government and commerce. During this same time period, thousands of Jews emigrated from Palestine throughout Asia Minor. Consequently, many devout Greek-speaking Jews lived in the lands surrounding the Mediterranean Sea. In fact, many Jews who lived outside Palestine spoke Greek better than they spoke Hebrew. These people eventually translated their Scriptures and the important expressions of their faith into Greek.

As translators performed their work on the Hebrew Bible, the Greek word most commonly used for *bisar* was *euangelizesthai*. In its most ancient usage, this Greek verb had many similarities with *bisar*. Like the Hebrew verb, *euangelizesthai* was a word used to announce victory in battle. Another similarity could be found in that the Greek verb originally needed no direct object to convey the subject of the proclamation. However, by the time the New Testament was written the usage of *euangelizesthai* had changed slightly. In later usage the word simply meant “to proclaim,” and some object had to be used with the verb to explain the subject of the proclamation.

This small shift in meaning explains why during the Christian era a noun derived from the Greek verb became much more common. Christians increasingly used *euangelion* (the noun derived from *euangelizesthai*) as a specific term to describe the good news of Jesus. *Euangelion* was indeed the content of their preaching. However, because the Greek language now allowed the content of their proclamation to be separated from the idea of proclamation itself – this meant that, writers of the New Testament could also say the good news was confessed, taught, spoken, told, announced, and witnessed.

Development in English Translations Earliest English editions of

the Bible used the Anglo-Saxon word “godspell” to translate the noun euangelion. Godspell meant therefore – “the story about a god” and was used because the story about Jesus was good news. As English developed, the word was shortened to “gospel,” and the Anglo-Saxon meaning was lost. It was further corrupted from the German, which was god-spell, or God’s honest truth.

Because euangelion was used specifically to refer to good news of Jesus, some translators have used other words to translate *bisar* in the Old Testament, even though the meaning of the two words are roughly the same. This distinction has been drawn in order to differentiate between the good news promised by the prophets and the good news which Jesus brought. Translators who make such a distinction often use “glad tidings” or an equivalent for the Hebrew.

Usage in the New Testament

In the New Testament “gospel” has two shades of meaning: it is both the actual message on the lips of Jesus about the reign of God (Mark 1:14), and it is the story told about Jesus after His death and resurrection (Gal 1:11-12). In each case “gospel” refers to the work which God alone initiates and completes. Inasmuch as God has chosen to bring about the world’s reconciliation in this one particular way, there is only one gospel (Heb 1:1-2). Furthermore, since God is the One working through the saving activity of Jesus, God is also the Author of the gospel (1 Thess. 2:13). The gospel is God’s message to humankind (Rom. 15:16). Only God calls and commissions the messengers of this good news, and, in addition, only God gives the messengers the story they are to make known (Rom 10:14-15; 1 John 1:5).

Therefore, the proclamation of the good news is the continuation of the work which God began in Jesus Christ. God’s messengers are not merely telling about the history of salvation when they proclaim the good news; rather, they are an integral part of the work

which continues through their efforts. The living Lord, Jesus Christ Himself, confronts listeners through the words of the messengers. To alter the message by adding extra requirements or by omitting crucial details is to pervert the gospel into a false message which ceases to have saving power (2 Cor. 11:3-4; Gal 1:6-7).

The Message of the Gospel

The most basic summary of Jesus' preaching appears in Mark 1:15. "*The time is fulfilled,*" He said. "*The kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.*" Mark offers no explanation what the good news is or what information it contains. Those readers who live several centuries after the writing of the New Testament must glean the message from careful study of all its books.

The need for good news assumes a bad situation. The bad situation in which humans find themselves and the reason they need good news is that sin has entered each of their lives (John 8:7; Rom 3:23). Sin is a power that controls them and shapes their destinies (Rom 3:9; 6:22). Sin's power must not be underestimated. In fact, humans are helpless by themselves to overcome its grip on their lives (Rom 7:21-24).

Because humans cannot overcome the power of sin by themselves, God has intervened on their behalf through Jesus. Jesus has come to seek out all persons so they may respond to God's grace (Luke 15:1-10; 19:10). God's grace, which Jesus bears within Himself (John 1:14), overcomes sin's power and offers forgiveness for individual sins (Mark 2:5; Rom. 6:14). See Grace.

While God offers grace freely to everyone, this grace is not effective in overcoming the power of sin in a person's life until that person accepts it (Matt 19:20-22; John 1:12). Because Jesus bears God's grace in Himself, grace is accepted only by receiving him (John 14:9-12). The marks of having accepted Jesus are repentance (Luke 13:3) and a changed life (Matt 3:8; 1 John 1:5-7).

The fact that forgiveness, freedom from sin, and a new life are possible is good news. Because all this is possible only through Jesus Christ, His message and His story are called the “gospel.”

The Written Gospels

Within the New Testament, the word euangelion always refers to oral communication, never to a document or piece of literature. Not until the beginning of the second century and the writings of the “church fathers” do we find references to “gospels” in the plural, indicating written documents. How did this transition from a spoken message to written books take place?

Literacy was not usual in the ancient world, even if the Jews could be considered a literate nation. Books and writing equipment were expensive and the education needed to use them was usually reserved for the rich and powerful. But by the times of Jesus Israel had synagogues all over the countryside where the Pharisees were nothing less than people devoted to the written word thinking that anyone who was illiterate was dirt – a goyim. Consequently, many societies preserved and transmitted their national stories, traditions, and faith by word of mouth. These societies stressed the importance of telling and remembering their traditions from one generation to another. It was what their religions of mythology were built on and how their religions developed. The Jewish people were to the contrary in all matters of religion.

In times of crisis (such as an invasion by a foreign nation), however, certain learned individuals would try to guarantee the preservation of their society’s oral traditions by writing them down. They often wrote out of the fear of what would happen if their nation was defeated or destroyed and no one was left to transmit orally the living traditions to the next generation.

The gospels of the New Testament developed along a pattern similar to other ancient writings. For many years the stories and

teachings of Jesus were communicated primarily by word of mouth. In addition to the fact of limited literacy, members of the early church believed Jesus would return soon, so they felt no urgency to write down His teachings for the future. Then, about thirty years after Jesus' ascension, three interrelated crises began to impinge upon the church. As a result of these crises, individuals responded to the leadership of God's Spirit to write down the teachings, stories, and message of Jesus into what we call the Gospels.

The first of these crises was persecution. The Emperor Nero initiated the first official persecution so he could use Christians as scapegoats for his own insane actions. After setting fire to the city of Rome in A.D. 64 as a way to clear a portion of the city for a construction project, Nero arrested Christians and accused them of committing the crime. Using torture, Roman officials extracted a "confession" from one Christian. On the basis of this supposed admission of guilt, Nero began a systematic persecution of Christians which included arrest, imprisonment, torture, and execution. The persecution begun by Nero continued in varying degrees of intensity during the reign of other emperors throughout the New Testament period. From a historical perspective, persecution may have strengthened the spirit of the early church, but that first generation of Christians felt their very existence was threatened.

The second crisis involved the passing away of the generation of people who had actually seen Jesus in the flesh, heard His teachings, and witnessed His miracles. Some died in the persecutions and others simply aged enough to pass away from natural causes. The early church placed a high value on the experience of actually having seen and heard Jesus (Luke 1:2; 1 John 1:1). Therefore, the death of members of the original generation of Christians was viewed as a potential break in their linkage to the historical roots of their faith.

The third crisis was the perceived delay in Christ's return to earth. Preaching recorded in the New Testament has a distinct sense of urgency about it. The apostles believed that Jesus would

be returning any day and that it was imperative for them to give as many people as possible the opportunity to respond to Him. Their constant emphasis was to communicate the gospel today, not to preserve it for the future. As a longer and longer period of time passed after Jesus' ascension, the church became more and more concerned about preserving the message.

The purposes of the Evangelists from approximately A.D. 60 until A.D. 90 was to preach and to set down the history of Christ in writing. Four individuals responded to the inspiration of God by writing down the message of, and about Jesus. As they did, these individuals surely held several goals in common. Responding to the crises around them, they wanted to preserve the gospel message in an accurate form for believers who would follow in future generations. In this sense the authors were each trying to produce a book for the Christian community. They wrote down the good news of Jesus to strengthen, to educate, and to encourage those who already accepted its message. As well as to record the prophecies of God and of Jesus' return that would be of critical importance as guiding lights to the generations to come, and especially the last generations before His second coming.

The written gospel was not only an additional tool for evangelism (John 20:30-31), but a source of personal contact used by the Holy Spirit so that Christ could speak with believers in a personal way down through the ages until his return.

The Gospel writers' primary interest was not to produce great works of literature, their principal objective was to convert individuals to believe in Christ and have personal relationship with Him. They also recorded facts to establish the truth in history that Son of God walked and loved us as a human being, proving that if Man will walk with God in this life they can also love in truth without fear.

The church does not possess one account of the message of and work of Jesus which stands alone as the official record of His activity. Rather, the early church recognized the inspiration of four different accounts of the gospel. Each one was written from a

slightly different perspective; each one had a different audience in mind; each one was designed to highlight the elements of the gospel which the author felt most important.

32 Scriptures with the phrase “Gospel of”:

(Matt 4:23 KJV) “And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.”

(Matt 9:35 KJV) “And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.”

(Matt 24:14 KJV) “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.”

(Mark 1:1 KJV) “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God;”

(Mark 1:14 KJV) “Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God;”

(Acts 20:24 KJV) “But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.”

(Rom 1:1 KJV) “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God;”

(Rom 1:9 KJV) “For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;”

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

(Rom 10:15 KJV) “And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as

it is written, *How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!*"

(Rom 15:16 KJV) *"That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost."*

(Rom 15:19 KJV) *"Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ."*

(Rom 15:29 KJV) *"And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ."*

(1 Cor 9:12 KJV) *"If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless, we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ."*

(1 Cor 9:18 KJV) *"What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel."*

(2 Cor 4:4 KJV) *"In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."*

(2 Cor 9:13 KJV) *"Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men;"*

(2 Cor 10:14 KJV) *"For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ:"*

(2 Cor 11:7 KJV) *"Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely?"*

(Gal 1:7 KJV) *"Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ."*

(Gal 2:7 KJV) *"But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter;"*

(Eph 1:13 KJV) *"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the*

word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,”

(Eph 6:15 KJV) “And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;”

(Phil 1:27 KJV) “Only let your conversation (way of living) be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;”

(1 Th 2:2 KJV) “But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.”

(1 Th 2:8 KJV) “So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.”

(1 Th 2:9 KJV) “For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.”

(1 Th 3:2 KJV) “And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:”

(2 Th 1:8 KJV) “In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:”

(1 Tim 1:11 KJV) “According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.”

(1 Pet 4:17 KJV) “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?”

Point of question on Gospel

Changing tides of culture, media, times, eating drinking, politics, etc. How does the Gospels effect these. As our time up against the Golden age of Rome. The early church puritanical how efficient is gospel though?

Hypothesis: Gospel antecedent to Church. Much of analysis and debate of church, looking for church is really gospel or should be

gospel. Gospel is what is interested and needs be examined because that determines church essence.

Another part of the gospel found in beatitudes and stands in contrast to Mystery Babylon and Antichrist. Humble, losers, not wrath shall win, but captives and strangers and pilgrims holding on to crown and faith, etc.

Should it be pointed out what gospel is not? Law, circumcision, carnal sabbath, food regulations, etc.

This is a very old characterization that goes back to Gregory Nazianzen.

Peter Said This About the Gospel

“For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. 2 Peter 1:16-21

Ideas that the Word renders concerning the Gospel itself:

“That people could be instructed with certainty things they should know.”

“But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ,

the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.” [Lk 1:4 & Jn 20:31]

*The gospel was preached before to Abraham. We are told. “that God would justify the heathen through faith preached to Abraham, and that all nations would be blessed in him.” [Gal 3:8]

*The gospel is not with wisdom of words but to be preached. [1 Cor 1:17]

*The gospel which they believed, received and in which they stand and are saved if they keep it, is life, unless they have received it in vain. [1 Cor 15:1-2]

*The Jews are enemies for our sakes as concerning the gospel, but as touching the election they are beloved for the fathers sakes. [Rom 11:28]

*The gospel of your salvation and the sealing of the earnest of your salvation, The Holy Spirit of promise. [Eph 1:13]

*Gentiles be fellowheirs by the gospel, of the same body and partakers of the promise. [Eph 3:6]

*Gospel of peace part of the armor of God. [Eph 6:15]

*“For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven whereof ye heard by the word of the truth of the Gospel which bringeth forth fruit and is gone into all the world.” [Col 1:5-6]

“So that the hope of the gospel, be not moved, which was preached to every creature under heaven. [Col 1:23]

*Gospel comes not with word, but power and Holy Ghost also. [1 Thess 1:5]

*Punishment of those who know not God and obey not the gospel. [2 Thess 1:8]

*Gospel (is) unto the obtaining of glory. [2 Thess 2:14]

*(We need to) Be a partaker of the afflictions of the gospel. [2 Tim 1:8]

*(He) Has abolished death; and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. [2 Tim 1:10]

*To be profitable, the gospel must not only be preached but it must be incorporated, or engrafted into a humble ‘receiver’ of truth.

*“For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of

God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" [1 Pet 4:17]

**The word is ultimately sewed upon earth when the everlasting gospel is preached from heaven. [Rev 14:6]*

29. What the Gospel Actually Is

Scriptures Tell The Story

By Terry Myers Smith

“The design of the Gospels was manifestly not to furnish a biography of Jesus the Messiah, but, in organic connection with the Old Testament to tell the history of the long-promised establishment of the Kingdom of God upon earth.” These were the words written by the great Jewish Christian biblical scholar Theodor Edersheim in his classic *Life and Times of Jesus*. (Edersheim: ch. IV p145)

More perfectly the opening words of the book which goes by its writer’s name, Luke, has this to say of the purpose of the gospels penned under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit Himself. We take delight therefore in opening its short dissertation on the meaning and purpose of the word gospel with what the gospel has to say about itself and its purpose.

“Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us,

Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word;

It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus,

That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.” Luke 1:1-4

Initially, we should view the Gospels from the point of Christ’s dual nature as man and God. It can be said that the first three gospels

represent Christ and his human nature and the Gospel of John is indicative more of our Savior's divine nature. But each Gospel has its peculiar and special meaning that added together makes them a full revelation of the character, life and person of Jesus Christ, Son of God, Son of Man. Traditionally, the four Gospels have been compared symbolically to the four rivers in the Garden of Eden, and most notably, to the cherubic representatives of the creation that surround the throne of God, assigning the man cherub to Matthew, the lion to Mark, the ox to Luke and the eagle to John. It has been observed by Christian historians that the apparent contradictions in the four separate accounts sufficiently solve themselves upon examination and rather than hindering credibility serve only to attest to their honesty, impartiality and the divine inspiration of their authorship. At the same time, the four Aversions or perspectives give the believer a varied approach to Christ and a variety of spiritual views that a single account could not have otherwise accomplished. The contrast and compliment supplied by this multifaceted look into Christ's earthly ministry serves to affirm, consolidate and bring to vivid clarity the kind of relationship God wishes to have with man through His only Son. In this way each Gospel has independent worth but each is only complete when received by their mutual relationship.

It has been further observed that Matthew wrote for the Jews, Mark for the Romans, Luke for the Greeks and John for advanced Christians; but all are suited for all Christians in every age and every nation. Perceiving the Gospels in this way Matthew exhibits Jesus as the Messiah and Lawgiver of the kingdom of heaven who challenges our obedience; Mark is the mighty conqueror and worker of miracles who excites our astonishment; Luke shows Jesus as our sympathizing Friend and Savior who commands our confidence; and John reveals Jesus, the eternal Son of God who became flesh for our salvation and claims our adoration and worship, that through believing in Him we can have eternal life. Notice that this interpretive scope is bracketed in themes of obeying in Matthew and believing in John. And for purposes of understanding show

a remarkable and consistent flow from the Old Testament to the New. Matthew announces that God has brought a 'sampling' of the kingdom of heaven as a promise of the fullness to come when God will establish the Kingdom of God in full in the glory to come. The whole duty of man, put in simple and direct terms, has always been and still is to believe and obey. Christ's coming and its revelation in the Gospels shows us the way to belief and the obedience it requires for all those who wish to enter into its eternal utopian bliss.

While there have been many gyrations and scurrilous attempts by Antichrist elements, all under the name of modern critical speculation, over the last few centuries suggesting that the Gospels were written at various times through the first three centuries after Christ's death and resurrection, they all appear lame upon the most superficial examination of the facts. The first three Gospels, known as the Synoptic Gospels because of their agreement in form and story, were certainly written before the year 70 AD, for they describe the destruction of Jerusalem as an event yet in the future, and thing near to come and something that would kick off the signs of the entire age leading up to the return of Christ. (Olivet Discourse: Matt. 24, Mark 13, Luke 21). Had the three Synoptic Gospels been written after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD it surely would have been reported as a fulfilled event and its importance with the return of Christ would probably have been more than partly disconnected to its purpose of kicking off the signs. There is no way to know when the Gospels were penned, but they were probably all written between 50 and 60 AD, or earlier by the very men whose names are assigned authorship. All the authors, with the exception of John, were probably gone, as was Paul, before the destruction of the Temple and the downfall of Jerusalem and Israel in 70 AD. John lived another couple of decades until quite old and his gospel assignment is the only one which does not give an account of the Olivet Discourse which prophesied the destruction of the Temple, even though he was present on those occasions when Christ taught on the signs of His Return. It is easy to understand that his inspired gospel account does not

because it would have been 'old' news. He would have been talking of prophecy as prophecy when it had already been fulfilled, so it was not appropriate for John's Gospel to cover the Olivet Discourse serving only to confuse its prophetic tone and integrity.

The disciples...

... never were told to preach the gospel (preach repentance yes but not to preach the gospel, only that they should or would preach the gospel later – after the resurrection. It was after the gospel was revealed in Christ and by Christ that it could be preached in Acts and beyond. Preaching the Gospel is, therefore, a large part of the authority and purpose of the Church, she is to publish, preach and disseminate the gospel: God's honest truth.

**But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name. [Lk 1:4 & Jn 20:31]*

**We are told that the gospel was preached before to Abraham. It promised that God would justify the heathen through faith, the faith which had been preached to Abraham which taught that all nations would be blessed in him. [Gal 3:8]*

**The gospel is not with wisdom of words but to be preached. [1 Cor 1:17]*

**The gospel which they received and believed, in which they stand and are saved (if they keep it), is the harbinger of salvation and life everlasting – unless they have received it in vain. [1 Cor 15:1-2]*

**The Jews are enemies for our sakes as concerning the gospel, but as touching the election they are beloved for the fathers sakes. [Rom 11:28]*

**The gospel of salvation and the sealing of the promise of your salvation, is the Holy Spirit of promise. [Eph 1:13]*

**Gentiles be fellowheirs by the gospel, of the same body and partakers of the promise. [Eph 3:6]*

**Gospel of peace part of the armor of God. [Eph 6:15]*

**For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven whereof ye heard by the word of the truth of the Gospel which bringeth forth fruit and*

is gone into all the world. [Col 1:5] hope of gospel, be not moved, which was preached to every creature under heaven. [Col 1:23]

*Gospel comes not with word, but power and Holy Ghost also. [1 Thess 1:5]

*Punishment of those who know not God and obey not the gospel. [2 Thess 1:8]

*Gospel (is) unto the obtaining of glory. [2 Thess 2:14]

*(We need to) Be a partaker of the afflictions of the gospel. [2 Tim 1:8]

*(He) Has abolished death; and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. [2 Tim 1:10]

*To be profitable the gospel must not only be preached but it must be incorporated, or engrafted into a humble 'receiver' of truth.

*For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? [1 Pet 4:17]

*The word is ultimately sewed upon earth when the everlasting gospel is preached from heaven. [Rev 14:6]

30. Is God A Mathematician?

By Keith Newman

The authenticity of the Holy Bible has been attacked at regular intervals by atheists and theologians alike but none have explained away the mathematical seal beneath its surface.

It would seem the divine hand has moved to prevent counterfeiting in the pages of the Bible in a similar manner to the line that runs through paper money. Bible numerics appears to be God's watermark of authenticity.

Vital research on this numeric seal was completed by a native of the world's most renowned atheistic nation, Russia. Dr. Ivan Panin was born in Russia on Dec. 12, 1855. As a young man he was an active nihilist and participated in plots against the Czar and his government. He was a mathematical genius who died a Harvard scholar and a citizen of the United States in 1942.

Panin was exiled from Russia. After spending a number of years studying in Germany he went to the United States where he became an outstanding lecturer on literary criticism.

Panin was known as a firm agnostic – so well known that when he discarded his agnosticism and accepted the Christian faith, the newspapers carried headlines telling of his conversion.

It was in 1890 that Dr. Panin made the discovery of the mathematical structure underlining the vocabulary of the Greek New Testament. He was casually reading the first verse of the gospel of John in the Greek: *"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with the God and the Word was God..."*

Dr. Panin was curious as to why the Greek word for "the" preceded the word "God" in one case and not the other. In examining the text he became aware of a number relationship. This was the first of the discoveries that led to his conversion and uncovered the extensive numeric code.

Oldest manuscripts

Dr. Panin found his proof in the some of the oldest and most accurate manuscripts – the Received Hebrew Text and the Westcott and Hort Text.

In the original languages of the Bible, mostly Hebrew and Greek, there are no separate symbols for numbers, letters of the alphabet are also used to indicate numbers.

The numeric value of a word is the sum total of all its letters. It was curiosity that first caused Dr. Panin to begin toying with the numbers behind the texts. Sequences and patterns began to emerge. These created such a stirring in the heart of the Russian that he dedicated 50 years of his life to painstakingly comb the pages of the Bible.

This complex system of numbering visibly and invisibly saturates every book of the scriptures emphasizing certain passages and illustrating deeper or further meaning in types and shadows. The 66 books of the Bible 39 in the Old and 27 in the New were written by 33 different people.

Those authors were scattered throughout various countries of the world and from widely different backgrounds. Many of them had little or no schooling. The whole Bible was written over a period of 1500 years with a 400 year silence apart from the Apocrypha between the two testaments. Despite the handicaps the biblical books are found to be a harmonious record, each in accord with the other.

Dr. Panin says the laws of probability are exceeded into the billions when we try and rationalize the authorship of the Bible as the work of man. He once said: “If human logic is worth anything at all we are simply driven to the conclusion that if my facts I have presented are true, man could never have done this.

Inspiration from on high

“We must assume that a Power higher than man guided the writers in such a way, whether they knew it or not, they did it and the Great God inspired them to do it”.

The Bible itself states clearly that it is the literal “God-breathed” living word of the Creator. The words “Thus saith the Lord” and “God said” occur more than 2500 times throughout scripture.

In 2 Timothy 3:16 it states *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God”*. Then in 2 Peter 1:20-21 it plainly states: *“No prophecy of the scriptures is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost”*.

Let’s take the number seven as an illustration of the way the patterns work. Seven is the most prolific of the mathematical series which binds scripture together. The very first verse of the Bible “*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,*” Gen 1:1 contains over 30 different combinations of seven.

This verse has seven Hebrew words having a total of 28 letters 4×7 . The numeric value of the three nouns “God”, “heaven” and “earth” totals 777. Any number in triplicate expresses complete, ultimate or total meaning.

Also tightly sealed up with sevens are the genealogy of Jesus, the account of the virgin birth and the resurrection. Seven occurs as a number 187 times in the Bible (41×7), the phrase “seven-fold” occurs seven times and “seventy” occurs 56 times (7×8).

In the Book of Revelation seven positively shines out: there are seven golden candlesticks, seven letters to seven churches, a book sealed with seven seals, seven angels standing before the Lord with seven trumpets, seven thunders and seven last plagues. In fact, there are over 50 occurrences of the number seven in Revelation alone.

Divisible by seven

There are 21 Old Testament writers whose names appear in the Bible (3×7). The numeric value of their names is divisible by seven. Of these 21, seven are named in the New Testament: Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Hosea and Joel. The numeric values of these names is 1554 (222×7). David's name is found 1134 times (162×7).

God's seal also pervades creation as though it were woven into the very fabric of nature.

The Bible has declared man's years to be threescore and ten (70). The development of the human embryo is in exact periods of sevens or 28 days (4×7). Medical science tells us the human body is renewed cell for cell every seven years.

We're told the pulse beats slower every seven days as if it were in accord with the seventh day of rest proclaimed in the Genesis creation week. And God formed man of the dust of the ground (Gen. 2:7); science confirms the human body is made of the same 14 elements (2×7) found in your average handful of dust.

The light of the sun is made up of seven distinct colours as shown in the rainbow. In music there are seven distinct notes which climax in a chord or octave at the beginning of a new seven.

In almost all animals the incubation or pregnancy period is divisible by seven. Seven is often referred to as "God's seal" or the number of spiritual perfection.

Number of resurrection

Eight is the number of new life or "resurrection". It is the personal number of Jesus. When we add together the letter values of the name Jesus in the Greek we get 888. Jesus was called The Christ, the numeric value of this title is 1480 (185×8). He was Saviour which has the value 1408 ($2 \times 8 \times 88$).

Jesus is also Lord which again is a multiple of eight being 800 (100×8). Messiah has the numeric value 656 (82×8). Jesus also called himself the Son of man. The term occurs 88 times and is valued at 2960 (370×8).

Jesus said “I am the truth”: the numeric value of “the truth” is 64 (8×8). The last book in the Bible is the Revelation of Jesus Christ which has exactly 888 Greek words. Eight persons were saved in the Ark at the great Noahic flood. God made a covenant with Abraham that every male Jewish child was to be circumcised on the eighth day of his life.

There are eight individual cases of resurrection spoken of in the Bible apart from Jesus. Three occur in the Old Testament, three in the gospels and two in Acts. It was on the eighth day or the first day of the new week that Jesus rose from the dead. The Holy Spirit also came down from heaven on the eighth day.

Nine is finality

Nine is finality or completion. The first example of its use is that infinitely sealed first verse of the Bible: “In the beginning God” which in Hebrew is: *Brayshith Elohim* which has the numeric value of 999. The very next statement “created the heaven” is also sealed with 999.

The number nine is endowed with a peculiar quality, it is finality in itself. Not only is it the final single number, but if you multiply it by any other number, the addition of the resulting figures will always revert back to nine ($2 \times 9 = 18 / 1 + 8 = 9$ etc).

There are nine basic gifts available to the Christian believer through the power of God’s Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:8-10). There are nine basic fruits which should be evident in the life of the believer (Gal 5:22-23). The words “my wrath” have the numeric value 999. The word Amen or verily is valued at 99 and occurs 99 times.

The work on the cross was completed at the ninth hour when

Jesus said “It is finished”. The shedding of his blood was final. It saw an end to the old system of animal sacrifice to atone for sin. The word “blood” in this sense occurs 99 times.

Great superstition has always surrounded the number 13 as being unlucky or dark. Perhaps there is good reason. One of the most convincing proofs of the origins of this number can be found by unraveling all the names by which Satan is known. Drakon or dragon has a value of 975 (13×75) and it occurs 13 times. Peirazon or tempter has a value of 1053 (13×81). Belial which is personification of evil has a value of 78 (13×6).

Anthropoktonos or “murderer” has a value of 1820 (13×40). Ophis or “serpent” is 780 (13×60). The phrase used by the Holy Spirit Ho kaloumenos diabolos kai ho Satanas or “called the Devil and Satan” is valued 2197 ($13 \times 13 \times 13$).

Small neat calculations

This article is in truth an oversimplification of the work of Dr. Panin and others who followed in his footsteps. Dr. Panin’s work initially involved some 40,000 pages of material on which he had written millions of small neat calculations. It involved volumes.

He often laboured up to 18 hours a day exploring the vast numeric structure. By and large it was a thankless task. Dr. Panin said “When I first made the discovery I was of course, taken off my feet – I was in the same condition as our friend Archimedes who when he solved a great mathematical problem while in the bath, rushed into the street naked, crying ‘I have found it’. I thought people would be delighted to embrace the new discovery, but I found human nature is always the same. So I quietly withdrew and did my work all by myself”.

Although it would appear that his work has been largely lost from popular reading today Dr. Panin did accomplish several outstanding

works. He published *Structure in the Bible the Numeric Greek New Testament* and *the Numeric English New Testament*.

The works of Dr. Ivan Panin have been put before the experts many times. Dr. Panin once challenged nine noted rationalists and Bible critics through the medium of the *New York Sun* newspaper Nov. 9, 1899. He dared them to publicly refute or give an explanation for a few of his presented facts. Four made lame excuses. The rest were silent.

Dr. Panin issued a challenge throughout leading newspapers of the world asking for a natural explanation or rebuttal of the facts. Not a single person accepted.

31. Ivan Panin

1855-1941 Harvard Professor

by T M Smith

Here follows a small Bio of Ivan Panin. The reader can find him online where there remains a cauldron of controversy over his N.T. work, but very little mention about his Old Testament proofs, because...**they are incontrovertible.**

Ivan Panin was born in Russia on December 12, 1855 and as a young man he was an active Nihilist, which meant he was one who was so “turned off” by the inane circumstances surrounding him that he adopted the attitude that all values were worthless and nothing was knowable or communicable.

Apparently, he detested the Czarist government so much that he participated in various plots against it and eventually was forced into political exile. From there he moved to Germany where he spent a number of years furthering his education. When he left Germany he immigrated to the United States and soon entered Harvard University where he became the personal friend of both the famous philosopher and psychologist professor William James and Harvard President Eliot.

Panin was a brilliant scholar and a Master of Literary Criticism. After graduating from college he became an outstanding lecturer on the subject of literary criticism and toured the country speaking on such luminaries as Carlyle, Emerson, Tolstoy and Russian literature in general. He received “top dollar” for each address he delivered, which shows the caliber of his talent. His lectures were delivered on college campuses and to exclusive literary clubs in many cities of the United States and Canada. During those years of travel and exposure to the public, Mr. Panin became widely known as a confirmed agnostic. So well known, in fact, that when he renounced agnosticism and embraced Jesus Christ, several newspapers carried

banner headlines announcing his conversion! Upon hearing of this remarkable turn of events, Professor James, who was reputed to be the greatest Metaphysician of his day remarked, “What a pity that Mr. Panin is cracked on religion. A great philosopher was spoiled in him.”

Prior to his life-changing encounter with Jesus Christ, Mr. Panin wrote some three thousand aphorisms (brief statements of principle) and many outstanding essays, which stand today as a memorial to his days as a Master of Literary Criticism. He also was an editor of two daily newspapers, a gifted writer, and an eloquent speaker.

What event made this brilliant and gifted man, one firmly convinced that absolute truth (“God”) was unknowable, change his mind? What so challenged his intellect and shook him to the very core of his being that he was left with no alternative but to believe in Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior? Well.... the testimony goes like this.

One day in 1890, Mr. Panin was casually reading the first verse of the Gospel of John in the original *Koine* Greek. This verse, in the original, says: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with the God, and the Word was God.” And as he read this sentence, his curiosity was stirred by the fact that the definite article “the” preceded “God” in the first instance, but not the second. Why the difference? To analyze this apparent discrepancy, he made a parallel list of all verses in the New Testament in which the word “God” occurs with the article “the” and all those without it.

When the learned professor compared the two lists he noted that there was a mathematical relationship between the two sums. Next, he went through the same procedure for the word “Christ” and on through several other words, each time taking note of the amazing numeric relationships hidden beneath the surface of the text.

This “chance” observation would later prove to have been a life-changing event as Ivan Panin enthusiastically pursued the newly-found and exciting discovery he later named “Bible Numerics.”

As these discoveries began to unfold, one after another, Mr. Panin

quickly came to the realization that they were far more than just coincidence. There was a mathematical precision inherent to the entire Bible that no mere mortal could have devised and his intellectual objections relative to an unknowable God were overruled! Jesus Christ revealed Himself through His Word to this “chosen vessel” and, like the apostle Paul and a host of others, Ivan Panin was never the same man again.

From that day in 1890 until he died on October 30, 1942, Ivan Panin literally devoted his life (over 50 years) to fully developing this discovery and preserving it for the world. It is said of him that he worked tirelessly for 12-18 hours each day counting letters and words, compiling hand-written concordances, and working out mathematical problems. He worked with such zeal that on several occasions his health completely failed. But in spite of the tremendous mental and physical strain this placed upon him, he labored without pay, giving himself entirely to this labor of love. At one point he was offered the very tempting position as president of a college, but he turned it down trusting God to provide for his needs. This man, whom the world would gladly pay “top dollar” for a lecture, chose a life of frugality in order to serve his Master by counting words, letters, syllables, and Bible numbers. Preserving his findings in neat, hand-written notes now yellowed with age. All 40,000+ pages of them!

{The reader should be aware that there is a controversy over the work of Panin, one that centers around the New Testament and what texts were used for his calculations. While he used a variety of extant Greek texts, and primarily the ‘Received’ Wescott/Hort text, he is accused of picking and choosing the ones that fit the ‘numbers’. If he did so it was in the belief that when they conformed to bible numerics it only proved their validity. The fact that Wescott and Hort proved to be occultists and perhaps Satanists has only added fuel to the criticism.

First of all, Panin’s work should not seriously affect any believer’s faith, for no one who knows God personally needs to have the Word of God proven to them intellectually for they will have already

experienced its reality and truth, and therefore will have an empirical knowledge of its living validity.

Panin's work was and is directed at converting the unbelieving soul, just as he himself had been converted from agnosticism to a faith in the living Christ by the power of the Word.

Second, and most edifying to a believer should be the whole body of work concerning the Old Testament where there is no controversy over text. All agree, atheist and Jew, Agnostic and Christian that the scrupulous care taken by the Jewish scribes over the centuries to hand down the perfect manuscript was unassailable. Panin's work holds solid and true for conformity and numeric purity. The Hebrew Apocryphal books, rejected by the Jews as inspired canon of the Holy Writ, on the other hand do not have any such symmetry and perfection, testifying to the truth of the Books of the Old Testament. Elisha's Outcast Eagles have concluded that the the unassailable truth of the Old Testament also renders the conclusion that Panin's work with the N.T. manuscripts should not be negated, for his yeoman work in the New Testament found the same mathematical results and continuity as in the Old Testament.}

32. About the Bible

by Terry Myers Smith

What Does the Word “Bible” Mean?

The word “Bible” means “The Book of Books”. It came to be known by the title Bible in both the English and French, but for two different reasons. The English called the Scriptures the Bible because papyrus paper, which was used to make books in ancient times, was produced at Byblos, Phoenicia. The French, on the other hand, named the collection of writings the Bible because of their word for book, *biblio*. The Bible, therefore, is aptly and universally titled the Book of books.

The Infallible Word of God

The word Scripture, which the Bible uses when talking about itself, means “sacred writings”. The Bible, therefore, is often and quite rightly referred to as the Holy Scriptures, or holy and divinely inspired word of God. The Bible is the infallible Word of God. This means it cannot be wrong and is always perfect. It is also immutable, which means it is constant, incorruptible, unchanging, and everlasting. There is no other book like the Bible in all the world, nor will there ever be. There is the Bible and there are all the other books ever written. The Bible, though written by numerous servants of God, was written by the finger of God himself. Just as His finger wrote the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai and gave them to Moses, so God wrote every word in the Bible. All true Christians believe the Bible is the Sacred and Holy Writing of God given to aid man in his salvation and relationship with the Creator.

The Most Published and Most Read Book of All Time

The Bible is far and away the most published book in the history

of man and became the first book ever printed on a printing press when Johann Gutenberg published the Mazarin Bible in 1437. Today it is published on every continent, in every language and dialect, and is distributed by huge organizations such as the American Bible Society and the Gideon Bible Society. The oldest known manuscript of any book of the Bible is of the book of Isaiah, dating back to the first century A.D. which was found in Qumran, Jordan in 1947. It is part of the archeological find known as the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The Bible has also been paraphrased, or loosely translated into vernacular language, which is not a strict translation and should be read with that in mind.

66 Books of the Bible –

39 Old Testament Books

27 New Testament Books

There are 66 books of the Bible, each book being broken down into chapters and verses for ease of understanding and reference.

The Bible is subdivided into two parts; the Old and the New Testament or, the law and the prophets before Christ and the law of liberty after Christ.

The Old Testament

There are 39 books of the Old Testament which are divided into three main divisions:

1.) The law (Torah as the Jews call it) which are the five books of Moses at the beginning of the Bible;

2.) The historical books and writings (Joshua, Judges, I Samuel, I Kings, etc. and the Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Solomon etc.)

3.) The prophets, which are the four major prophets – Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel and the 12 so-called minor prophets which end the Old Testament.

The Old Testament was added to over the centuries as God inspired his servants to record the sacred writings. The text was meticulously copied by Hebrew scribes preserving its integrity through the centuries.

The New Testament

By A.D. 150 the New Testament canon had been established, but

it was not formally accepted and recognized until the councils of Laodicea and Carthage in the second half of the fourth century. (363 and 397 A.D. respectively). The New Testament has 27 books and can be seen in the light of four categories:

1.) 4 Gospels (the ministry of Jesus on earth)

2.) The historical book of Acts of the Apostles

3.) 21 epistles (or letters) written to seven churches, various believers and special households of faith. These letters were written by the Apostles Paul, Peter, John, Jude, and James, the brother of Jesus

4.) Revelation, the only purely prophetic book of the New Testament.

The Bible is written in Hebrew (in the O.T.) and Greek (in the N.T.). A small portion is written in Aramaic (a related Semitic dialect, which after the captivity of the Jews in 600 B.C. replaced Hebrew as the common language of the Jews) the small part in Aramaic is Dan.2.4 – 7.28; Ezra 4.8 – 6.18; 7.12-26; and Jer 10:11.

The use of common Greek, which was the universal and common language of the world at the time, in the New Testament shows that after the coming of Jesus the Gospel was opened to the whole world and to every man without restriction.

The Bible is not organized in a strict chronological order which can make it hard to get a sense of the order of man's history as seen from God's point of view. But God's plan of redemption, which has always had a beginning and an end, is revealed in His Word. God is the great architect, He does nothing by the seat of His pants; He has a plan. But to understand this plan we have to be willing to dig into His Word and ask Him to personally show us what it is all about.

Just as Jesus taught His disciples in parables so the Bible is laid out in such a way that we must go to Him to get the meaning and have it put in perspective and order. There is a story about one of the great antichrist figures of all time named Alexander the Great who solved the riddle and prophecy of something called the Gordian Knot. The Gordian Knot was a huge rope tied together in the most intricate fashion so that no man could untie it. A prophecy had said that a

man would come along who would solve the riddle and go on to rule the world. Many had tried before but of course none could even begin to solve its riddle. Alexander, after his father's death in Greece came to the Gordian Knot and promptly took out his legendary sword and with one slash cut the knot apart. Alexander went on to fulfill the prophecy but died at the age of 33 for his trouble. The point is that many people try to handle the Word of God in the same manner. They cut into it and try to solve its riddles. But God will unravel the word for us. The Scriptures say of themselves that they are a sword sharper than any sword, able to pierce and divide asunder the soul from the spirit. We must not take the Word of God into our own hands and handle it the way the antichrist figure of Alexander the Great handled the Gordian Knot; we must let God unravel the Word for us through His Spirit, the Holy Ghost.

One final word: The Bible is not the Trinity. The Bible is not a person; it is about the persons of God, His oneness in three persons. The Trinity is not the Father, the Son, and the Holy Bible. The Trinity is the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. You have to know God to understand the Holy Scriptures. Then the Bible will truly become "The Book of Books" for you.

Onward to a few of the outstanding things the Bible says about itself.

A Few Things The Bible Says About Itself

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." 2 Tim 3:16

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Heb 4:12

"But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him." 1 John 2:5

“We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”
2 Peter 1:19-21

“...even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” Eph 5:25-27

“How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?

So then faith [cometh] by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.”
Rom 10:14-18

“I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” John
17:14-17*

33. The Book of Books

All Scripture is Given By Inspiration

by Terry Myers Smith

The name Bible comes from two separate origins, English and French. Just to show its miraculous nature both names ended up the same. The English came up with the name because of the place, Byblos, Phoenicia, where the papyrus paper was made in ancient times to make paper books. The French derived “biblio” from their word for ‘book’. Therefore the Bible is aptly titled the ‘Book of books’. The word “Scripture”, which the Bible uses when talking about itself, means “writings”. The Bible, therefore, is often and quite rightly referred to as the Holy Scriptures, or holy and divinely inspired word of God. The Bible is the infallible Word of God, which means it cannot be wrong and is perfect. It is also immutable, which means it is constant, incorruptible, unchanging, and everlasting. In all the world, there is no other book like the Bible, nor will there ever be. There is the Bible, and there are all the other books ever written. The Bible, though scribed by inspired servants of God, is written by the finger of God himself, just as His finger wrote the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai and gave them to Moses, so God wrote every word in the Bible. All true Christians believe the Bible is the Sacred and Holy Writing of God given to aid man in his salvation and in his relationship with his Creator.

The Bible is far and away the most published book in the history of man and became the first book ever printed on a printing press when Johann Gutenberg published the Mazarin Bible in 1437. Today it is published on every continent, and in every language and dialect, and is distributed by huge organizations such as the American Bible and the Gideon Bible Societies. The oldest known manuscript of any book of the Bible is of the book of Isaiah, dating back to the first

century A.D., which was found in Qumran, Jordan in 1947. It is part of the archeological find known as the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The Bible has also been paraphrased, or loosely translated into vernacular languages which are not strict translations and should be read with that in mind. There are 66 books of the Bible, each being broken down into chapters and verses for ease of understanding and reference. It is subdivided into two 'parts; the Old Testament and the New Testament, or the law and the prophets before Christ and the law of liberty after Christ. There are 39 books of the Old Testament which are divided into three main divisions: **1)** The Law (Torah, as the Jews call it) which are the five books of Moses at the beginning of the Bible. **2)** The Historical books and writings (Joshua, Judges, 1 Samuel, 1 Kings, etc., and the Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, etc.); and, **3)** the prophets, which subsist of the four Major Prophets – Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel and the so-called 12 Minor Prophets, which end the Old Testament Scriptures. The Old Testament was added upon over the centuries as God inspired his servants to write the sacred writings and 'canonized' (i.e. declared official) by Jewish rabbinical authorities around the year 297 B.C. in Alexandria, Egypt. From there it was handed down over the centuries in a preserved pristine state by Hebrew scribes who meticulously copied each and every parchment for use in their synagogues.

By about A.D. 150 the New Testament canon had been established but it was not formally accepted and recognized until the councils of Laodicea and Carthage in the second half of the fourth century (363 and 397 A.D. respectively). The New Testament has 27 books and can be seen in the light of four categories: **1)** Four Gospels (the ministry of Jesus on earth). **2)** The Historical book of Acts of the Apostles. **3)** Twenty-one epistles (or letters) written to seven churches, various believers and special households of faith. (These letters were written by the Apostles Paul, Peter, John, Jude and James, the brother of Our Lord.) and, **4)** Revelation: the only exclusively prophetic book of the New Testament.

The Bible is written in Hebrew (in the O.T.) and Greek (in the

N.T.). A small portion is written in Aramaic (a related Semitic dialect, which after the captivity of the Jews in 600 B.C. replaced Hebrew as the common language of the Jews) The parts written in Aramaic are the book of Matthew, Dan.2:4 & 7:28; Ezra 4:8, 6:18,7:12-26; and Jeremiah 10:11. The use of common Greek, which was the universal and common language of the world at the time, in the New Testament shows that after the coming of Jesus the Gospel was opened to the whole world and to every man without restriction.

The Bible is not organized in a strict chronological order, which can make it hard to get a sense of the order of man's history as seen from God's point of view. But God's plan of redemption, which has always had a beginning and an end, is revealed in His Word. God is the great architect. He does nothing by the seat of His pants. He has a plan. But to understand this plan we have to be willing to dig into His Word and ask Him to personally show us what it is all about. Just as Jesus taught His disciples in parables, so the Bible is laid out in such a way that we must go to Him to get the meaning and have it put in perspective and order. (There is a story about one of the great antichrist figures of all time, named Alexander the Great, who solved the riddle and prophecy of something called the Gordian Knot. The Gordian Knot was a huge rope tied together in the most intricate fashion so that no man could untie it. A prophecy had said that a man would come along who would solve the riddle and go on to rule the world. Many had tried before but, of course, none could even begin to solve its riddle. Alexander, after his father's death in Greece, came to the Gordian Knot and promptly took his legendary sword out and with one swoop cut the knot apart. Alexander went on to fulfill the prophecy but died at the age of 33 for his trouble. The point is that many people try to handle the Word of God in the same manner. They cut into it and try to solve its riddles. But God will unravel the word for us.) The Scriptures say of themselves that they are a sword sharper than any sword of man, able to pierce and divide asunder the soul from the spirit. We must not take the Word of God into our own hands and handle it the way the antichrist

figure of Alexander the Great handled the Gordian Knot; we must let God unravel the Word for us through communion with His Spirit.

The Bible is infallible, immutable and perfect. It shall last forever. It must be interpreted by the Holy Ghost for it is he that is our guide into all Truth. The Bible is the revelation of the Truth – the Truth is Jesus, Son of man/son of God. The Bible is not a member of the Trinity per se'. The Bible is not a person, it is a perfect expression of the persons of God and particularly THE WORD – even Jesus Himself. The Bible is about the persons of God, His oneness in three persons. The Trinity should never be confused; it is not the Father, the Son, and the Holy Bible. The Trinity is the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. The Holy Scriptures reveal God and His plan for our redemption. It is truly, “The Book of Books” about the Triune God and his character and love for man.

The Holy Bible is
The WORD OF GOD

and is good for...

DOCTRINE

REPROOF

CORRECTION

INSTRUCTION IN RIGHTEOUSNESS

We stand dedicated to bringing forth God's Word. The commendations handed out by Christ to his faithful people were given partly because they had always kept the word of His patience and not denying His name. We shall continue to promote this wonderful truth and keep His Word in our hearts. It is paramount to faith that we always study the WORD. We should believe the Bible above all things ever written or said. The Bible provides all spiritual knowledge and understanding when taught to us under the direction of the Holy Spirit; that one and only Holy Spirit who is freely given to all those that ask the Father – to have Jesus baptize them in the Spirit.

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in

righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” 2 Ti 3:16

4 Ways–

With prayer and godly labor, it is a fundamental of the Christian faith to bring forth teachings, testimonies, lessons, and exhortations; all carefully laid on a Scriptural foundation, which will minister in health and welfare and faith in these four direct ways:

1. **DOCTRINE** – The Bible contains all of the fundamental teachings of Christ. We are taught the basics of being a disciple of God, walking in the spirit, the doctrine of baptisms, laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment and the world to come.
2. **REPROOF** – Scripture, received with godly fear, turns us around and leads us on a path of righteousness. God’s Word will discipline us so we can grow in the light of its truth.
3. **CORRECTION** – The study of God’s Word has the power to make human beings correct. It shows us a correct way of faith, correct thoughts and attitudes, and correct actions. If we take the Scriptures to heart they will cleanse our minds of all presumptuous ways and the wrong teachings which oppose the declared ways and doctrines of God and Jesus Christ.
4. **INSTRUCTION IN RIGHTEOUSNESS** – The Bible teaches us the difference between right and wrong. It shows us how to put off sin and put on love. The Bible shows us what we must do to live a pleasing life to God. Heb 6:12

34. There are Many Versions of the Bible

But Are They All God's Word?

by Nicole Gagnon

The book, *New Age Bible Versions*, by G.A. Riplinger, was a tool used by the Lord to teach me some very important facts that I needed to know and understand in order to be where I am now in my relationship with Him. He knows us personally and knows what each individual needs on their journey to perfection. I did not know how important this book was for me until long after I read it.

It was the end of 2012 and I had just become born again. I ended up going on a trip and wanted a book to read on the plane. I happened to see this book on the table at home and asked if anyone was reading it. I was told it was brought to our house so someone specific could read it, but that it turned out they were not interested. I took it on vacation and read a lot; in the airport, on the plane, in the car once I got to my destination, I was very intrigued by this book and could hardly put it down. The book compares the King James Version of the bible to the New Age Versions, such as the NIV and the NASB, and how important those differences are to a Christian trying to learn, hear from and essentially have a relationship with Jesus Christ.

One reason why this book held my attention was because the church I grew up in read the NIV Bible and I never knew, cared or understood why. I was now reading the King James Version and at this point in my life, I was wondering why I should be reading the King James Version and how it differs from the version I had always known. I thought it was only a matter of old English versus a more modernized way of saying the same things so it could be more easily understood by the people in the 21st century. While I attended

the church I grew up in, I don't recall any kind of reference being made to the particular version of the bible we read or any mention of other versions of the Bible. It has made me wonder if people in churches consider which version of the Bible they're reading and why. I wondered if my parents ever considered this, not just because they made the decision to read it and trust it, but they had made that choice for my brothers and myself also.

As I read this book, I learned a lot of truths. I know some people think I was just taking this author's word for it, but that is not so. I prayed about it, considered it, had confirmations from the Lord about it, and was attacked because of it. As a born again Christian, I know that Satan hates God and anything to do with His will being done, so the fact that I was learning the truth about the many different versions of the bible really got him going. But if I'm being attacked by Satan, I praise God and cling to him more, and rejoice knowing I'm doing right by God, otherwise Satan would not be paying attention to me because I'm not getting in his way.

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." 1 Peter 5:8

This book actually pissed me off because I found out how the writers of the new age versions have perverted God's word. This book gives reference after reference to direct scriptures in the bible that differ from each other depending on what version you read, and how it changes the entire meaning of those verses completely. I looked up so many of these to double check for myself and lo and behold, it was right, every single time.

"For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:

And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book

of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.” Rev. 22:18-19

One example of the way that Satan messes with and deceives the people in the pews with New age versions of the bible is by changing the words “he” and “Son” to “The One”. “The One” is not only put in new age versions because of people, such as feminists, not wanting to believe that God is a him, not only to get the world to believe that all we need to do is become one, to be unified, (which God tells us he made the oceans and multiple languages to prevent that from happening because all man’s ideas of unity is to throw God completely out of the equation) but because “The One” can refer to Lucifer. How could someone up and decide to change the words, and therefore change God’s word? Satan had his hand in it, he is THE deceiver. One of the big points made in this book is that Satan will use whoever and whatever he can to become more powerful than God himself. What better way to go about trying to do this than to mess with God’s word itself? Matthew 4 tells us that Satan used God’s word to tempt Jesus, so we cannot be naive in thinking that he wouldn’t do the same with us. We tend to forget, or don’t know, or don’t think about the fact that Satan is smarter than us. He knows what he’s doing and he’ll do anything to try and win. But that’s another thing a lot of new age readers don’t even read about Satan because he’s mis-referenced or removed entirely from a lot of verses in the New Age Versions. I learned that this could be a big part of why a lot of Christians believe that everyone is going to heaven. Hell and Satan are not spoken about much in new age versions, and sometimes mis-referenced, so it’s as if they don’t exist.

Another way that Satan is deceiving the new age readers is by having entire verses completely omitted from these new versions of the Bible. Look at Mark 9:44 and 46, you can look it up online and compare the NIV to the KJV. Do you notice how one version doesn’t even have a verse 44 and 46? I couldn’t believe my eyes when I saw this. How could this not be questioned by the people in the churches? Is it because they aren’t allowed to speak up during the

church service? Do they not want to cause a scene? Is it because they don't want to question their leader in which they take this person's word on everything that comes out of their mouth? It seems as though most people don't care. They don't want to get into it because you're not supposed to question things, just believe them.

I learned a lot from reading this book. It was one of the most influential books I have ever read. This book was crucial to my understanding of Satan and his deceptive ways and also an understanding of people and how they really aren't seeking truth. People want to be deceived; they want the easy road which includes not doing any thinking for themselves. This is what Satan counts on from people and hopes for because he can easily manipulate and use them. I write this in hopes that the reader will take an honest look at this idea for themselves. I was completely unaware of this so I am sure other people are as well.

35. A Highly Interesting Case for Divine Inspiration of the Bible

Overwhelming Mathematical Evidence for Inspiration of Scripture

*From the Works of Dr. Ivan Panin
Harvard Scholar and Mathematician
Edited: by Dr. Keith L. Brooks 1970*

One of the most remarkable occurrences of biblical proof in our time is God's preparation of one individual to produce positive evidence that would completely undermine all Biblical criticism and bring atheism toppling to the ground wherever honest, thinking men will face the facts. It's not in refuting the fallacies of Darwinism or any of the quirky bents on evolution promulgated first by Julian Huxley or in our day by men like Richard Dawkins and the late, Stephen Jay Gould, as one might think. These have been thoroughly shot down by modern biological science, from within, through the discoveries of the microscope made on a micro-biological scale, and from without, by the obvious conclusions drawn by honest evaluation and knowledge of macro biology and the complexities, makeup and relationship of human organisms to one another. In fact, this evidence does not concern a refutation, but is a singular confirmation.

More startling still is the fact that this individual was a converted Russian Nihilist, a Harvard scholar, and mathematician. At the very time when organized atheism was laying its plan to get control of Russia and make use of its vast resources to sow the seeds

of atheism in every nation of the earth, God was preparing His Russian, Ivan Panin, to bring forth scientific evidence of the verbal and plenary inspiration of the Holy Scriptures in the original languages.

Dr. Panin, who passed away in October 1942, after 50 years of work on Bible numerics, was not the first to discover that there was a strange mathematical structure running through the Bible. There was Browne in his *Ordo Saeculorum*, and Grant in his *Numbers of the Bible* and Bullinger in his *Numbers of the Scriptures*. These all brought forth many striking examples of numeric features in the Bible.

Skittish Evangelicals took these men's works with some trepidation thinking they were cabalistic. But none of the aforementioned set up any sort of system of fortune telling or prophetic weirdness to bring forth gray and gloomy hidden futuristic jingoism. Ivan Panin was cut from the same cloth as the men who preceded him. His only desire was to reveal another conformation of the infallible truth of the Holy Writ.

It remained for Dr. Panin, however, by giving his very life to the task, to find that every letter of the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts is numbered and occupies its own special place in the order of the total number of letters in the Bible, the slightest variations of orthography being all God ordained. Since every Greek and Hebrew letter carries a numerical value (letters being used for figures in these languages), every word, phrase, sentence and paragraph has a definite arithmetical sum.

Dr. Panin devoted himself so persistently to counting letters and working out mathematical problems that he often wore himself out physically. His works were voluminous and his discoveries seemingly without end. He was the author of a volume, *Structure of the Bible* and of a revision of the New Testament based upon his numeric discoveries.

Panin's establishing of the practically infinite series of complex systems, in the Hebrew and Greek texts, all sequences, combinations, ratios, etc., following a uniform design from Genesis

to Revelation, is undoubtedly God's answer to modern atheism and higher criticism and His vindication of the verbal and plenary inspiration of Scripture. The discovery settles many questions of text. It proves that the books of our present Bible, and they alone, have the required features. It settles disputes of long standing as to some portions which scholars have said should be eliminated from the Bible. The doctrine of the divine authority of the Scriptures has always been fully sustained by the proofs from fulfilled prophecy, from the inexhaustible depths of truth revealed, from its matchless power over the lives of men, from its indestructibility and from the testimony of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. However, some have been won to wave these lines of evidence aside as unscientific.

Dr. Panin has submitted conclusive scientific proof that the Bible could not have been produced by the unaided human mind. This proof is found in the amazing numeric phenomena in the very structure of the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts. Dr. Panin demonstrated, either that every writer of Scripture was an unparalleled literary and mathematical genius or that he wrote as he was moved by the Holy Ghost. Prof. John C. Banks, a worthy successor of Dr. Panin, has been offering numeric evidence to the same proposition.

Panin laid his discoveries before the readers of a New York paper, copies of which were sent to leading skeptical educators and scientists with a challenge they disprove, if possible, the phenomena to which he had called attention. Since that time many other learned skeptics have been confronted with the same evidence, and not one has been able to discredit it. Some challenged him to find the same mathematical structure in Hebrew and Greek classics outside of the Bible. Panin, therefore, gave much time to the examination of other writings failing to find such phenomena. As a testament to the legitimacy of the sixty six books of the canon of Scripture, and the refutation of the Apocryphal books added by the Roman Catholic Church to their Old Testament, nothing close to the numeric fluidity of the numbers 6,7, 8, 9, 11, 12 was found in any Apocryphal writing.

The Number 7

It is a well-known fact that the number 7 is found throughout the universe. It is evidently the number of the Creator and the number of fullness, rest, and completeness.

Not only is this law of seven found running through creation, but it is found scores of times on the surface of Scripture, and always appears to be significant. Furthermore, careful students have often been amazed to find this number always appearing in unexpected ways. However, skeptics might attribute this to the writer considering 7 a mystical number, and studying to write important sentences in exactly seven words, or to cleverly develop subjects under seven points.

Panin's work, however, deals not with translations but the Hebrew and Greek. One is foolish who attempts to maintain verbal inspiration of the King James Version or any other version. Translation difficulties have been tremendous. It is a well known fact that the constant change going on in language usage, has rendered many words in our English translation practically obsolete, hence the various attempts at "modern speech" translations.

But how could Panin get back to originals since we do not know that we have originals? The answer is that the comparison of hundreds of manuscripts presented to us shows uniformity that proves a common source.

Numerical Values for Letters

The Bible is written in two languages; the Old Testament in Hebrew (the few chapters in Chaldee being for numerical purposes the same as Hebrew); the New Testament in Greek. Both these languages have this peculiarity: they have no separate symbols for numbers, corresponding to our modern Arabic figures, 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,0. In

their place they make use of the letters of their alphabet, so that each Hebrew and Greek letter stands also for a certain number. This is called the numeric value of the letter. As each word consists of letters, the numeric value of a word is the sum of the numeric values of its letters. The numeric value of a sentence, paragraph, chapter, book or volume, or library, is the sum of numeric values of the words of which these consist. By means of these numeric values, the Greeks and Hebrews performed all their numeric operations. But in Scripture, an additional system is used for the purpose of numeric construction of the text, that of Place Values.

Place Values

The Place Value of a letter in the Scripture, whether Hebrew or Greek, is the number of the place the letter occupies in the alphabet. Accordingly, in the Hebrew, the place values and the numeric values of the first ten letters are the same. And the same is the case with the first five letters in the Greek. But the eleventh Hebrew letter does not stand for eleven, but twenty. Accordingly, its numeric value is 20, but its place value is 11; the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, the twenty-second, stands for 400. Accordingly, its numeric value is 400, but its place value is 22. The same applies to the Greek alphabet. Its sixth letter stands for 7; this is its numeric value, but its place value is 6.

Full Values

The full value of a Hebrew or Greek letter or word is the sum of its numeric and place values: thus the value of the word for “Jesus” in Greek is 975, of which the numeric value is 888, and the place value is 87. Now notice further features.

The numeric value of the vocabulary is divisible by seven.

The numeric value of the various alphabetical groups of words is divisible by seven.

The numeric value of the various forms in which the words occur produce the same phenomenon.

The above enumeration barely touches the surface of the numerics Panin brought to light. He challenged any man to write one paragraph of 300 words intelligently and produce some numeric phenomena of like designs and complete it in six months. Any man who can do it will prove himself a wonder. No man has offered.

Many of the Scriptures writers were men chosen from very ordinary walks in life, having little or no schooling. If Matthew, Mark, Luke or John, for instance, had attempted to write by unaided human wisdom, and produced the harmonious numeric features found throughout their books and in each topic of their books, how long would it have taken them? Remember that with each additional sentence the difficulty of constructing on this plan increases in arithmetical and geometrical progression, for they contrive to write each paragraph so as to develop constantly fixed numeric relations to what goes before and comes after.

Elaborate Numeric Design

But an even more amazing feature remains: the number of words found in Matthew, not found in any other New Testament book, displays elaborate numeric design. How did Matthew know that he had used words that would not be used in any of the other 26 books? He would have to have before him all these books, and would have to have written last.

It so happens, however, that each of the other books shows the same phenomena. Did each writer write last? If not, then, is each of the writers a mind reader as well as a literary and mathematical artist, never equaled and hardly even conceivable?

Panin proceeded to prove by numerics that every book of our

Bible carries such features, that each one is necessary to cause the numerical scheme of the entire Bible to work out correctly, and that nothing can be added to or subtracted from the Bible, as we have it, without spoiling these features.

From the first verse of Genesis to the last verse of Revelation, these divine evidences are found. The God of nature is, therefore, proved to be the God of Scripture. The quarrel of modern skeptics, therefore, is not with believers of the Bible, but with God Himself.

To demonstrate the validity of Bible Numerics, to illustrate its worth where textual matters are concerned, and to whet the reader's appetite for a more thorough study of this fascinating subject, we offer the following excerpts from selected publications:

Below are the Hebrew words of the very first verse in the Bible. The words are taken from their line position and placed in a column so that the "numeric value" of each word may be more easily shown. (The actual Hebrew characters are shown in the original)

Now take the numeric values of the Bible authors (those to whom the books ascribe themselves), by adding up the value of each letter.

The sum is 721 11's. The sum of the factors 7, 11, 103, is 121 (or 11 11's).

The presence of these factors of 11's in connection with the number, order and names of writers is either accidental or designed that the number of books in the Bible should be a multiple of 11 might be purely accidental, since, however, only every 11th number is a multiple of 11, the chance for any being a multiple of 11 is only 1 in 11.

That this number be so divided between ascribed and unascribed books that each class be also a multiple of 11 this may also be accidental but the chance of this is only one in 11×11 , or one in 121.

That this number be so divided between ascribed and unascribed books by 11/s among the authors of only one book and those of more than one may be due to chance, but the chance of its being accidental is only one in $11 \times 11 \times 11$, or 1,331.

Going thus far through the eight features of 11's noted, every one might be accidental, but the chance for their being so is only one in the 8th power of 11, or 214,358,881.

Now the sum of the numeric values of the 26 authors (7,931) is also a multiple of 7. Of this number the 21 writers of the O.T., or (3) 7's, have 3,808, or 544 7's, and the N.T. writers have 4,123, or 589 7's. Of the 3,808 belonging to the O.T., 2,933, or 419 7's belong to the writers of the Law and the Prophets, from Moses to Malachi, and 1,190 or 170 7's belong to the writers of the so-called Hagiographa, from David to Nehemiah. Seven of the 21 O.T. writers, or (3) 7's, are expressly named as such in the N.T.; Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Hosea, Joel. Their numeric value is 1,554 or (222) 7's. The numeric value of Moses who heads the list and John who closes it, 345 and 1,069, make 1,414 or (202) 7's.

These features of 7's in connection with the order and writers of the books may also be accidental, but the chance for these features of 7's and 11's happening together is one in billions.

It is clearly shown that the present number of the books of the Bible is not accidental but designed. It is seen that the proportion between ascribed and non-ascribed books is designed. It is seen that the proportion between the number of books belonging to one writer and the number of books belonging to writers of more than one book is designed. It is seen that the proportion in the Bible between epistles and non-epistles is designed. It is seen that the order of the Bible books in the Heb. and Greek is designed. It is seen that the names of the 26 writers are designed.

On the assumption of mere human authorship these numeric phenomena of the order and unanimity and non-unanimity of the books is wholly unaccountable, but the assumption that a Superior Mathematical MIND, the mathematical Author of nature, has planned these numerics (unwittingly by the writers themselves) at once explains not only these phenomena, but thousands of similar ones that can be brought forward.

Does this mean that the critical scholars of the world and the atheists and infidels will now all be brought to bend the knee to Jesus Christ and to accept the Scriptures? No, indeed! For scores of them who already have been confronted with these facts, push them aside, saying either they have no time to investigate or they

are not interested in mathematics of the Bible. “*The world by wisdom knows not God,*” 1 Cor 1:21 and “*the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God,*” 1 Cor 2:14 no matter how strong may be the evidences of divine inspiration presented. If the Infinite Christ Himself could not convince the scholars of His day, no numeric phenomena revealed in our day will convince those who do not want to be convinced.

“*This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.*” John 3:19 The value of these discoveries lies chiefly in their power to confirm the faith of born-again ones in these last days, encouraging them, like the great disclosures of archaeology of these last days, to proclaim with renewed power the old Gospel, which, accompanied by the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, is able to break down the infidelity of those who are blinded by the enemy of our souls.

NUMERIC VALUE

1. In the beginning
2. Created
3. God
4. (An indefinite article which is not translatable)
5. The heavens
6. And (with indefinite article)
7. The earth

There are three important nouns in this first verse God, heaven, and earth. The numeric values of these three nouns are 86, 395, 296, respectively. When these three numeric values are added, the total value [777] is found to be a number which divides perfectly by 7 a number which is a multiple of 7, which is 111 7 s. In God's thinking, this Triple Intensification of His perfect number, 7, is the strongest possible manner of speaking.

Is it not strange that the numeric value of these words is a value which divides perfectly by seven a value which is an exact multiple of seven? Notice that the numeric value of the words is not 776 or 778, but exactly 777. If the numeric value were 776 or 778 it would not divide evenly by 7.

Here the number seven occurs in a strange manner beneath the surface, beyond the view of those who merely read the words or surface of the Hebrew text. It is mysteriously hidden in the numeric value of the three words and is passed by unnoticed unless it is discovered by special investigation and special counting. Each numerical fact or seven discovered in the structure of the text is called a feature a numeric feature. This, then, is feature one. It is repeated below to place it in a list with other numeric features that have been discovered beneath the surface of the first verse in the Old Testament.

FEATURE ONE

The numeric value of the three important Hebrew nouns, God, heaven, earth, is exactly 777 or 111 7's.

FEATURE TWO

It is strange to note that the numeric value of the verb in the first verse of genesis is also a number which divides perfectly by 7 a number which is an exact multiple of 7. The numeric value of the Hebrew verb created is exactly 203 or 29 7's.

FEATURE THREE

Strange to say, the numeric value of the first, middle, and last Hebrew letters in this first verse is also a number which divides evenly by 7. The numeric value of these three letters is exactly 133 or 19 7's.

FEATURE FOUR

The numeric value of the first and last letters of all of the seven Hebrew words in this verse is also a number which divides perfectly by 7. Their numeric value is exactly 1393 or 199 7's (Notice the numeric value is not 1392 or 1394 but 1393, always a number which is an exact multiple of 7).

FEATURE FIVE

The number 1393, which is the numeric value of the first and last Hebrew letters of all the seven words, divides in the following manner. The numeric value of the first and last letters of the first word and the last word is a number which divides evenly by 7. Their numeric value is exactly 497 or 71 7's.

The numeric value of the first and last letters of the words remaining between the first and last words also divides perfectly by 7. Their numeric value is 896 or 128 7's (497 plus 896 equals 1393).

FEATURE SIX

The Hebrew participle ETH which is not translatable into English, occurs twice in the sentence of seven words. The article the also occurs twice. The numeric value of these two words which occur twice also divides by 7. Their numeric value is exactly 406 or 58 7's.

FEATURE SEVEN

The last letters of the first and last words have a numeric value of exactly 490 or 70 7's.

These numeric facts or sevens are, indeed, beyond the view of mere readers of the Hebrew text. They are truly mysteriously hidden beneath the surface and can be discovered only by special searching and calculations.

The above features were discovered in the numeric values of the Hebrew letters and words. However, the number seven is also concealed in various other ways in the structure of this first Bible verse. Examples are given below.

FEATURE EIGHT

It is indeed strange to note that the number of Hebrew words in this verse is not 6, not 8, but exactly 7.

FEATURE NINE

The total number of Hebrew letters in these seven words also divides perfectly by seven is an exact multiple of 7. The number of letters is exactly 28 or 4 7's.

FEATURE TEN

The first three of these seven Hebrew words contain the subject and predicate of the sentence. These three words are translated In the

beginning God created. The number of actual letters in these first three Hebrew words is exactly 14 or 2 7's.

The last four of these seven words contain the object of the sentence. These four words are translated; the heavens and the earth. The number of letters in these last four Hebrew words is 14 or 2 7's.

FEATURE ELEVEN

These last four Hebrew words consist of two objects. The first is the heavens, and the second is and the earth. The number of letters in the first object is exactly 7. The number of letters in the second object in the Hebrew is 7.

FEATURE TWELVE

The three leading words in this verse of seven words are God the subject and heavens and earth the objects. The number of letters in these three Hebrew words is exactly 14 or 2 7's. The number of letters in the other four words of the verse is 14 or 2 7's.

FEATURE THIRTEEN

The shortest word is in the middle. The number of letters in this word and the word to its left is exactly 7.

FEATURE FOURTEEN

The number of letters in the middle word and the word to its right is exactly 7.

These seven numeric features or facts are strangely hidden beneath the surface. They are truly beyond the view of ordinary readers of the Hebrew text and are discovered only by special investigation and counting.

The above are only a few examples of the many amazing numeric facts which have been discovered in the structure of this first verse of only seven Hebrew words. Literally dozens of other phenomenal numeric features strangely underlie the structure of this verse & ... ("Mathematics Prove Holy Scriptures", Karl Sabiers, reprinted 1969, pp.21-27).

Texts Used by Panin

The text used by Panin in his counts is the Received Hebrew Text for the Old Testament and the Wescott and Hort Text for the New

Testament. He has had reference to many other texts. The count be it noted, almost invariably sustains Wescott and Hort on the New Testament.

The following are abbreviated example of the kind of phenomena found by Dr. Panin in these texts

1. He takes a given subject like the genealogy of Christ in Matt 1:1-17, or a book of the Bible as a whole, or the Bible in its entirety, and shows the following kind of phenomena:
2. The number of words in the vocabulary will divide by the number seven.
3. The number of words beginning with a vowel is divisible by seven.
4. The number of words beginning with a consonant is divisible by seven.
5. The number of letters in the vocabulary is divisible by seven.
6. Of these letters, those which are consonants and those which are vowels both divide by seven.
7. The number of words in the vocabulary occurring more than once is divisible by seven. Those occurring only once likewise divide by seven.
8. The number of words occurring in more than one form is divisible by seven. The number occurring in only one form likewise divides by seven.
9. The number of nouns is divisible by seven. The number that are not nouns divides by seven.
10. The number of proper names divides by seven. The male names divide by seven. The female names divide by seven.
11. The number of words beginning with each of the letters of the alphabet is divisible by seven.

The Books of the Bible are numerically coordinated

The Bible has 66 books, of which some assign themselves to some author by name while others are un-ascribed within the text. Those which assign themselves (within the writings themselves), either in whole or in part to certain writers, are as follows: Exodus., Lev., Num., and Deut., ascribe themselves at least in part to Moses, or are quoted as the works of Moses in other parts of the Bible. Isa., Jer., Ezek., and the 12 Minor Prophets, ascribe themselves to the writers whose names they respectively bear. Psalms is ascribed to David. Prov. and Song of Sol., ascribe themselves to Solomon and Eccl., ascribes itself to “the son of David.” Dan., Ezra and Neh., ascribe themselves to these respective writers. James., 1 and 2 Peter., and Jude bear the names of the writers. The epistles of Paul, with exception of Heb., ascribe themselves to Paul. Rev. ascribes itself to John., The un-ascribed books are Gen., Josh., Judg., 1 and 2 Sam., 1 and 2 Kings, Job, Ruth, Lamentations, Esther, 1 and 2 Chron., Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, 1, 2, and 3. John, and Hebrews.

Of the writers named as the authors of the books of the Bible, some have ascribed to them more than one book. Moses has 4, Solomon 3, Peter 2, and Paul 13. Other writers have only one book ascribed to them.

Now bear in mind that the books of the Bible are, in the Hebrew Received Text and the Greek Text, arranged differently from the English Bible. In the original texts, the order is thus:

1. Gen	23. Zeph	45. James
2. Ex	24. Hag	46. 1 Pet
3. Lev	25. Zech	47. 2 Pet
4. Num	26. Mal	48. 1 John
5. Deut	27. Psalms	49. 2 John
6. Josh	28. Prov	50. 3 John
7. Judg	29. Job	51. Jude

8. 1 Sam	30. S. of Sol	52. Rom
9. 2 Sam	31. Ruth	53. 1 Cor
10. 1 Kings	32. Lam	54. 2 Cor
11. 2 Kings	33. Eccl	55. Gal
12. Isa	34. Esth	56. Eph
13. Jer	35. Dan	57. Phil
14. Ezek	36. Ezra	58. Col
15. Hos	37. Neh	59. 1 Thess
16. Joel	38. 1 Chr	60. 2 Thess
17. Amos	39. 2 Chr	61. Heb
18. Obad	40. Matt	62. 1 Tim
19. Jonah	41. Mark	63. 2 Tim
20. Mic	42. Luke	64. Titus
21. Nah	43. John	65. Phile
22. Hab	44. Acts	66. Rev

The number is 66, or 6 11's. The unasccribed books are 22, or 2 11's. The ascribed books are 44, or 4 11's. Of these 44, 22, (or 2 11's) belong to writers of more than one book and 22 (or 2 11's) belong to writers of only one book. Also, the sum of the 66 numbers (or 6 11's) is 2,211, (or 201 11's). This number is divided thus: the 22 books of the authors of more than one book are 946 (or 86 11's). The other 44 have 1,265 (or 115 11's).

Of the 66 books, 21 are epistles. Their numbers are (James to Phile.) 45-66. Now the sum 2,211 for the 66 books is divided thus between epistles and non-epistles: the epistles have 1,155 (or 105 11's), and the non-epistles have 1,056 (or 96 11's).

Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Joel and Daniel are expressly quoted in the N.T. the number of their books are 2,3,4,5,12,13,15,16,27,35. The sum is 132 or (12 11's).

Moses	345	Zechariah	242
Isaiah	401	Malachi	101
Jeremiah	271	David	14
Ezekiel	156	Solomon	375
Hosea	381	Daniel	95

Joel	47	Ezra	278
Amos	176	Nehemiah	113
Obadiah	91	James	833
Jonah	71	Haggai	21
Micah	75	Peter	755
Nahum	104	Jude	685
Habakkuk	216	Paul	781
Zephaniah	235	John	1069
TOTAL 7,931 or 11 x 7 x 103			

CONCLUSION

There is much more to the work of Dr. Panin. But one sure and certain conclusion we draw from his endeavors is that the inspired word of God is the 66 books of the Bible, 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament. No other, whether it is the book of Mormon, writings of Seventh Day Adventist creator Mrs. White, or the Apocrypha of The Catholic “Bible”, can stand the same tests of mathematical perfection. In this time and age of so-called agreement and unity ask yourself how important it is that we agree on what the inspired word of God really is? Can we agree as Christians if we don’t agree on God’s Word? Can we be going in the same direction if we don’t have the same manual to “*profit us in doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness*.”? It is written that *ALL Scripture is given by inspiration of God that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.* 2 Tim. 3:16-17 All of the Bible is infallible and perfect not just a part of it. Dr. Panin’s work testifies to the 66 true books of the Bible. Anything else introduced to the Church as God’s Word is confusion, chaos and inspired by spirits other than God and is cultic.

Concerning this work of Dr. Panin, Prof. A. Gordon Melvin, of New York City, prominent in the field of secular education, made

a pilgrimage to Aldershot, Can., to see Dr. Panin, and the following report was given:

“After talking with Dr. Panin and looking over his work thoroughly, I feel it is time for a concerted effort of those who know this work to make it available to many who do not know of it. I find that Dr. Panin has in his possession data in the form of numeric concordances which represent years of labor.

Dr. W. Bell Dawson, well-known Canadian scientist, said:

“I quite concur in what you say about Dr. Panin’s work, which I have known for a number of years. I am especially interested in its bearing on the decision between “various readings” which would be very valuable. I trust his great work may be followed up.”

Dr. Arthur I. Brown, Canadian medical scientist, and well-known Bible lecturer, now with the Lord, also visited Dr. Panin and urged people to make Dr. Panin’s work known.

Dr. D.M. Panton, editor of *The Dawn* and well-known Bible teacher, of London says:

“Mr. Panin’s discovery, as astounding as any discovery that could be made, is one of God’s solvents for the final crisis. It is the deathblow of all disintegrating criticism, not alas, that the critics will be convinced, for the foundations of their doubt lie far deeper than the intellect, and where confirmed belief is confuted, it merely shifts its ground; nevertheless it remains for all who appeal to the intellect, a response from the intellect, in the mercy of God who meets every soul on its own grounds. The destructive analyzer of the Scripture stands revealed as an infant analyst in the grasp of a complexity of which he never dreamed. Verbal inspiration is here mathematically proved, past all cavil. The Scripture discloses itself as a parchment which, when held up to the light reveals the autograph of its Maker; a script that bears exactly that imprint of a miraculous arithmetic which is borne by the snowflakes falling in a flawless mathematical pattern, or by the perfect convolutions of a shell. To Dr. Panin’s critics I would say, “Do you challenge his figures? If so, where are they wrong? If not, his inferences are indisputable. You cannot argue with mathematics.”

With these indisputable FACTS before us, how utterly foolhardy it would be to turn them aside and deliberately go on our way to an eternal HELL. The Scriptures (the Word of God) distinctly place before us the two, and only TWO, destinations for man: Heaven or Hell. Every individual will spend ETERNITY in one or the other of these two Places. Surely wisdom would dictate that we make sure of Heaven. How wonderful, and eternally blessed that God in His love for us (for all mankind) has made a WAY for all who will come to Him through the finished Work of His Only Begotten Son on the Cross. He tells us, *"I am THE WAY, THE TRUTH, and THE LIFE: No man cometh unto the Father, but by ME."* John 14:6. What folly to deny, or dispute with HIM! And why?! Far better, yes, wiser, to take the Publicans place and cry, *"God be merciful to me, the sinner,"* Lk 18:13 and receive the Saviour so graciously given. See John 3:16 and 1:12. His Word is *"COME,"* Matt 11:28. come *"NOW."* Tomorrow may be too late. *"Behold NOW is the accepted time; behold NOW is the day of salvation"* 2 Cor 6:2. He still graciously cries, *"Him that cometh to ME I will in no wise cast out."* John 6:37.

"Come to the Saviour, Make no delay. Here in His Word He's shown us the Way."

36. For I would not, brethren, that you should be ignorant

....

The Seven Pillars of Knowledge

Forward by LeRoy Gardenier

Religionists of any era “love the praise of men more than the praise of God”. John 12:43 In our Lord’s time, it was the chief rulers of the synagogues who believed on Him but refused to confess Him because they didn’t want to lose their jobs. It was as simple as that. This is an ongoing problem. The Lord Jesus forcefully dealt with it when He warned His power-struck disciples not to exult over spiritual gifts but, rather, to rejoice that their names were written in heaven. We can never be reminded enough that Jesus told us that some would do mighty works, even cast out demons, in His name. Yet, He would have to say of them: “I never knew you.” Matt 7:23

In John 7:24 our Lord both warns and commands: “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment”. Just as it was not enough for the ancient synagogue rulers to believe on Jesus, yet refuse to confess Him; so, it is not enough for modern Christians to receive the Holy Spirit with His spiritual gifts without the determination to continually yield to Him. Seven times the Spirit speaks to the churches in the book of Revelation so that we may understand what the church consists of and is really all about. Seven times in the Epistles the Holy Ghost inspires the writers to expound upon those foundational topics of which we must not be ignorant. As it was prophesied that the Messiah’s presence and preaching would dissipate the gloom and bring brightness to a land and people dwelling in darkness and the shadow of death, so it was promised to the Church that vast areas of ignorance and confusion would be

enlightened and clarified by the teaching office of the Holy Ghost, the One sent by Jesus and given by the Father to lead us into all truth. Seven is God's number for perfection and completion. In both the Old and New Testaments, God used units of seven to represent perfect or complete service: the seven years that Jacob labored for Rachel and the seven deacons chosen in Acts. Important life-fulfilling or life-threatening events such as years of fruitfulness and famine, degrees or levels of punishment, formulas for obedience, a spirit of perfect prayer, as well as the perfect completion of Messiah's mission are all described in segments of seven. In the Gospels, forgiveness is related to multiples of seven. We mentioned that Seven Churches are addressed in Revelation. It should also be noted that Paul's Epistles are sent to Seven distinct Churches. The consummation of all things, especially the important topic of judgment is connected with the number seven. Hebrews 6:1 gives perfection itself as the seventh item or goal in a series of doctrines the Holy Ghost wants to teach us: repentance from dead works, faith toward God, the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, eternal judgment.

Most of us feel fairly confident in handling the problems and situations that life throws at us. We rely instinctively upon our innate ability and our past experience. The challenge of "the Seven Pillars of Wisdom" is to set aside these carnal weapons, repent of our spiritual ignorance, listen attentively to what the Spirit is saying to the Churches, and learn from His quickening Word where the battle really is.

Introduction

Wisdom Hath Builde Her House

by T Myers Smith

The church has a perfect and everlasting example of wisdom in everything that our Lord Jesus has ever done or said, and will ever do or say. Jesus and wisdom are one and the same. The Scriptures say that in Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

The marvelously rich treasure house of wisdom and knowledge is revealed throughout the Bible. The booklet, *The Seven Pillars of Knowledge*, expounds on the seven places in the New Testament where God's Word expressly tells the believer "not to be ignorant". These seven plain form edces, which we have dubbed "pillars of knowledge", are by no means the only areas in the Gospel where God would have us to be instructed in. These are, however, fundamental areas of knowledge so basic to our walk with Jesus that God has warned us to be alert and schooled in them so that they are incorporated into our faith. In Proverbs wisdom is personified and it is said that she *"hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars."* Prov. 9:1 Those seven pillars are the seven pillars of knowledge revealed in the Epistles of the New Testament.

We, the living stones (through our faith in Christ), are the building. *"Ye also as lively stones, are built up to a spiritual house, a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God, by Jesus Christ."* 1 Peter 2:5 The pillars of knowledge are the backbone of our spiritual house upon which our faith and understanding of God's will must securely rest. The seven areas are:

- 1.) The True Nature of Salvation (1 Cor. 10:1)**
- 2.) The Jews: God's chosen people (Rom. 11:25)**
- 3.) Fellowship: The Sharing of Fruit (Rom. 1:13)**
- 4.) Gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12)**
- 5.) Our part of the Cross (2 Cor. 1:8)**
- 6.) Judgment (2 Peter 3:8)**
- 7.) The Rapture of the Bride (2 Thes. 4:13)**

These seven exhortations are worth our constant review. They are critical to sound doctrine and a clear understanding of God's plan for the house (we, His church) which He has built for His habitation. Truly they are the seven pillars of knowledge for the Church, which

wisdom has hewn out and positioned securely in the framework of our spiritual building.

Peter, on the day of Pentecost, declared, *“this is that which the prophet Joel prophesied”*. Acts 2:16 The Holy Ghost had fallen on the multitudes and they had spoken in other tongues. The old men dreamed dreams, the young men saw visions, and the young women prophesied. But Pentecost was only the start. Joel spoke of the two rainstorms, the former and latter rains and the restoration of all things. The day of Pentecost was the former rain. Today’s revival is the latter rain and now the fruits of God’s fertile rain are ripening and bursting forth. Wisdom *“hath builded her house”* and the knowledge of Christ’s principle doctrines has restored many things and made the Church strong again. Wisdom *“hath hewn out her seven pillars”*!

Consider the pillars if you have not already done so. Review them. Believe God’s Word about them. Take serious the announcement made by the Spirit in those seven scriptures where He has said, *“I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning...”*. God is asking each member of his household – and remember we are the lively stones built up to a spiritual house – to get their pillars firmly fixed and situated in their active faith so they then can move on to higher ground.

“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God.

Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

And this we will do, if God permit.” Hebrews 6: 1-3

As Jesus declared to the religious leaders, *“Wisdom is justified of her children.”* We are not only wisdom’s children if we follow Christ but we are the house which wisdom built. Be wise. Do not be ignorant. Check out these seven pillars so you can go on to perfection!

These seven exhortations are worth our constant review. They are critical to sound doctrine and a clear understanding of God’s plan

for the house (we, His church) which He has built for His habitation. Truly they are the seven pillars of knowledge for the Church, which wisdom has hewn out and positioned securely in the framework of our spiritual building.

Paul wrote to the churches in Galatia because they had fallen away from true righteousness by following the law instead of spiritual perfection: *“My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be FORMED IN YOU.”* Galatians 4:9

One night many years ago, God awakened me in the middle of the night and asked me; “Did you ever notice that the Star of David is made up of two triangles?” I had to answer that I hadn’t noticed that. He went on to say that one triangle represented the Church, and the other, Israel, and that the three points of each triangle each stood for the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. He said that it represented a time when both groups would truly be under the Trinity and that the core that lay at the center of the two triangles symbolized the Godhead.

Sadly the Church all too often has this advice of Paul flip-flopped. They want to judge the world (which is the job of the Holy Ghost) and not judge themselves within the Church. But it is clear we are to judge sin within the Church and leave the world to the judgment of God.

37. #1 The True Nature Of Our Salvation

The Seven Pillars of Knowledge

by T Myers Smith

Growing up in the Episcopal Church I was surrounded by regular church goers, sincere in their belief that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. We were all baptized into church membership; we all shared the liturgy; we all fellowshiped together; we all kissed the bishop's ring upon our confirmation, did good works, and worshipped together. But with us, I now know, "God was not well pleased".

Unfortunately, none of us had a clue about real salvation or what it takes to live a life pleasing to God. The result of our ignorance was gross blindness about God's ways and, as a result, we were perpetual sinners. The fruit of our lives, which is the undeniable proof of faith, was not the fruits of the Spirit, as they must be for those who claim to follow Christ, but instead, they were the fruits of the flesh, and they were in evident abundance.

Lyings, stealings, backbitings, hatred, and all sorts of lusts of the flesh, such as adultery and greed were common works. Instead of being Christians in word and deed, our faith was dead. We were Christians in word only. As our Lord's brother, James 2:26, said in his epistle, "*For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*" And brother, me and my fellow worshippers were dead – dead as doornails. The hypocrisy I saw within those beautiful but dead walls of stone drove me to a cynicism about Christ and eventually to a loss of faith in God altogether. But God, in spite of the confusion and darkness of the religion of my youth, brought me to the light and gave me a saving knowledge of His Son, and to God's glory I have been reaping the benefits of salvation ever since.

It did not take long after I was born again to realize that many

Christians (truly born-again Christians) are like the Episcopalians of my youth. They say they are Christians, but they live like the Devil. They think that just because they are Christians by some commitment or experience and because they continue to rub elbows with true Christians, they will be saved by their association with the “Church”. We born-again Christians should know better, but do we? It is not enough to be a Christian by label or word only. Simply answering an altar call is not the end-all either. We must put away sin in our life and live in obedience.

Paul, speaking to the body of believers at Corinth, a church which allowed sins to intermingle among their fellowship and worship, warns us all in 1 Cor. 10:12 saying, *“let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall”*. There is no such thing as eternal security. God will never take away our free will. As Peter says in his second epistle to the faithful believers in Christ, we must do the will of God to make our election sure. A man must repent, accept Jesus and be born again, but he must learn obedience and how to walk humbly in the love of God.

One of the seven pillars of knowledge (all seven are antidotes administered by the Holy Ghost to inoculate us against ignorance) is this:

“Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;

And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

And did all eat the same spiritual meat;

And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.” 1 Cor. 10:1-5

God is pointing out to His people that it is not enough to be with Christians, to just be around when His Spirit moves or heals, or even to eat and drink of the same spiritual food and drink. Paul openly

says that the things which happened to Israel in the wilderness were written as warnings for us. *“Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.”* verse 6

Warning Not to Murmur Against God

Righteousness and faith do not rub off on us just because we associate with Christ's people. Let me say it again, righteousness and faith do not rub off on us just because we associate with God's people. This scriptural pillar of church knowledge from 1 Corinthians continues on by noting that the faithless Israelites had fallen into four sins, all of which are common seductions to those called to a life of faith.

- 1.) They had committed idolatry.
- 2.) They had committed fornication.
- 3.) Some had tempted God.
- 4.) They had murmured (complained) against Him.

In other words, they had gone a whoring after other Gods, they had fallen into lusts of the flesh, had accused God of evil intentions against them, and had complained that He didn't know how to take care of them properly. All these and more are the sins which easily beset any Christian or member of the Church. Think about it. How often have we heard these sins, seen these sins, even flirted or committed these sins ourselves?

Paul repeats the earlier warning: *“Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall”* 1 Cor.10:11-12. This passage, this exhortation to knowledge, this plea to “not be ignorant” is not a threat, and Christians should not take it as a threat from God. Those with a dogmatic view of the Scriptures may argue about God's intent here, but Paul states that this passage is simply a word to the wise

when, a few verses later in verse 15, he says, “*I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say*”.

Joshua's Mountain Pass of Choice

As the things in 1 Corinthians 10 were written for examples to us, so God had Israel act out the simple choice He gives us concerning hearing His voice and obeying it, or opting to do our own thing instead.

Just after entering the promised land, Joshua (who had been instructed by Moses, who had been instructed by God), had all of Israel walk through the small mountain pass between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. As they funneled down through the narrow way, God told Joshua to take the leaders of the 12 tribes and split them into two halves. The leaders of six tribes were to stand on the slopes of Mt. Ebal and the leaders of the other six tribes took up their places on the side of Mt. Gerizim. As the people of Israel marched through the narrow mountain pass Joshua read all of the laws and statutes that Moses had written down (Deuteronomy) so that everyone could hear them. The leaders on the side of Mt. Gerizim then read a list of blessings which God promised to give Israel if they would be obedient to His voice and follow everything that was commanded of them that day. The leaders on the other side of the narrow strait, on the side of Mt. Ebal, then pronounced the curses that would befall Israel if they were rebellious and refused to listen to God's voice. (Deut. 27)

What a majestic sight! What a wonderful moment it must have been in the history of Israel to be moving into the Promised Land and have the simplicity of Christ laid so perfectly before them. The way before them was straight and narrow, the blessings for obedience to His voice simple and clear. The penalty for ignoring His voice and loving commands made obvious. What electricity must have been in that ravine! What Holy Ghost goosebumps must

have come upon all the people. (Joshua 8) Like those who passed between Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim, we come to Christ and we are called to walk the straight and narrow path. Jesus told this parable about people who hang around and partake of God's things and never really repent of their rebellion or of doing their own thing.

“Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are:

Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.

But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity” Lk 13:24-27

If we do the works of the flesh we are none of His. We should not kid ourselves about that. People do not prove their love for the Lord by words only, they prove it in word and deed. Just because we come to Christ, it is not a given that we will do His will or flee the world and its sin. In another parable, Jesus said, “Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of the Father which is in heaven.” Matt. 7:21 He concludes the parable by telling people that those who hear His sayings are like those who build their house on solid ground and those who hear and ignore are like those who have no foundation for their house and will someday come to ruin with a great crash.

Paul says of himself, what a shame it would be if he brought so many to salvation but he himself became a castaway. Why would he say this unless it were a possibility, no matter how remote? If he, the model in New Testament scripture for us, can say this, then we should also monitor our own hearts as he did his own. The truth of salvation is that those who do the will of the Father are saved and not those who simply say “Lord, Lord”.

The apostle John put it this way in his first epistle: 1 John 2:6

“But whoso keepeth His Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him. He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked.” Brothers and sisters in Christ, all equal before God, let us take heed how we walk and thereby make our election sure.

38. #2 The Jews: God's Chosen People

The Seven Pillars of Knowledge

by T Myers Smith

“For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part has happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in.

And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:

For this is my covenant to them, when I shall take away their sins.

As concerning the Gospel, they are enemies for your sakes but as touching the election, they are the beloved for the fathers' sakes.” Rom 11:25-28

God has clearly warned the Church not to think of herself more than she should, that blindness came to the Jews so there could be a time of salvation for the whole world. This “suspension” of time for the Gentile’s sakes has a prescribed end. In due course, the Jews will be saved. Yet in its dark ignorance, the Church has often forgotten this truth and ignored the promise to the Jews who are the seed of Abraham. Over the last thousand years the Church has belittled, accused, persecuted and even killed the Jews. Christianity as a whole has condoned their hatred of the Jews by believing that it was the Jews who killed Jesus and that because of that God has cast them adrift forever. The Church has used this rationale to feed its self-righteous attitude and to excuse persecution of the Jews. But no

matter how or why this attitude and spirit has prevailed it has been one of deep ignorance and is scripturally wrong.

The Jews were no more responsible for the death of Christ than the Gentile world, and the Gentiles were no less responsible than the Jews. Let this truth be established in your heart and mind, as Jesus said;

“Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again.

No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” John 10:17-18

Jesus **surrendered** his life for our (Jew and Gentile) sakes. Those involved in making the trap for Jesus are still guilty, however. Remember, it was not only the Jews (with their trumped-up charges) that bear the blame, but ROME (representing us Gentiles) approved the execution and it was the Gentile soldiers who mocked and scourged Jesus, placed the crown of thorns on His head, made Him carry the cross up Golgotha, and pierced Him in His side. Yes, we all bear responsibility for hating and crucifying God. It was a conspiracy of all mankind.

That the Jews shoulder sole responsibility for the death of Jesus is the first great misconception the Church has carried against the nation Israel and it inevitably leads to a very serious mistake. Wherever this ignorance persists it is believed that the Jews have been cast off forever by God. Romans chapter 9, 10 and 11 should be studied carefully by every Christian and taken to heart. It establishes who we are and who the Jews are in the face of God's plan of redemption.

“I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.

Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much

more their fullness? ...

For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches.

And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree;

Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root but the root thee.

Thou wilt say then, The Branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.

*Well; because of unbelief they were broken off and thou standest by faith. **Be not high minded, but fear:***

For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.” Rom. 11:11-12, 16-21

As the prophecy says, all Israel shall be saved. The time of the Gentiles shall come to an end just as God has declared. The Church had forgotten these basic promises and God’s sure word of prophecy. Becoming wise in her own conceits and puffed up in the spiritual pride of the blessings which God had bestowed upon her she became ignorant and injurious.

But, glory to God, the Holy Ghost has lifted this condition. The knowledge about the nation of Israel and its election has been restored to the Church in our lifetime. In every denomination and group the truth about the chosen nation has come to light. The establishment of a Jewish state in Israel in 1948 and the great outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the denominations during the sixties and seventies has forced the Christian believer to look at the Jews with greater compassion. Churches everywhere have decided to support the Jewish cause and to sing the praises of God’s chosen nation. The Holy Ghost has confronted us with this marvelous truth and it is up to each individual believer to receive it in his or her heart.

Yet, to indiscriminately support the Jews in everything they do may have peculiar dangers lurking within it, too. We must use keen

discernment. The day is shortly coming when the Jews and lukewarm Christians will again be in league against God. The two will conspire with the antichrist to set him up in the temple in Jerusalem as God Himself. To the Jews and Christians involved in that work we owe no loyalty. God will not require that His people support apostate Jews working for humanism even if they are of the chosen nation. We cannot give all Jewish causes and action carte blanche support.

*“(God) will render to every man according to his deeds:
To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for
glory and honour and immortality, eternal life.
But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth,
but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,
Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth
evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile:
But glory, honour and peace to every man that worketh good,
to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:
For there is no respect of persons with God.” Rom. 2:6-11*

How then should we support the Jews?

What then should we do? God wants us to acknowledge and help Israel doesn't he? Yes, we should defend the Jews and respect the fact that they are heirs to the promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. We should rejoice in the fulfilling of prophecy and aid them in their spiritual fight against the antichrist spirit of the world; and we should promote the re-establishment of Israel in today's world because it is God's plan being manifested. We should be careful not to be influenced by the humanistic arguments that ever rage against the Jews in today's atmosphere of international power politics regardless of how logical or compelling they seem. Yet, in another sense, all that is happening in Israel is none of the Church's business.

If we are not to be deceived by events shortly to come to pass we must be wise as serpents but gentle as doves. Much of what we are witnessing in Israel today is a sort of family squabble. What is happening in the Middle East, with the violence, intrigue and jockeying for peace, is the fulfillment of end-time prophecy.

God's workings with the Jews, even to the Church, remains a mystery and a paradox: like a father chastising his son. Through the prophet, Micah, God announced that He has a controversy with his child.

"Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel." Mic. 6:2

But through his prophet, Zechariah, God has also established Israel as his dear child, saying,

*"Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon.
For thus saith the Lord of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you; for he that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye." Zech. 2:7-8*

He loves the child but there is a breach between them, one that only the parties involved can resolve. The Church has as much insight into this controversy as a stranger, who passing by, sees a father chastening his child and has no perfect understanding what is really happening. I look forward with great anticipation to the day when the controversy that God has with the "apple of his eye" comes to its saving conclusion. What a day that will be, I am sure. As the scripture says,

"For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" Rom. 11:15

We can only now guess at the full meaning of this scripture. Until

then we ought to have compassion on Israel and aid them in their battle against the antichrist spirit and the spirit of a world always ready to persecute them. I believe time will reveal that the born-again, Spirit-filled Christian walks a tight-rope of faith concerning the Jews and how to react to their plight. Therefore, I will not support those Jews who betray the calling of the nation Israel by compromising with the spirits of the antichrist and humanism. For the day is fast approaching, and has even started, when Jews in power will support and uphold the Antichrist in return for peace with the nations of the Gentiles. Just as this is now happening we can be sure that the days are rapidly approaching when the Jews and the Gentiles will conspire together, just as in the days of Christ's first coming, against the plan of God. This time, instead of trying to kill God, the conspirators will attempt to depose God and usurp His Lordship by worshipping the antichrist as he sits on the throne of God, in God's temple, in God's city. We can be certain this conspiracy will take place because it is written in the books of the prophets, in Daniel, and in Revelation. It will be a time of great evil and holocaust for the Jewish people and for all those who hold fast the testimony of Jesus.

The leaders who guide the world into the conspiracy of the antichrist, I will not follow, we should not follow, nor am I required to follow. Isaiah heard and recorded these words over 2500 years ago but the Spirit now speaks them to the Church today:

"For the Lord spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying,

Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom, this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid.

Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.

And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, for a gin

*and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem .
And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken,
and be snared, and be taken". Isaiah 8:11-15*

When we start to understand the nature of end-time prophecy it becomes apparent that the Christian must stand by and, in many ways, be content to watch the drama unfold, to watch the conspirators swarm together. But we must also be ready to help the afflicted Jews who refuse to be part of the "confederacy" that was prophesied so long ago. In the meantime, we should not look down on the Jews or be prejudiced against them, or proclaim the Gentile world as the chosen peoples of God. Instead, I will look for the fulfillment of prophecy, which includes the salvation of Israel, the judgment of the world, the redemption of the Church and, of course, the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ in the clouds.

39. #3 Fellowship: The Sharing Of Fruit

The Seven Pillars of Knowledge

by T Myers Smith

For many people, fellowship means going to church and listening to a sermon. To others it means gathering together around a table, sharing a meal, remembering good times, and looking toward the future with a mix of desperation and hope. To Christians, fellowship ought to be something deeper, however, something more purposeful and fulfilling, a sharing of mutual benefit which will provide nourishment for the soul. The apostle Paul wrote the Romans exhorting them not to be ignorant about fellowship and told them of the great desire he had to exchange spiritual fruit with them.

“For I long to see you that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end you may be established;

That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that often times I purposed to come to you, (but was let hitherto) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.” Romans 1:11-13

For centuries Christians more often than not came together ignorant of true fellowship and its spiritual purpose. They came together for every reason but to sharpen their personal relationship with Jesus and share the good fruit of God. Many church-goers still believe that any gathering under the Christian banner, for whatever purpose, is fellowship. They believe singing hymns, or receiving communion, or talking over coffee and donuts is fellowship; and in worldly terms that is the sum total of most fellowship.

The common dictionary defines fellowship as camaraderie, but in God's world that definition is far too shallow. A deeper look into the root of the Hebrew word reveals that sharing is synonymous with fellowship. Among the called out ones (the Church), fellowship means sharing the fruits of God. The exchange of the fruits of the Spirit (or fruits of righteousness as it is called in many places in the epistles) encourages us in God's Word and helps to make it a reality in our daily lives.

Sharing and Washing Are at The Heart Of Fellowship

Any group or place that claims to provide fellowship will make it possible for the individual believer to share the fruits which God has grown in them. Saints will not be required to sit silently like wooden people in a row watching the back of one another's heads while one or two people do all the ministering and sharing.

Further, any true fellowship will make it possible to test the fruits. Believers will be able to have the dust of the world washed from them by the comfort, encouragement and gentle admonitions of fellow saints. True fellowship will allow a saint to grow according to God's time-table. The fruits of patience and longsuffering will be in evidence so new, or less mature, believers can "catch up" with the older, wiser brethren. Immature brethren seeking deliverance and freedom will be allowed to confess their sins and faults openly in an atmosphere of love, thereby having their "feet washed" from the dirt that clings to them through unavoidable contact with the world. In Christ's name sin will be forgiven. In love and faith, unruly and unlearned believers will be taught, and even rebuked when necessary, to the end that they are delivered from their sins. Body ministry, the type spoken of in 1 Cor 12, will be employed and practiced in the spirit.

Paul longed to have fellowship with the Romans. To Paul that

meant imparting spiritual gifts to them, encouraging their faith and sharing spiritual fruit with them. Paul, being wise in the Lord, knew that all of his knowledge, all of his freedom and all of the gifts of the Spirit were useless unless they produced fruits for God's use. He also knew full well that where there is no sign of fruit then all of the fellowship, or rather presumed fellowship, in the Church is in vain. If no good fruit is growing in our personal lives we have nothing to share of any value when we come together as believers. Our fellowshiping, no matter how impressive the music and the worship, is, in a manner of speaking, fruitless.

Jesus taught His disciples to beware fancy talk and hypocrisy. He warned them about watching for fruits. He said, *"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits."* Matt 7:15-16 Paul gave the Church at Galatia an outline of what God says are good fruits and what are bad fruits.

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have told you in time past, that they which sow such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit let us walk in the Spirit." Gal.5:19-25

Everyone who is honest must admit that at some point during their life he or she has been well acquainted with the works of the flesh. The nature of the fruits of the Spirit, on the other hand, is a mystery to the unconverted heart. It is the personal ministry of the Holy Spirit that reveals them to us after we are born again. The list in

Galatians is a summary of the fruits, but only a summary. To that list we might add things like honesty, patience, humility, and kindness also.

We must learn what the fruits are before we can detect them

Learning and detecting the fruits is not something we can treat like Psychology 101. They are much more than a list just to be memorized. Knowing what the fruits are is one thing; knowing what they really mean and how they affect our lives is another. Worldly ideas about such things as love, joy, peace, etc., are quite different from God's truth about them. We may be very happy that we made a dishonest buck, but is that the joy of the Lord? We might find peace by compromising the truth or someone else's interest, but is that spiritual peace? The greatest example is in the greatest fruit of all, love. It has been said, love is never having to say you're sorry. That's garbage. It is not love to allow people to have their own way regardless of their treatment of others, or to simply give them anything they want. That's deadly. Nor is love indiscriminate unity, as ecumenism teaches; look what a unified Germany did in World War II. Nor is love to be confused with reconciling sin to Christ; Christ came to destroy sin. God and sin will never be brought together, never be reconciled. Instead, love is a mixture of truth and mercy, as the pair so often appears side by side in Psalms. God's love never ignores the truth, but rejoices in it, and yet it mixes compassion with truth in a way that works salvation and righteous judgment at the same time. God's love is a miracle; it is beyond our highest thoughts. It is Jesus hanging on the cross, the truth about our condition, and God's wonderful mercy compressed into one enormous act of love. Love is embodied in a person. Love is Jesus.

Brothers and sisters, it is not enough to know the words or throw around Christian platitudes concerning fruit. The Church must

know how to detect them if they are to benefit by the sharing of them. We must not settle for a basket of pretty looking plastic fruit. Do not settle for anything but the real thing. If we are to be nourished by the fruits then we must detect the real thing first in our own lives and spirit, and then look for them in those around us. We must not be ignorant about the fruits and that true fellowship is about the sharing of those fruits so everyone can be mutually nourished.

Paul wrote to his friend and fellow soldier in Christ, Timothy, about the realities of fellowship.

“And let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor.

If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.

Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” 2 Timothy 2:19-22

Fellowshipping among the saints, partaking of the good fruit of God, one with another, is one of the greatest joys of the Church. The God-given purpose for the gifts of the Spirit is to produce fruit for God’s use. As the parable of the sower of the seeds shows: some hear God and immediately forget about it; some do God’s bidding for a short while but persecution scares them off, some grow but get choked by the cares of the world and never bring fruit to perfection; and some, with patience, slowly, just the same as the fruits of nature grow, bring forth spiritual fruit for other saints to be nourished by and comforted. If we have love (and the other fruits) then we will have something to share when we come together with other saints.

40. #4 The Gifts: Given by the Spirit

The Seven Pillars of Knowledge

by T Myers Smith

Few things, during the revival of our times, has stirred more controversy than the rekindling of the spiritual gifts. Citing both real and imagined abuses, some have preached against the gifts of the Spirit; others have dismissed them as emotional superstition; and still others have gone so far as to say they are out and out Satanic. No matter the objections, God desires to give us gifts. First and foremost, will always be the gift of His Son and the work Jesus did on Calvary. But close behind the gift of the 'cross' are the gift of the active presence of the Holy Ghost within us and His spiritual gifts given in order to help and mature the body of Christ. Whatever the abuses (and there have been abuses), or whatever the fine religious arguments fashioned to oppose the free-flow of the gifts in the Church, one thing remains sure in God's Word: **We are told not to be ignorant of the gifts.** The twelfth chapter of 1 Cor. vs 1,4-11 is explicit:

"Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant...

Now there are diversities of gifts but the same Spirit. "And there are differences of the administrations, but the same Lord.

And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which works all in all.

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another

the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; "To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;

To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another the discerning of spirits; to another diverse kinds of tongues; to another interpretation of tongues;

But all these worketh that one and selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."

If we refuse the gifts of the Holy Ghost we will remain ignorant, not only in this crucial area, which is meant to help in our walk, but in other areas of our Christian life as well. Throughout the Age of the Church the Christian world has maligned the Jews for rejecting Christ, the one whom God had sent; and at the same time we have been horribly guilty of rejecting the Holy Spirit, the one whom Jesus sent. What sort of hypocrisy do we engage in when we judge the Jews for rejecting Christ and turn around and reject the ministry of the Holy Spirit? The Holy Ghost is the Comforter, the Teacher, the Judge; He is the one sent of Jesus to lead the Church into all truth. Yet we have preferred to lead ourselves. Regardless, Christ's words are no less true today than they were the moment He first spoke them to his disciples at the Last Supper.

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of Truth, is come he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he hears, that shall he speak and he will show you things to come.

He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." John 16:13-14

There can be no question: the single greatest factor in the lifting of the apostasy of the Church has been the outpouring of the Holy Ghost on our generation. The gifts are given to help believers enter into the resurrected life. The gift of wisdom is given to the Church to help her in situations that are impossible to cope with by human means. The gift of knowledge is given to enlighten the Church

in time of special need; supernatural faith is given to accomplish the impossible; healings are brought forth to aid salvation's work; miracles are performed to witness to the Gospel; discerning of spirits is given to protect and deliver the Church; and prophecies come forth to edify the believer and give praise to the Lord Jesus. These and other gifts are bestowed on the Church as the Spirit wills, in the manner the Spirit wills.

Do Not Let Abuses Stop You From Receiving Gifts

Some churches have fallen into the mistake of thinking there is a set pattern which the Holy Ghost uses in bringing forth the gifts. There is, however, neither a pattern nor a single way in which the gifts are administered. As the Scriptures plainly say there are differences in the way gifts are administered and a diversity of ways in which they operate (1 Cor.12). But they are not for entertainment either. In some places the gifts have been exploited as entertainment, P.T. Barnum style.

Some charismatic groups have wrongly invited people to be baptized in the Holy Spirit never considering whether the person has even been born again. Others, preferring power, have forgotten their first love – Jesus, and sought the gifts above hearing the voice of God and being obedient to it. Do not, dear brethren, let these abuses deter you from receiving the blessings that the gifts of the Holy Ghost provide. If abuses were an excuse for discarding the truth then the whole world would only need to cite the abuses perpetrated by “Christianity” in the name of Christ as an excuse for rejecting Jesus. There are no excuses for rejecting God's gifts and if we do we will remain ignorant.

In preaching to the Corinthian church, a church that had been abusing the gifts, Paul first warned them to do things in order, but still used words like “desire” and “earnestly covet” to teach them to want the gifts. A word to the wise. Often, if not always, the controversy over the gifts settles on the gift of tongues. Relying

on their intellect, Christians become embarrassed by the gift of tongues; to them the gift of tongues is absurd, or foolish, or even demonic. Ignorant men say that God gave it to the Church, but doesn't any more, and now only Satan has it and uses it to mock God. If what they say is true then God gave a gift to his Church, took it away, let Satan have control of it, and now allows His Church to be tossed round and round in total confusion. It is clear from the full context of 1 Corinthians (especially chapters 12 & 14) that Paul and the Holy Ghost agree: tongues is a purposeful and valid gift of the Spirit. Any honest searcher of the Scriptures will come to know that tongues are very closely associated with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is, in its prayer form and not its prophetic form, the confirmation to the believer that he is immersed in the Holy Ghost by faith. Paul ended his teaching on the gifts and speaking in tongues to the Corinthians with this: *"Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to **speak with tongues**. Let all things be done decently and in order."* 1 Cor. 14:39

How Do the Gifts Come Forth?

The gifts will be given to us and administered to us by dream, or vision, or a still small voice, but when and how the gifts come forth is often up to the discretion of the vessel receiving them. *"The spirit of the prophets are subject to the prophets."* 1 Cor. 14:32. This means that the recipient of a gift will have to initiate the operation of the gift. The feeling to bring forth the gift may be so intense that the person feels like they will explode if they do not get it out. Or, it may be just a gentle prodding of the Spirit. People often think they have to be put into some kind of spiritual trance before they can bring forth a gift of the Spirit. Not true. Not all times are proper, but when the time is right I have to act by faith and let the gift flow. *"Let all things be done decently and in order."* 1 Cor 14:40

What then do the various gifts of the Spirit have in common? If it is not the way they are administered, or how they are given, or

in their operation, what, then, makes the gifts true gifts from God? The test of the gifts is not in their glamour or even in their miraculous nature. Satan can, and will, perform miracles of his own. The proof of the gifts lies in to whom and to what they testify. The single common thread running through all the gifts of the Spirit is that they edify the Church while they sing the praises of Jesus Christ. If the gifts are not to be abused, then the recipients and the beneficiaries must test them with all diligence. Dreams, visions, prophecies, and all profound words, must be tested. They must conform to the Good News. The operation and administration of the gifts may vary, but the one thing which will never vary is their Gospel truth. The Holy Spirit praises Christ and never lies or blasphemes about God in any way.

To have gifts flowing in our church increases our responsibility as believers, for it means added responsibility in testing their truth, and that means we must be knowledgeable in all areas of the Gospel, especially where the Holy Spirit has told us to beware and to “*not be ignorant*”. We must know God’s Word in order to hold the gifts up to the proper scrutiny. We cannot rely on a pastor or leader to know God’s Word for us. The gifts mean added responsibility. We must be able to detect which spirit is speaking, whether it is the good Spirit of God or the wandering, fallen spirits of Satan. And for that we need to be of good understanding. We must not be ignorant, brethren.

4I. #5 Taking Up Our Cross

The Seven Pillars of Knowledge

by T Myers Smith

“For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life:

But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead.” 2

Corinthians 1:8-9

Many churches and preachers preach the message of the cross. They preach that Christ left His glory in heaven, shed His blood for us, died on the cross, was buried, and rose again to sit at the Father's right hand, so we, sinful mankind, could be saved. And we, as Paul did, praise God for anyone and everyone who preaches the Good News. But that is only the beginning of the truth about death and life, only the first half of the message of the cross.

Oh! Don't get the wrong impression! Christ did it all on Calvary. There are no other and will be no other sacrifices needed to redeem man out of the deadly grip of sin. Jesus is the once and for all Lamb of God. He is the beginning and the end; the Alpha and Omega; our father, brother, sister, mother. We must pick up our own cross and follow after Him.

Like Paul, we must succumb to the Spirit. We must live in the Spirit and “kill” our flesh. That mystical, but very real, “sentence of death” should be active and working in the life of any true disciple of Christ. Desires and ambitions anchored in this present world should give way to hope in the Gospel and the life that is to come. Hope for a continuing better world built on the sandy delusions of humanism should be shattered to pieces by faith in God's prophetic word.

Disciples who are buried with Christ will also be resurrected into new life, a life of love and power that the world cannot know.

The Bible frankly advises the Church “*to not be ignorant*” concerning the wonderful power of the resurrected life. By dying to self Paul could honestly say, “*For when I am weak then am I strong.*,” 2 Cor 12:10 and also, “*I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me.*” Phil 4:13 The way to this kind of supernatural strength, unknown entirely to the ways of man, is to pick up our own cross and follow Jesus to our very own, personal death.

Everybody wants to go To Heaven but nobody wants to die

This, however, is not a popular stand to take. Getting people excited about healing and miracles is much easier and more acceptable by far. Insisting on spiritual death is a hard thing, as a gospel song says, “Everybody wants to go to heaven, but nobody wants to die.” Everybody wants the power of Jesus Christ to be active in their life, but very few are willing to give up everything in order to have it be a reality and the prominent force during their entire day. Christians often prefer to wallow in their own excuses for sin while searching for some hidden door that will lead them on some easy, self-gratifying way to spiritual perfection. The fulfilling of sacraments, giving of tithes, going to church, making confession, doing penance, good works, memorization of Scripture, and witnessing can all be neat little ways to think we are appeasing God’s will; when in reality we are avoiding the nitty-gritty of the cross.

The flesh cannot obtain to the power of Jesus Christ. Paul told the Galatians (a church fallen into the snare of thinking they could live righteous lives by following rules and laws), “*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*” Gal 2:20 Paul had crucified

his flesh so that the righteous one, Jesus Christ, could live through him.

But what does it mean? How does one die to self? How is one crucified?

It is done through prayer and belief. Dying to self means yielding to the Holy Spirit. It means being obedient not just in word but in action. It means seeking the truth rather than our own selves, even to our own hurt. The prophet Micah asked this question over two millennia ago, *“Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”* Micah 6:6-7

And God gives Micah the answer...

“He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” vs 8

If that were the case under the law, how much more does it apply under grace? Infinitely more! But the believer cannot hope to have the fruits of love and justice brought about through a humble walk unless he has died in the spirit. Why else would Jesus have taught things like:

“And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.

He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.”... Matt 10:38-39

And this parable:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.

If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.” John 12:24-26

Jesus taught about our part of the cross because it is a spiritual necessity for the Christian walk and to ignore it is to walk a fruitless walk. We are told fruitless branches are thrown on the fire because they have no other use. What seems to be a mysterious and frightening path – because no one wants to die – is actually the true garden path. If we believe by faith that the power of the Holy Spirit can bring about our spiritual death whereby the deeds of the flesh can be mortified and we can be resurrected into a life of victory; then it will happen for us.

Many Christians through this Age of Grace have lived the following scripture in such a way that they could testify in truth to its reality. *“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” Col 3:1-3*

Only by believing in the power of dying to self does this great passage of the Bible have any substantive meaning:

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.

For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” Rom. 8:1-14

There is no other way to attain the righteousness of God than through the crucifixion of our own flesh by the spirit. There is no short cut. If you can hear this message, then by faith pray to God that He gives you the grace to die to your plans and your will, so you can live to His. I assure you God will smile on your prayer and will begin engineering your glorious demise in His own time, in His own merciful and compassionate way.

42. #6 Fast Approaching: Judgment Day

The Seven Pillars of Knowledge

by T Myers Smith

The Day of Judgment is coming. Let the mocking movie, the scoffing co-worker, the doubtful religious man, and the ambitious political leader continue to walk in darkness; the day of coming judgment is drawing nearer as we draw each breath. God has promised that His only Son will return with armies of saints from heaven to purge the earth of corruption, injustice, and sin.

We who know and believe the words of the Bible take to heart this passage which Peter wrote telling fellow Christians not to be ignorant.

“But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” 2 Peter 3:7-10

The Holy Ghost has taught The Church in these past 40 years and

continues to bear witness in our hearts that the judgment of the world is necessary if God's promise of a righteous rule of Christ on earth is to be fulfilled. If heaven and earth are not purged then the new heaven and new earth promised in the last two chapters of the Bible would have no chance to exist. The Scriptures are explicit, the world is going to be burned up in fiery judgment. Revelation tells the story. Peter prophesied in His second epistle:

"... that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,

And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water:

Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:

But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." 2 Peter 3:3-7

The world and its faithful followers believe that their governments, institutions and glorious ideas will all last forever. And though there is no reconciling the Spirit of God with the spirit of the world, many Christians have figured that God wants to save the "world". But James declares: "... know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." James 4:4

And John exhorted the Church in this fashion.

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world, if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world,

And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.” 1 In 2:15-17

We can be sure that if the world is going to pass away then they who love the things of the world will also pass away.

A fiery judgment is coming on the Earth

Christ first came in meekness, lowly, riding a colt, not a warhorse, and gave Himself into the hands of the world so that some would receive salvation, but that will not be His mission at His second coming. He will return with fire in His eyes and a sword of judgment in His mouth. An unusual way to express His appearance if it were not so spiritually perfect. Christ will burn everything that cannot stand up to the gaze of God and will cut to ribbons anything that does not measure up to His word. The world will melt and tremble at His presence. According to the prophecies written in Revelation, Christ and His saints (all true and **faithful** believers) will begin a thousand year reign, ruling with a rod of iron.

As the day of God’s terrible judgment draws closer and closer; God’s warnings echo louder and louder. Crime, corruption, sexual perversion, hypocrisy in government and religion, and lusts of all sort are rampant, false prophets are seducing the Church; lying spirits are working every kind of deceit inside and outside the confines of believers. Not even judgment like AIDS, war, or financial ruin can convince people to do the right thing. The cup of iniquity is filling and the signs of the time are shining brighter and brighter in every newspaper headline and on every 7 o’clock news broadcast. As prophesied in 1 & 2 Tim, seducing spirits are selling the doctrines of devils. Sin is said to be good; doing your own thing is righteous – indeed we live in the perilous times of the last days. Everything points to the soon return of Jesus.

Two thousand years, or just two days on the Lord’s heavenly cal-

endar, have passed since Jesus departed to be with the Father and it is very, very likely that Jesus will reappear on the dawn of the “third day”, just as he reappeared on the dawn of the third day after His crucifixion. To escape the judgment that is coming upon all the earth, members of the Body of Christ must be willing and ready to receive judgment now, in their personal lives and in their hearts, as well.

There is no escape from God’s judgment, neither should there be. Sacraments, tithing, good works; none of these can deliver us from our ultimate destiny. We must all face our maker. Either we can submit to His merciful and delivering judgment and let it produce love and freedom in us, or we can stubbornly hold out and fall victim to His terrible judgment. *“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”*, as it says in Heb 10:31. Instead, we are taught by the Bible that, *“if we judge ourselves we shall not be judged, but when we are chastened we are chastened of the Lord that we should not be judged with the world.”* 1 Cor 11:31-32

Many aspects of our walk involve a process of being delivered from evil into goodness, of being brought from darkness into light; departing and fleeing and being changed into His likeness. If those things are to happen to us we must invite the judgment of the Holy Ghost. His judgment must win out over ours. Without accepting God’s judgment in our walk we will remain in the world no matter how godly or pious we appear to be.

“Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,

Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be

*diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot,
and blameless.” 2 Pet 3:11-14*

This is the only way to be spared the fiery judgment coming on the earth. If we live spotless and blameless lives for Christ, a spiritual perfection before Christ, then we can look forward to the judgment of the world and the second coming. We can hope in the rapture, which will likely come before the great tribulation that is to come on all the world according to Revelation. (Rev 3:10)To use the words of Peter, we can make our calling and election sure. (2 Peter 1:10) This perfection spoken of is not a carnal or intellectual perfection. It does not mean we will never make a wrong judgment or a mistake. It is a perfection achieved by obedience of faith. It can be detected by the faithful eyes of other disciples of Christ because the fruit of our actions is the evidence of our obedience. Our perfection hinges entirely on hearing the Word of God and doing it. It is important here to realize, however, that God does not want us to fear His judgment; in fact He wants us to invite it. Beautifully, this passage of Peter’s which exhorts us to not be ignorant, this pillar of knowledge in the Church, is the only one of the seven pillars which is addressed to the “beloved” instead of simply, the “brethren”. Being addressed to the beloved reassures the faithful that God’s love is with them always – even in judgment. For it is for our sakes that the world will be judged.

43. #7 The Rapture: The Bride Waits

The Seven Pillars of Knowledge

by T Myers Smith

“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive [and] remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

Then we which are alive [and] remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” 1 Thess 4:13-18

Comfort one another with these words. How often are we comforted with the words of the rapture in our fellowship? The resurrection, whether of the dead or living, is the hope of the Church. It is the reward of our labor of faith and without a living faith for the rapture, without the constant nourishment it provides for our souls, we will suffer from spiritual malnutrition. The resurrection is the glorious moment in the battle of our salvation. If the goal – if the end of our discipline and trials – becomes vague and obscure, then our whole walk can become muddled.

Ignorance in these last hours of the Church Age can and will make us a lazy, sleeping, carnal body of misdirected believers. Historically, the Church has been so busy building a kingdom here on earth, or meddling in the politics of the nations that it has had little interest in the “vague and distant fables” about the rapture. But a new day has dawned in the Church. The Holy Ghost has renewed a spirit of faith about the resurrection of the living and given her faith for God’s promise that He will lift all faithful believers out of impending world tribulation. The Church has been informed by the Spirit that the time for the rapture looms closer and closer with each tick of the clock.

The revival of the ’60’s and 70’s opened every denomination’s eyes to the signs of the time. Now, one fulfilled prophecy is following fast on the heels of another. Prophetic scholars all agree; the signs of the end-time are appearing and flashing like huge neon signs on the horizon of time, changing color and graphics as each prophecy is newly fulfilled.

Signs of Christ’s Return

Jesus told His disciples to behold the fig tree, and all the trees, that when they begin to bud it would be time to look up, for our redemption would be drawing near. The fig tree represents Israel, the other trees represent the nations of the world. It is not a coincidence that just after Israel, once again, budded into a nation in 1948 after more than 2,000 years of lying dormant, that many of the ancient biblical powers also returned as forces on the world scene. Egypt, Iraq (Babylon), Iran (Persia), Syria, Libya and Ethiopia have all, for various reasons, reclaimed important positions in the affairs of the nations of the world, and all within the last two decades. These countries which were all but laughed at in elementary geography books a generation ago, are now forces to be reckoned with, and it is a miracle.

Another beacon blinking on and off almost every day is the warning given by Jesus on the Mount of Olives. Jesus promised that the end would be preceded by wars and rumors of wars and earthquakes in diverse places. Hardly a news day goes by when one of those things cannot be reported. On the day of this writing war was being rumored in Bosnia, and two violent earthquakes, killing hundreds of people, hit along the Pacific rim. Post-colonial Africa has been the scene of millions of murders and deaths with constant tumults and unceasing commotions, rebellions, coupes and genocides.

Along with these signs shine the brilliantly bright prophecies of Daniel serving as a tremendous warning of the nearness of the rapture. Daniel was told that the meaning of his prophecies would be hidden away until the time of the end when travel and knowledge would be vastly increased. Today we can understand Daniel's prophecies in the light of history and current events. Our understanding of Daniel is partly due to the fact that we live in a world that has increased its knowledge a million-fold in this century alone. We live in a "global village" shrunk to miniature size by TV, computers, jets, satellites and automobiles. The Book of Daniel is, in and of itself, a sign of the end-times and the impending rapture. Every Christian who reads and understands the book of Daniel will be blessed by having their faith for Christ's return bolstered.

The New Testament's forewarning of the believer about the spiritual condition of people in the last days is yet another sign. Ask yourself if the following passage of Scripture does not describe an all too familiar world.

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasure more than

*lovers of God;
Having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof:
from such turn away.” 2 Tim 3:1-5*

A good and accurate description of the workplace and society in general, don't you think? Other signs of the end include the formation of the European Community (which is headed toward a powerful and unified Europe), the rise of ecumenism in religion, the taking of Jerusalem by the Jews in 1967, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in accordance with the prophecy of Joel concerning the former and latter day rain.

Exact Hour of Rapture Not Known

It is clear; Christ is getting ready to receive his bride. The exact hour of the rapture is a secret known only to the Father Himself, but the words of Jesus tell us that we can know the general time and season by discerning the signs of the day. He gave us signs to look for and warned us to be ready and watching, lest that day come on us like a thief.

Ask yourself this. If we could not know the time why else would Christ have scolded the religious leaders of Israel for knowing how to read the signs in the skies so they could determine the coming weather while they ignored the spiritual signs of their day that foretold of Jesus' first coming?

He said, “When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red.

And in the morning, It will be foul weather today the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?

A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them and departed.” Matt 16:2-4

The sign of Jonah referred to is, of course, the sign of the resurrection. As Jonas had been in the belly of the whale for three days, so Jesus was in the belly of Hell three days before he rose again. The sign of the second coming will also be the resurrection, this time it will be the first-fruits rapture of the Church, those who are dead in Christ and those who remain alive (and have been faithfully watching for and listening for Christ's calling) will be taken out of the "belly" of a coming "Hell". Jesus refused to put on a supernatural circus for the faithless leaders of that day and our day will be no different. Jesus will not send lights flashing in the skies, or comets racing through space spelling out his name to herald the coming of the rapture. The signs of the rapture will be, and have been, prophecy being fulfilled. The sign of His second coming with ten thousands of His saints will be the rapture. The warning is already given. The rapture (itself a sign of the end) will come in a twinkling of an eye and it will proclaim the soon return of Jesus to earth with his faithful saints.

Christ's beloved bride will be faithful while she awaits His call. She will be a spiritual virgin keeping herself clean from idolatry and fornication while making herself pure with the hope of His calling. She is striving for what the apostle Paul called "*the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*"; Phil 3:14 a calling so great he counted everything else as dung.

Get ready then, and as Jesus advised, pray that you be accounted worthy that you escape all the evils that are coming on the world so you can be found standing before the Son of Man in glory.

PART II

PREPARED

44. In Search of The Church

by Terry Smith

Just as we all must come to know Christ individually and cannot come to a saving, personal knowledge of Jesus by our association with a group or organization, so we must also seek out for ourselves the truth concerning the Church. Regarding the Church, every truly born-again believer will ultimately have to ask four fundamental spiritual questions in their own heart.

1. **Who is the Church?**
2. **What is the Church?**
3. **Where can the Church be found?**
4. **How do I fit into the Church once I find it?**

Finding the answer to these questions can be more difficult than what our initial expectations might expect, especially if we are coming out of a denomination that we grew up in or had some adult connection with. Especially, if we have been injured or abused by some bogus church experience, or terrorized by some bible-belter weirdo trying to work out their own salvation by tacking you to their idea of the cross which they themselves have refused to mount.

It can be a great struggle to find the true answers to these questions, people are so frustrated that they give up trying. It requires a supernatural visitation, a move of the hand of God, spiritual biblical gifts such as words of knowledge, words of wisdom and prophecy, as well as the others enumerated in the epistle of 1 Corinthians chapter 12, to draw us to the arms of the savior. In these last days it is by prophecy and the on-going fulfillment of things Jesus said would take place at the end that are designed to help the forsaken, the forlorn, the bruised and battered ones, to fall into the arms of the living God.

If you have wondered why the biggest problem to the Churches is the Churches themselves, you are not alone. We, too, wonder

why our biggest problem as Christians sometimes seems to be the Church, where to settle and the truth of our relationship with it. In America we are free to roam, not confined to a tighter authority or a state-church with legal regulations as in Europe and Great Britain, or as in our former days of Puritan societies. In this modern age we have been freed up to range away from our parent's church, the one in which our family and fathers once had the clout to demand that we attend. The latest generation of American churchgoers and born-again believers have no conception of the way their parents were situated in the Church.

People today have the freedom to choose and wander about from church to church at their whim. If they have been found to be injurious or hypocritical they can merely move on to another roosting spot. As soon as they are criticized or challenged, as soon as they are offended or meet with an unfriendly fellow they are at their discretion to bolt. All this has made it so there is no accountability. Priests rape children, businessmen manipulate entire congregations. Regrettable demands to forgive sins, where no forgiveness is merited, are leveled at child victims and the innocent where the pressure is on the victim to let sinners keep on sinning with impunity. Many have been sinned against with egregious sins so that Christ has been condemned by association. It is an evil of the end times which its victims do not have to be deprived of the love of Christ because of the sins of self serving faithless Christians.

It can only be that people do not ask themselves the fundamental questions of Who, What, Where and Why, concerning the church the body of Christ. It is too convenient not to seek the Church. Plus modern believers, I think are just down-right scared and lazy in regards to demanding faithfulness and truth concerning righteousness and honesty. Christ has never approved of lying, cheating, hypocrisy, deceit. and bearing false witness. He has never approved of trampling on relationships, family or otherwise. People in the Church have been handed salvation on a silver plate, and they continue to abuse it, taking freedom as freedom to do sin, or anything they please because, they say, Christ has saved them. Why

should they do anything to expend energy or concern to do right; why should they fear to do wrong?

But the complexities of this vast realm of Christ's Church, in every corner of the earth, with its good and bad, wicked and righteous, thorns and fruits, idolatry and true worship is an entire world into which we are born when we come to Christ. Like it or not it swirls about us unseen, but nevertheless, powerfully real, effecting our welfare in every way possible. This is why we may have, as many Christians have since the second half of the 20th Century, numerous encounters with believers, fellowships and churches, all with mixed results, before we can settle in and fellowship with that portion of the body of Christ with which God wants us to cohabit and serve Him and righteousness, and not sin.

It can take time to find out about the vast expanses of God's Church and where we fit into it. Along the way we are certain to have bad teachings about the Church. In fact, wrong ideas about the Church abound from Evangelical doctrine to mainstream Christian conventions. All too often the platitudes of accepted, popular born-again doctrine fill the believer with man's ideas about the Church and the way man thinks God 'ought to be' rather than the way God and the Church actually is. The Church can all too easily feed the sheep baloney rather than the sincere milk of God's Word, especially when it comes to the subject of itself, or when teaching the straight and clear reality which God Himself, has declared about the Church. *"But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work. Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart."* 2 Tim 2:22.

We are here counseled by the Word of God that we should follow Christ with *"those who call on the Lord out of pure heart"*. The reason for the advice is in God's house not all believers actually believe or act like they believe. Some are in it only for what they can get out of

it. Some are very dishonorable. It is taken for granted all too often that every professing believer is 'saved' and being saved, that the four questions above have all been asked and settled by our pastors and the teachings of their denominational affiliation. Upon deep scrutiny (and sometimes not so deep) we are shocked to find out, however, that these questions have been answered with trite clichés or broad sweeping generalities or things no longer pertinent; they sound all fine and dandy but don't really conform to the Truth of the revealed Word of God. We find out that God is there in name only and that another spirit resides there, in spite of the fang-dangles and pretty speeches. Sometimes we find out that the enemy, just as the parable depicts, has sown many weeds among the wheat and that we are among weeds and fools. This is all part of who the Church is, however. Don't get me wrong – not the pure and true Church, or even the purest church, but the unsavory side of the house of vessels which dishonor it.

It is OK to purge ourselves from fellowship with such vessels of dishonor. Even more, it is suggested and counseled that we do so.

Even more alarming we may discover that the fundamental questions about the Church have never even been asked by those assembled together in the name of Christ. In its simplest form the Church can be defined as those who are separated from out of the world and assembled under the banner of Jesus Christ. Christians say we should accept anyone who calls himself a brother, or trust the motives of everyone who has answered an altar call or come forth at a convention. They think that where church is mentioned in Scriptures (77 times) that it automatically means 'perfect' and saved. But that does not conform with 1 Corinthians 5 where we are told to separate ourselves from wanton sinners in the Church. It does not consider the great criticism leveled at believers in the letters to the churches in Revelation 2 & 3. It does not consider Paul's words to those churches throughout the Roman Province of Galatia when he stood up and told them "*I stand in doubt of you.*" In turn, we are scolded by misguided ones to 'judge not lest we be judged'. But that does not hold fast with Jesus' statement that we

judge not by appearance but judge righteous judgment, or that we shall know them by their fruits, or that the Church is duty bound to judge when a stumbling block has been cast by one brother in the way of another. We do not have to judge the sinner per se' but we must make a judgment on the stumbling block and its effects. **Read 1 Corinthians 5.** The word Church is from the Greek, EKKLESIA, meaning a calling out, or the called out ones, or the separated ones. God's call in 2 Corinthians 6.17 to "*come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing: and I will receive you*" is a call to become a member of the true Church of God without reservation.

We believe the Church is a spiritual body made up of individuals here, there and everywhere that cannot be contained in a building, place, denomination, or teaching. (Though there can be groups, 'bodies' here and there communing in the Lord in friendship and faith as the Philadelphian Church of old apparently had). The Church is contained in a person – Jesus Christ. By the power of the shed blood of Jesus Christ these people have been given new birth through the conversion of repentance so that they have been made new creatures in Christ? Within this greater body provision has been made to give us increase and speed us along the way to a mature and healthy relationship with Christ and the Father by way of the Spirit and the Word of God. This is **what** the Church is. The body of faithful believers assembled in His name is who she is, including all her imperfections, weeds and acquired spirits of error, and such. We have to pick our way through briars and brambles to find a place, a body, genuinely seeking after the purer form of church. The apostle Peter described this body, this Church like this: "*Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.... But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.... Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.*" 1 Pet 2

This is the picture painted in God's Word of the part of the Church, which pleases Him. God is building up a place for His own habitation, one of "**lively stones**", "*fitly framed together*" Eph. 2:19-22 that has come 'out from among the unclean thing and become separate' from the world and all idolatry. But this is only corner of the vast expanses of the Church. The **letters to the seven churches** in Revelation, the parables told by Christ to His disciples in the Gospels and the teachings and doctrines of the Epistles shine forth the truth and reality of what God's overall Church is really like. These words uncover great mysteries unknown since the world began about where the Church is to be found and what her condition truly is. They coax us, encourage us, and instruct us so that we can find out that good portion of the Church, where we should reside and where our spirits can best thrive in Christ.

It is our hope to delve into and provide answers for our readers about who and what the church is, where it is and how we should live and move within her. It is our belief that Philadelphia fellowships do exist, though they may be difficult to find since they are off "the beaten path" and that there is a high calling of God in Christ Jesus, a crown of righteousness that is attained by obedience that not all believers acquire. There are wheat and tares in the Church. There are vessels of gold and silver, which by purging themselves from vessels of dishonor become "*sanctified and meet for the Master's use and prepared unto every good work.*" We believe there are faithful and slothful servants and wise and unwise virgins. All these are in God's house. The Church is a conglomerate body of both faithful and struggling souls. Hypocrites and people who have departed from the faith with seducing spirits, those whose God is their belly and walk as the enemies of the cross of Christ, walk imperiously in her halls and sit in her chairs of authority. Our question must be how should the believer who seeks to be called and chosen and faithful move in this vast and great household of God? Should one settle for the first seat they find, or ought they to seek their proper place in the body of Christ? Though it may be a hard quest it should be part of our Christian journey to find our place in the body of Christ and that

includes seeking for a fellowship of faithful believers who seek the Lord out of a pure heart.

*“For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;
To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;
To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:
All these work that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he the Spirit will.” 1 Cor. 12:8-11*

45. His Sheep Will Hear His Voice

by T Myers Smith

God's voice... How many Christians anguish over hearing it? How many are tormented because they don't have the faith that they can hear Jesus' voice? How many? Even though Jesus declared himself to be the "Good Shepherd" and has promised that his "sheep WILL hear his voice"; how many Christians, for whatever reason, continue to doubt that they can hear God's voice? True, the carnal man does not know the sound of God's voice, and the newly born spiritual man is not entirely familiar with its sound either; but the doubt and uncertainty should soon pass away for the born-again believer so he or she can become a hearing and obedient child of God, grounded in faith and hope with the wings of righteousness flying high in submission to the gentle and gracious God of their salvation.

The Comfort of Power from Psalm 29

Psalm 29 was written to reassure us of God's exceedingly powerful and magnificent, unmatched voice. The Psalm cries out to Man to "give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name." And it proclaims loudly that God's voice is great beyond our comprehension. It announces:

PSALM 29

The voice of the Lord is upon the waters.

The voice of the Lord is powerful.

The voice of the Lord is full of majesty.

The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars.

The voice of the Lord divides the flames of fire.

The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness.

*The voice of the Lord makes the hinds to calve, and discovers
the forests.*

Certainly, if the Lord's voice can do all the profound things stated in Psalm 29: shake trees, cut through fire, shake the wilderness, give birth to animals in the wild, explore the earth, and ride the oceans – all in power and excellent majesty, should not Christians have faith that the voice of the Lord will cut through all the other voices of our existence to speak clearly and concisely to our heart?

Jesus declared himself to be the Good Shepherd and said his sheep would hear his voice. Jn. 10:11-16 This is a promise. If we are members of Jesus' flock, we WILL hear his voice – He has said so! If we, as Christians seek to hear and obey then the “bottom line” promise of Psalm 29 will be realized. A thing even greater than cutting through fire, breaking awesome trees, or riding along on vast deep oceans, will happen. God's voice “*will give strength unto his people*” and “*bless his people with peace.*” Psalm 29:11

God wants people who hear and obey – believe it. Christ is the engineer and designer, he wants to empower and educate His own so they may be able to perform His will and His tasks of faith by means of obedience to His directions. He will make his voice heard and His will be known to those who seek it. You can stake your faith on it. “*And I have other sheep that are not of this fold: I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice*” Jn 10:16 God wants all his people to hear His voice. This is one of the great ministries of the Holy Ghost; to allow us to hear the voice of Christ which tells us what is the Will of the Father. This instruction by His voice, in every matter so small or great, is the only means by which one can find their way in this dark world.

*“To him Jesus the porter opens; and the sheep hear His voice
and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leads them out.*

*And when he puts forth his own sheep, he goes before them,
and the sheep follow him: for they know his VOICE.” Jn. 10:3-4*

It's an insult to God if a true believer doubts that God will make his voice known loud and clear to him or her. Is the voice of the Devil stronger than the voice of God? Is the voice of the "world" stronger than the voice of the Spirit? Is the voice of our own flesh stronger than the voice of Jesus Christ? Though our voice and the voice of the world and of the Devil resounds continually in our heart throughout the day, it is strong only to those who do not listen; for the spiritual person will quell their own voice and squelch the voice of the world and the Devil, in favor of hearing the Holy Spirit's vibrant and gracious words of Jesus.

Spiritual exercise, trials and tribulations, experience, God's admonishments, and His chastisement, all work to increase our discernment about hearing His voice, enabling those who care to, recognize and reject all other voices (spirits). Jesus said, *"My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God and do it."* Lk 8:21

The Psalmist said, *"Seek the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding."* Prov 3:5 Remember hope is not faith; because *"faith comes by hearing and hearing comes by the word of God."* Don't fall into the traps of presumption telling God what His word says and demanding He apply it when, where, and how you think it should be applied. This is the egregious mistake of all fundamentalists. Living by faith is obedience. Want to be Jesus' brother, sister, or as His mother? Hear the word of God and do it. It is all accomplished in the Holy Spirit.

Solomon summarized his search for wisdom and the true way of life in the book of Ecclesiastes when he summarized the whole matter by writing: *"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: **Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.**"* Eccl. 12:13 Implied in his final word was: We should live by faith and do what He says.

Faith is key to pleasing God,

"For by it the elders obtained a good report." Heb 11:2

46. Just Who Is The Philadelphia Church?

by T Myers Smith

Christ gave us an encompassing overview of the entire household of God in the second and third chapters of Revelation when he addressed seven separate letters to seven churches in ancient Turkey. This was the land where Paul and others first preached the Gospel to the Gentiles. It was a place where the Christian faith was first established and took on the forms that it would have during the entire church age. Jesus wrote to each church commending and criticizing their behavior according to their works and faith. To each He sent words of commendation, especially for good works, but to all except two of the communities, He sent harsh words of warning and rebuke, commanding their immediate repentance lest they suffer great punishment, including exclusion from the church and even loss of salvation.

As for the churches of Smyrna and Philadelphia, however, the Lord had nothing but words of encouragement and praise. The church in Smyrna would suffer persecution but, their mission, Christ told them, was to be patient and wait until that day past. The church of Philadelphia would also be persecuted but in a different way. Their persecution would come from those who claimed to be true believers but were not. They also were required to wait, but this too would be different from Smyrna. They were to trust in the Lord and wait on His return. Christ promised to deliver them from the Great Tribulation that was to come on all the earth. Philadelphia is synonymous with trusting, waiting and being faithful. Though their strength and numbers were small they were given the greatest promise of all – God’s mercy and love, and escape from the dreadful judgments of God. The Philadelphian faith is a great faith

to have and one which holds the greatest of promises from Christ to His Church. I would rather be “living in Philadelphia” than in any other place on earth, waiting for the Lord’s return and hoping to be taken out of the judgments that are shortly to come on the whole earth. The following is The Christian Spirit’s second essay on: The Philadelphia Church: Who is she? What is her faith?

Church history can best be plotted by an upside down bell-shaped curve. During the apostolic era the church was closest to Christ’s intent for His church. Gradually, however, it drifted into apostasy falling farther and farther away from the application of the pure gospel as presented and taught by the apostles Matthew, Luke, Paul, Peter, John, James, Mark, Jude and others. It hit rock bottom during medieval times and began to rise out of the “pit” when the reformation hit Europe in the middle of the second millennium of the church era. The final upsurge of the graph is represented by the last two letters of Revelation (chapter three of Revelation) written to the church at Philadelphia and the believers of the city of Laodicea.

These two eras of church history were to have their day of flourishing simultaneously at the time of the end, the time in which we now live. Laodicea will dominate Philadelphia by size and influence and is far overshadowing her at the present day. While they “live” side-by-side, they also represent the greatest contrast of all. Philadelphia has no spiritual fault to cause Jesus to rebuke her. Laodicea has nothing that pleases the Lord. The former, Christ loves dearly; the latter, Christ threatens to spew out of his mouth with disdain. Philadelphia is promised rewards and protection in the hour of judgment; Laodicea is threatened with the fullness of God’s wrath. Only those Laodiceans who respond when Christ knocks on the door of their heart will be spared terrible judgment.

In terms of worldly success, however, Philadelphia is weak and must hold fast to the little strength that it has, while Laodicea thinks itself “rich, and increased with goods, and (in) need of nothing ” Rev 3:17 KJV and does not know itself to be wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked”. One church can be found along the wide and well traveled roadways, the other is down a narrow

one way path, found only by those heartily seeking its entrance by faith. Take a prayerful look at the wonderful promises and blessings in the letter to Philadelphia. Ask God for understanding of their application, and then come, and be encouraged to be part of this 'nowhere', 'anonymous' fellowship. I hope your faith will swell so you, too, can become, if you are not already, a living stone in this fellowship of Philadelphia, the name that literally means: brotherly love.

PHILADELPHIA: STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS

Paul's words to the Corinthians will be understood by those of the Philadelphia faith. *"Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."* 2 Cor: 12:9-10 KJV

This church will not be found on any street corner, or at a bible college, it will not have a membership roll – at least not one written on this earth. This church is invisible and weak in worldly terms, a church persecuted from within the church itself and a church with no social influence. She is a church in constant peril of temptation, but in a wonderful and complete way, she is the strongest and greatest, because she is immersed in God's Word and ways. This church has had "membership" down through the church age (as the other six), but particularly now, with revival of all things for the end time, this church is coming into its fullness.

STRANGERS IN A STRANGE LAND

To hear the calling of this church demands a love for the life of

faith. To respond to the call one must be delivered from fear of the unknown. The kind of faith required in this pew less church is so foreign to the faith of man, and so much God's kind of faith, that it passes all knowledge of this world. The life of the Philadelphian is not only unattainable for man by means of the flesh, but entirely incomprehensible and can only be experienced by complete trust in God's power and love. The aspiring Philadelphian learns that he must let God lead him blindfolded along never before trodden paths. As pioneers without knowledge of where to go or what to do, they must trust the Holy Ghost as their unfailing scout and protector. So is the nature of the faith God requires here. It is Abraham going to a strange land, Moses confronting the Pharaoh, David meeting Goliath on the battlefield and John the Baptist preaching repentance in the wilderness. Here by the light of the candlestick of Philadelphia a simple believer living a nondescript life can be producing the pearls of faith that please God wholly. Abiding in this place of brotherly love a person of "unimportance", doing no traditionally accepted churchy good works can be exalting God in the highest and preparing for Christ a testimony of love that will live into eternity forever. The person in this assembly of faith will have a single eye fixed on Jesus, the hope of a new world to come, and the promises of eternity with God. Here is what the letter to Philadelphia reveals.

CHURCH OF THE OPEN DOOR

The church of Philadelphia is a special church because she has the promise of the open door. The door of faith is continually open here; literally the sky's the limit. Here faith gives one the boldness to enter the heavenly throne room of God to make requests in the name of Jesus. The door of prophecy is open; and the pathway home is clearly marked. At the end of the path is that "Big" open door, that door that will open at a twinkling of an eye to gather the faithful sojourners into the mansions Jesus has prepared for them. The open door has endless applications to the Philadelphian; it's all around significance is mercy with a capital 'M': the ultimate expression of open door mercy will be the Rapture.

HER PASTOR IS HOLY AND TRUE

Jesus pastors this church with the title “*he that is holy, he that is true*” Rev 3:7. Accordingly, Christ will feed his flock here with truth and holiness. To have fellowship in the spirit of Philadelphia one must accept Christ as the Way, the Truth and the Life – not just the Way and the Life. The one whom Christ has sent must be listened to daily. One will not be permitted to say outwardly, “Yes, God’s ways are not man’s ways”, and then callously live as if God should fit into the prefab mold man has built for Him. The pursuit of money, power and worldly glory will give off a spiritual stench, as rotting flesh. In this church the walls are not of wood, or stucco, or brick; its light is not filtered by stained glass windows. The walls here are of the truth of God’s Word, the windows are the clarity of the guidance of the Holy Ghost. Words from a forked tongue or a self-righteous hypocrite make a deafening noise when they echo off these walls. Workers of such things, we can have faith; will be driven out by the Spirit.

A THIRSTY LIFE

Intimately knowing Jesus as the Holy and True One will produce holiness and righteousness in the disciple. To follow after Christ in this realm means one must not only be separated from the world, but one must be set apart to God as well. It is a thirsty life. Thirsting after his every word, on every subject, in every situation, will be a delight. Former presumptions about truth, holiness and righteousness, once thought to be solid as rock, will blow away like sand in a windstorm. The past will be dead and gone, buried with the old life. The traditions of our fathers, along with our ambitions and self-images, will be shed like dead skin to be replaced by the healthy covering of salvation’s wisdom. By the standards of the world (and the Laodicean Church) this spiritual clothing will look like a burden. In truth it is freedom.

SHE HAS THE KEYS TO THE MERCIES OF DAVID

The books of Isaiah and Acts call God’s blessings on the house of David “*the sure mercies of David*”. In the letter to Philadelphia Jesus says he holds the key of David, which is the key to the blessed mercies of God. God promised that he would never forsake David

and that he and his family would rule Israel forever. That is why Jesus is of the bloodline of David. Likewise, the church of Philadelphia will rule with Christ forever. Those who receive Jesus as the Truth will unlock the fullness of God's mercy, just as David did, and will be able to flourish in God's unrestricted, unrequited love. They walk in the mercies of David under the mantle of truth. Truth and mercy blended together in only the way God can do it, adds up to God's love. Thus Jesus tells the Philadelphians that he loves them and that those who have persecuted and harassed them will someday be made to bow down before them and be forced to admit that it is the Philadelphians whom Jesus loves. Often in Psalms "truth" and "mercy" appear together. In God's economy they are as inseparable as life and breath. The two appear in unison in twenty separate places in the Psalms. Psalm 117 is a simple psalm, but one of the most reassuring and profound. It praises God for his mercy and truth and therefore his love. It speaks of nothing more, and thereby makes the understated point that God is love.

*"O Praise the Lord, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people.
For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of
the Lord endureth forever. Praise ye the Lord." Psalm 117:1-2*

The oft quoted passage of 1 Corinthians 13, in describing love, tells us those things which are opposed to love and summarizes love by noting that it suffers long, is kind and rejoices in the truth. Truth and mercy is promised to Philadelphia. And so, the Philadelphia church has accepted Christ the Truth and wants his mercy, and is therefore immersed in the love of Christ. In contrast the Laodicean Church has fallen for the carnally gratifying and deadly way of embracing the law. By following the law with its scriptural and not so scriptural rules and sacraments it tends to exclude itself from mercy. What seems so wonderfully pious and righteous is fatal self-righteousness. If they live by the law they shall die by the law, because no person is righteous.

Philadelphia is different. The people in this church will know the width, depth and height of God's love because they will have the

faith to count on God's mercy, and not their own righteousness. "Have mercy on me, help me, deliver me, work this out for me", will be the cry in her heart.

OPEN AND SHUT DOORS

This love of truth and mercy will make way for a quiet but bountiful faith in the believer. It will not always manifest itself flamboyantly; it may never in some people. In fact, their acts of faith may be almost undetectable. The effects of their faith and prayers may be on the heart and mind and invisible to all but God. Unlike the gifts of healings and miracles this gift of faith will often be a matter of Christ opening doors and shutting them according to an individual's personal need. Jesus testifies to Philadelphia of his power to "*openeth and no man shutteth and shutteth and no man openeth*" Rev 3:7. What a wonderful, wonderful promise this is and, Oh, how the Church has missed the opportunities it offers. Jesus will open impossible doors while closing doors that could easily be open but could lead to dead-ends for the believer. The believer's part is to respond in faith and walk through those supernatural doors no matter what the appearances, while restraining themselves from forcing open those doors the Master has shut for their benefit. And do not think these shut doors pertain to only heresies or sins; they may just be a means Christ uses to direct us into the Father's perfect will. Like a shepherd guiding a flock through a mountain pass Jesus wants to use these open and shut doors to bring us home safely and to make our life in Him productive, satisfying and victorious.

To have this merciful guidance in our lives we must be willing to do what Jesus calls the "works of God". We must believe on the one whom God has sent, namely, Jesus. "*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto all good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them*" Eph 2:10. Through these supernaturally opened doors the works of God and the faith of the believer merge into one. The believer's purpose and identity take their predestined shape and finally come into sync with God's perfect plan for their life. Then our life in Christ can truly bear fruit. But There Will Be Battles. Those called to this invisible and

unimposing church will need fatherly protection and direction. This simple faith in God's guidance, and their hope in the Rapture, along with their love of the truth, will make this church a radical assemblage of faith, hated by Satan and those who love this world.

PERSECUTION

Because of its weak station in the world and strong relationship with Christ this church will suffer persecution. Alone without religious props to hold it up, the Philadelphia church will rely on the strength of its fellowship with the Father and the Son as her sole support. For their radical faith Philadelphians will often be outcasts among the brethren. Even worse, they will have to struggle against persecution from within the Church, from those, as Jesus puts it in His letter, *"who are of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews (elect), and are not, but do lie"* Rev 3:9. Because they do not rely on sacraments or the law to save them or make them righteous, their salvation will be questioned. Her insistence on the truth and sound doctrine may cause her to be branded as a divider of the brethren; even accused of being hated of God. Reliance on God's mercy and faith in the Holy Spirit's ministry will make them, in the eyes of most churches, out of order and unruly. They will be slandered as rebels without true ties to the Church. Already today those who do not lean on religious crutches are considered renegades by many people in the established, orthodox Christian world.

The Philadelphia church's hatred for the teachings of Jezebel (idolatry and seduction injected into the very marrow and fiber of the Church during the Age of Thyatira); the doctrine of Balaam (using God's Word for personal and worldly gain); and their revulsion of the Nicolaitan system (system of priesthood and dominating clergy) may drive them to the outer fringes of Christianity and into their own homes where they will worship in spirit and truth. They will be mocked; and by all appearances they will seem the farthest from Christ. Yet the day is coming when Christ will vindicate them by making those who say they are 'Jews' and are not come before them and admit that they are the ones whom Jesus has loved.

The church of the open door enjoys many freedoms. The price

she pays is temptation to cave into the world and the Laodicean way of faith and persecution from within and without. Attacks from Satan and his demon powers are subtle and clever; but sometimes not so subtle. Christ, therefore, exhorts this people to, “*hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown*” Rev 3:11. This is the trial of the Philadelphians. They must remain steadfast in the face of ridicule and persecution. The other churches’ trials are in their need to repent of deadly spirits, heresies, or sins, but the Philadelphia church must hold on to the little strength it has, while not denying the name of Christ. Even as the hour comes when this church must stand without the camp she must stand fast in the faith God has given her.

Dying to Self...

... may be a simple concept, easy to understand. The incredibly hard part is having a sentence of death worked in us.

But the Holy Ghost is faithful to work this “operation of God” for us, if, and only if, we will allow Him to perform it. If we have faith that God’s power of love is great enough to perform a death in us, as the sign of water baptism shows, then we can be free. Not until this happens, however, can we be free to move on in our journey to perfection, for spiritual perfection requires we be ‘dead’. The Bible tells us in Romans that only the dead are free from sin. Without faith it is impossible to please God; because anything that is not of faith is sin and faith is demanded if spiritual perfection in Christ is to be achieved. Therefore if we want to go on unto perfection (as *Hebrews 6:1-3* tells us) in our journey to bride-ship of Christ we must die in order to be free from sin, free to live in the Spirit, free to live by faith. Then we can be raised up in the likeness of Christ, to the resurrected life, having our worldly and carnal desires and aspirations converted into His spiritual will by believing and trusting

in the Spirit of Christ to manufacture this in us. We can be perfect in that we are freed up to “*hear the Word of God and do it*” Luke 8:21

The Philadelphian Will be Willing to Pick Up His Cross

Of the seven letters which Jesus dictated to the apostle John in Revelation 2 & 3 the letter to those who fellowshiped together in the Asia Minor city of Philadelphia shines above all the rest. For those early Christians Christ has nothing but love, admiration and approval because among other things they “*loved the truth and did not deny his name.*”

Because of Jesus’ unqualified love for the Philadelphians and the brand of faith they held, it is good and reasonable for today’s believer to use their faith, just as Paul urged believers to follow his example, as a mirror of their own hopes and faith. To be invited to this great kind of faith is the greatest calling and a wonderful privilege, but it costs everything, including trust and hope in our own “life”. Those who seek the same approval given by the Lord and Savior to the Philadelphians will surely have “*the sentence of death working in them*”, the same sentence Paul declared to the Galatians which was at work constantly in him.

“But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he yet will deliver us.” 2 Cor:1:9-10 KJV

At first we are confused by Paul’s claim – what sentence of death? But if we consider the full gospel as spoken by Jesus and recorded by the Epistles we can begin to understand about this “sentence of death” through the eyes of faith. Jesus said, “*And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that*

findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.” Matt. 10:38-39. Anyone who gives another interpretation to Jesus’ words, other than dying to self and the fleshly concerns that are held in common by all people, need look no further than the dozens of proclamations in the Epistles to understand that Jesus was talking about dying to “self. Perhaps the clearest wording about the reality of believers dying to self comes from Paul again when he said, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” Gal. 2:20.

If the born-again Christian is to be free, that is, **really free**, in this life, then he must be delivered from sins, from worldly concerns, from fears, and from false hopes; he must be dead to lust, selfishness, and pride. It cannot be done through our own determination or by following a system of rules or laws, the only way to be free is to give up, to “die” to self. We must give up our ambitions and carnal aspirations, and anything else one can think of that is associated with selfishness, so we can walk in the Spirit, a realm, the only realm, in which a person can live a truly pleasing life to God. What greater example can there be than the Lord himself who literally gave up his life for us. His call to the Philadelphia Faith asks that the prospective Philadelphian “spiritually” give up his “will”, and by this sentence of death, give over his life to him completely.

Death and Resurrection symbolic of Water Baptism

Is this not the real purpose and meaning of the ceremony of water baptism? Jesus himself had it done to him to show he was willing to die to his own will and we now show our obedience to this call by sinking in the watery grave with Jesus so that we can be raised up in his faith and life. This is an action, no – better called

a declaration of faith, whereby we wish to die to self. Colossians 2:12&13 says we are, “**Buried** with him in baptism, wherein also ye are **risen** with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, **being dead in your sins** and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.” Water baptism is a statement of an obvious fact. Death must precede a resurrection. If we are to live in the resurrected life of Christ we must first die. If we wish to do someone else’s will other than our own, we must die to our will? This cannot be a mere theoretical or theological consent; it must be done in all reality, in all actuality. Jesus said time and time again that he did not come to do his own will but his Father’s which is in heaven. Dying to self is about that simple. One particular time Jesus was told that his kin were outside and wanted to see him. His direct reply to the request was, “My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God and do it.” Luke 8:21. This is a pronouncement of absolute obedience. This is doing, not merely pronouncing some decree of untested faith.

Dying to self should be simple to understand. But we try to sidestep it by the rationale of fine religious distinction. But it cannot be done within the confines of the Full and True Gospel of Jesus Christ as revealed in the infallible pages of the Bible. By faith we hear the Good Shepherd, and in obedience we do his will and not our own, simple as that. And that, Philadelphians and prospective Philadelphians, is the reason and way to dying-to-self.

It is simple to understand. The incredibly hard part is having a sentence of death worked in us. But the Holy Ghost is faithful to do this “operation of God” for us, if, and only if, we will allow Him to perform it. If we have faith that God’s power of love is great enough to perform a death in us, as the sign of water baptism shows, then we can be free. Not until this happens, however, can we be free to move on in our journey to perfection, for spiritual perfection requires we be ‘dead’. The Bible tells us in Romans that only the dead are free from sin. Without faith it is impossible to please God; because anything that is not of faith is sin and faith is demanded if

spiritual perfection in Christ is to be achieved. Therefore if we want to go on unto perfection (as Hebrews six suggests) in our journey to bride-ship of Christ we must die in order to be free from sin, free to live in the Spirit, free to live by faith. Then we can be raised up in the likeness of Christ, to the resurrected life, having our worldly and carnal desires and aspirations converted into His spiritual will by believing and trusting in the Spirit of Christ to manufacture this in us. We can be perfect in that we are freed up to “hear the word of God and do it”.

47. The Church?

Who, What and How She Came To Be

by T Myers Smith

The term “church” is the English translation of the Greek word *ekklesia*, and literally means *the called out ones, or separated ones*. The use of the Greek term prior to the emergence of the Christian Church is helpful in understanding the nature of the Church.

Two streams of meaning flow from the history of its usage that have bearing on the New Testament understanding of church. First, the Greek term *ekklesia*, which means “called out”, was commonly used to indicate an assembly of citizens of a Greek city and is so used in Acts 19:32 & 39. Greek citizens were the elite, they held the political power and enjoyed great privileges, but they also had the duties of state and military service in protecting the people. (FOR Christians to put all emphasis on Church without maintaining focus on the purpose for which they gather, and the duties of their service to God, which is, to share and preserve the living gospel within the confines of their assemblies, is as absurd as the event in Acts when the citizens of Ephesus had gathered at a city assembly but did not even know why they had come together. It resulted in a tumult and chaos with no constructive business or result, except in an attempt to kill Paul.) The citizens who were quite conscious of their privileged status over/against slaves and noncitizens were normally called to the assembly by a herald and dealt in their meetings democratically with matters of common concern. When the early Christians understood themselves as constituting a church, no doubt exists that they perceived themselves as called out by God in Jesus Christ for a special purpose and that their status was a privileged one in Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:19). Second, the Greek term was used more than one hundred times in the Greek translation of the Old Testament which was in common use in the time of Jesus.

The Hebrew term (qahal) meant simply “assembly” and could be used in a variety of ways, referring for example to an assembling of prophets (1 Sam. 19:20), soldiers (Num. 22:4), or the people of God (Deut. 9:10). The use of the term in the Old Testament in referring to the people of God is important for understanding the term “church” in the New Testament.

Thus all these groups were exclusive and “privileged” or allowed to be there because they conformed to all the requirements necessary for membership or admittance, and ability to perform the function or be useful to the purpose for which the called gathering was assembled. The defining requisites for membership among the church can be and must be summed up in the Gospel. Therefore the Gospel is all important.

The first Christians were Jews who used the Greek translation of the Old Testament. For them to use a self-designation that was common in the Old Testament for the people of God reveals their understanding of the continuity that links the Old and New Testaments. The early Christians understood themselves as the people of the God who had revealed Himself in the Old Testament (Heb. 1:1-2), as the true children of Israel (Rom. 2:28-29) with Abraham as their father (Rom. 4:1-25), and as the people of the New Covenant prophesied in the Old Testament (Heb. 8:1-13). As a consequence of this broad background of meaning in the Greek and Old Testament worlds, the term “church” is used in the New Testament of a local congregation of called-out Christians, such as the *“church of God which is at Corinth”* 1 Cor. 1:2, and also of the entire people of God, such as in the affirmation that Christ is *“the head over all things to the church, Which is his body”* Eph. 1:22-23.

Therefore the only real way to study the Church is to determine where and in what condition the Gospel was at all times. Where the Gospel thrives the Church lives, where the Gospel was perverted or lost, the Church suffered by degrees.

What the word Church means in the New Testament is further defined by a host of over one hundred other descriptive expressions occurring in relationship to passages where the church is being

addressed. Three basic perspectives embrace most of these other descriptions. 1. The church is seen as the body of Christ; and a cluster of images exists in this context as emphasis falls on the head (Eph. 4:15-16), the members (1 Cor. 6:12-20), the body (1 Cor. 12:12-27), or the bride (Eph. 5:22-31). 2. The church is also seen as God's new creation (2 Cor. 5:17), the new persons (Eph. 2:14-15), fighters against Satan (Eph. 6:10-20), or bearers of light (Eph. 5:7-9). 3. The church is quite often described as a fellowship of faith with its members described as the saints (1 Cor. 1:2), the faithful (Col. 1:2), the witnesses (John 15:26-27), or the household of God (1 Pet. 4:17).

Major Characteristics of the Life of the Church

The preeminent characteristic of the church in the New Testament is devotion to Jesus Christ as Lord. He established the church under His authority (Matt. 16:13-20) and created the foundation for its existence in His redeeming death and demonstration of God's power in His resurrection. Christ's position as the Lord evoked, sustained, and governed the major characteristics of the life of the church in the way members were admitted, treated one another, witnessed to His power, worshiped, and lived in hope of His return.

Persons were admitted to the local congregation only upon their placing their trust in Christ as Savior (Acts 2:37-42), openly confessing this (Rom. 10:9-13), and being baptized (Acts 10:44-48). Baptism or immersion in water was performed because Christ had commanded it (Matt. 28:18-20) and was itself a dramatic symbolic picturing of the burial and resurrection of Christ (Rom. 6:3-4). Joining the church made one a fully participating member in it, unlike many of the religious groups in the first century in which there was a substantial period of probation before full acceptance. Being born-again was the one and only prerequisite and there was no sacrament demanded for its reality in the believer's life. When

Christ accepted the person, the congregation did also, even though the members might be aware of weaknesses (Rom. 14:1-4).

The way in which members of the church were called on to treat one another was modeled by what God had done in Christ for the Church. They were to forgive one another (Col. 3:12-14) and to love one another (Eph. 5:1-2; 1 John 3:16) because God had done this for all of them in Christ. This foundation for Christian fellowship gave ultimacy to its requirements that reflected on each church member's relationship with God (1 John 2:7-11).

Members of the church were called on to demonstrate the power of Christ's redemption in their own lives by exemplary conduct, embracing every area of life (Rom. 12:1-13:7; Col. 3:12-4:1). The overcoming of sins in the lives of Christians was a witness to the redeeming power of Christ in action in the community (Gal. 5:22-26), and the sins to which the communities were prone were clearly identified and challenged (Gal. 5:19-21). The Christians were expected to adopt a new lifestyle wherever it was appropriate to their commitment to Christ (Eph. 4:17-24).

The worship of the early church demonstrated the lordship of Christ, not only in the fact that He was extolled and praised but also in the fact that worship demonstrated the obligation of Christians to love and to nurture one another (1 Cor. 11:17-22; 14:1-5). In distinction from worship as it was practiced in the pagan cults of Greece and Rome, Christian worship not only stressed the relation of a person to the Deity but went beyond this to stress that worship should edify and strengthen the Christians present (1 Cor. 14:26) and should challenge pagans to accept Christ (1 Cor. 14:20-25). Christian worship was often enthusiastic and usually involved all Christians present as participants (1 Cor. 14:26). This openness both inspired creativity and opened the way for excesses which were curbed by specific suggestions (1 Cor. 14:26-33; 1 Tim. 2:1-10) and by the rule that what was done should be appropriate to those committed to a God of peace (1 Cor. 14:33).

All of these characteristics of the life of the church existed in the context of an urgency created by the awareness that Christ

was going to return (1 Thess. 1:9-10). Christ's return would bring judgment to the unbelievers (1 Thess. 5:1-10) and thus made witnessing to them an urgent concern.

How central this belief was to the early church is illustrated by the fact that the Lord's Supper, which they observed at His command was seen as proclaiming "*the Lord's death till he come*" 1 Cor. 11:26. The return of Christ was to result in glorious joy and the transformation of the Christians, a hope that sustained them in difficult times (2 Thess. 1:5-12).

Ordering of the New Testament churches A striking feature of the order, as opposed to organization, of the early churches is that every member of the church was seen as having a gift for service which was to be used cooperatively for the benefit of all (Rom. 12:1-8; 1 Pet. 4:10). Paul used the imagery of the human body to illustrate this unique feature of the church's life, stressing that every Christian has a necessary function and a responsibility to function with an awareness of his or her share in the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-31). In the context of this strong belief that every member has a ministry, certain persons were designated to fulfill specific tasks in relation to the functioning of the church such as apostles, bishops, elders, and deacons. As these offices are examined, it is important to remember that the order of the early churches was not necessarily the same in every locality. A large church would need more functionaries and works and helps than a small one, and the presence of an apostle or his designated representative would cause the other leaders in a given church to be seen in a different light. In addition to these variables, the church was in a period of rapid growth; and as it responded to the needs of ministry, roles or offices, such as the appointment of the seven in Acts 6:1-7, were created to enable the church to fulfill its ministry in Christ.

"Apostle" usually designated one appointed as the authorized representative of Jesus Christ, and the term in the New Testament is most frequently applied to one of the Twelve (Acts 1:15-26) or to Paul (Gal. 1:1-24). The term was occasionally used in a wider sense to indicate the validity and importance of one of the early

church's leaders, such as James (Gal. 1:19) or Barnabas (Acts 14:4; compare Rom. 16:7); but there is no hint in the New Testament that an apostle could appoint a person to succeed himself and establish a continuing line. The office is, in fact, seen as foundational in the church's history and not as continuing (Eph. 2:20).

Bishops and elders had quite similar responsibilities; and Paul, addressing the elders in Acts 20:17, stated that they were bishops or overseers (v. 28). Usually, however, the term "bishop" is in the singular (1 Tim. 3:1), and the term "elders" is plural (Jas. 5:14) as a specific church is addressed. The responsibilities of a bishop are described in 1 Tim 3:1-7 and Titus 1:7-9. He is described as representing the church in a way which would suggest that each church had one designated leader who functioned much in the way a contemporary pastor does.

Deacons were required to be exemplary Christians like bishops (1 Tim. 3:8-13). Since their duties are not specified and they are usually listed with the bishops, it is usually assumed that deacons devoted themselves to the larger work of the local church, assisting in whatever ways were most appropriate to the local congregation of Christians as the seven did in Acts (6:1-7). The order, rather than organization, of the early churches was not governed by a rigid plan that each church had to follow. The guiding principle was that the church was the body of Christ with a mission to accomplish, and the church felt free to respond to the leading of the Holy Spirit in developing a routine or order, not so much a human structure, that would contribute to its fulfilling its responsibilities (Rom. 12:1-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-11; Eph. 4:11-16).

The main structure, if it could be called such, was assembling together in the name of Christ as full-fledged, equal citizens of the Kingdom of God, to worship God, for the Gospel's sake, and for the promotion of the salvation of every member of the body. By faith each member was expected to assemble, striving to love one another and knowing that wherever two or three gathered together in His name there he would be also. As eagles flocking to the body, they could spiritually and in all reality, feast on His body

and drink His life-giving blood. This was in the spirit of the ekklesia, or 'the called out ones', just as the Greek world had acted out in their worldly culture which provided the name 'church' for Christ's believers. They had been exhumed from the world and risen into the life of Christ. They had been removed, 'called away from, and separated' to God.

The Growth and Expansion of the Early Church

Jesus taught His disciples that by following Him they were to be involved in a movement that would continue (Matt. 16:13-20; John 14:12-14), but it was after the resurrection of Jesus that the mission of the church really began (Matt. 28:16-20; John 20:19-23; Acts 1:6-11). The earliest Christians were Palestinian Jewish followers of Jesus and found it difficult to witness to non-Jews (Acts 10:1-48). The bridge to the Gentiles was the Hellenistic Jewish Christianity, which sprang into existence with the conversion of Jews from the dispersion who were visiting in Jerusalem and converted at Pentecost (Acts 2:5-47). These Jews whose residence had been in the cities of the Roman Empire were called Hellenistic because they were generally more open to the Greco-Roman culture than their Palestinian colleagues. They spoke and wrote Greek as their primary language, gave their children Greek names (such as Stephen which means "crown" in Greek), and were more willing to relate to Gentiles. It was this group of the early Christians that was the major channel in spreading the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 19:11-26). It was also the phenomenon of persecution of the early Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, Stephen, Peter, James) that sent them from their comfortable place in Jerusalem into the rest of the world to preach the Gospel in Antioch, Babylon, Africa and other far-flung places of the Roman Empire, including Rome and the Far East. Ironically, God used persecution to further the Gospel and spread it far and wide among the Gentiles. The thousands of converts who

had sold their property to live communally had nowhere to live once they were rooted out by persecution and were forced to 'go into all the world'. The spread of the Gospel through the dispersal of the early church at Jerusalem was so great, in fact, that Paul could tell the Colossians twenty years hence, that the Gospel had gone into all the world. (Col. 1:6) Christ was to be a light to the Gentiles as Isaiah had seen, and so the move into the world had to be able to relate to the Greeks and the rest of the Gentile nations as well. Paul said he became all things to all men for this reason: that some could be saved (1 Cor. 9:18-22).

Paul was a Hellenistic Jew (Acts 21:39); and when he became a Christian, he was called to and accepted a ministry to the Gentiles (Acts 22:21; Eph. 3:1-13). Significantly, he inaugurated his ministry of founding new churches from the base of a church composed of both Gentiles and Hellenistic Jewish Christians (Acts 11:19-26; 13:1-3). Paul's strategy was to visit synagogues in the cities of the Roman Empire and to proclaim Jesus as the Christ (Acts 18:5). The usual result was that some Jews and some Gentiles who were interested in Judaism (called God-fearers, Acts 18:7) believed in Christ, were expelled from the synagogue, and formed the nucleus for a growing church (Acts 18:5-11; 19:8-10). Be persecuted and expelled, once again was the idealistic catalyst of church expansion, and even, spiritual growth in the individual members of the body. The Acts of the Apostles gives only a glimpse of the early Christian heroes and heroines with a focus on Peter, Paul, and a few others (Acts 18:1-4, 24-28). There were, however, many heroic Christian witnesses unknown to us who first carried the gospel to Rome (Acts 28:14-15) and to the limits of the Empire in India, Egypt, and the outlying areas of Europe. Each of the twelve apostles has traditions and fables surrounding their evangelistic expeditions and ministries. Each one is supposed to have died a glorious martyr's death which only furthers the cause of Christ and the disseminating of the Gospel throughout the world during the first thirty years of the Church's existence.

Special thanks to Harold S. Songer for the meat of this article.

48. What About Sainthood?

by T Myers Smith

No object of worship ought to steal our affection. There is only one mediator between man and God; the man Jesus, who died for our sins. A saint is not a man or woman who did three documented miracles and therefore is given a place worthy of our worship or who becomes empowered to answer our prayers. Actually, true believer is synonymous with Saint.

Down through the centuries, since the Church was established, the meaning of the word saints has changed and been perverted from its original meaning and connotation. In the early church, the New Testament Church, all true believers in Jesus Christ were referred to as “saints”. This was not because of anything they had done or not done, but because they had accepted and believed that Jesus’ shed blood on the cross covered their sins.

The words from a Phil Driscoll song say it perfectly.

“We’re the people of God. Called by His name, Called from the dark, and delivered from shame. One holy race, saints everyone, because of the blood of Christ, Jesus the Son.” The saints according to the Scriptures are not people deemed so after their death, by the judgment of men or the voting of synods. They are not individuals who have lived so-called good lives of religious glory. Those things may be admirable but do not make one a saint according to the Scriptures. The term ‘saint’ is not only used to describe the believers who have gone home to be with the Lord, but living ones as well. This is not because they treat people kindly and do ‘good works’. Saints are not merely those, as the oft used cliché says, nice or helpful persons. True saints are those who have yielded their wills to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Just a few of the scriptures indicating this are:

- *“Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified (set apart) in Christ Jesus, called to be*

saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, ...” 1 Cor. 1:2

- *“... unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia.” 2 Cor. 1:1*
- *“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus; and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:” Eph. 1:1*
- *“Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:” Phil. 1:1*

The meaning of the word saint is undoubtedly uncovered in its usage in Scripture. Saint is mentioned three times, twice in the Old Testament and once in the New. The word “saints” appears in 23 chapters of the Old Testament and in some chapters more than once. In the New Testament the word is used in 42 chapters and 61 times. That it is used so profusely seems to answer all questions about its wide range and common use for believers in general.

A few more examples will further make the point as to the common nature of the label, saint for a true believer and not some super-saint concept fostered by Christianity’s false religion which amounts to idolaterising and worship of men and angels. Proverbs 2:8 says; *“He keepeth the paths of judgment and perserveth the way of His saints.”* The following verses show that saints were just ordinary believers living on the earth.

“But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.” Rom. 15:25-26

“And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” Eph. 4:11&12

“All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar’s household.” Phil. 4:22

“Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” Col. 1:12

There are Old Testament saints who lived by faith and believed in God’s promises of the coming Messiah. There were New Testament saints who trusted the Messiah and believed His word when He did come. Saints throughout Church history placed their lives in the Savior’s hands, not in any system or religion. And there are those living today who are saints of God, ministering and being ministered to, in the same way, in the name of Jesus. There are many who are waiting to be called to the “Marriage Supper of the Lamb”. Rev. 19:9 But even beyond that glorious feast comes the moment ALL SAINTS have been looking toward.

“To the end He may stablish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with ALL HIS SAINTS.” 1 Thess. 3:13

Also as recorded in Jude 14;

“And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with TEN THOUSANDS of His SAINTS.”

Not a small elite group, but a family of believers!

49. Christ's Death Is A Jubilee

by Eloise Gardenier

God loves liberty and freedom. It is His plan that we be freed from all forms of bondage and oppression. The Law of Moses is a wonderful example of God's desire to free man from not only sin and death, but to make his daily life on earth replete with the benefits of justice and freedom. Every government has weighed the necessity for control and order against freedom and usually freedom is the loser. But in God's law it was possible for every man to be free to love his neighbor, live without fear and be able to worship God in truth and reverence. God set up a law that proclaimed loudly His love of freedom and liberty. No government or institution has ever made such a daring and bold decree as God did when He instituted the year of Jubilee in Israel. The following is a look at this wonderful law and the spiritual commitment God has always had to making men free in all respects.

Over the years I have sent out a "Jubilee" letter to friends and family members who were about to celebrate their fiftieth birthday or fiftieth wedding anniversary. This is because it foreshadowed aspects of the work that was accomplished by Christ's death on the cross. The greatest act of liberation was Christ's suffering and death on the cross at Calvary. But God's total commitment to liberty was long before established in this wonderful law from the Old Testament.

In Leviticus 25:9-14 we read;

"Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land. And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family.

A jubilee shall that fiftieth year be unto you: ye shall not sow, neither reap that which groweth of itself in it, nor gather the grapes in it of thy vine undressed.

For it is the jubilee; it shall be holy unto you: ye shall eat the increase thereof out of the field.

In the year of this jubilee ye shall return every man unto his possession.

And if thou sell ought unto thy neighbour, or buyest ought of thy neighbour's hand, ye shall not oppress one another."

Then in verses 17 & 18 we see,

"Ye shall not therefore oppress one another; but thou shalt fear thy God: for I am the LORD your God. Wherefore ye shall do my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them; and ye shall dwell in the land in safety."

And verse 23, "The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me."

And verses 35 & 36 we see; "And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him: yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner; that he may live with thee. Take thou no usury of him, or increase: but fear thy God; that thy brother may live with thee.

The last verse of the chapter tells us;

"For unto me the children of Israel are servants; they are my servants whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God." Lev 25:55

If we were still under the law we would have to wait fifty years for past problems, abuses, mistakes and inheritances to be atoned for. Only then could family members be reunited and rightful possessions be restored. The year of jubilee was a foreshadowing of when, in one day, on a cross, one man would atone for every man, woman and child's sins. The only provision being that each

man, woman or child receives the atonement. Instead of having to wait fifty years for the spirit of atonement or restoration to come and restore all things, it became available for all, at any time, during the “age of grace”. Jesus Christ our Saviour, paid the price for this gift for each of us. All we have to do is ask and receive His mercy, because He laid down His life in our place. He is ever generous with mercy, forgiveness and will provide us with a whole new life, if we are willing to receive it.

The Acceptable Year of the Lord

Isaiah the prophet foretold the coming of the “Anointed One”. In Chapter 61, speaking in the first person, he prophesies of a later time when Jesus would stand up in the synagogue on the Sabbath to read from verse 1 and 2. In Luke 4 we find that the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him and he read this from it, “*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised. To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.*” Luke 4:18-19 In Isaiah 61 we have a prophecy about Jesus, Our Lord and Saviour, and His ministry. Again we see the theme is proclaiming liberty to the (physical and spiritual) captives, and the opening of the prison and of the eyes of those who are blind. When? “The year for His favor”; The Jubilee.

In Luke 4:17-21 when our Lord, Himself, stood up and read from Isaiah 61, He read only this far – “*To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.*” He then stopped without finishing the verse. He sat down as they all gazed at Him and proclaimed “*This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.*” Luke 4:21 He did this because He is the one who sets all captives free. Before He came, men were only set free from bondage every fifty years. This is one of God’s many pageants acted out by His “chosen people” the Jews to show us how much

we need a Saviour. Jesus was the living fulfillment of *“the day when salvation and the free favors of God profusely abound”* Luke 4:19 (Amplified Bible). He is that free gift from God for our salvation. Isn't it something, the one which sets free is a free gift! We are saved by faith not works, lest any man might boast. Jesus stopped there and because of Him we have been living in the age of grace for almost 2,000 years, yet many people never hear this message that is so simple, the message that can set them free in body, soul and especially spirit. We read in John 8:32 (Amplified Bible) *“You will know the truth and the truth will set you free.”* When the Jews that were present protested that they were Abraham's seed and in bondage to no man, He answered them with *“You are slaves of sin, every one of you. And slaves don't have rights, but the Son has every right there is! So if the Son sets you free you are free indeed.”* John 8:34-36 (Amplified Bible) Praise God!

Remember Jesus stopped reading before He finished Isaiah 61. The part that was left says; *“And the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn”*. He stopped there because only that much had been fulfilled. The age of grace began almost 2,000 years ago where all we have to do for salvation is accept Jesus as our personal Saviour through His finished work on the cross. Soon that age will be at an end *“and the day of vengeance of our God”* will begin. Praise God, we can escape all those things that are coming on the world to try it. The end of the age is upon us, and Jesus is coming back soon! In Revelation 3:10 we are promised; *“Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.”* We praise and thank Him that He has made such wonderful provisions for those who want to obey Him.

The Jubilee Trumpet

In the Scriptures the fiftieth year is known as the year of jubilee. I

quote from a book called Manners and Customs of the Bible. “The year of jubilee was ushered in by the sound of trumpets throughout the land every fiftieth year, on the Great Day of Atonement. Like the Sabbatical Year, it was a year of rest to the soil.” (I think we could, in a spiritual sense, change soil into soul). My bible dictionary states that those trumpets were “ram’s horn trumpets”, which is exciting to me. I can almost hear them calling us to rest now. God wants our souls to be free from toil and labor and to find the acceptable rest that comes from trusting Him completely. *“There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief”* Hebrews 4:9-11 Because of Christ’s death on the cross our whole life can be a life of Jubilee.

The Trump of God

Just as Jesus was raised on the third day, we who are “*looking for, and hasting unto the day of God*” 2 Peter 3:12 wait for the time when we, too, will be resurrected as it is promised in 1 Thessalonians 16 and 17: “*And the dead in Christ shall rise first, then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.*”

As far back as Leviticus the trumpet of the Jubilee – a picturesque ram’s horn, was sounded. I believe the ram’s horn is a prototype of the one yet to come. “*For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:*” 1 Thess 4:16. Now we who have been set free by Jesus, our Saviour, await “*the trump of God*”. The trumpet that will call us “up hither” to be the “bride of Christ”. **“Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”** 1 Thess 4:18

50. Doctrine Should Never Be a ‘Dirty Word’ in the Church

by Eloise Gardenier

In these days of false unity (ecumenism) and fake “love”, doctrine has become a dirty word. This is going on throughout the strata of Christianity, even in main-line, fundamental, evangelical, born-again, charismatic, “tele” and “mega” churches. By faith we believe that, as always, God has a remnant, or “little arks”. It is our hope that this remnant still believes as we do that without “sound doctrine” the people will be deceived.

With this in mind, I was urged to check every time the word doctrine is used in the most reliable translation the King James Version. As always, Strong’s Concordance was invaluable. In the Hebrew the King James translates the word, Leh-kakh, as doctrine. It can also mean instruction or learning. In the Greek a number of words are translated doctrine but they all can be traced back to the root word didasko which comes from the prime verb, dao, meaning “to learn”. Doctrine, therefore, has to do with teaching and being taught, instructing and learning. God’s Word is largely designed to teach and instruct us in the ways of the Lord and warn us against false teachings and erroneous ways, to direct us in the paths of the Truth.

Going back to the Old Testament, in Deuteronomy 32:1-5 we find this promise from “The Song of Moses”.

“Give ear O ye heavens, and I will speak; And hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.

My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distill as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass:

Because I will publish the name of the Lord: ascribe ye greatness unto our God.

He is the Rock, His work is perfect: for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He.

They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of His children: they are a perverse and crooked generation."

Yet the last verse of chapter 29 leaves us with this promise; "They also that erred in spirit shall come to understand and they that murmured shall learn doctrine." In Philippians 22:14-15 Paul exhorts us to: "Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world." What a wonderful goal for all of us! We should not fear to learn right doctrine.

God's Word tells us about doctrine, we discover this admonition from Paul; "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." 2 Timothy 4:3-4 I believe these last two verses are being fulfilled before our eyes and ears.

Therefore let us get hold of Paul's charge to remember doctrine in our zeal to bring others into His kingdom! "I charge therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the Word: be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. 2 Timothy 4:1-2 And I must add this: "...and so much more, as ye see the day approaching." Heb 10:25

Scripture is for Doctrine

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."
2 Timothy 3:16 The Bible tells us that many were astonished at Jesus'

doctrine. Jesus preached; “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord have we not prophesied in thy Name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity.” Matthew 7:22-23... “And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine. For He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” Vs 28,29 On another occasion Jesus answered and said to them, “Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. ...God is not the God of the dead but the living. And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at His doctrine.” Matthew 22:29,30 and 32 Also, “And He taught, saying unto them; Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but you have made it a den of thieves! And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy Him, for they feared Him, because all the people was astonished at His doctrine.” Mark 11:17-18

The perfect conclusion to this section is from John chapter 7. In verses 15-18 Jesus gives a wonderful summary explaining His ‘doctrine’ which we can apply to ourselves, today, if we follow His instructions. “And the Jews marveled, saying, ‘How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? Jesus answered them, and said, ‘My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me. If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his glory: but he that seeketh His glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.”

Good Doctrine vs. Bad Doctrine

“Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law.”

Prov 4:1-2 As I researched the word doctrine I found that definite lines are drawn in Holy Scripture between good doctrine and doctrine of which we should beware.

Good Doctrine

The two epistles addressed to Timothy use the word doctrine thirteen times. Paul is writing to 'his own son in the faith'. *"Till I come, give attendance, to exhortation, to doctrine. ...Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee."* 1 Tim 4:13-16 *"If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine", where unto thou hast attained. But refuse old wives fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness."* 1 Tim 4:6-7 *Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor especially they who labor in the Word and doctrine."* 1 Tim 5:17

All too often, in these next two verses, the emphasis is placed on "tongues", and frequently the subject provokes an argument. I have had a few debates myself. I see these verses rather as a pattern now, for when we come together to worship the Lord and edify one another. 1 Cor chapter 14, verse 6 instructs us; *"Now brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?"* In verse 26 Paul asks; *"How is it then brethren? when ye come together everyone of you hath a Psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying."* In the book of Acts we find this example for our fellowshiping and gathering together. *"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul; And many signs were done by the apostles."* Acts 4:42-43

Warnings About False Doctrine

Here we will review the warnings given us about false doctrines. Then we will end on a positive note with those doctrines we can strive to live by and to teach. The word doctrine was seldom used in the Old Testament, only six times, two of which we have used. The third one is from Jeremiah; *“But they are altogether brutish and foolish: the stock is a doctrine of vanities.”* Jer 10:8

The readers must know, by now, that we are convinced the times in which we are living are the “last days”. Soon all Bible prophecy that speaks of those times will be fulfilled. With that in mind I will list some of the Scriptures that warn us of those times. *“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils: Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;”* 1 Tim 4:1-2. *“Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines.”* Heb 13:8 The world today is filled with every imaginable false doctrine, contrary to God’s doctrine. The world’s answer to that is; *“Everybody has a right to his own belief.”* We are warned to grow up and focus on searching for the truth in Eph 4:14 *“That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.”* Jesus has this to warn us about. In Mark 12:38 we see; *“And He said unto them in His doctrine. ‘BEWARE of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the market places.’”* *“This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. but in vain do they worship me teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”* Matt 15: 8-9

Once more in His letters to the churches in Revelation we find this. *“But this thou hast that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.”* Rev 2:6 *“So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.”* Rev 2:15 In verse 14 Jesus also expresses His displeasure with those who hold the

doctrine of Balaam. (The account of Balaam can be found in Numbers 6:22-24) Bringing these warnings to a close, let us ponder these verses. Starting with 1 Timothy 1:9-10 we are cautioned about things contrary to sound doctrine. *"Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murders of mothers, for manslayers, For whore mongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind (sodomites), for men-stealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine."* And this, *"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."* 2 Timothy 4:3-4 And this, *"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and AVOID THEM. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."* Romans 16:17-18

I close these warnings with this from 2 John 1:9-11; *"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God! He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed. For he that biddeth him God Speed is partaker of his evil deeds."*

Now I present some Scriptures from Titus to help us do as Paul proclaimed he was doing when he said: *"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect be thus minded: and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this to you."* Philippians 3:14-15 What a comfort to know our Father will show us all we need to know, if we seek Him and trust Him. Titus 1:9 exhorts us; *"Holding fast the faithful Word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers."* (Those who speak against) In chapter 2 of Titus we find these gems; *"But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine:"* Verse 7; *"In all*

things showing ourselves a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity (honesty) sincerity.” Verse 10; “Not purloining, (keeping back for oneself i.e. stealing), but showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.”

Hebrews 6:1-3 encourages us thusly; “Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto PERFECTION; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God. Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit.”

I present this Scripture as what I believe God’s goal is in insisting through His Word that we learn and obey SOUND DOCTRINE!

“And He gave some apostles; And some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers;

For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head even Christ:

From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” Eph.

4:11-13 & 15-16

God’s goal is to have a glorious bride for His Son, and sound doctrine is like a road map to get us to that destination. I want to follow that road. Do you?

I hope the reader will understand what the word doctrine is really all about. I must confess that during and since I have done this search and writing, with the faithful guidance of the Holy Ghost, I understand much better. I once heard a preacher say, what he

preached came back on him. Praise God I'm glad that happened to me, with God's doctrine.

PRESS TOWARD THE MARK OF THE PRIZE!

51. How the Trinity Works

By – Through – and – To

by T Myers Smith

Anyone who is born again is a legitimate child of God and may take up residency, as it were, in the household of faith. This house of faith, though it must be taken as a spiritual house, can be compared to an earthly home with bedrooms, showers, kitchens, dining areas, family rooms, dens and even exercise rooms and gymnasiums for each individual believer. So big is this house of God that each of us can be said to have our own bath, bedroom, closet, study and dining room – a well-equipped studio apartment. We also share many rooms and parts of the house with our fellow believers: communal dining halls, family rooms, great and busy kitchens, grounds and gardens. Of course, this is symbolic of our spiritual riches and the ‘home’ which the Spirit of God provides for us as we sojourn in this world. What we need to do is take up residency in this household of faith and learn to be a proper resident. It is a living home where our experience in it is always expanding, changing and renewing. There is a tremendous variety of shades of faith among the inhabitants, from heretics, lazy and silly and stubborn people, to true believers who walk by the prescribed directives of God’s Word and the Holy Spirit, trusting and relying upon the Lord. Some walk in the flesh and are never free from condemnation because it is not possible for flesh to dwell in this spiritual house without obvious conflict. Others, who walk in the spirit, fit in, spirit walking with spirit in unison, and it is the spiritual person in Christ who is freed from this condemnation and incongruity because they are spiritual living in a spiritual habitat. There are many windows and various levels with stairs and hallways for access to each part of the boundless mansion, each place or quarter a spiritual realm in its own right conducive for the spiritual person to gain ground in his spiritual life.

Also, there exist foyers, ante-rooms, lobbies and visitor's rooms scattered profusely about the property and grounds where the invited or curious visitor may get a glimpse of the spiritual life that takes place in this grand spiritual house which is at the disposal of any of the born-again residents who are wise enough to avail themselves of its vibrant spiritual life. Clearly posted about the property in Christ's own handwriting, written in His Blood are the placards: YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN IF YOU ARE TO ENTER THIS PLACE.

It is not a sign meant to intimidate, but just a simple statement of irrevocable Truth. A little and narrow door remains the only entrance to this vast, boundless abode, unsearchable in all its beauty, reaching from sky to sky. Above the door is a blood stained cross, bright as light, made of an unknown type of wood. This door, from the earliest beginnings of the Church, remains the one and the only legitimate means of entrance. Over the years vast numbers of people have entered by a back door of the building, cut out by the chainsaws of men's powerful ideas, giving religious people, they suppose, the right to ignore the sign as an antiquated and small minded idea of a day gone by. But they make a fatal mistake. Some – many – have come through the narrow door with other pretenses and state of belief and mind and have taken up residency without regard for God's wishes that they should enter the door by faith in His Word and Christ only. But it makes no difference for it is not possible to partake of the benefits of living in God's House unless we have been Born-Again. It is the only way in which we can get to know the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, the only way one may have true access to the throne-room of God which lies at an elevated place in the center of the household of faith.

He is Builder and Master of the House

By far, more fascinating and compelling than the house in which

we live or the great estate which Scripture calls “the household of God”, is the Creator, builder and master of this wonderful spiritual edifice. He is like no other, everything about Him is supernatural and wonderful; His name is synonymous with LOVE. He is like no other because – when He speaks it comes to pass – when He ordains it is chosen – when He decides it is done. He is Three-in-One, all three are in perfect harmony at all times. He is The Triune God. This Divine Nature of God and the workings of the Trinity is the prime purpose of this teaching. How the owner of the house, the creator and builder of the household of Faith, is one God in three, and how the relationship between the three works for the salvation of all those who enter in at the narrow gate...

Most newly born-again Christians discover that they have heard the expression Father, Son and Holy Ghost but are still hazy about it all, often confused, even troubled in their soul. Who should they address when praying, which part of the Trinity oversees what aspect of their new life, what is the relationship of Father to Son, what is the relationship of the Spirit to both. Do I pray to the Father; or is it only Jesus to whom I should pray? Is the Holy Ghost an active person of the Trinity, someone I should pray to or does he pray for me, is he someone who is always sitting silently in the background never making Himself known? Are the Three submitted to one another and in what order; or are all three equal in authority? How should I address myself to each one, and when? These questions are very real and legitimate and need to be settled by an understanding in the mind and heart of every believer.

The workings and reality of the Trinity was fought over during the first few centuries of Christianity when the foundations of the faith were being laid in the Church. Some of these misconceptions taught that Jesus and the Father are one in the same being. Some taught that Jesus was only spirit and not God come in the flesh. Some argued about his humanity vs. His Divine nature. Some ignorantly concluded that there was no such thing as the Holy Ghost, or that He is not a separate and distinct person from the Father and Jesus. All these theologies of Christian idiots came through influences

brought about by pagan speculations which had their roots in Nimrod's Babel, in basic polytheism, by Rabbinical Judaism, or early corruptions and misinterpretations of the true Gospel. In all cases they somehow denied or confused the Trinity, confounding ideas about the mission and relationship between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

All this nonsense and confusion stands as the ultimate testimony of the shortcomings and evils of 'theology' when it replaces simple study and belief in the Word of God, the Bible. Regardless, every perversion and confusion about the Trinity is dispelled by study of God's Word and looking to its infallible writings for clarification about the relationship and purpose of God through the Three Supreme Persons with a single, unified nature.

The greatest source of confusion came in two forms: 1. denying that Jesus is God; 2. denying that He is man. Of course the simple truth is: Jesus is both Son of God and Son of Man. He is both divine and human. This is why He was born of a virgin woman. God was His sire and man His mother. He is Son of God and Son of Man. Of all beings in the universe Jesus is unique because He is partaker of both the eternal and temporal nature and yet free from sin. *"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."* Heb 4:15 Because of this, Jesus is not just the only mediator he is the natural mediator between God the Father and Man.

God said of Himself: *"I am that I am."* Ex 3:14 The way this is expressed today might be: "it is what it is". God is who he is. He is One at all times and it is not possible that any person of the Godhead could not be one, in perfect agreement at all times and forever. Many of the Jews also fell into error because they insisted that God is one God and that the Father had to be alone without any other deity. They believed this meant that Jesus could not be eternal and of the same substance as God Himself. This error was due to their stubborn refusal to understand God's directive in the Old Testament, *"Hear Oh, Israel, the Lord thy God is One"*, as a declaration of unity of the Trinity as well as the Oneness of God.

It was also from fear brought about by Babylonian, Egyptian and Greco-Roman polytheism and mythologies that espoused multiple gods. The heathen worshiped many gods and this was at the heart of the world's most predominate religion and the one sanctioned as the Roman Empire's official state religion during the early formative years of Christianity.

All of this can be dispelled by the Scriptures which wonderfully teach about the workings of the Trinity in simple and direct terms. Jesus taught His disciples clearly about the matter. He said, *"I and my Father are one."* John 10:30 And at the last supper He said, *"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."* John 14:26 But of all the Scriptures one verse in Ephesians summarizes the workings of the Trinity for man's salvation with perfect clarity and simplicity.

"For through him [Jesus] we both [Jew and Gentile] have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Ephesians 2:18

Here, in the letter to the Ephesians, lies the greatest most succinct description of God's Triune working in the Bible.

By – Through – and To.

By the power of the blood of Jesus, through the power of the Holy Ghost, we can go to the Father. The Trinity works in perfect harmony to give us access to the Father and it is by the Trinity's coordination of love and power that the process is brought to bear that makes our communion with God a reality. Let the vision described in the sidebar which I once experienced serve as an example to illustrate the simple but profound truth of the workings of the Trinity.

"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but

*fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;
And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and
prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;
In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto
an holy temple in the Lord.” Eph 2:19-21*

Many wrong ideas about the Trinity were suggested and incorporated into various systems of belief that were rejected by the Church as heretical. Beliefs labeled Dualism, Ebionism, Docetism and Gnosticism were debated and at times fostered, each one confused the workings of The Triune God.

About God’s Name:

Wherever the word God appears in the English versions of the Old Testament it is translated from the word Elohim. Elohim is the plural form of Eloah, remarkably, the sacred Hebrew Scriptures almost never use Eloah when mentioning or recognizing God, whereas Elohim is used exclusively. This plural designation for God, commencing with all references to Him in Genesis, including the story of creation of Man, is remarkable because it insinuates the Triune nature of the Godhead, which traditionally the Jews fought against tooth and nail. Genesis 1:26-27 “And God (Elohim) said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God (Elohim) created man in his own image, in the image of God (Elohim) created he him; male and female created he them.” This Elohim is not a single Eloah, or Creator, but three eternal and divine witnesses of perfect oneness, in heaven. By two or three witnesses shall the matter be established is the pronouncement of The Elohim, because it is in keeping with the nature of the divine. Three bear witness in heaven, Jahweh [the

Father], Dapar [the Word], and Ruwach [the Holy Ghost]: and these three are ONE and together exist as The Elohim, or, simply – Elohim [God]. Therefore, 1 John 5:7 can accurately say: *“For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one”*. This is Elohim, translated God, taken by the Hebrews as One God, but undeniably referring to the plural nature of God, though ONE in perfect unity. And this, this plurality of God always insinuated in the use of Elohim, was used exclusively by all prophets and scribes of the Old Testament whenever they spoke of the Creator and maker of all things.

52. Be Still: Listen to the God of All Creation

We are Now At The Foot Of God's Throne

by T Myers Smith

Now you have reached a most crucial destination. We are in the innermost place of the universe. This is where The Father sits on the White Throne ready to judge the dead and the living. Jesus sits at His right hand. We, His people, called to be priests after the order of Melchizedek, are welcome. We are welcome because of what Jesus has done for us, because the place has been sanctified, purified, and cleansed by His very own blood. His blood has made us clean before our God.

When we come before The Father we should always remember, always continue to acknowledge the sweet, wonderful, magnificent nature of Jesus. We are there because He is our friend and our Savior. Jesus comes down off His seat next to The Father's right hand to be our sponsor before the God of all Creation. As we kneel on both knees, quietly before the throne, Jesus kneels on one knee as our mediator. Our shoulders are wrapped by His right arm, His left hand holds our head erect. In His strong embrace our feeble knees are strengthened and our hanging head is secure before God. We are without shame, there is no guilt, we need not fear. We are welcome in the hub of the universe. This is the nucleus of all things. We are in the place where actual true love, faith and hope reside without hypocrisy or lies.

Solomon saw this very vision of Christ (Song of Solomon 2:6 & 8:3) when he wrote: "His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me".

Now, leaning on the everlasting arms of Jesus, it is time to for a believer who knows Christ to listen up and become a true disciple.

In the embrace of Jesus, at the foot of the throne, we are confident before God. The believer may now come, not just to praise God but we have come to hear Him speak to us so that individual faith may grow. We know that the apostle Paul said in Rom. 10:17, *“faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”*.

In awesome reverence, in the fear of the Lord any aspiring priest will be thirsting after every word that proceeds from the mouth of God and will be anxious to obey His Lord and Master.

The Psalmist issued an important message from God to all saints concerning their presence in the throne room when he proclaimed: *“Be still, and know that I am God.”*

Now we have come before our God because we are adopted children, heirs of salvation and members of His household of faith. In the following writings in this section on how the trinity works the believer will be informed and encouraged. Jesus has proclaimed that His mother, His brother, and His sister are they who hear the Word of God and **do it**.

We but need to be quiet before The Father and by the Holy Spirit He will speak marvelous things to us, things which shall give us faith. He will show us how to put on the bowels of mercies, how to extend brotherly kindness; and how to look to the health and welfare of others rather than ourselves. And above all He will show us how to love one another, not as loving our neighbors as ourselves, but that we love one another with the love which Jesus has loved us.

This is the bottom line, the final command of our Father that will predominate as we sit before the throne of the universal imperator of all universes and beyond.

Ultimately His people will all hear the same command always being promoted from our loving Father; that gracious command to:

“LOVE ONE ANOTHER. LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS JESUS HAS LOVED YOU.”

53. A Vision of The Trinity Powerfully At Work

Life is good and active in the house of God.

by T Myers Smith

I was praising the Lord in the spirit one day when suddenly I was transported by the Spirit to the throne room of God. Immediately, I was before the Father's throne at His feet. I was on my knees and Jesus was with me on one knee. He had His right arm around my shoulders and His left hand was under my chin holding my head. I was transfixed before God. I was afraid to move for fear that the vision, though I knew I was really in the throne room of God, would dissolve just as quickly as it had appeared. The Father then spoke to me and asked me, "What can I do for you?"

I asked for salvation for some people and some other things and then precipitously asked the Lord, "What can I do for you?" His reply was simple and quick. "Love one another." After a bit longer the vision lifted but my memory of it has never faded.

The picture of the workings of the Trinity has served me well for forty years. Jesus was on one knee to show His subservience to one thing and one thing only, the Father. I was in His arms to show that whatever is accepted of Jesus and in His care is also accepted by the Father and that it is by this fact that we have access to the throne of grace. It is the Father who hears and answers our prayers when they are offered in the "name" of Jesus. My being in His arms showed I was asking in accord with His desires and with Christ's OK. But what made this visit to the throne room happen, what made it a reality, was the power of the Spirit to transport me into the arms of Jesus and appear, in all spiritual reality, in heaven before God. "*And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:*" Eph 2:6 Jesus having one arm around me and one hand

under my chin provided a perfect picture of the Song of Solomon when he appears in chapter two and eight to His bride with the same love and care. *“His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me.”* Song of Songs 2:6 It is by His love that we are able to hold our head up in the presence of the Father and make our requests known to Him in time of need. This whole picture is a perfect illustration of The Trinity at work for the believer.

By the transporting power of the Holy Ghost, I was seated in heavenly places in the arms of Christ. Through His grace and by my personal relationship with Christ I was granted access to the Father. The owner and master of the household of faith is all things and provides all things to his children. The Father is overseer and conceiver of the plan of salvation. He is omnipotent and omniscient. There is nothing He does not know and He is the architect of the sprawling spiritual house in which we live. The Son is the only path of entrance, for he delivered to us the only key that can unlock the door, a key in the form of the cross. A personal acknowledgment of Him as the Savior of our life is required if we are to be a resident in this great household of faith and we must concede to his will by obedience to the Spirit if we are to live in harmony with him in the heavenly home, his residence. But Jesus is much more than just Lord and Savior to those who have taken up residence in the household of faith. He is our advocate with the Father, always ready to intercede with the Father in our behalf. He wants to be our Friend, Parent, and most wonderfully, because he is man, he can be our brother, our sibling able to identify with us in everything. And he is Shepherd and Captain of our souls He wants to be our eternal husband and make us one being with Him – even as He and His Father are one. The Spirit is omnipresent – ever ready to console, convince, convert, guide and comfort on a personal level any believer of the household of faith who will allow him into their private quarters.

Life is good and active in the house of God. The adventure of life never ceases. The Triune God, always in perfect harmony, is ever present, ever ready, to give us what we need by His effectual workings in our lives. It is by – through – and to. By the power of

the Spirit and through the love of Jesus we can go into the presence of our caring Father. *“Cast all your cares upon God, for he careth for you.”* 1 Pet 5:7 When someone asks you; How does the Trinity operate, how does it work? Answer them: by through and to, that’s how! How does the Trinity work?

BY, THROUGH, and TO – One, in God’s Love working together for a person’s salvation.

54. Faith For the Gift of 'Laying on of Hands'

by T Myers Smith

"The Laying on of hands" is a common practice among ministering Christians that has been seen and experienced by many believers down through the Church age and by countless thousands in our generation. This practice of laying one's hands upon another person and praying for them is declared in Hebrews 6:2 to be one of the "*principles of the doctrine of Christ*", a fundamental for all born-again believers. These six doctrines are: "*Repentance from dead works, faith towards God, the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment*". As a principle doctrine of Christ this "*laying on of hands*" should therefore be taught and encouraged in every fellowship where serious believers gather to worship the Lord and those who wish to be washed by the pure water of the word.

Not our Power

The power of God does not lie within our hands in the sense that our flesh is what brings about the works of God. Rather it is our asking in the authoritative name of Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Ghost, so that our prayers are heard and God's mighty power is manifest among us. Our laying on of hands is an outward sign of our act of faith that we are a vessel of prayer through which God pours out his Spirit to do His awesome works. The apostle, Paul, instructs us through his letter to Timothy to "*Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure.*" 1 Tim 5:22 It is the gift of discernment that we ought to rely on to make sure

the Holy Ghost is prompting us to lay hands on someone. It is very important that we consider God's perfect timing when we desire to lay hands on an individual and pray.

The Old Testament Set the Precedent

Even in the Old Testament, there are accounts of the laying on of hands. Many of the accounts pertain to the placing of the hands on the head of the animal that was going to be sacrificed as an offering to the Lord and there is one interesting account of the Levites being an offering of the children of Israel.

"And thou shalt bring the Levites before the tabernacle of the congregation: and thou shalt gather the whole assembly of the children of Israel together:

And thou shalt bring the Levites before the LORD: and the children of Israel shall put their hands upon the Levites:

And Aaron shall offer the Levites before the LORD for an offering of the children of Israel, that they may execute the service of the LORD.

And the Levites shall lay their hands upon the heads of the bullocks: and thou shalt offer the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering, unto the LORD, to make an atonement for the Levites.

And thou shalt set the Levites before Aaron, and before his sons, and offer them for an offering unto the LORD.

Thus shalt thou separate the Levites from among the children of Israel: and the Levites shall be mine." Num 8:9-14

There is also the story of Israel when he blessed the sons of Joseph and knowingly placed his right hand upon the younger of the two. *"And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the*

firstborn.” Gen 48:14 Scripture also tells us how God spoke to Moses and commanded him to anoint Joshua as the children of Israel’s next leader. “And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the LORD commanded Moses.” Deut 34:9

Jesus Laid Hands on Believers Often

Search the Scriptures and you will discover that Jesus laid hands on people for a variety of reasons. Jesus healed the sick, raised the dead and blessed the children with the laying on of hands as we see in the following places.

1. *“And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.” Mark 6:5*
2. *“Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them.” Luke 4:40*
3. *“He laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.” Luke 13:13*
4. *“And besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live...And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cu mi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise.” Mark 5:23,41*
5. *“And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.” Mark 10:16*

Jesus even prophesied about believers in the church. He said: *“And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues. They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them;*

they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." This prophecy by Jesus should build our faith that the practice of laying hands on the sick, whether physically or spiritually, has indeed received God's own stamp of approval. Mark 16:17-18

The three main purposes of laying hands on believers are: Healing, Baptism of Holy Ghost and for Appointment. By looking into the word of God we find that there are many examples of people in the early church who laid hands on one another in prayer. There are mainly three kinds of examples for us to follow set forth by the apostles of the early church. The three purposes that hands were placed upon others in prayer were when the person was being prayed over for healing, or for the appointing of some to do God's work, or, in the most recorded occasions, hands were laid upon someone when they were being prayed over to receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

A scriptural example of healing accompanied by the laying on of hands is in the following account about Saul (Paul) in the book of Acts. After he was struck with blindness by the Lord along the road to Damascus and was brought into the House of Judas we are told; *"And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink. And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized."* Acts 9:9-12,17-18 This same Saul whom God later gave the new name of Paul also laid his hands upon some and prayed for their healing. *"And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of*

a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him.” Acts 28:8

Then there are accounts of believers receiving the Baptism of the Holy Ghost with the laying on of hands. We already know Paul received healing from blindness and the Holy Ghost baptism in this way when Ananias laid hands on him and prayed, and we are told of these other accounts. *“Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.” Acts 8:17 “And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.” Acts 19:6* Paul wrote to Timothy in two letters and in both he mentions “the gift of God” which is within him (Timothy) and exhorts him not to neglect but to stir up that gift which was received by the “laying on of the hands.” *“Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.” 1 Tim 4:14 “Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.” 2 Tim 1:6*

The third purpose for the laying on of hands that has been shown to us through the Word is for the anointing of those who have been called by God to do His works. It is explained to us in the beginning of the sixth chapter of Acts that the Apostles needed to have seven men chosen to minister among the Grecian Jews in order to take care of a problem that arose and was causing murmurings among them. These men were chosen for their faith and for being full of the Holy Ghost. Scriptures tell us this about the seven men of *“Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. And the word of God increased; and the number of disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.” Acts 6:6-7* Another example is recorded in Acts concerning Saul and Barnabas. Hands were laid upon them when they were prayed over before they were sent out to preach the word of God. *“And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.” Acts 13:3*

So let those of us in the Church today remember the next time we feel led to lay our hands on someone in prayer that what we are

doing has been happening among God's people for generations and that our physical act of faith is witnessed by those among us and by our Father in heaven who has also laid his hand upon us who are his children. His hand of judgment and His hand of mercy has been placed upon us who have asked for and received the shed blood of Jesus Christ and the fire of the Holy Ghost.

THE TABERNACLE TENT

The entire tent was 45 feet (13.7 m) long, 15 feet (4.6 m) wide, and 15 feet (4.6 m) high. It was a wooden skeletal structure, overlaid with gold, with no solid roof or front wall (Ex. 26:15–29). Five wooden bars (overlaid with gold) passed through rings attached to each frame (Ex. 26:26–30).

The Most Holy Place was a 15-foot (4.6-m) cube, containing only the ark of the covenant (Ex. 25:10–22; 37:1–9). It was here that Yahweh would descend to meet with his people in a cloud theophany (divine appearance). The high priest could enter only once a year, on the Day of Atonement (see note on Heb. 9:7).

The framed structure was covered by four layers of cloth and skin (Ex. 26:1–14).

The table for the bread of the Presence (Ex. 25:23–30)

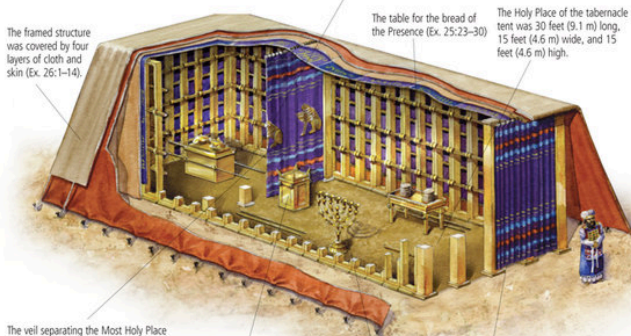
The Holy Place of the tabernacle tent was 30 feet (9.1 m) long, 15 feet (4.6 m) wide, and 15 feet (4.6 m) high.

The veil separating the Most Holy Place from the Holy Place was made from blue, purple, and scarlet dyed yarns woven with fine twined linen and embroidered with cherubim (Ex. 26:31–33). It hung on four golden pillars.

The altar of incense (Ex. 30:1–5; 37:25–29)

The golden lampstand (Ex. 25:31–40; 37:17–24)

The veil that formed the entrance to the tabernacle was similar to the veil separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place, except that cherubim were not embroidered on it. It was suspended on five golden pillars (Ex. 26:36–37).



55. The Trinity Revealed In The Tabernacle

by LeRoy J. Gardenier

Throughout the Old Testament period, the nation Israel was a living reminder of and witness to the reality of “the One True God”. The Almighty created this people and raised them up to be a shining light to the rest of the world. All the other nations were steeped in the darkness of polytheism, the worship of many gods. The sons of Jacob, descendants of Abraham the father of all true believers – they alone, amid the rising and falling dynasties, the extensive empires, the diverse and fascinating cultures, the impressive shrines and temples erected to a pantheon of deities – the Jews alone stood firm on the Biblical revelation that “*the Lord our God is **one** Lord*”. Deut. 6:4

For all their intellectual insight and practical knowledge the ancient peoples, including the sophisticated Greeks and Romans of classical fame, never grasped this essential characteristic of God’s unity. The Chosen People were singled out to treasure, guard and witness to three fundamental aspects of true religion: the unity of God, the Messianic hope and the revelation in the Holy Scriptures. But in their attempts to stand for monotheism, the worship of One God, against the universal acceptance of many gods, the Jews themselves erred and were blinded to God’s full revelation of His nature and character. God progressively unfolded the truth about His nature through the names He called Himself. Even in the Old Testament, there are a number of indications of God’s triune personality – Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Among these important Old Testament indicators are Jacob’s three-fold reference in Genesis 48:14-16; the many mentions of “*the Angel of the Lord*”; the personification of “*Wisdom*” in Proverbs; as well as the continuing

allusion to that Personality known as the “*Spirit of God (or of the Lord)*”.

The tabernacle’s overall shape was in the form of a large rectangle. It was a temporary and portable dwelling place for God. Later, the two temples that were built followed the same basic pattern. These were meant to be permanent structures and were more elaborate. We know the Bible gives exact dimensions for these buildings and precise instructions for the quality and placement of their furnishings. Here I’m mainly concerned with their general design, function and spiritual application, especially as they connect with the wonderful life-giving work of the Holy Trinity.

The large rectangular shape of the entire tabernacle was bordered by an enclosure that had a curtained opening only at one end, the eastern entrance. This doorway opened onto a rectangular courtyard in which was placed the ominous bronze altar of sacrifice and the large brazen laver or wash basin. Behind these two objects stood the roofed Tent of Meeting which contained two rooms. The first room, rectangular in shape, was called the Holy Place. The furnishings of the Holy Place were the seven-branched golden candlestick, the gold-plated table containing the twelve loaves of shewbread and the golden altar of incense. The Holy of Holies was the innermost room, perfectly square in shape, and held the Ark of the Covenant with its mercy seat guarded by two cherubim. Here the very presence of God resided. Originally the box part of the ark contained three very important items: the tables of the Law, a jar of manna and the rod of Aaron that budded. Note that in each of the three separate areas of the tabernacle – the courtyard, the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies – that there are three prominent objects or furnishings in each place. In the **Courtyard** there is the entrance, the altar of sacrifice and the bronze laver. In the **Holy Place**: the golden candlestick, the table of shewbread and the golden altar of incense. In the **Holy of Holies** is one object, the Ark of the Covenant. It held three items: the tables, the manna and the rod.

Now that we’ve seen the overall pattern and the particular

furniture of the tabernacle, let's look at its spiritual function and the symbolic connection to the acts and operations of each Person of the Blessed Trinity – the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

The Old Testament worshiper was drawn from the outside world through the opening into the courtyard by the demands of the Law. Periodically he was required to bring an offering to the altar of sacrifice for ritual cleansing. If his oblation was an animal or bird, the worshiper brought it to the altar, killed it and then handed it over to the priests. Under the Old Covenant that was as close as the believer got to the presence of God unless God visited him in some way. Only the Levites and priests could handle the holy things. So even though the worshiper understood that the priests took care of the sacrifices, washed themselves at the laver, lit the golden candlestick, consumed and replaced the loaves of shewbread and offered incense at the golden altar, the ordinary person could take no personal part in these priestly functions. Of course the Holy of Holies was strictly out of bounds to all, except the High Priest alone, who was permitted to enter once a year on the Day of Atonement to sprinkle blood on the mercy seat.

The Courtyard

The tabernacle and its appurtenances are now things of the distant past, of a different dispensation, of a religion now fully realized in spiritual relationships. But the symbolism of the tabernacle and the instruments of grace it stood for still endure. Like the worshiper of old, the sincere seeker after Truth is drawn from the world by the Father into **the Entrance** of the arena of salvation. The altar of sacrifice is now replaced and fulfilled by the Cross of Calvary and its atoning blood. There the seeker becomes a believer, meets the Lord Jesus as his personal Savior and is washed in the Blood of the Lamb. Then, as a priest of the living God, he uses the laver under the guidance of the Holy Ghost to remove those stains and

defilements – the dust accrued by concessions to the world, the flesh and the devil. The operation of the Trinity is so apparent. The Father draws him to Jesus. The Lord Jesus, the Sacrifice who is both Victim and Victor, meets him at the altar of sacrifice, the Cross. The Holy Ghost leads him to the laver to confirm salvation and carry on the redeeming work of sanctification.

The Holy Place

In the area of **the Holy Place** this blessed program continues but the order of influence is reversed. The only light in this enclosure comes from the seven-branched candlestick symbolic of the Holy Ghost. The one source of nourishment there are the twelve loaves of shewbread containing the fragrance and flavor of the One who calls Himself “*the Bread of Life*”, even Jesus. And it is the Father who receives our prayers as we stand at the golden altar wafting heavenward the petitions and intercessions that penetrate the unveiled Presence. “*Seeing that we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God... let us therefore come boldly into the throne of grace.*” Heb. 4:14,16

The Holy Of Holies

Yea, we are not only permitted but we are urged to enter the very **Holy of Holies**. There we find the Father, represented by the tables of the Law; the Son, signified by the manna from heaven; and the Holy Ghost, typified by the rod of Aaron. The first two objects and their Representatives are patently clear. The third, Aaron’s rod and its connection to the Holy Ghost, merits a brief explanation.

According to Exodus and Numbers the rod of Aaron was associated with two differing miracles. It was used by Moses to

discredit one of the many hideous gods of Egypt, the serpent. Under God's power and direction this rod turned into a serpent that devoured the reptiles spawned by the magicians. Later, in Numbers, the reaction of the whole wilderness company against the just punishment God inflicted on Korah and his rebellious crew further challenged the divine authority that resided in Moses and Aaron alone. The people were instructed to place twelve rods, each engraved with the name of a tribe, in the presence of the Lord. Aaron's name was inscribed on the rod reserved for the tribe of Levi. Overnight it was Aaron's rod alone that budded with almond blossoms. This miracle confirmed God's approval of His appointed leaders. How representative are these two miracles of the diverse manifestations of the Spirit: convicting of sin, on the one hand; and supplying effective anointing and sure direction through God-gifted leaders, on the other.

Many years ago I drew a blueprint of the tabernacle design. In its appropriate area I marked a place for each object and added Scripture references that pertained to the individual pieces of furniture. I encourage the reader to make a similar investigation for himself. I'll cite just a few appropriate Scriptures to give you an idea of how I went about it. Maybe the ones you select will be even more fitting. As an overall theme in keeping with the general design I chose Psalm 27:4 *"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple (tabernacle)".* At the entrance to the tabernacle I applied Leviticus 26:11-12: *"And I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people."* I closed my diagram with a depiction of the Ark of the Covenant and its three symbolic objects. Beside it I wrote John 16:8 *"And when he is come (the Holy Ghost), he will reprove the world of sin – the convicting power of the Law represented by the tablets of stone. Of righteousness – the jar of manna symbolizing Christ and His righteousness. And of*

judgment” – Aaron’s rod which was used to bring judgment against rebellion and sin.

From my limited study of the tabernacle, I saw how efficiently it was constructed and how relatively easy it was to carry about and re-assemble. God designed it to be simple in construction, symbolic in shape and portable in practice. I hope this explanation of the tabernacle will encourage the believer to carry in his innermost heart the Blessed One it so beautifully and clearly represents.

56. The Holy Ghost is the Transformer and Power

by T Myers Smith

The Lord will often use similitudes to give us spiritual understanding. Just recently very dear friends of mine had applied for help with their energy bill. They had gotten behind on payments and weren't able to get caught up. So they contacted the utility company to work something out. The company came out to assess things. A gentleman came with all kinds of special equipment to make a real assessment of the situation. He pointed out all the problems with their home, where they were losing power, their insulation needs, and so on. Never had they imagined they not only were going to be forgiven their debt but they were also going to come in with experts to fix all the problems in their home all expenses paid. The only thing they had to do was sign a paper acknowledging all the problems that had been sighted and agree to allow the contractors to fix them according to the workers schedule and timetable. I think everyone will agree, you can't get a better deal than that!

Here is what the Lord revealed to me. When we come to Jesus and make him our Lord and Savior we are made a whole new creation. We **start** a whole new life. The Lord will reveal himself to us. He speaks to us about all kinds of things, and just as a young toddler learns to walk, we can learn to walk with him.

There will come a time when the Lord will speak to you about your house, the place in the spirit where you are living. There is an expert, The Holy Ghost, the one who can come in and assess your home and he will let you know if you are losing power. The assessment and solutions are offered freely but it will cost you your will. You will need to consent to him in all that he will show, and wherever your will or life in general may be in opposition to God.

He will forgive all your debts and begin fixing all that is wrong in your spiritual life so you can live a full and pleasing life to God. All this through Christ Jesus by the transforming power of the Holy Ghost.

You can bear much fruit in your life and live a warm life by conceding to the Holy Ghost and listening to him.

I have known many Christians that would not allow the Holy Ghost to come into their life at all and hardly any who had, who would not allow the Holy Spirit to have complete influence over their heart and mind. Because of their resistance they live a life full of confusion and are tossed about with every 'wind of doctrine'. It doesn't mean they are not saved through the blood of Christ but they will never be the best kind of Christian they could be... aspiring to become the Bride of Christ. People that are like this want control of their own life, in spite of the fact that they have little of life's wisdom. Regularly we have little or no control over what happens to us. We hardly ever know what is going to happen next. Cancer can invade us. Weather can come and destroy all we have. We can lose a job or suffer the death of a loved one. Then what do we do? It is not sophistry or philosophy; everything we see is temporary, and will all pass away someday. In the end these things are but tools to get us from this temporary existence to a permanent eternal life. We can't take anything with us, except life, providing we somehow acquire it before death exacts its toll on our earthly body. The only thing here is our eternal spirit and the testimony of faith we may have in God Himself.

Hearing His Voice

I remember the first time I heard God's voice in my heart. I was so excited that the God of the universe was speaking to a nothing like me. It's still awesome even when He shows me things that are displeasing to Him and (Oh!) how sorry I feel. When he forgives me

and changes me I know how blessed I am. When He tells me He loves me and is with me when I'm going through a rough time it gives me the courage and strength to keep pressing on to the prize of being His eternal Wife.

One day the Holy Ghost, the expert gentleman, came to me and said there are a lot of problems with your life and where you live (inner being) and I want to point those things out to you so you can have a fuller life in Christ. I was actually losing power in these areas. I was being robbed of a fuller life in Christ. I yielded to the Spirit and he gently changed me in many ways.

The Holy Ghost is fully equipped to assess us; he sees our hearts and all that is hidden there. The Bible tells us that our hearts are deceitful and desperately wicked Jer. 17:9 and it is so very true. I know this personally because of what he has shown me about myself. I couldn't change my nature. I didn't have the power to do it. The Holy Ghost does. He knows exactly how to speak to us. He is firm and yet gentle, tender and merciful. *"A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory."* Matt 12:20 His mercies are new every morning.

He also has all kinds of gifts to give us to help us along life's journey. He wants to make us new creatures and fully equipped to do the Father's will. He wants to bring us to God's perfection. Ultimately, he wants to make us the Bride of Christ which is the highest mark you can attain to in this life. We have to be willing to pay the price, which is to die to self. This can only be done by the transforming power of the Holy Ghost, we can't do it ourselves. We need to trust Him to bring this about for us. *"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."* John 14:26

When we let the Holy Ghost have complete control of our lives all things will work together for our good. God will use all kinds of circumstances that can bear fruit in our lives and help those around us for eternal good. I'm not saying life is going to be easy and we

won't have any trouble. Actually, we will have more trouble because we will now be at enmity with the world and Satan just as Jesus prophesied in John 16:33 *"In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."* Only the Holy Ghost can help us make it home safely.

Someday we will be with the eternal Spirit in Heaven and have that wonderful life we all long for. Where perfect love, peace, joy and all that is Christ's surrounds us all the time and we will live in God's presence with Jesus and the gentle Holy Ghost.

We will be judged according to all that we have done in these bodies. We will all appear before the judgment seat of Christ and all receive for the things done in this body, according to what we have done, whether it be good or bad. So we can strive to have a wonderful testimony for all eternity of all we allowed God to do with us or have a different testimony of what we ourselves have done with our life.

"But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour.

If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." 2 Tim 2:20-21

I want to be a vessel unto honor, sanctified (by the Holy Ghost) and fit for the master's use, prepared unto every good work and bring glory to Jesus Christ for all that he has done for me. I want to honor the Holy Ghost by yielding to him and his teachings and be the apple of God's eye for the love, trust, and faith that I have in them. I want that testimony in eternity. I hope you do too.

57. The Path To Walking In The Spirit

Introduction to Series on: Perfected in The Spirit

by T Myers Smith

We are abjured by the Scriptures that if we live in the Spirit we ought also to walk in the Spirit. When we follow His instructions on a daily basis, it is called walking in the Spirit. This should be the daily goal of every disciple of Christ, that is, to be a reverent follower of the Holy Ghost. We must shake off any and all temptation to enjoy the advantage of the gifts and benefits of the Holy Ghost, living and basking in their glory and effervescence of life, while refusing to follow after the Spirit and not living in the wake of His action, or speaking and doing His will.

The path to living in the Spirit and walking in the Spirit is one of gain and growth in one's relationship with the Spirit of God. Our relationship with the Holy Ghost is one which needs nurturing if it is to grow into the full flower of maturity. Mere introduction does not constitute the fullness of purpose for any relationship. A relationship with the Holy Ghost is no different. It must grow by experience and knowledge if it is to blossom into full and loving fruition.

The things necessitated for growth in our relationship with the Holy Ghost might well be described in many different ways, using appropriate teachings, similes and examples. There have been those who have admirably explained the path to growth and closeness with the Holy Ghost but the Bible does it best. The Bible speaks of man's relationship with the Spirit as being bonded together by spiritual revelation, by belief and faith generated by the wisdom of God, by learning to trust the Holy Ghost through actual life experience, by education and teaching, in Jesus' words at the 'Last

Supper' for instance, and by gaining in knowledge, understanding and having the wisdom for daily living imparted to us by the grace of Jesus Christ during life's spiritual experiences.

Some of the ways and processes in which man's relationship with the Spirit is enhanced are universal, by that I mean, common to all those faithful people who wish to have a personal relationship with the Spirit. Other ways in which this holy relationship is built vary from individual to individual because a relationship with the Spirit is highly personal also. It is personally and introspectively understood and received by the sober individual exclusively within a *mano-a-mano*, heart to heart, wholly personal way.

When all's said and done every relationship with the Spirit is a prized diamond of exquisite beauty, and at the same time every relationship with the Holy Ghost is as unique and differs as one diamond differs from another in beauty and scale and clarity. The Holy Ghost is that personal. His relationship with me is both universal and entirely unique, known only to me, at the same time. No one has the kind of relationship with the Holy Ghost as I do. He wants to get to know me in a fashion that no living creation will ever know or understand me. He wants me to come to know him perfectly as well. This is how wonderfully personal He wants to be with anyone who will accept it.

In the end, when all individual truths and nuances are factored in and established in His love affair with a person one thing is certain and inarguably universal: it always comes down to the same thing: hearing His voice, whether it be by reading the Bible, by way of a charismatic gift, while in pray, in fastings or by some random experience, a conversation with someone, a TV show, an article or some voice used by God to get our attention. We must hear His voice and be subject to it. For this to happen we must learn to deny ourself. Then we can be obedient to its direction.

The Spirit can and may speak to us from almost anywhere using anything. While being negotiated our way through this earthly temporary present life we must listen and do. He is the only perfectly honest guide we shall ever meet in this life. We've tried to

explain this relationship and the method of the pattern of growth in the following sub-section of Purified Perfect titled: Perfected in the Spirit. As with any of God's spiritual truths there could be more than just a single way to express this grand relationship of all realities. The following is an attempt to describe how the Spirit has worked a relationship with us, how the Holy Ghost has befriended us and encouraged people because of the active grace of Jesus Christ in a believer's soul, to be Christians who walk closely with Him. The following articles are little more than introductions to each of the phases of the growth pattern of a relationship that a person can have with the Holy Ghost. When one has a holy and reverential respect and admiration for the 'third' person of the Trinity we will have a friend for all time and beyond into eternity.

First, he will teach us to believe that He exists and that he wants a relationship with those who know Christ. Then we must acquire a spirit of yieldedness to Him and a thirst to hear His voice. We must then be willingly schooled and disciplined so we can have the courage to obey His voice. We must then abide by His ruling, His decisions. This means we will learn to trust in those decisions regardless of how they may affect us personally or how they appear in regards to the world. Finally, when we have been taught these aforementioned things, we are expected to stand in the repercussions of those decisions; living and breathing regularly, day by day, in those decisions – ultimately walking without argument, hesitation or doubt, in full confidence of His love.

Obviously not every born-again, spirit-filled person will achieve this kind of worshipful and close walk with the Holy Spirit. Yet this does not change the fact that it is God's will for every disciple of Christ to walk in this fashion. The apostle John in his first letter (chapter 2 vs 6) simply put it this way; *'We ought also to walk, even as He walked.'* Our relationship does not begin with walking with Him. It must grow into a walk with Him. For the most part people are not capable of such a thing as walking with Him right from the get go. We cannot readily see Him or hear His voice well. We must have a spiritual single eagle-eye sharpened and developed by

experience. We must acquire an acute sense of spiritual hearing so that it is honed like radar to follow. In the handful of articles in this place of our website we have charted the pattern of development of the relationship with the Spirit phase by phase beginning with: Believing, Yielding, Obeying, Trusting, Standing, Living and finally, Walking with Him.

58. Believing in The Holy Ghost

Jesus Ascended to Heaven so we could receive and believe in the Holy Ghost

by Eloise Gardenier

It had been on my heart to write something about Pentecost and I had been hoping for a revelation from the Lord with something a little different about this most important day in Christendom. Then, one morning in April, as I was beginning to awake, the Lord spoke to me one lone word in that “still small voice” similar to the way he had spoken to his prophet Elijah as recorded in 1 Kings 19:12. The word he gave me was: trilogy.

The obvious Biblical trilogy and the one that came immediately to mind is about the three most important events of Jesus’ life on earth: His birth, His death, and His resurrection. Without this and His ascension to heaven to sit at the Father’s right hand, the day of Pentecost could never have come. But the Lord went on to show me another trilogy of sorts, a trilogy of Christian celebrations. They are Christmas, Easter and Pentecost. Unfortunately, Pentecost has always been the most forgotten of these three special days, mainly because it has to do with the Holy Ghost and that its ultimate reality required that Jesus go to the Father so the ‘Comforter’ could be the Minister to the Church. Though it is often disregarded by Christians it is equally as important as Christmas and Easter in God’s overall plan for the Church because it completed the work the Father had sent Jesus to do here on earth. Because of Pentecost, the Third Person of the Trinity was able to come into the world and begin His work of judgment and comfort.

Much of the Church completely ignores this day or only gives it a nod. Even those who have declared they are Pentecostals, having

received the Baptism in the Holy Ghost, all but ignore this glorious day when the Spirit of God freely fell on repentant, true believers. Others, who choose to label themselves “Charismatic”, shying away from using the word Pentecostal or Holy Ghost, also let the day of Pentecost slide by without appreciation for the wonders that this day has ushered in. By treating their experience and life in the Spirit as if it were for circus delight rather than growth of the fruits of the Spirit, Charismatics water down the true meaning of Pentecost. Often their experience is even a counterfeit of the true Pentecostal experience of being filled with the Holy Ghost and ends with little devotion and regard for yielding to the third person of the Trinity.

But Jesus Himself told us how important it was that the era of Pentecost should come to believers. Jesus said to those closest to Him: *“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.”* John 16:7 But why was it expedient for us that the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, should come? As Jesus said of Him: *“And when He is come, He will reprove the WORLD of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father and ye see me no more; Of judgment because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.”* John 16:8-12 The reason Jesus said; *“It is expedient that I go away”*; was two-fold. On this earth, as the “son of man” as well as the Son of God, Jesus was confined to the place where His body of flesh was located. He could only preach, teach, minister to and convince those in His physical presence. But when the Holy Ghost was given God could be with every believer, everywhere, all the time, in a strong, personal way, teaching, guiding, comforting and edifying them. Because the spirit is invisible and introspective His presence must be believed for and accepted by faith.

Second, since Jesus would no longer be physically present, believers would need to believe and trust that they too would have the Spirit to constantly remind them of true righteousness that would live only by the abiding will of God, Jesus, manifested by the

power of the Holy Ghost from within and without. Jesus had told his disciples, *“When the Spirit is come He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and judgment.”*

The Spirit Held by No Bounds

God remained in heaven on His throne as the Director of His “Plan of The Ages” in this dispensation. He sent His Son to earth to die for the sins of man. In order to make his death for us legitimate, He had to be born of woman yet remain the Son of God. His flesh was man, His Spirit God. But when Jesus returned to His Father, redeemed and glorified, He sent the Holy Ghost, called the Spirit of truth in John 14:17; *“the comforter, who will teach you all things”* John 14:26 – *“the comforter and spirit of truth who will testify of me,”* John 15:26. He has no bounds, He is free to touch, persuade and convict hearts all over this earth in every instant of time.

Proverbs 15:3 instructs us; *“The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.”* Again, in Zechariah 3:9 & 4:10 we are given the same message; *“...upon one stone shall be seven eyes:”*... These are the omnipotent eyes of the Spirit of God. And once again we get a similar reference to God’s eyes, or the probing of the Holy Ghost, in 2 Chronicles 16:9 *“For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him ...”* In the midst of this trilogy of the life of the Savior and the trilogy of the days of Christian celebration is the working of the trio of the unified Trinity of the Godhead.

The work of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost involves their total cooperation and unity in all the work they do to bring about God’s wonderful “Plan of the Ages”. Much of it has been to make an avenue for the Holy Ghost to come into the world en masse. It began even in the Old Testament when only a few special servants were personally visited by God the Father.

It was a rare happening and usually had to do with special instructions, testing, or warnings issued. Most of these visits were one on one. A few examples are: Adam and Eve, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David and, of course, the rest of the judges and prophets.

What a Trinity. Each having a different role to play, but always in complete agreement! How completely perfect God's omnipotent works have been, in giving the whole world a chance to become His tried, tested and saved sons and daughters. His personal work in the Old Testament was only the beginning of His preparation for a family made in His own image. It was "Act I" of His pageant for all our sakes. Old Testament saints were used to set the stage for "Act II".

Power of Holy Ghost Manifested in the book of Acts

By all the groundwork done for us in the Old Testament the time finally came for another phase of God the Father's wonderful family plan. Jews and Gentiles alike, all who were willing, to accept Jesus would be made a part of His eternal household of faith. Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection/ascension, was the second act of God's play or program. Let us go back to that original Scripture the Lord brought to my mind. Jesus is preparing those closest to Him. He must return to the Father and it was expedient (be good, be better for, be profitable for) for the Church that He go away. Then He explains that if He does not go away the "Comforter" (The Holy Ghost) will not come. But, He continues, if He does depart He will send the Holy Ghost to them. They did not understand at the time but they certainly did once they experienced the power and presence of the Holy Ghost after the initial pouring out of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2 and the entire book of Acts

thereafter is the story of the power of the Holy Ghost in the early apostles' lives.) Always two witnesses in heaven.

The Church Age is the Holy Ghost's Turn on Earth

There is another reason why Jesus had to return to heaven in order for the Holy Ghost to come. It is god's will that two 'Persons' of the Trinity be in heaven at all times, each one taking His turn at ministering to a lost World. The Father was the first to visit a "few good men" during the centuries of the Old Testament, while Jesus and the Holy Ghost were in heaven. Then Jesus walked among more men, including individuals, small groups and large crowds during His thirty-three year stay here on earth. Meanwhile, the Father and the Holy Ghost were together at home in heaven, to support Jesus during His time of suffering, shame and victory. Then Jesus had to return to be with the Father in heaven while the Holy Ghost took His turn and came to earth to do His work. His part in that "Perfect Plan of the Father" is to cover the whole earth with His power and gifts while drawing hungry hearts into the true family of God. This period will continue until the Age of Grace is completed when the Spirit will be partially withdrawn 2 Thess 2:7 during the period of judgment known as the Tribulation. At this time the Gospel will be preached from heaven. I believe the Holy Ghost will still search out hungry hearts until Jesus returns with His saints in that final great heavenly cavalry charge at Armageddon. The Father and the Son's ministries were filled with actual appearance, so the Holy Ghost has manifested Himself here and there with the tongues of fire and by His gifts to the Church, but for the most part He requires that the Church believe and trust in His power in the unseen realm of the Spirit. We must believe if he is to have power toward us.

In summation, the word the Lord tells a story of a trilogy within a trilogy. Those have reaped the wonderful fruits of the Pentecostal

gift and life can and should remember Jesus' mission here and that it is what made the day of Pentecost possible. That day of Pentecost is only ten days apart from Christ's ascension and I can respect it with the same awe, reverence, gratefulness and joy as I do Christmas and Easter. We can seek the Lord on how to keep this period of time each year, if we are so inclined. But the larger more actual trilogy is the way of the workings of the Trinity. Each one has taken His turn in His time here on earth, each of the three persons of the Trinity fulfilling His own special calling here on earth to seek out, draw, convict, persuade, instruct, even woo individuals into what will be God's eternal family. The Father appropriately began this plan by choosing those He felt would set a good foundation, including the only nation He calls His own, the Jewish nation – and others before that also – men like Enoch and Noah. It was the Father who wrote the Ten Commandments on the tablets of stone for Moses to deliver to the people, just an expression of the character and love of His Only Son, Jesus Christ. Then the Father turned over this ministry of personal contact with mankind to Jesus, who came, died and rose again so that all our sins might be forgiven, if we are willing to repent and receive our “new life” and be born-again of the Spirit. Then Jesus, when His part was fulfilled, returned to the Father for our good, that the Comforter might come. The Spirit then, knowing no bounds, could give all of mankind a chance to accept God's Plan of the Ages, and become a part of his Eternal Family.

Those of you who have had the blessed experience, started that first Pentecost, praise God for it. If you haven't received this perfect gift from God, seek Him for it, with all your heart. It gives us the power and helps us to occupy until He comes.

59. A Lesson Learned From The Law of The Leper

Yielding to the Holy Ghost

by T Myers Smith

This lesson shall take the tack that all born-again Christians are, in the true spiritual sense, “cured lepers”. We have all been plagued by sin’s rotting effects; some have nearly been eaten alive by sin – the most basic of all of man’s afflictions. We have all experienced the running sores of guilt and fear, the torment of putrefying, disfiguring envy and jealousy, the gnarly mutations of the spirit caused by obsessive lust and hatred. Our leprosy, painful and deadly, would be incurable, leaving us to a miserable, ugly fate were it not for the saving grace of Jesus and the love He proved for us at Golgotha. Because of this boundless love of Christ, snatching us off of the “isles of lepers”, many Evangelicals make the mistake of assuming that born-again Christians are fully vested with God’s righteousness from the instant they enter God’s kingdom; that there is no cleansing or washing needed for those “cured of leprosy”. But this is an unfortunate fallacy.

Yielding to the Spirit is Our Righteousness

While all who are saved by grace stand clean before God in the sense that they are forgiven of past sins and able to be in His holy presence because of the atoning blood of God’s only Son, we still need to seek after His righteousness. No one is made instantly perfect, holy, or righteous; that’s why Jesus issued the directive to be holy as God is

holy and perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. If it was a 'given' then there would have been no necessity for Jesus to instruct us to become holy and perfect. New birth only marks the beginning of a process, lets us start with a clean slate so we may become holy and righteous in the sight of God. There is a difference between being forgiven and having a new start in Christ, and living a pleasing life toward God by living a daily life of faith in the Spirit. Just as babes start with milk and graduate on to meatier food, as they require it for the maturing and growing process, so Christians must get past the infantile stage and ingest meaty, substantial spiritual food if they hope to grow healthy and strong in Christ.

The Bible alerts us to the fact that there are degrees of quality among the personal lives of Christians. *"In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man, therefore, purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work."* 2 Tim 2:20-21. We must not only do what is right, we must cease to do wrong. We must "flee youthful lusts" and associate with those of similar spiritual ambitions. *"Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart."* 2 Tim 2:22. If attaining to righteousness did not involve a process or quest then Jesus would not have told His disciples to seek after it and certainly would not have suggested to us to hang around with and fellowship with those who seek God out of a pure heart. There is some truth to the old adage that we are known by those with whom we associate.

The seeking process is two-fold. The main aspect is to acquire the spirit of righteousness through yielding to the Holy Ghost. The second aspect is to shun our sin and shed the old man – to repent of all our carnal and earthly ways, including any lingering faith in man. True righteousness is only accomplished in us when we allow the Holy Spirit to have full reign over us, so that He gradually and completely gains control of our personal thoughts, or tongue, and our whole living and daily life. He can help us to pick up our cross

if we will only yield to Him. We can be like the widow who cast in her 'whole living' and thereby so impressed Jesus. The law of the cleansing process for the leper delivered to Israel in the statutes of Leviticus was also designed to illustrate this great spiritual truth that we are to shun the flesh and be cleansed from our unrighteousness. This enlightening law of the leper and how it was given to us as a wonderful acting out of this marvelous principle of transformation from filthy sin to God's righteousness, a process which requires yielding to the Spirit's wisdom and guidance, which God hopes and expects every forgiven sinner to embark on and complete as he or she walks humbly and in reverence with Christ.

Being Born-Again is Merely the Beginning

It is fashionable in many Christian circles – no! more than fashionable – to think that man is inherently well-intentioned and that he is by character good-willed and of a loving nature, even though this is completely contrary to the message of the Scriptures. *“There is none that is righteous, no, not one who doeth good.”* Rom 3:10 But many Evangelicals and Pentecostals sincerely believe in man's goodness. They believe that it merely needs to be unleashed from within. Forgetting what they were taught in the Bible, they fawn over the doctrines of Ecumenism, desiring to share in humanistic dreams and powers. They just don't want to be left out. They fall for the good-looking charmer like a school kid swooning in the arms of the supposedly loving and progressive thinking ecumenical churches.

The first casualty of this spiritual infatuation with the “love” movement is the preaching of genuine righteousness and spiritual perfection. Power hungry, self-serving shepherds of the flock do not want to insist on righteousness from their people because it will empty pews and decimate bank accounts. They want influence in the community and the world of politics; they want recognition and

acceptance from the sheep and they often want large salaries. It is a dubious thing when pastors are richer than the mean of their congregation, and numbers on the roll translate into money, human resources and personal prestige. And money, laborers and prestige translate into power.

John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus by preaching “*Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand!*” The first words preached by Jesus after He was tempted in the wilderness were “*Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand!*” Matt 4:17 Without repentance there can be no salvation for a person. It is simply not possible. We, therefore, must first admit our inherent nature to sin, ask for forgiveness for our particular sins, our rejection of God and, then, trust in the blood of Jesus to be the payment for those transgressions which we have committed with regularity from our youth against God and man. “*For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*” Rom 3:23 For without this miraculous conversion from a fleshly, carnal being to a spiritual being there can be no abiding communion with God. He is a spirit and must be worshiped as a spirit. He will not abide in a stony dead place, but will reside in us only when our hearts have received life through His Son, Jesus Christ, and the forgiveness which only His shed blood can purchase. In short, we must be born-again.

Yet this new birth, so fundamental and necessary to eternal life, should never be viewed as the end-all or the complete fulfillment of being a pleasing son or daughter to Him. It is merely the first leg of that road less traveled, the beginning of the pursuit of giving our utmost for His highest. Our new birth is only our first step in seeking God’s righteousness when we are given the potential or, the “*power to become the sons of God*” John 1:12. If we were not to seek God’s perfect righteousness then why would scriptures like, “*work out your salvation with fear and trembling*” Phil 2:12, and “*Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.*” Heb 12:14, and “*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect*” Matt 5:48, be stated so forcefully?

Law of Cleansing is a Process

*“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought unto the priest:
And the priest shall go forth out of the camp; and the priest shall look, and, behold, if the plague of leprosy be healed in the leper;
Then shall the priest command to take for him that is to be cleansed two birds alive and clean, and cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop:
And the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water:
As for the living bird, he shall take it, and the cedar wood, and the scarlet, and the hyssop, and shall dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water:
And he shall sprinkle upon him that is to be cleansed from the leprosy seven times, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose into the open field.” Lev 14:1-7*

The law of the cleansing of the leper shows this very singular point: that there is one true spiritual process for having the righteousness of Christ grow in us. God, in three persons, is everywhere in this law of the cleansing of the leper; the Trinity completely dominates the process. The leper is not completely passive for he must do his part, but it is a concessionary role in which he must be actively submissive to God's will. The law, as it was designed, provides a temporal and corporeal working model for necessary and true things that exist in the world of the unseen. The New Testament calls the law “a schoolmaster” and in this case, we are taught a most important spiritual lesson on the chalkboard of Mosaic Law.

It is clearly stated that the Old Testament rituals are meant to be nothing more than “a shadow of things to come” Col 2:17. If this law

of the cleansing of the lepers was not meant by God to be a spiritual lesson then we would be compelled to admit that it is nothing short of bizarre. Consider it. A priest was to take two doves from a man who once had signs and symptoms of leprosy but no longer did, kill one dove in a clay pot while running water over it, take the other bird along with the scarlet, hyssop and cedar, dip them into the blood of the dead bird, sprinkle it seven times on the one-time leper and pronounce him clean. Then he was to take the living bird into, not just a field, but an open field and let it go free. Now ask yourself this question. Is God into meaningless gibberish and mystical rituals just to satisfy an urge to dominate and confuse people, or is there a greater meaning behind these curious acts? Because if this whole ritual does not signify a great spiritual truth of salvation then it is just an exercise of remote and strange incantations that signify nothing. But we know that God is a God of purpose and that He is practical, and always looking to teach us about the ways of salvation and the deep things of the redemption process. He tells Isaiah, *"Come let us reason together. ... though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson they shall be white as snow."* Isa 1:18 This ritual was created to show man the way to walk in the paths of Christ-like faith; to walk in the ways of a "leper" who is cleansed from his filth and can be "free as a bird".

To begin with, we must acquaint ourselves with the symbols of this parabolic ritual.

1. The leper is you and me – a sinner whose sins, like the natural leper, have eaten away at his body, soul and spirit. (Rom 3:1, Rom. 7:18)
2. The priest overseeing the operation is the great High Priest and mediator between God and man: Christ. (Hebrews 2:17, 3:1, 4&5; 1 Tim. 2:5)
3. The birds represent the Holy Ghost and His ministry. (Matt 3:16, Mk 1:10, Luke 3:22 & John 1:32)
4. The scarlet stands for the blood of Christ. (Red dye)
5. The hyssop stands for the weakness of man. (Fragile plant)

6. The cedar is the strength of God. (Strong, enduring, the mightiest of plants)
7. The earthen vessel is the human condition, life in this temporal body of dust and clay.
8. Running water is symbolic of the Word and its cleansing powers and ability to quicken the Spirit of God within us.
9. The mixture of the above elements represents the process we undergo with these spiritual ingredients to have righteousness worked in us.
10. The open field represents the destination God has for us of freedom and complete emancipation from sin.

The symbolism of why there must be one dead bird and one living bird is much of the point of the law's teaching and will become clear as the lesson unfolds.

First, we take note that the leper is already clean when the process of ritual begins.

*"This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing:
He shall be brought unto the priest:*

And the priest shall go forth out of the camp; and the priest shall look, and, behold, if the plague of leprosy be healed in the leper;

Then shall the priest command to take for him that is to be cleansed two birds alive and clean, and cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop:" Lev 14:2-4

This process is not about curing him of his leprosy (sin) for the man is observed by the priest to already be free of symptoms of the disease. We, therefore, must conclude that this lesson in spiritual truth is targeted for those who already know God and have had their initial sin miraculously wiped away. They are already born again. So, this is not about evangelistic concerns of bringing people to Christ. The person or object of the ritual, the "leper", is already cleansed and cured. We must conclude then that this, strictly speaking, is for

those who are already engaged, to whatever degree, in a walk with Christ. Now, the former leper is to go through a purifying, process.

All of the elements are assembled. They include, first, the birds (the Holy Ghost and His ministry) and then the scarlet, cedar and hyssop; which are Christ's atoning and powerful blood, the strength of God and the recognized weakness of the former leper, respectively. The ingredients being all in place before any action takes place is indicative of the fact that the man has been cured of leprosy (sin), as when one becomes born-again, and everything is spiritually in place making it possible for the process of cleansing and true righteousness to begin.

Is It Not A Very Odd Sacrifice?

You May Ask: Why Did An Innocent Animal Have To Die?

The Holy Spirit Indwells the "Clean Leper" *"And the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water:"*

Notice that the first action is performed on command of the priest (Jesus) who has the bird inserted into the vessel of clay and slain. How strange and cruel this would seem if it did not have spiritual significance. It, however, points to the truth of the human condition and what drastic measures God must go to in the heart of man to get him cleansed and on the road to righteousness. A gentle little bird must be sacrificed to make a leper clean. The gentle bird here is none other than the Holy Spirit. Jesus is not the only one who 'sacrifices' Himself for us. For the Holy Spirit makes great sacrifice for us when he dwells within us. It is symbolic of the true sacrifice that God makes when He commits His Spirit to a life in and with us. This is the significance and spiritual meaning of first placing the bird within the vessel of clay and then slaying it once it is within it.

Take note that the priest is the one who commands that the bird be placed within the vessel and sacrificed. The Holy Ghost – by the command of Jesus alone, for he is the one who baptizes with the Holy Ghost (Matt 3:11) – is placed inside the earthen vessel and that vessel is us. This sacrifice, for the bird is slain, is great and shows forth the immeasurable sacrifice the Holy Ghost has made by agreeing to dwell within these vessels of clay called men (Gen 1:26, 2:7, Job 13:12, 33:6 & 2 Cor 4:7). It is not spoken of enough concerning the sacrifice which the Holy Ghost makes each and every time He does the bidding of the High Priest and indwells a cured “leper”. For the Holy Spirit, and we emphasize **HOLY**, to become totally associated with these sons of dust and unclean sinners and to go everywhere, be everyplace and live the life of any mortal is a great sacrifice for a holy God. It would be like one of us sharing the existence and life of a scorpion, or an unclean dog, and being locked in their bodies, doing the things they do, living their fears, anxieties, lusts and ignorant, carnal desires. Christ’s atoning blood has made the unclean, clean, making it like a ‘former’ leper. The blood has made us a clean vessel and prepared the way for the Holy Ghost (the dove-bird) so that the vessel is clean enough for Him to place Himself within us. This is why no person can have the Holy Ghost placed within except he first be cleansed by the born-again blood of Jesus. The blood of Christ scours our soul and spirit and the Spirit can move in. But the Holy Spirit, in a sense, allows Himself to be slain. He is imprisoned. He dies to freedom and self for our sakes. This is so we are not alone; left without guide, comforter, teacher or soul-mate (John 14:16-18) while waiting for Jesus’s return from heaven where He now sits on the right hand of the Father waiting for that blast from the trumpet of the archangel.

What a sacrifice the Holy Ghost has made and we do not give Him due credit for this, but this lesson teaches us that we can and ought to do so. To see His willingness to indwell a cured leper as an extraordinary and incalculable sacrifice of love is to begin to give Him some honor and worship. As we shall see, it is the Spirit’s hope

that we will set Him free and not keep Him confined in the depths of our human nature represented by the earthen vessel.

God hopes that the risk He is taking, this great sacrifice of indwelling flesh will not go for naught by having the Spirit languish in the earthen vessel, His power suffocated by neglect or an unresponsive, disinterested heart, His love shunned and forgotten by a carnal mind and thirst for the things of earth. Notice that the High Priest does not perform the actual sacrifice. He has someone else pour running water, or as the Scriptures call it elsewhere, “living” water, over the bird as it is being slain in the vessel. How curious, until we make the connection with the living Word. The water is the life-cleansing and dynamic power of the Word of God (Eph 5:26). The Holy Ghost is the one who performs the whole sacrifice of Himself and all that pertains to it, including the pouring out of the Word upon the sacrifice. The running water is also the regenerative power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the daily renewing brought by the indwelling presence of the Holy Ghost which is abundantly worked in us. Titus 3:5-6

The Spirit works this in us and performs the whole operation of liberation from sin in us Himself, for that is what the whole sacrifice is about, declaring the liberation and cleanliness of a former leprous sinner.

Though a sacrifice is made, the Holy Spirit dwelling within us does not die, but lives with vitality – if we will go out into the open air and set Him free. For the Spirit to live the Christian must go the next step in the process. He must concede to Him, yield with compassion to Him, not imprison His Will and power, but let Him have full range, fly free and be unrestricted.

A Spiritual Admixture Cleanses the Cured Leper

“As for the living bird, he shall take it, and the cedar wood,

and the scarlet, and the hyssop, and shall dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water: And he shall sprinkle upon him that is to be cleansed from the leprosy seven times, and shall pronounce him clean...”

The High Priest, you will observe, is still very much in charge of the whole process. He must remain in charge. Just as it would have been entirely inappropriate for the “cured leper” to wrench any part of the carefully prescribed process from the control of the priest, so it is wrong for any believer to think that the aspects of this spiritual process in Christ can be altered or manipulated. Now all ingredients must be brought together into one homogeneous and perfect spiritual mix. This is the hard part and the least likely to be understood or accepted by the “cured leper”. If we allow Him to do it, Christ will mix the power of His resurrected life, with faith in God, and ever-decreasing reliance on ourselves to bring ever-increasing righteousness in us. This brings an unavoidable dichotomy, a tension within our spirit. We are pulled to God and away from self. Christ will increase our faith to trust and believe God, will help us grow in grace so we can rely His strength rather than our own, so we may, as the Proverb says, *“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”* Prov 3:5-6 The verse which follows reinforces the other part of the mixture for righteousness, that we not rely on our own goodness or insightfulness for good. It says, *“Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.”* Prov. 3:5-7 As Paul puts it in 2 Corinthians 1:9: *“we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead”*. Jesus used analogies to connect us to His cross so that we would understand that, like Him, we are to be “dead” to self. *“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but*

whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it." Luke 9:23-24 and, *"he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me."* Matt 10:38 The scarlet ingredient in the sacrifice represents the power of Christ's blood to save, forgive, deliver and free us to live a spiritually rich existence. The cedar represents the trust which Christ, who is *"the author and finisher of our faith"*, Heb 12:2 will encourage us with and provide for us. The hyssop is the death to self that is a recognition of our human limitations and fleshly weaknesses, whereby, we no longer trust in our own powers and weapons.

With these spiritual symbols, that is, the dead and the living bird, the scarlet, the cedar and the hyssop; acting upon and in union with one another God has shown the ultimate aim of forgiveness of sin and the cleansing power of the blood of salvation. It is the Holy Ghost, the blood of Christ, God's strength and man's humility, along with the High Priest (who ultimately is the Son of God, Jesus, who dips them into the blood of the sacrificed in their behalf. This act symbolizes that true righteousness can only be brought about in all actuality after the forgiven soul has yielded and submitted to being cleansed. it was a foreshadowing of the power of the Holy Ghost when one submits to the baptism of the Holy Ghost (symbolic of the initial bird being placed in us (for we are called a vessel of the Holy Ghost in Scripture) and then us letting it be freed to have flight in the earth by releasing it by our will power to do His solitary work of good.

Then, and only then, can the four elements of righteousness: (1) the freeing power of the blood of Jesus (2) the power of the living presence of the Holy Ghost within us (3) the ability to believe and yield to the Spirit of God and (4) the denial of all aspects of self; blend perfectly and harmoniously together, combining in full force to begin to grow the fruits of God's righteousness in a "cured leper" made spotless by Christ's forgiveness. The act is begun by the High Priest who is the only mediator between God and man. It is conditional upon the reception of the Holy Ghost by the "jar of clay", the Holy Ghost having "sacrificed" His holy and heavenly

nature to inhabit the 'earthen vessel' of a leprous soul. The only way it can become clean. It is done seven times (signifying that it is a process accomplished fully over a period of time and that it does not take place overnight or in an instantaneous fashion through prayer, miracles or a simple one-time act of bowing submission. The priest sprinkles the mixture on the "cured leper". When this is done, and only when this is done, does the priest pronounce the one-time leper clean. Notice, the priest does not pronounce the leper clean at the outset of the whole ritual when he first determines he is spotless and cured. It is only at the end of this remarkable and spiritual ritual that the human creature, cured of leprosy (sin), is finally called, clean.

One should now readily see that the process of seeking and gaining righteousness for the "cured leper", the born-again Christian, is from beginning to end, all about the Holy Ghost. Only one thing remains in the process. We must let the Holy Ghost have His way; it is He who must be in total control if righteousness is to reach its greatest height in us. He must be set free in our hearts to have full reign over our life. He should be our guide, comforter and teacher. He should have His way at all times, and we should be ready and willing to unleash Him in every situation. The end result of this remote ritual, this otherwise strange law which comes to light only in the radiant and lucid beams of Christ's understanding, and the Word as taught by the Holy Ghost, is for the living bird within us to be set free. This clearly means we are to allow the Holy Ghost to have reign. To let Him fly. It is for us, the 'cured leper' to: *"... let the living bird loose into the open field."*

60. Obey The Spirit - And Live!

Beware! The Unpardonable Sin

We reprint this letter about obedience from *The Christian Spirit Magazine*

first published in *April 1995* from Mr. F. Candell

Dear Staff,

I pray this letter finds you in his light, and that your burdens are light. (Matt 11:29, 30) I have enclosed a copy of a message I was guided to compose. I hope you find it suitable for print. It is a message that truly needs to be shared. In these end-times it is urgent that we, as God's children, try to send messages that will help others to see the truths as our Lord meant us to. Yet a lot of Christians are very confused and are misled. As Christ said "*The Gateway to life is small, and the road is narrow and only a few will find it.*" Matt 7:14 NLT I'm trying to shine a bright light on that narrow road so that others may find it. Although I am in constant struggle (Rom 7:15-25) and I am without fellowship, He has blessed me with the ability to see and understand many truths in his Word. I try to share them when I can. Well may God's grace and blessings be upon all who sincerely love our Lord, Jesus Christ (Eph 6:24). I will keep you and your ministry in my prayers.

UNPARDONABLE SIN

In Matthew 12:31,32 Christ said "*wherefore I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men. But the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven unto men.*" The message is clear. A person may cross the line that separates our Lord's mercy and his wrath and not be able to cross back!

Are you scared that you could cross that line, and be severed from his love and forgiveness? Can we actually do something so atrocious

that even our Lord's never-ending love and mercy for us could be denied? Well ask Noah! Do you think it could happen again in our time? See Luke 17:26 *"And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man."*

It is not His will that any should be lost. But understand that His word is law! He has made a provision in His word that all can be cleansed and sanctified.¹ Jn 1:9, Isa 1:18. You might ask after reading the above mentioned scripture how then can there be an unpardonable sin? The answer is simple; God will not force his forgiveness upon us. Notice in 1 John 1:9 the word "if", if we confess, confess in faith and repentance. The sin that is known to us in our heart is never forgiven if it is not admitted, therefore unpardonable. Let's define the word sin, so there can be no mistakes,¹ Jn 3:4 *"whoever commits sin transgresses also the law. For sin is the transgression of the law."*

But it is also an offense against the Holy Spirit. Christ said the Holy Spirit would teach us all things, help us remember His word, and guide us into all truth. John 14:26, 16:13 The Holy Spirit will either rebuke us or convict us of sin. (John 16:8, Eph. 5:18-21) So please understand that as long as we "allow" the Holy Spirit to teach, guide and convict us, we can never be guilty of the unpardonable sin. HALLELUJAH! But if we refuse to acknowledge the Spirit and his guidance we insult the Holy Spirit. The book of truth says that people insult the Holy Spirit three ways; they grieve Him, resist Him and despise Him. Eph 4:30, Acts 7:51, Heb 10:29 Dangerous business!

Why is it unpardonable? Because without the Holy Spirit we cannot be saved, without the Spirit we cannot truly repent! The Spirit makes us aware of our sins, (that little voice that quotes scriptures to your mind) without the Spirit in our hearts it becomes hardened, our conscience gets dulled. When we refuse to listen to the Holy Spirit what hope can there be for us?

Understand now why it is unpardonable? There are three common ways man can commit the unpardonable. **One** is to say that they do not want to be saved. They are comfortable in their worldly materialistic lives, but their lives are not filled with the joy and

peace, only those blessed with the Holy Spirit can know their lives are not abundant. Prov 28:13 The **second** way is most unfortunate because these people honestly want to be saved and get right with the Lord. For one reason or another they procrastinate and end up not doing the very thing they so wanted to do, totally surrender to the Lord! The **third** group of unpardonable sinners are members of the Church – Christians! Surprised? There is a greater danger of these Christians falling into unpardonable sin than any others. You see, sanctification is an ongoing process, a complete metamorphosis, from caterpillar to butterfly. Some people, once they are saved, become comfortable and complacent. They feel secure in their church. But the more we let the Spirit guide us in the Lord's Word, the more truth he reveals to us and also the more accountable we become for our actions. No one gets all of God's truths revealed to them at once. As we grow we are guided more and more along the path of righteousness! We must keep moving, growing, learning and guiding others, if we stop we could end up like the Church of Laodicea. They were filled with the Spirit, but became lax in His word and were allowed to be cheated out of salvation by being lukewarm and believing lies. Col 2:1, 4, 13,15,16, Rev 3:14-20, 2 Thess 2:10-11. Is there one thing God's word says is wrong in your life yet you rationalize it away as being "O.K."? If so, you are clinging to sin!

Do not resist the Holy Spirit, when truth comes into your life, obey it! It comes from God. He would not give it to you if you did not need it. And know when he gives you truth, he gives you the power to follow that truth and obey the Holy Spirit. But know that the Spirit cannot abide in someone that willfully and deliberately disobeys the truth, God's word! If I went to your house and you cooked me a wonderful meal with your mother's passed-on recipes and you worked hard all week to obtain the funds to purchase this special meal. How would you feel if when served it, I set the plate on the floor for your dog to eat? Would you cast the truth God gives you in His Word through the Holy Spirit aside? Jn 12:35 Listen to God's word, not to man's philosophies. Be not deceived, don't lose

your crown! Rev 3:11, Col 2:8-10 Be firmly rooted in His Word as you have been guided and taught by the Spirit. Col 2:7 Refuse to follow His Word as you know it and by that sin you shall be judged, it could even get to an unpardonable extent. Ja 4:17, Jn 15:22, 9:41, Prov 14:12, Lk 13:24, Amos 8:12, Ja 1:22. In closing I ask you to look up the Scriptures quoted in my short message, let the Spirit guide you.

I procrastinated for almost 10 years putting off what I knew to be the truth but was not socially acceptable. I even went to prison and I thank the Lord for not letting me drift away by my heart becoming hardened. There were times I did not know him, but I asked forgiveness from my heart! And he knows our heart; he forgave me and blessed me with the Holy Spirit. I am not perfect in that sense and stumble all the time, sometimes I don't even think I'm a good disciple. Rom 7:15-25 It is a daily battle I fight, I do not always win the battles, but I will win the war because I have Christ watching my back! Eph 6:10-17 (Notice no back armor!) So put on the full armor of God, lift up the sword of truth, be a doer of the word and not only a hearer James 1:22 and wait on the day that we will hear his voice so softly saying, *"Well done thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of the Lord."* Matt 25:21

Integrity Needed:

Obeying Holy Ghost is Serious Business

by Leroy Gardenier

Over the years, in my old life, I had practiced and performed religious rituals with as much sincerity of heart as I could muster. Nevertheless, when I came to know the Lord Jesus in a personal way and the Holy Ghost entered my heart, one of the earliest "leadings" I can recall was the Spirit's stern warning to be scrupulously honest and straightforward about my real intentions whenever or wherever I gathered with other Christians in His name.

When I read, *“For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged”* 1 Cor 11:30-31, I saw even more clearly that functioning as a member of the Body of Christ, being entrusted with the handling of His Word was serious business, indeed, and never, ever to be trifled with in any way. Eli, the priest, was smitten because of negligence. Saul, the king, brought destruction on himself and his house because of a presumptuous and rebellious attitude. Ananias and Sapphira were struck down separately for conspiring to lie to the Holy Ghost. There are many others as well, the prophet eaten by a bear, Aaron’s son’s incinerated for offering strange sacrifice, Simon Magus for trying to buy the Holy Ghost, etc., etc.

Proverbs 4:23 admonishes: *“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.”* False teaching and bad example that encourages “the freemasonry of false fellowship”; preaching of the humanly-inspired social gospel of good works; and, promoting the pernicious twisting of God’s own Word – these are issues that can easily be cloaked in “Christian” garments but, inexorably, corrupt the heart. To worship Him *“in spirit and in truth”*, John 4:23 the Lord seeks solely and simply “honest inquirers with true hearts.”

61. In the Care of The Holy Ghost

Trusting The Holy Spirit

by Joelle Gagnon

A Gift of Knowledge

I had a dream that a black woman, dressed in white, had a baby and it was a very precious child. The black woman loved her child so much I could see it in her eyes. With her was a white woman (also dressed in white) who saw the black woman with her child and could see the great love the black woman had for her child. The black woman asked the white woman if she would take care of the child for her. The white woman was amazed at the thought of it. The black woman told the white woman that the white woman was free and she could offer the child more than she could. All she had was her great love for the child. The white woman said the child was better off with her because of the great love the black woman had, but in her heart she knew that, in a way, she had more to offer the child. She also knew her love for the child was nowhere near the love the black woman had. The black woman handed the child to the white woman and then she took her own life. The white woman couldn't believe her eyes and she felt such a great sense of responsibility for the child knowing the price that was paid so that she could care for the child.

– END OF DREAM –

A few days later the Lord told me the dream was about Jesus (the black woman) and the Holy Ghost (the white woman). –

INTERPRETATION:

When Jesus ascended into heaven to be at the right hand of the Father he promised to return again for his bride, the church. What we often overlook is that this means Jesus is not with us in the flesh. We should know and understand the effect this reality ought to have on our faith and relationship with God. When we say we wait for His return we are necessarily conceding that we know He is not here on earth with us. To put it in another way, if you are waiting for someone to come, you are, by default saying he is not with you.

So how is Jesus with us then? Whose care are we in? Jesus has left us in the care of the Holy Ghost until His return. This is an undeniable truth revealed by the Holy Scriptures. Remember, Jesus said to His despairing disciples when He was leaving them that they should rejoice, not just for Him because He was going back to be with His Father, but also because it was expedient that He should leave and send the comforter, even the Holy Ghost to abide with them. By the presence of the Holy Ghost, Jesus can dwell with all of us all at once. The Holy Ghost is the omnipresence of God.

It is by the Holy Spirit that we have fellowship with the Father and the Son. Ephesians 2:18 says, *“for through Him (Jesus) we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”* Through the sacrifice of Jesus, who gave His own life (for no one took it, He gave it up willingly just like the black woman in the dream), and by the power and care of the Spirit (Holy Ghost) believers can come to the Father. The Holy Ghost is our teacher, guide, comforter and the means by which we have access to the Father. Of course, it is all made possible by the shed blood of Christ on Calvary. So it is through Jesus, by the Holy Ghost, to the Father. Through, by and to. This is the working of the Trinity and the Holy Ghost is critical for the integrated workings of our fellowship with God.

The Holy Ghost is a person, the third person of the Trinity. The dream shows that the Holy Ghost is our nanny. We should throw ourselves into the care of the Holy Ghost until the return of our Lord and Savior. If Jesus were here we would have to make a pilgrimage to see and hear Him and to sit at His feet and be taught. We would all

have to go to where He was to be in His presence. But now, by God's great design for this age of grace, we can all be with God constantly and instantly thanks to the loving care and presence of the Holy Ghost who can give us spiritual access to God who is a spirit.

Jesus said it was expedient for Him to go and for Him to send the Holy Ghost. Every believer can be with Jesus every moment if they rely on and trust in the Holy Ghost and His power. Wherever the Holy Ghost is received, revered, yielded to, and embraced (not just in word but in all reality), there is liberty. The body can only be one in the Spirit and have fellowship with Jesus and the Father by the Holy Ghost. Jesus has given us over to the Holy Ghost until He calls us to heaven with a shout and the sound of trumpets. Until then, let us throw our lives into the arms of the comforter, teacher, and guide – the gentle Holy Ghost.

TRUSTING

Lay Your Burdens down

A Word from the Lord given to T. Myers Smith Feb. 15, 09

My children, why do you so carefully pack your concerns and your cares every day when you wake up? As if a person going on a camping trip makes sure that they have all of their necessary items. Why do you pack all those things, my dear children, so carefully? Take stock in all of them and count them and itemize them and make sure that you have them. Haven't I told you even in this very day, the words that came forth? Haven't I told you many times that I'll take up your cares and your concerns?

Why must you always be as Martha caring about every detail? And letting slip at any time, that one thing that matters. That Mary, that good thing that I would not take from her. Why must you hold onto these things? I have said that there is a rest. I said that I would

take up your burdens and your troubles for I truly care for you and every care that you have. Why don't you believe? What happened to those who were cast off and fell in the wilderness, but those who did not believe? I will not take that good thing away from them. Why are you so proud of yourself when you pack so tightly so neatly and so carefully all of your burdens. To take off for a nice weekend camping trip, every day. Why are you so proud of that? Should you be proud that you don't believe me? Should you lay your burdens down? Should you give them to me? I have spoken to you, prophetic words even by a stammering tongue, lay your burdens down. Why do you take such pride in them? I Am Your Father.

62. We Can be Strong in Christ

Stand Up in the Spirit

by T Myers Smith

I wonder if you have seen before, as I have, men and women, brothers and sisters in Christ, who have an obvious zeal for God. These believers in Christ boast of a wonderful excitement they have found in walking with the Lord. These worshippers of our Lord Jesus have a glow in their eye and about their faces. Their countenance clearly tells us that the Spirit of God is alive within them and the joy and the peace which God has set in their hearts overflow within them to the extent that it affects the very flesh on their face. Victory in Jesus is what comes to my mind when I see a person whose face shines so brightly at the mention of the name Jesus Christ. I think we are all familiar with the joy that is upon the face of someone who has received, in their heart, Jesus Christ as their own Lord and Savior. Perhaps we can remember looking at our own face in a mirror shortly after we had become born-again. Most likely our countenance did show the change because of what took place in our spirit within us. Whose face cannot change, when we realize that our spirit was dead to our heavenly Father but through our acceptance of the blood of Jesus, which is victorious over all death, we are cleansed and made new? Now we know our spirits have become alive to God. He looks upon his new child in Christ with good pleasure for his son's namesake and we are assured of a new life right now and forever with our Creator in heaven. This is the victory in Jesus that can put peace and joy in our hearts and upon our faces.

Unfortunately many experience a temporary change in their countenance. After a honeymoon time with the Lord, our own

nature within is always sure to show itself and shake up our new found faith. We can count on it. Very often early in our walk, our relationship with Jesus is strained by what can seem to be a constant struggle between the nature of our flesh and the Spirit of God. In Romans chapter 7 Paul speaks clearly about this. He says in verse 7, *"I would have never known the sin in my heart – the evil desires that are hidden there – if the law had not said; 'You must not have evil desires in your heart.'"* Romans 7:7 (Living Bible) When we are walking with Jesus the Spirit sets the law of God in our hearts. Jeremiah 31:31-33 is a prophecy about a new covenant when the Lord will put the law upon the hearts of men. Paul continues in Romans chapter 7, to speak of the struggle within. He writes *"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 and makes me 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 inside me loves to sin. Oh, what a terrible predicament I'm in! Who will free me from my slavery to this deadly lower nature? Thank God! It has been done by Jesus Christ our Lord. He has set me free."* Rom 7:22-25 Living ... He has set me free. These are the words that describe victory in Jesus. Unless we seek out God's will and strive headstrong to be pleasing before the God we serve, the joy and peace which once filled our heart can now become smothered by shamefulness. Our new countenance can change and reflect the painful struggle of the battle that wars within us.

Now how about those who we know have been walking with Jesus for years and the peace and joy still shows brightly upon their face. What makes this believer in Christ different from another? I'll tell you not only has this believer received Victory in Jesus but he has also been walking victoriously in Jesus. Because we are Christians we should be compelled by enthusiasm for what Christ has done for us to walk victoriously in Jesus. What does this mean? To get right to the point it means we should march forward, always toward Christ

and seek to become strong by his Spirit, and in his Spirit. We should seek to become spiritual strongmen in Christ.

If the very thought of walking victoriously in Jesus excites you and stirs a desire within you, if you want to be able to say of your own relationship with Jesus, that it is sure, strong and victorious, then you should seek the free gift from God, the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. This Baptism which is told of by Jesus Himself in Acts 1:8 says that the believer, when baptized by the Holy Ghost, will receive power. If you have already received this baptism then you have within you the very same Holy Spirit that enabled Paul, Peter, Timothy, and the other first followers of Jesus to become spiritual strongmen in Christ. Jesus said the Apostles shall be witnesses unto Him in both Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria and unto the uttermost parts of the earth. God had no plans to send out spiritual weaklings among the world to testify of His Son Jesus. If we allow God's Spirit to do His work of deliverance in our lives and want nothing less than the very most that the Father has to offer to us, we can stand firm in our claim of walking victoriously in Jesus. God will then have good pleasure in us and will allow us to testify before the Church and unto the uttermost parts of the world about His son Jesus Christ.

Stand Strong in the Spirit of God

God wants to make us spiritual strongmen, but for this, we must trust the Holy Ghost fully, not only that He wants to make us perfect, complete and strong, but that he will do it if we allow. We ought to seek to become this and not settle into being spiritual weaklings and wimps; cry-babies who want their own way, who throw tantrums or become obstinate toward God. We should desire the strength of the Holy Spirit which God has available for all in His Church; that baptism of fire by which we can receive strength, endurance, and wisdom to do the work that God will give us faith

to do. We can become strongmen, not for ourselves but spiritual strongmen for our Lord, to exhort and edify one another in the ways of God. Let us abstain from the unnecessary things of the flesh in order to trim down the excess of worldly desires and begin to do away with any vestiges of a sinful heart. If we find there is an area in our lives which we know is a stumbling-block before us and it hinders our walk with the Lord we should become headstrong in placing this behind us and claiming our victory through Jesus. Isaiah says, *“Because the Lord God helps me, I will not be dismayed; therefore, I have set my face like flint to do his will, and I know that I will triumph”*. Isaiah 50:7 Living We ought to stand up strong in the Spirit of God. If necessary, rebuke the enemy in Jesus’ name. We have the right to use the great authority of Jesus’ name against Satan which may constantly place temptation in our way. Stand up strong in the spirit of God. Let us desire to become mature Christians.

Paul wrote in his letter to the Colossians *“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.”* Col 3:1-2 Desire to become a mature Christian. We all need to keep our guard up against the flesh. We must stand strong in our faith for the power of the Holy ghost within us to overcome all spiritual enemies. Let’s not settle for anything less than the very most God has for each of us. Let us all become true worshippers of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Then we will have a glow in our eyes and about our faces that will clearly tell the world that the Spirit of God is alive within us. The joy and peace which God does set in our hearts will overflow within us to the extent that it will affect the flesh of our faces.

63. Our Lives Ought To Be Centered in Christ

Living in the Spirit

T Myers Smith

In the preceding articles in the series on: *Walking in the Spirit* we have presented the reader with the essential building blocks which are necessary ingredients in the immersion process for the perfecting of the individual believer's relationship with the Holy Ghost. Beginning with believing, and followed closely by yielding, obeying, trusting and standing in the Spirit, a relationship is built which situates the believer to receive all the higher spiritual qualities for which the Holy Ghost has designs for giving rise to in the potential disciple. The Holy Ghost wants to be rich toward us and provide us with all spiritual gifts so that we can stand tall in Christ. The high designs which the Spirit has for the believer are those which turn a Christian into a true disciple of Christ, namely: living and walking in the Spirit. It is His intent that we should live, breath and have a real, textured spiritual existence wrapped in a perpetual life in the Spirit.

This higher, living and walking relationship in the Holy Spirit is the end-all, the penultimate and ultimate relationships, needed to facilitate entry into Christ's life. It is only at this degree of one's relationship with the Holy Ghost, fully resurrected from the sarcophagi of one's own provincial little world, that the believer has now entered into a mature relationship with the Spirit of God. The process delineated in the articles on this page amounts to an approximation, but the rudimentary sum of the conglomerate experiences which is scripturally termed the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The process belonging to the baptism of the Holy Spirit has

been generally outlined as beginning with believing in the Spirit of God and then experiencing the necessity of yieldedness and obedience, then the reality of trusting and standing firm in His power, and not the power of self. Only then can one's existence be centered daily in the life of Christ, which comes by and through the closeness of a relationship which is in unquestioning submission to the Holy Spirit. This includes all the requisites of the Spirit's Will and hopes concerning this immediate life, as well as the one that is to come, and can be lived not just daily, but as finitely and minutely as on a moment by moment basis. The Holy Ghost can be that close to us.

The above preliminary experiences of our immersion can only be brought about as a result of giving ourselves over to the care and direction of the Holy Spirit by faith. They are necessary precursors if the last two 'bottom-line' fruits of immersion, i.e. living and walking in the Spirit, are to be realized in all actuality so that the believer becomes a living, walking determined, focused, faithful, disciplined follower of Jesus Christ. Until then the Christian can only be talked to and dealt with by God in the way which Paul talked to the Galatians who walked in the letter of the Law and in the carnality of the flesh. *"And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and WALK AS MEN?"* 1 Co 3:1-3 It is only when one finally stands in the Spirit, able to have all threats and lures staved off and defeated, being dressed in the armor of God (see Galatians 6), that one can then, live in and walk with, the Spirit of God in a mature and immovable fashion, confidently going before the throne of grace, in full assurance of faith to make known those petitions for others before God. *"The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much"*, schools the Book of James 5:16. However, living in Christ's life and not one's puny world can never be brought about by one's own willpower or one's steely discipline. The operation

of God which works on us to dissolve faith and confidence in our own carnal power (even when one may be trying to be faithful and prudent with the best intentions and trying to follow God) can only be accomplished by the Spirit of God Himself who sets things up in the course of our life to ‘nullify’ our ego and dismantle our confidence in self-power. Only the Spirit can dismiss the ego and fill the void with the invigoration of Himself. We must concede to the sacrifice of ego; permit the entrance of a new and better way. We must sacrifice our ego in exchange for the sacrifice the Holy Ghost is willing to make for us by committing to live with us. We are taught by Jesus Himself that “*without Him we can do nothing*” John 15:5. It is the Spirit who convinces us of all righteousness and steers us gently and in timely fashion away from all unrighteousness. The Holy Ghost convinces us, not only that we should be like Jesus, but that we can walk even as he walked. “*He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, EVEN AS HE WALKED.*” 1 John 2:6 The Spirit, when we exist in true state of believing in Him, when we are yielded, obedient, trusting and standing solidly in faith and unmovable, will make it, engineer things, so that we can have our life dissolve into perfect association with Christ’s – we truly and actually are living in Him. We must hear His voice and be obedient to it. If we say we cannot hear His voice we are calling Him a liar. He has told us that we need to live by every word that proceeds out of His mouth. He also says He will supply our every need. Speaking to us is the prime way God provides for our every need according to His riches in glory. This is His promise to us. It is the Spirit Himself who cuts the path, clears the way and makes God’s voice clear and distinct in our heart. This is the Holy Ghost’s job to guide us into all Truth, this, His passion, to deliver THE WORD to us. We can stride along in the steps of the Spirit who shadows always Jesus. But... We must be wise and attentive. The Spirit is a tutor who teaches the individual the way in which to enter into Christ’s life; how to cross over that stolid chasm of a dreary and dead carnal life by way of a spiritual bridge which joins life with and into Christ’s own life. This is what is meant by this fabulously wonderful scripture: “*But the anointing*

which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and EVEN AS IT HATH TAUGHT YOU, YE SHALL ABIDE IN HIM". 1 John 2:27 This is a scriptural testimony of the Holy Ghost which teaches us that we must be immersed in His guidance that leads to living, or abiding, in Christ's life. This 'living in Christ' means that one is devoted to the extent of being obsessed, or in other words, affectionate to Christ's hopes and not one's own, enthusiastic about Christ's plans and not in one's own exclusive universe, loyal to the kingdom of God and to Christ's promises of salvation and His absolute enthrallment with the Father's Will, . Conformity to this is living fully in Christ. Only full reverence and respect for the Holy Ghost can produce this metamorphosized path to a perfect relationship so that living in Christ becomes second nature and unthinkingly real in the born-again saint.

We can say that this supernatural chain of supernatural spiritual experiences is 'natural' because it naturally and logically follows that we should live in Christ's life in all reality. We are His, bought and paid for by the priceless value of the blood of God. It is only 'natural' that we should by the supernatural power and unerring guidance of the Holy Spirit live Christ's life and forsake all personal construction of our own. The Bible drives the point home in these passages: "For ye are the temple of the LIVING God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." 2 Cor 6:16 And we know that this temple talked of by Paul is the temple of the Holy Ghost and as God is to live in us, we are also to live in Him and exist in His life, which is Christ's life. "But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that commits fornication sins against his own body. What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost who is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For you are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's". 1 Cor 6:18-20. He also said elsewhere: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" 1 Co 3:16.

Today, as never before, God has rolled out the red carpet leading into His throne room and is issuing an open invitation for all born-again Christians to come before Him where they may experience the joy and awesome power of being in the presence of His Royal Majesty and Awesome benevolent nature.

All too often we saints think in terms of God looking down upon us from above. Those who understand that God inhabits the praise of His people often think in terms of God descending to the place of worship and inhabiting a place, a church, a home, or a heart, through the praises of the saints. This is a truism, but... in this hour, instead of coaxing God down to us, God is telling us to come to Him. This is an added factor in worshipping God in spirit and in truth. Come up to His temple, come through the real gates by the Spirit, enter into the courts, the real courtyard of the real temple of which Moses' tabernacle was merely an earthly replica; and come into the temple, past where the veil once hung, and into the Holy of Holies sprinkled with the blood of the Lamb, the innocent blood shed for us which is the only ointment that renders us a clean conscience toward God. The Lord God Almighty, the one and only Potentate of the universe, is calling to all those who have "put on" Christ by being washed in the blood of His dear Son, saying to them that they are welcome, come, if you are washed in the blood and worship in all reality at my throne in the hub of the universe.

Born-again Christians have always had the privilege of boldly entering God's throne room of grace, but how many Christians have understood the reality of this privilege? How many take regular advantage of this great heritage which was won for them by the victory Jesus won on the cross at Calvary? It is now time for the Church, as a potent body, to take advantage of God's sweeping invitation to come to Him.

We ask: How many would refuse to go to the President of the United States if issued an invitation to the White House? How many would not focus, and with excitement, be consumed by the importance of the invite? Especially, if they were encouraged to ask the President anything that they felt was advantageous to the

kingdom? What citizen would not be ecstatic and mightily proud to be received by the leader of the people and be honored to be heard at the seat of their country's government by its leader?

But our invitation into God's presence is greater by far. Think of it, dear saints, we are not being invited to see the mere leader of a country, or to the seat of some earthly power; we are being summoned to the hub of the universe, to the heartbeat of all creation, to the very spot from which all life emanates and every atom and molecule of Creation consists and is held together. We are able to live in life. It is time to live in the Holy Ghost. There can be no greater place to be received, no sweeter place to spend our time, anywhere in all the universe, than the Holy of Holies, the throne room of His Royal Majesty, the God above all gods. As never before, in these last hours, God the omnipotent, the Creator of heaven and earth has called His people to a continual assembly in the actual, true, and only real Holy of Holies, the one in heaven where Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father waiting for the trumpet call which will signal the gathering of his bride in a twinkling of an eye, the glorious church prepared without spot or wrinkle, whom Jesus adorns in holiness and righteousness. Come into the Holy of Holies, calls the Holy Ghost to our souls and minds, to our spirit. *"But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect."* Heb 12:22-23

As David instituted a 24-hour tabernacle of praise, so God is instituting a 24-hour open-door policy as never before, inviting any and all to come, to feel welcome and free in His throne room. He only desires that we come in the right spirit and frame of heart and mind; in the Spirit and in the arms of His Son, Jesus, all under the auspices of the Trinity. God is calling his people to set their affection on things above and not on things of the earth. Check your Will and your ego at the door, mount the cross, be crucified and enter into God's Will by the Spirit under the forgiveness of the

shed blood of Christ. You must be born-again to have this kind of 'security clearance, this sort of privilege before the master of all things. Then you may enjoy his presence, have communion with God in its deepest reality and fatherly affection. Christ is calling His Church to gather into the nucleus of things, the hub of the universe, His Father's throne room which is in the heavenlies.

Ephesians 2:18 tells us, "*For through Him (Jesus) we have access by one Spirit to the Father.*" By the Spirit, through the blood of the Lamb, to the Father, we come. It is: BY THROUGH and TO: to God's throne in heaven itself. This is a reality, albeit a spiritual reality, just as sure and real as any earthly tangible thing, including that body which is that "temple" of your soul and spirit.

And so the Trinity beckons us, Jesus greets us, ushers us in, permits us – embraces us; that we can and should come into the Father's presence with joy and assurance. "*Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience...*" Heb 10:22 Dear saints, this is the method of our might in the last hours, this is the residence of strength the citadel of the soul, the might of our spirit. This, dear brothers and sisters, will be the power of the Church in the coming hours and days! Let us focus on every aspect of entering into this great dwelling place of the Universe, the Holy of Holies and being before his throne of grace, in his actual presence, where we can receive instruction from the Father on his Will for us in our everyday lives, resting in the arms of Jesus, living in the Spirit so that we may walk with Him.

64. Walking Perfect in the Spirit

An Analogy of the Trinity

by T Myers Smith

The optimism of the Philadelphian believer to walk apart from sin and to be crucified with Christ, to pay the price we must pay for a certain spiritual perfection in the eyes of God and Christ, that can be expressed in the following analogy of an oil-burner that I once owned.

I was having a great deal of trouble with it. It spewed soot, leaked oil and water, and produced far more noise than heat. When the electrode failed to fire, the oil would accumulate in the burner and the fumes would stink up the entire house. It always seemed to fail when it was needed most when the weather was coldest.

It tried to do its job, even sounded like it was putting in the effort, but it fell far short of getting the job done at the most inopportune times.

Being a Scottish skinflint by nature, I tried to fix it myself. How pathetic was that? Finally, and wisely, I broke down and decided to call a professional repairman to take a look at the problem.

After examining the furnace the repairman gingerly approached me and said he had a bad news, good news scenario for me. As a natural pessimist, I asked for the bad news first. He told me frankly, that the furnace was hopelessly gone, absolutely beyond repair. I needed a completely new burner and furnace. Not totally surprised, I wondered out loud what the heck the good news could possibly be?

The good news, he told me, was that he could put in a completely new system and that I would not have to pay for it, or the installation, right away. In fact, he would not make me put anything

down on it for six months and after that, I would start making some regular monthly payments. Being short on liquid cash, as they say, I was thankful for the installment plan and instantly agreed to the terms. All I needed to know was what the final price would be and how much it would cost me per month once the payments began just so I could fit them into my budget. What started out pessimistically ended with utter optimism. I did not have to struggle through the winter of another discontent. Thankfully, I could be sure I would have a warm house, hot water and a safe home for the future.

So what does this have to do with becoming free from our sinful condition and walking with God?

In the Holy Ghost, We Can Become ‘Optimistic’

It was the great American thinker Will James who turned his back on the field of psychology calling it, ‘a nasty little science’. His disgust was due to its pessimism about the human condition, a belief that he simply could not abide. Having been Harvard educated he had also felt the oppressive influence of Puritan theology. Though Puritanism had rightly emphasized the depravity of human nature, James was deeply offended because it offered no hope for change, no route for the improvement of man’s sinful condition. He saw Evangelical religion as a pessimistic theology, as well, one which conceded to man’s sinful plight as inalterable, offering no hope for escape.

Will James was right to be offended by the ‘nasty little science’ of psychology and the theology of raw Puritanism. In desperation, like so many ‘foolish’ wise men, James turned to his own brand of Evolution hoping that man would somehow evolve through philosophy, or improve by introspection, or somehow be freed by his rational mind from the iron shackles of his degenerate nature.

He had hoped in man. He vowed to do at least one deed of kindness every day, to build in himself a righteous love for mankind.

As a result, he gained a reputation on the Harvard University campus as a man with a generous and kind spirit. James' vow to do good seems quite laudable, but it does not solve the problem of our sin which can so easily boil over and beset the soul of the most well-intentioned man. James, of course, missed the boat, for he overlooked the solution – the true Gospel of Jesus Christ – and was unable to see that the Gospel had provided a means for man to walk upright before God by faith. In spite of being engulfed in Puritan pessimism by the traditions of his famous family, Will James had been unable to break out and see the light of the Gospel's great optimism about man and his nature. That optimism is centered wholly in being born again and that man can be given a whole new nature through the power of the shed blood of Jesus Christ to pardon and sanctify Man in God.

The Holy Ghost is Perfect, Therefore There is Perfection in Him

Though the Philadelphia faith agrees with Puritanism about the depravity of the human heart – *for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God* – and we know that *there is none that is righteous no not one* – the Philadelphian has great hope because there is perfection, even in this life, in Christ. If Will James had only known he could have lived out his life's hope by walking in the Spirit through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. We hope somehow that Will James was saved, but we doubt it.

The Philadelphia faith, while honest about sin, and the battle we must wage all our lives against it, is the most optimistic because it believes in the victory of righteousness in the human soul and heart thanks to the living power of Jesus and the Holy Ghost within a person. Philadelphia believes that God's commands to us to love him

and love our neighbor are not given in vain. They are given because mortal man, through Christ, by the power of the Holy Ghost can have access to the mercy seat of God Himself and can keep the 'law of liberty' to love God and one another.

Overcoming sin, not in the world, but within a willing soul was the business of Jesus. He did his business and returned triumphantly to His Father. This is why Jesus could say: "*Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*" Jn. 16:33. Jesus did His work to overcome sin, now we must do our job by submitting to the Holy Spirit. Our job then – is to overcome tribulation by walking in the Spirit. This ought not to be done with skepticism or doubt, or by natural pessimism. It should be done in hope and with an optimistic spirit and by a perpetual ready and willing frame of mind.

Just prior to telling us that he has overcome the world Christ informs us: "*In the world, you will have tribulation*". By this, He obviously means we will have pain, sorrow, distress, mistakes, failures, misjudgments, persecution and betrayals that must be overcome. We must deal with and forge through those natural inadequacies of love and truth, those things of the world and of flesh and spirit, to get to the other side of the fence of life where truth and actual righteousness live just as breath exists without thought or labor, in and by the living Holy Ghost Himself. The way to do this is to allow, to concede by hope and faith, that the Holy Ghost can transport, imperceptibly, the carnal flesh into a realm of pure spirit, even though we appear to be in the flesh interacting with flesh and things of this earth. It is a miracle of transformation and one walks on 'solid' spiritual ground where one can hear, if he or she cares to, the glorious suggestions, advice, and conclusions of God's Will. It is a place of the dialogue of friends, of conversations of two persons in love. The needs and hopes of both, the desire to help and actually know one another as the Jewish thinker Martin Buber had put it: relationships are supposed to be I and Thou. (Not the way Man naturally conducts relationships with others – Me and it. People as an object for their use, and nothing more.)

With the Holy Ghost, our relationship with God and man can

be, should be in another realm. A place outside of time and space, where God inhabits the endless truth in love. A never-ending boundless place sublime fit for perfect friendship, that place for which God sent His only Son to allow a friend to enter so that He might be able to share all His glories and adventures of life with a tried and true blue 'friend'. This is, not only the work of the Holy Ghost, but He is the only one who can do it. He is the agent that can bring us out from carnal realms of relationships. Into the light of friendship and love.

This is not to say, that we shall not all be required to suffer fiery trials of personal disappointment and seducing temptations and betrayals of friends that we had hoped would be true. This is part of life's passion and true. But Christ through the Holy Ghost's intervention for us can be a person's advocate, protector, provider and counselor through every relationship if we hand over the wheel to Him. It is inevitable that we must endure a lifelong struggle against our mortal enemies, the voices of sin: our flesh, the world, and Satan. Regardless, sin, whose wages are death, does not have to hold sway over the born-again believer, for we have been told that we have been bought with a price. Therefore, when we accept this price having been paid for us, we are no longer our own, but Christ's blood has purchased our temple for a dwelling place for the Holy Ghost that we might in all truth be the Temple of the Holy Ghost.

This we concede to not only in principle or mind but in all truth and deed. We give our body, soul, and spirit to the rightful owner, which is our reasonable service. This is the great and daily good deed we must faithfully perform every day. Then we can truly accomplish that daily good deed to which Will James rightly aspired. Goodness can actually flow like a river by the power of the Holy Ghost as the opportunity is presented by God's doing and His Will. Goodness is a fruit of the Spirit's laboring in us, but it is entirely up to us to allow Him to do His work in the soil of our heart. We must allow Him to plant the seed, water it daily, feed and see to it that it is weeded with care, not to injure the plant and its growing fruit. It is all the Holy Ghost's doing, we must not get in His way, but

hope and by faith see to it that the fruits of love, etc, not only grow but are properly maintained and cared for. We must stake them, keep infestation away. Do what the perfect gardener tells us to do without questioning Him or giving Him a hard time about whether He knows what He is doing. In giving Him a hard time are we, not a liar and a deceiver – a bonafide jerk.

The Actual Pathway to Victory

The only pathway to victory and a ‘certain kind of perfection’ over sin that tends to reign over us, is by way of Jesus Christ. As he said, we must pick up our cross and follow after Him and any disciple who is not willing to do this is not worthy to be his disciple (Matt. 6:24, 10:37; Mk 8:34; Lk 9:23). We must deny ourselves if we are to serve Him perfectly, as righteous stewards of the good things of God.

How can anyone doubt that Christ has declared that the pathway to righteousness goes through him by way of the Holy Ghost. Then, and only then, is it possible to take up our personal cross, and follow Him. A man must first lose his life if he is to find it. We must die to self. For, yes, we are told in the Word that the right saints overcame sin by the blood of the Lamb and the Word of their testimony and that they loved not their lives to the death. All too often we overlook the third part – *“they loved not their lives unto the death.”*

The Christian who breaks free of the shackles of sin is the one who will do as Paul advised Timothy.

“Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.” 2 Tim. 2:3-4

The crucified Christian will disentangle himself from this world as much as he can while faithfully picking up the cross of Christ, not

loving his life more than his service to his master. Persecutions, struggles and lesser, even trite, inconveniences will be endured. *“All those who will live godly lives in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”* If we live it with understanding and trust, it can be done with optimism, knowing that God is doing allowing this to perfect us spiritually, to build us up and make us into free and righteous men and women.

The goal of picking up our cross and being crucified with Christ is so we no longer walk in the flesh, but start to walk in the spirit. The overcomer must be walking in the Spirit and not the flesh (or ways of the world).

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.” Romans 8:1-6

The above scripture is a crucial one. True Christian optimists will shed off the hopeless ways of the world, not lean to their own understanding, let the Spirit lead them to love and righteousness and be freed from the depravity of the fallen human heart into the righteous, holy realm of the Divine Nature which resides in Jesus Christ, *“in whom is all the fulness of the Godhead bodily”*.

Peter tells us that the Gospel promises Man that he can be free from sin and become a partaker of God's nature in this life when he says; *“Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious*

promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

The Laodicean spirit within the modern church says that it is not possible to walk perfectly in this life. They say it is arrogant to believe we should be perfect, can be perfect. They talk only of this world and are blind and 'cannot see afar off', as the Bible puts it. For Jesus talks of perfect obedience, of a full-time commitment to acquiescence to the Holy Ghost. In simple common language, listening and just doing what you are told. The very first thing that every parent ever has had to say to their child. "Just, please, do what I tell you, for your own good, do what I ask!" Every parent (who cares for their child) would happily accept any child as perfect if they did that. Jesus wants us to be perfect, He knows it takes faith, pure and simple faith, not adult thinking and questioning faith, but simple child-like faith. The child who would do this would intuitively and simply trust their parent. Jesus told us that it is not a matter of getting more faith, it is simple, a single thing, faith is the sum of its parts, it is a whole in itself. It is not a matter of acquiring a whole bunch knowledge so I can trust. A little child must believe, trust and do if the child is to be perfect. There may not be any perfect child on earth, but if there were that child would just believe that they should do what they are told. To say we cannot be perfect and should not be perfect and then out of the other side of our mouths admit that God is perfect makes no sense. It is sophistry of the worst sort. Simply, it is devised to excuse one's own unrighteous self-serving desires. Our unconverted, unsaved nature is to doubt; God's nature is to believe. Our nature is to sin, God's is to be righteous. Our nature is to despise, God's is to love. Our nature is to defile ourselves with lies, God's is to honor only the Truth. Our position is like the unthankful child to demand and question. God's is to give and teach, to share and to save from death and harm. Our fallen nature is to be unholy. God's is to be holy. We are fearful. God is fearless. Without God we are souls lost in the world, we are limited in vision, in terrible darkness and cannot help but end in a pool of pessimism. With God and walking in Him, we should be full of

optimism, we can be in the know, see the light, and the rainbows of hope and the expressions of God calling us to His love. We have a future in eternity if we trust Him and believe in what He tells us to do, we do not need a pile of that faith, we just need the spark of trusting him as a child ought to trust he that is good, and learn to do it with delight and fearless hope.

You and I have the chance to walk free. It is our choice to do what He that is good advises us. But there is a cost; the cost of the widow who gave everything she had (Matt. 12:22), a cost to be counted. The cost David was willing to pay: repentance – and all his being and earthly wealth for the glory of God in His service (1 Chron: 28-29). The cost is that we love not our lives (more than Christ) unto the (day of our) death. But we simply believe and trust Him. For this, we need nothing but simple singular, primary oneness of faith to hear His voice (by the Holy ghost) and DO IT!

The Analogy Then is Something Like This:

The oil-burning furnace represents man's spirit, his true inner being. The oil burner itself is symbolic of the Spirit of God and the heat that is supposed to be thrown off by the oil furnace stands for love, or, in other words, the opposite of sin.

Before being born again, man is like that old oil-burning furnace. We are unable to produce any warmth (love) because of our broken, useless condition. We cannot be overhauled. We must be entirely replaced, turned into a new creature and be given a new spirit (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10, and so on). We are always on the verge of self-destruction ready to explode, throw dark clouds of soot and make a lot of threatening rumblings while producing very little good if any at all. The repairman represents Jesus. He talks us into replacing the entire unit (spirit) and gives us a new heart, one that can receive a brand new oil burner that will work perfectly if we let it. The oil burner, of course, is the Holy Ghost and it is His oil that

burns in us to produce the warmth, or love, of Christ which radiates from us into the world.

But remember the good news, bad news part. Christ gives us a new spirit free, just for the asking. There is no down payment or set-up fee just as in our analogy, but Christ told his disciples they must count the cost Luke 14:28 of the installation and what it will require, having the burner always operating in perfect fashion. It would have been ridiculous for me to keep the old dilapidated furnace out back of my house and try to reinstall it to correct any problems, or to avoid paying any of the agreed to payments when the time to pay came due. How absurd would that be? There are installment-like things we must pay after our initial born again honeymoon experience. There are adjustments and maintenance costs to be paid on the 'new furnace and burner'. There are such things to be done in the Spirit.

Among the installments and regular maintenance is carrying our cross daily as discussed in a previous part of this teaching. These are called "enduring hardships as good soldiers" in Christ 2 Tim.2:3-4 by letting God use our bodies as He did with Peter and Paul. They are in the fiery trials that must try every disciple 1 Pet. 4:12. They come in the form of persecution, and we are told that every Christian *"that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."* 2 Tim. 3:12. Killing the flesh within us hurts. It is a surgery of the spirit that requires endurance, steadfastness, patience and suffering – all things that are contrary to the way of the flesh and the flimsy 'gimme' doctrines of the modern Laodicean Christian faith which is to be loathed without apology.

These 'sufferings' may be euphemistically termed – the bad news. To defeat the flesh we must count the cost and pay the price. I am sure the reflective reader will be able to come up with even further instances of paying the price of killing the flesh. The true disciple knows that our hope is built on the solid Rock of truth, Jesus Christ. It is the Rock and the grace of Jesus Christ that will see us through so difficult a journey as triumphing over our flesh.

True Christian optimists will shed off the hopeless ways of the

world, not lean to their own understanding, let the Spirit lead them to love and righteousness and be freed from the depravity of the fallen human heart into the righteous, holy realm of the Divine Nature which resides in Jesus Christ, *“in whom is all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.”*

Peter tells us 2 Pet. 1:4 that the Gospel, in fact, promises Man that he can be free from the flesh and become a partaker of God's nature in this life when he says; *“hereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust [of the flesh].”*

65. Man Is Wise To Obey God's Voice

The Three Wise Men Listened

by Eloise Gardenier

December 1998

“Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the East, and are come to worship him.” Matt 2:1-2

Should we be surprised that there was no large crowd awaiting the birth of Jesus? Hardly anyone knew of the impending event. Angels had to sing to shepherds and prophets had to prophesy in the Temple about the approaching nativity. In fact, in verse three of Matthew, we are told that *“when Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.”* That these travelers from the east, who are called “wise” by the Scriptures, were drawn of the Spirit from a faraway place serves as a hint that very few men were wise about spiritual things at that time. We might even infer that wise men were a very rare breed in the days just preceding the first coming of Christ. We might also conclude that not much has changed in two thousand years as men await the second coming of Christ. How many wise men are there who await the coming of the Lord?

Verse two is very revealing in that it declares these wise men saw “His Star!” Questions ring out. How did they know it was Christ’s star? How did they know He was the King of the Jews? And how did they know to worship Him? Instead of being excited and joyful, Herod and all Jerusalem were troubled. What a strange and foolish

way to feel at the coming of the Savior. His actions were even more incredible and proved him to be a fool's fool.

When Herod gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. Their reply to him was, *"In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel"*. Matt 2:5-6 (see Micah 5:3)

Then Herod called the wise men and inquired of them when the star appeared. His next move was to send them to Bethlehem, he told them; *"Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also."* This, of course, was a lie. He had no intention of worshipping Jesus, for when he heard the prophecy of Micah and that he would rule over the people of Israel he sought only to kill him. As we read on we find out to what lengths he would go to do away with "Mary's Boy Child".

How foolish of Herod to think he could undo prophecy or frustrate the plan of God. Though wise in the world and politically adroit in every way this power hungry man was a complete fool. He had gained the world and would lose his soul. His temple was a marvel and his palace a place of splendor and beauty. He had built cities and successfully courted the Roman Emperor Tiberius in a deadly game of cat and mouse politics. He was ruthless and knew every means of protecting his power by intrigue, bribery, brutality and persuasion. And yet he stands the symbol of the foolishness of the world that went about its business as the Lord Himself was taking on the form of mortal flesh to bring man the gift of immortality through forgiveness and redemption of sin.

But the wise sojourners were not taken in by Herod's crafty plan. After hearing the king, these perceptive men ignored his instructions and departed to continue their search for the Messiah. Once more the star appeared to them, the one "which they had seen in the east" (inferring: a rising light). It went before them, till *"it came and stood over where the young child was."* Instead of wondering how

this could benefit their worldly position and place the wise men were humbled by being in the presence of God.

“When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshiped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.” Matt 2:11

After accomplishing the mission God had so perfectly guided them on, He once more spoke to them, this time in a dream, warning them they “should not return to Herod, so they departed into their own country another way”. Once more these obscure believers proved their wisdom by being obedient to the voice of God.

Before Herod could react to the birth of Christ the Lord gave Joseph a dream, saying, “Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him” Joseph, too, proved himself a wise man by taking immediate heed to the dream he was given.

“Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the WISE men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the WISE men.” The prophecy of Jeremiah was fulfilled; “Rachel weeping for her children”. When Herod was dead, the Lord visited Joseph in Egypt with a dream, telling him to return to Israel. They settled in a city called Nazareth: fulfilling that which was spoken by the prophets, “He shall be called a Nazarene.”

Now about the WISE MEN!! These men are only spoken of once in the Bible, but the account of their faith and deeds takes up most of a chapter. Perhaps they are kept somewhat mysterious because their experience was one of a spiritual journey. If only more were willing to take such a WISE journey, hearing the voice of God and doing what He says.

There are all kinds of speculation, stories and even outright and outrageous lies about them. Some of those guesses are; who they were, how they dressed, their skin color, their gifts and even where their bones were laid to rest. But I believe they were men who knew God, who had personal contact with Him. How else would they have known what the “star” meant and what it was about and that the child would be the “King of the Jews”. Were they Caucasian, Black, Oriental, or Jew, none of that matters – if it did, God would have made a point of telling us. In fact, God’s silence on the matter of race and origin of these men points more directly to their spiritual character rather than their fleshly heritage. These men heard from God personally, were obviously instructed to follow the star, gave gifts in adoration and worshiped the Son of God. They heard and obeyed! And those my friends, are the signs of “WISE MEN”!

There was a shortage of “WISE MEN” in those days, and so there is today. Not nearly enough men and women seek, believe and obey. The formula is simple but the world complicates it. The population of the world approaches 6 billion today, as of 1993 less than a third of the population called themselves Christians. And of those how many know what it means to be a true Christian? It may be their “religion”, but they have no personal knowledge of Jesus Christ the Saviour.

That is why Jesus came to this earth, born of woman and the Holy Ghost, the very Spirit of God, that He might be both man and God. This shows us how we can become a part of God’s family by being influenced by the Holy Ghost in our lives, guiding us to be more like Jesus every day.

I hope this will be each reader’s most cherished gift this Christmas, the guidance of the Holy Ghost, for the rest of your stay here on earth. This will make you a “WISE MAN” / “WISE WOMAN”.

66. The Gift That Keeps On Listening

The Holy Spirit:

by T Myers Smith

Madison Avenue sorcerers have long used their deceptive arts to create enticing campaigns to enable the rough and ready Christmas shopper to tread the straight and narrow road of Christmas bliss so they can find that perfect gift for a friend and loved one alike. The wizards of Babylon have taken the vision of sugar plums dancing in the head of the children on Christmas Eve to greater and greater heights with each succeeding Yuletide season. We have been graced with the gift that lasts forever, the present that men dream about, the one she can't resist and the gift that keeps on giving. They stir up our greed for gold and silver, vacations and transportation, diamonds and jewelry, electronics and perfume, coats and hats, candy and cards; all of which, as the Scripture says, are to perish with the using. Ah! What a wonder to receive a gift that satisfies and benefits the soul and spirit - a gift from God. If you are looking for a real gift this Christmas, or any time actually, if you are born-again, you could receive a gift that is greater than all the rubies of India, a gift that keeps on listening, keeps on answering! Jesus said, "*Ask and it shall be given unto you.*" Matt 7:7

Most evangelical Christians assent to this in principle, but few believe its purpose and power, for asking begins with asking for the Holy Ghost and His spiritual powers manifested by the gifts of His miracles, knowledge, wisdom and Word. Knowing the truth of the scripture which says that Jesus came, died and then ascended on high "*and gave gifts unto men*" Eph 4:8 is one thing, trusting Christ to give us gifts "*according to His riches in glory*" Phil 4:19 is quite another.

Jesus tried to reassure us to have faith for receiving great spiritual gifts, especially concerning the Holy Ghost when He said; *“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?”* Matt 7:11

The gift of the Holy Spirit and the accompanying gifts make our spiritual lives rich with power, our minds stable with understanding and gives us comfort in Christ. The Holy Spirit is the gift to the believer that keeps on comforting, the gift that keeps on teaching; the one true gift of God that keeps on giving. Once we have asked Jesus for the gift of the baptism of the Holy Ghost and received it by faith, the Spirit will keep giving gifts to us that will enhance, enlighten and strengthen our relationship with Jesus. As a token of this love and promise of gifts, the Spirit gives us, first, the gift of speaking in tongues; a gift that opens the door to all other supernatural, spiritual gifts. At first, this gift seems a useless and foolish thing to our carnal minds, a gift that only makes us seem as if we were silly children. But in a certain respect, it is the greatest of all the gifts which the Spirit will give a Christian because it is the gift that keeps on listening. It is not a gift about speaking or talking because we must give our tongues over to the Spirit of Christ in childlike faith. But rather it is the gift of having God’s wisdom spoken by the Spirit On behalf of us. We do not know what He is saying or asking, but we know He is taking our deepest groaning and stirrings in our spirit to the Father. Paul put it this way in Romans 8:26

“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.”

If you have been or were ever taught to be suspicious of this gift then take another look and reconsider. All bible-believing

denominations (loosely called Evangelical) are forced to concede that God gave this gift of the Holy Spirit with the accompanying gift of speaking in 'tongues' was given without doubt to the fledgling Church. The bible says also that God does not repent of giving His gifts. The fact that this gift is not or will not be received by all, and perhaps just a few, is worthy of debate and discussion. That it may be confined in general reception to the early days of the Church life, called the former rain in Joel and to the last days before Christ's second advent called the latter rain by Joel is also worthy of honest discussion. What is unquestionable is that the gift of tongues is an original and unique gift to man of the Holy Ghost, prophesied of by Isaiah and reserved for the powerful prayer life of those who seek to be relegated to the submission and devotion of the Holy Ghost in times of great need. What greater need in the Church has there been than during the inception and infancy of the Church and then in its full maturity in the end when Christ comes back to receive His Church-Bride who has grown into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Himself. The Spirit forms our prayers in His own language before we even know what is needed or desired and takes them to the ever listening ear of the Father. The gift of speaking in tongues is truly the gift that keeps on listening. If you haven't received it yet you should make this gift the absolute highest on your Christmas list. You should seek books, tapes and personal help from ministers or agents of the spirit of Pentecost to receive this great gift without delay. Pray to the Lord for increased faith to receive this gift of heavenly access as a child. No other gift could serve you as well as this gift that gets the ear of God in such a supernatural and perfect way, in an instant of time. There are no busy signals, no downed lines, no cable problems, no "kick outs", boot-ups, hard drive crashes, connection interrupts, or blue screens - it is a direct access line for the born-again Christian to God's ear anytime, day or night; it is the perfect and instantaneous way to present needs, known and unknown, to the throne of God.

It is true that the start of something is half the battle, but the bible says, *"Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof:*

and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.” Ecc 7:8 Our Patience begins and ends with being patient to let the Holy Spirit have His way with us.

If the Church needed the glory of the Spirit and its gifts to edify, unify and mature the Church in the beginning, how much more does it need the gifts of the Spirit and praying in tongues to perfect them in the last days of its preparation for the bridegroom? Sadly, too many in the Church have missed this truth and have chosen to revere the rational mind above the mind of Christ, teaching that God took it away and gave the gift of tongues over to the hands of Satan to use as a tool to deceive, confuse, harass and impede Church glory and maturity. This shouldn't find a place even in the rational mind. Why would God do this? He is not the author of confusion for those who seek Him and love Him. If we had the child-like faith that Christ told us to return to, and that we often claim to want, then we would not be suspicious of the Holy Ghost and His gifts, especially the one that gives us unlimited access to the ear of the Father.

If you have been taught to be suspicious of this gift then ask yourself these questions. Were the 3,000 men and women on the day of Pentecost suspicious of God's gift of tongues of fire? Did Paul, who said he thanked God that he spoke in tongues more than any of the charismatic Corinthians, treat speaking in tongues as an insignificant gift from God? And what about the twelve men in Acts with whom Paul met and spoke on the road to Ephesus? When Paul asked them about receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost they freely admitted they had never even heard of the Holy Ghost. This was not the response of heathens or aborigines; it was the statement of confirmed believers who were not too stubborn to admit their ignorance. But they received the Holy Ghost and the gift of tongues without suspicion or reservation. They did not suspect that God would be trifling with them by giving them a useless gift or allowing Satan to give them an unclean language. The gifts and calling of God are without repentance, so declares the Bible. God has not withdrawn the gift of speaking in tongues; the Church withdrew their faith. Very few of us will open a package on Christmas morning

and throw it back into the face of the giver. Even if we don't understand it or appreciate it, we accept it with joy because it comes from one who is presenting a token of their love to us. But we treat God's gifts with disdain when we throw the gift of tongues back in His face, and yet claim to love Him more than anyone else in the world.

Many years ago I knew a woman who had recently been converted to Christ. She was, by nature, a very docile and gentle person. She spoke so quietly that if a dishwasher was running or a jackhammer chattering away outside one had trouble hearing her voice. Outwardly, she was submissive and humble, but even she had a stubborn streak in her heart and could not readily receive everything God could offer her. This was in the days of the height of the Charismatic Movement and the gift of the baptism of the Holy Ghost and speaking in tongues was being discussed, debated, taught and received in every nook and cranny of every denomination of Christianity. But even this contrite, gentle soul was suspicious until God intervened in a miraculous manner.

While resting at home one day the phone rang and she answered it. The voice on the other end of the line was speaking in tongues. Startled, the demure lady asked; "Who are you looking for?" The voice simply responded by asking for her by name. When she replied, "Yes, this is she", the voice resumed speaking in tongues and never again spoke a word to her in English. Within moments the tears began to flow from my gentle friend's eyes and she instinctively knew that the Holy Ghost was urging her to join with Him in speaking in tongues. She fell to her knees and with tears of repentance, mixed with joy, she started to utter unknown words of the Spirit. They were slow at first, but then picked up with rapidity until she was boldly speaking in a "natural" cadence. She never understood the words but knew they were being spoken to God by the Holy Spirit on behalf of her deepest spiritual needs. They were a form of intercession, a pure and perfect language of the Spirit of Christ, being instantly delivered to the ears of the Father in heaven. She knew what Paul was talking about when he had said, the

Spirit *“makes intercession for us uttering things we know not how to utter”*. Rom 8:26

I also know a brother and sister who received the gift of tongues unbeknownst to one another miles apart in two different cities on the same day, one by the laying on of hands, the other alone without urging from the Church body, to confirm and validate the timeliness for the gift of tongues in today's spiritual life. I could tell of many, many unique and personal testimonies, including my own, of the validity of the gift of tongues, but the above two should suffice. This gift is vital to our spiritual health. It is like having a physician on hand at all times listening to our every ailment, like having a loving mother ready to hear our every fear and disappointment, or having a friend who hears our every hope; or like having a father near to us for sweet counsel at all times.

We have a God who hears of our concern about Him and our fellow man. Through the Spirit, our heart can talk to God. The gift of speaking in tongues is not about talking at God; its glory and power is in the fact that we can speak perfect prayers at the drop of a hat and that God is always listening because they are prayers of faith and truth formed by His very own Spirit. It is the gift that gives us access to the throne by the blood of Jesus. The gift that keeps on listening...

“When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.” Eph 4:8

67. The Woman Who Hid Leaven In Three Measures of Meal

The Leaven of Heaven: Understanding the parable of:

by T Myers Smith

“The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened.”

This brief, but awesome parable, related in not one, or two, but in three of the gospels Matt 16:6/Mark 8:15/Luke 12:1 has wonderful prophetic overtones for the individual's walk of faith.

These words from the mouth of our Savior give us hope for the day when we shall be like Jesus, completely permeated with God. In a few words, this little graphic picture instigates in us those three eternal virtues, hope, faith and love, which God is constantly shaping and forming within us. This parable gives us hope for things to come, faith that God will be formed in us and assurance that His love will completely overpower us in that day.

We know that God wants us to be fully equipped so that we may have every opportunity to be worthy and successful disciples of His Son, Jesus Christ. *“For in Him dwelleth the Godhead bodily. **And ye are complete in him**, which is the head of all principality and power.”* Col 2:9-10 By receiving the three baptisms at the hand of God: repentance, water, and the Holy Spirit, we are completed, in the sense that we are fully equipped with the spiritual utility in order to become a mature Christian, servant of God. These three baptisms are the ‘leavening’ that the woman (Church) puts into,

kneads into, the individual. Without these three baptisms, this good and godly infusion, Christians are sorely hampered to the point of impossibility. Man must have all the power of God residing in Him, not around, Him or theoretically involved in his thoughts, but in Him, if he is to obtain the commanded holiness and perfection urged by Christ of His followers. Prospective disciples are instructed by Christ to 'be ye perfect' and 'be ye holy', just as our Father which is in heaven is holy and perfect. To attain to such lofty requisites, those spiritual and not earthly forms of goodness and holiness, it takes submission to the hand of God and the reality of the power of God within the individual believer. When He said we are the work of His hands, He meant it literally. When the godly power of the three baptisms are infused by faith through immersion, the disciple then must allow their penetrating power to take hold and grow, like yeast in a portion of dough. The fruits and effects of the infusions of the baptisms can be realized so that they will attain to their prescribed purpose.

In the case of this parable, as with all parables, the meaning is hid from the world and given only to those disciples seeking to follow the Lord with all their heart. We must let God interpret these symbolic stories for us. Jesus told His disciples it was not for the multitudes to see and understand the mysteries of God. (Matt 13) That is why He taught in parables. In private, however, He did reveal the meaning of many of the parables and made sure they understood them. (Matt 13) The story of the sower of the seeds and the story of the wheat and tares provide us with the method that Jesus Himself used to interpret His parables. The way Jesus unlocked their meaning holds the key to understanding those parables which are not directly interpreted for us in the Scriptures.

In revealing the meaning of the story of the wheat and tares Jesus first identified what each symbol stood for and then showed what part they have in reality. (Matt 13:36-43) He said the sower of the good seed was the Son of man, the field was the world, the good seed is the children of the kingdom, tares are the children of the wicked one, and so on. He then told them the devil has sown tares

among the wheat but that in the end, at the time of the harvest the angels would come and separate the children of God from the children of the wicked one. This is the method He would have us use in searching out the meaning of each parable, including the one about the woman and the leaven of heaven.

We start, therefore, by identifying each symbol. The leaven is Jesus Christ THE WORD, more specifically it is the three baptisms by which He hopes to baptize us and make us fully equipped; turning wholeheartedly to God, dying with Him, and coming to life in the Spirit with Him. This process, this kneading, is done by the woman, the Church, as it is being done now in this teaching. The three measures of meal is tri-part man (body, soul, and spirit).

Therefore, the kingdom of heaven, God's dominion, His world, His way, is like this: **THE WORD OF GOD** (Jesus) is hidden deep within a person through three baptisms, infusions and washings. Each baptism (**Repentance, Water, and Holy Spirit**) permeates the threefold parts of tri-part man – spirit, soul and body. It starts when Jesus enters our heart at the moment of our salvation and eventually the saved person, the person overcome by salvation's (health) power, will be permeated by Jesus (the leaven of heaven) through and through just like a little lump of yeast causes a whole loaf of bread to rise. How do we know this is the correct teaching? For that, we must, of course, turn to the Scriptures which remain the only way to confirm our beliefs. We know that leavening is symbolic of doctrine or teaching. In Matthew 16 Jesus told His disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. He later told them what He meant was that they should reject their doctrine and teachings. We know that leavening is anything that influences our behavior. In 1 Cor 5:6-8 we are shown that the true leaven is Christ, our Passover, who was sacrificed for us. The Passover and all other sacrifices under the Mosaic law were without leaven. There were few exceptions to this and each ritual 'spoke' of Jesus as the one who made it possible for us to approach God. One such offering was used to kick off the feast of Pentecost which is the feast most closely associated with the Holy Ghost. (Lev 23:17) This was set up by God to

show that even in the law Jesus, and He alone, is the only leavening needed for God's people. As the peace offering between God and Man, offered as the firstfruits through the ministry of the Holy Ghost, Jesus was the leavening. Other than that, no other leaven is needed. Jesus has to be the leaven from heaven. Three times in John 6 He says I am the bread of life. He told the Jews He was that manna from heaven sent down by His Father. He is the Truth. He is the only true doctrine, teaching, and way. He must be the leaven in three baptisms which the woman will take and hide in three measures of meal.

The woman is the active agent of this process. Without her, there is no action. Nothing will happen. The Scriptures tell us that the Holy Ghost is the one who sheds the love of God abroad in our hearts. (Romans 5:5) It is the Holy Ghost's mission to give the gifts to the Church severally to every man as He will; The Holy Ghost renews our spirit, regenerates our mind and heals the body. And in every instance that the Holy Ghost speaks it is the words of the bread of life, Jesus. The Holy Ghost glorifies Jesus and makes Jesus come alive and rise up in us. The woman is the Church wherever she is dominated and moved to action by the Holy Ghost. Bit by bit we are being perfected by the workings of the Holy Ghost who is striving to have Jesus permeate every fiber of our being. The Spirit using the Church, like the spirit of wisdom personified as a woman in Proverbs, can hide Jesus in any part of our being.

Un-risen man needs the leaven, body, soul and spirit

The three parts of meal is a man – the un-risen man – waiting for the leaven of heaven that will cause him to rise, to be seated in heavenly places. The resurrection power belongs to Jesus, to whom the Father has given the power of life over death. Jesus is the one who can save us body, soul, and spirit. First Thessalonians 5:23-24 makes this prayer saying; *"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it."*

The leaven of Jesus can and will save us wholly in all three

measures. But it is not after the fashion we suppose. It is not in the order in which we often recite the progression: body, soul, and spirit. It is very important for our faith's sake that we understand that the order is the exact opposite, even as we can infer from the Scripture itself. The prayer of Thessalonians says, spirit, soul, and body because the first priority with God is the spirit, then the soul, then last our bodies.

Aren't we first made new creatures by being given a new spirit at our rebirth? God is renewing our spirits within us daily, even as our bodies deteriorate. God must be worshiped in spirit and in truth. Our spirit must get right with God first. Second, is the battleground of the mind and emotions which embody the soul. The soul (mind and emotions) must be given over to the Holy Ghost who labors to have us receive *"with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save our souls"*. James 1:21 We must give these darlings of our life, these minds over to Christ so that every thought can be brought under His subjection. We want to have the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16). Through the gateway of the mind, the enemy gets a foothold and can harass the children of the kingdom. This advice from Ephesians 4:17,18 is the leavening the Holy Ghost wishes to permeate our mind with: *"This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart."* Rather than trusting in our mind and ability to figure out what is right and wrong for ourselves we need to have the eyes of our heart enlarged so we can see only Jesus and His will. The leaven of heaven will cause us to think His thoughts and hear His words. The leaven of heaven is able to save our souls.

Third, and the final portion of the makeup of tri-part man is the one we are so often obsessed with, i.e. the body, which is thought to be the biggest problem and yet with God it is the least concern. Jesus said fear not those who can kill your body but fear God who can cast you into Hell. If thy eye offend thee pluck it out, He also said, for it is better to enter heaven maimed and halt than be cast

whole into Hell. Cut off that 'appendage' of the flesh, eye, hands, evil heart, feet running to evil, tongue (see Proverbs 6:16-19), 'kill' them; die to them or they could hinder your entrance into the kingdom in that day of salvation. These words say the body is our last concern and, rightly so, the body will be the last to be redeemed, the last to be saved from the grave. Our bodies die, are in a state of dying as any soul can tell you who has forty or so years under the belt. But our spirits are renewed day by day in the inner man and our minds washed daily by the 'water of the word'. As long as we keep up our spiritual hygiene that is. Our bodies will be glorified when we put off mortality from immortality, this corruptible body for an incorruptible glorified model on that glorious day of the resurrection and our everlasting redemption from death. In the meantime, the Holy Ghost heals and cures us of spiritual ills and sickness. Such healing is the mission which Jesus said He was on when He announced He was the fulfillment of the Messianic promise from Isaiah in His hometown synagogue at the start of His ministry. But no earthly or bodily healing is meant to be lasting at this time. Otherwise, the saints Paul, Peter, John and those who have come after would not sleep because their bodies gave out. The leaven of heaven will permeate our bodies to the full when we see Jesus and not until. The hope of this does help to purify our spirit and soul, however.

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." 1 Jhn 3:2-3

The day is coming, if we invite the Holy Ghost to do its ministry in us, that we shall be entirely and completely permeated by Jesus. What the Holy Ghost is hiding in us now will have its full effect. The true leaven of heaven, that true bread of life, the real Word of God and true teaching from the Father – even Jesus Christ – will take us over. But first is the spirit, then the soul, then our bodies shall be

glorified even with the body that shall never die or grow old – Hide
that leaven in me, Oh Lord! Take not thy Holy Spirit from me!

68. Jesus' Testimony From The Cross

by T Myers Smith

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me." Matt 27:46 The remarkable last words spoken by Jesus before he died on the cross for you and me.

The words which gender so much wonder and discussion, especially around Easter time. They sound so fateful, yet they are merely an introduction to what our loving Savior was saying in his heart as He breathed His last; for He could not say all He wanted in that one last expel of air from His agonizing lungs. But the Spirit of prophecy had said it all the Psalmist David ten centuries before and what a glorious utterance of love and faith it fore spoke of what was in the Christ's perfect heart. It spoke of the agony of His death which he died for me, twenty centuries later. Is it any wonder why we should with open hearts of love bow before the majesty of the power of prophecy which makes available the understanding for such creatures of God's as we are. He gave everything to save me from death. He endured being separated from the very reason for which he lives and breathes – His Father – so that I could enter into life. He endured the longest moment called death, away from His Father's life, so that anyone who would could reside in the warmth and glow of life in love forever.

The Psalm expresses the entirety of the moment and the victory He won for you and me; for anyone who would come to Him with their heart in love. We beg your attention, and invites you to the foot of the cross that you might hear His wonderful and eternal utterance that he wishes to speak to you. It is personal for anyone who can hear it.

The accounts of the crucifixion are given practically word for word in both Matthew and Mark:

“Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, this man calleth for Elijah.

And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink.

The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.

Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.”

Matt 27:46-50

Beginning at the very moment when Jesus spoke the words, “My God *why hast thou forsaken me?*” they have been misunderstood, misinterpreted and confused. At that moment, men began running around to get Him something to drink, others said He was calling on Elijah, some said wait and see if the prophet Elijah will come and save Him, and others ignorantly declared: “*He said He could save others but He could not even save Himself.*”

Since that day ignorant people, supposed Christians and non-Christians alike, have said that Jesus’ faith faltered, that at the last minute He thought The Father had failed Him; Understandable for unbelievers and natural skeptics, utterly idiotic for those professing to have believed that He was the Christ.

For those of us who know Jesus in a personal way, we know such confusion is natural, but nonetheless frustrating to hear and utterly impossible to endure. Give Jesus a little credit and one will instinctively know that it is not what it seems to be at first glance from this earthbound place in which we draw our impulsive first impressions. But with God and His dealings with ignorant Man things are never the way we think they ought to be or the way they seem to our brutally limited perspective and vision

The most plausible explanation I have ever heard is that Jesus was

left alone by the Father when in that exact moment He took on the sins of the world. The explanation says that God cannot look on sin and therefore when Christ became sin for us God was forced to turn His back on Jesus for a brief moment. Jesus was then jolted into saying, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

This may well be true; it all makes Scriptural sense, but there is something else about His words that is equally true and shows forth the enormity of His faith and love. Besides the fact that God obviously can look on sin, because if He couldn't He would not have been able to give this place even a cursory glance ever, it is equally certain that Jesus, as He hung on that cross, cared more about the Father and me and you, than He did about Himself. There is a pop gospel song written and sung by Hank Williams that says, “as He hung there all alone, His life was almost gone, He never stopped prayin' for me.” I know that is true. His love is that great!

No, Jesus' dying words were not faithless words of doubt, or words of despair. They were a testimony of belief in the Father, a respect and a knowledge of the power and purpose of prophecy and an undying faith in the mercy of His Father.

I humbly submit to you the reader that the words “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me” was only the tip of the statement the suffocating Christ was making. I submit Jesus was referring with His dying breath to Psalm 22 in its entirety. If He could have He would have recited the whole Psalm. The Psalm begins as a prophecy of the day of His crucifixion and ends with high praise of God and a testimony of God's salvation which would come out of the Messiah's death and resurrection.

As the epistle says; “*Looking to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*” Heb 12:2 At the moment of His death Jesus was thinking of Psalm 22, thinking of the “*joy that was set before Him*”, and trusting God for “*the glory to come.*”

Picture it. As he hung, nailed to the cross, Jesus was slowly suffocating. Each breath He drew was monumentally harder to draw

than the one He struggled to draw before. Unlike someone facing a firing squad, or entering a gas chamber, the condemned Jesus did not have the wind or strength to make a lengthy statement. He could no more make a speech than someone having an asthma attack. So, He gathered all the strength He had left, filled His lungs with as much air as He could inhale, and gave the world His dying testimony. Psalm 22!!

When we look at the Psalm it becomes so very believable that this is what Jesus would have said had he been able to speak. This is the testimony of the one who said just moments before. *“Forgive them Father for they know not what they do.”*, Luke 23:24 and had just told the thief next to Him that they would be together that day in Paradise.

That His final statement refers His Church, those who would believe on Him, to Psalm 22 is not at all far-fetched, especially, in the light of all the other testimony He gave while hanging on the cross. A look at Psalm 22 reveals Christ’s heart toward man and God, at that critical moment in the Redemption Plan.

The first two verses bare out the explanation that in that moment the Son and the Father were “separated”. Jesus was totally alone. God the Father had left him to become sin for the world. *“Behold,”* as John the Baptist said, *“The Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world.”* John 1:29 and Isaiah said, “He bore our iniquities.”

Verses three through five immediately testify to God’s holiness, His faithfulness to deliver us, and that we can always trust Him, no matter what the circumstances, “they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.” This is Jesus’ proclamation of trust and faith in God, even at the moment of His being left alone while taking on the sins of the world. He did not falter or sin.

Then verses 6-18 begin to chronicle the prophetic fulfillment of that day’s events.

One by one, things not able to be uttered, the things that could not be spoken at the time had already been brought into existence, they had been given birth into the world, had not just been forecast they had been experienced in the world. Jesus confirmed their

reality in that moment gave shape and form and realization to their utterance. He hung there, nailed to a tree, cursed for us, giving up His life, the very thing that He was, is and always will be – Life.

1. I am a worm, a reproach of men, and despised among the people.
2. The people accused without heart. “He trusted on the Lord ... let him deliver him seeing he delighted in him.”
3. His divine nature ... “thou art my God from my mother’s belly.”
4. There is none to help and the strong surround me.
5. He was poured out like water.
6. Thirsty and wrung of all strength He slowly died.
7. They pierced my hands and feet.
8. They part my garments among them and cast lots upon my vesture.

All this, recorded in Psalm 22, happened that day. It could serve as a reporter’s account for a newspaper, website or TV report. After that comes Jesus’ true faith and feelings about His Father and the trust He has in the height, breadth and depth of God’s love and the wisdom of His plan of redemption.

The Psalm (Jesus’ proclamation from the cross) says, “*But be not thou far from me, O Lord: O my strength, haste thee to help me.*”

Jesus’ declaration of faith comes raining forth in Psalm 22 like this:

1. **Deliver me.**
2. **Save me.**
3. ***I will declare thy name unto the brethren: in the midst of the congregation I will praise thee. (vs 22)***
4. **I will fear Him and glorify Him.**
5. **And importantly, (when seen in the light of My God, why hast thou forsaken me) “For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him: but when he cried unto him, he heard.” (vs 24)**

6. ***I will pay my vows. (vs 25)***
7. ***“...your heart shall live forever.” (vs26)***
8. ***The kingdom is the Lord’s. (vs28)***
9. ***All nations shall worship before thee. (vs27)***
10. ***None can keep alive his own soul. (vs29)***
11. ***“A seed shall serve Him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.” (vs30)***
12. ***They shall testify that God has done all this. (vs31)***

In this flowing declaration, there is no lack of faith in these declarations which the breathless, suffocating Messiah could only utter in one introductory phrase. With his failing breathes He had denoted in the spirit; the entire prophetic psalm of glory breathed out to a needy world. This was the ultimate faith of the perfect Son of Man, redeemer of his race. This, this great word, His heart’s desire in his dying moments. To utter it in full, but not with man’s fleshly strength, it could only be uttered by the breathing, living Holy Spirit for all time and to every generation thereafter. And so the Spirit of God utters it in our listening ears for Him. Jesus did not doubt the Father’s love and mercy, nor did He think God’s plan had gone awry. Jesus had Psalm 22 fully in His heart the moment He said, “My God, my God, *why hast thou forsaken me*”. He knew the “seed that would serve Him” and those who would not stop at the first verse, but would read on and discover the faith of Christ, Son of God/Son of Man.

69. Dead Man Walking; Well, Limping...

by LeRoy Gardenier

"Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid Thine hand upon me." Psalm 139:5

Back in the 1930's, there was a popular nighttime radio show called One Man's Family. That title would be an appropriate label for the whole second half of the book of Genesis. The latter 25 chapters of the Bible's first book of fifty chapters focus on one man, Jacob, the younger brother of Esau, his multiple wives and his family of twelve sons and one daughter, Dinah.

So many primitive characteristics and qualities of character found in all humans are so clearly dramatized in this lengthy story, it could be helpful to summarize at least some of them. The prejudices and preferences of the parents, godly people though they were, seem to have encouraged a spirit of competition, an effort so highly esteemed among men, but so deadly to true spiritual life and progress. Isaac doted on Esau, the elder; while Rebekah favored Jacob.

Esau is presented as an undisciplined intimidator; his younger brother, a conniving manipulator. Most of us are familiar with the stories of Jacob first conning his brother out of his birthright, then later deceiving his faltering father in order to obtain the special blessing reserved to the eldest son by the right of primogeniture. Esau's rash vow to murder Jacob forces the younger son to flee the country and take risky refuge with his uncle, Laban. For twenty years Jacob reaps to himself what he has sown. His mother's brother affords him the same sort of deception that Jacob had perpetrated on his own immediate family. But all the while God's hand is upon him – promising Jacob better things to come, protecting him from

Laban's threats and connivens, prospering him in all that he undertakes.

Finally, God calls this unwilling prodigal back to his ancestral home in Canaan. But taking leave of Mesopotamian Padan-Aram; removing his expanding family and multitudinous possessions from the influence of his domineering, possessive uncle places Jacob "betwixt the Devil and the deep blue sea". Like the Psalmist he can rightly exclaim: "*Thou hast beset me behind and before*" (Psalm 139:5). Trying to slip away from his uncle by stealth, Laban and his fiery sons pursue him with a vengeance. Up ahead awaits his cheated, offended and disgruntled brother, Esau, who still might have murder in his eyes! Here God intervenes mightily on Jacob's behalf. In a dream, He warns Laban not to harm his fleeing nephew. Crossing over into the land of promise this prosperous son of Isaac is graced with a personal, powerful encounter with the God who had revealed Himself to him many years before at Bethel.

Jacob emerges from this supernatural contest defeated and surrendered, but a new man with a new name, Israel, meaning "God Commands". Miraculously, all is forgiven between Esau and Jacob. The elder brother graciously accepts the peace offering proffered by the younger. The new man, Israel, deftly disentangles himself from any dealings or further dependence on either uncle or brother. At long last Jacob finally strikes out on his own a free man, the lord and master of his own personal family and possessions. Down deep, though, he knew he was a dead man. Laban could have easily snuffed out his life. Esau might have greeted him with a dagger between the ribs instead of a fraternal hug. But now Israel was a new man, the past was all behind. He didn't exactly come racing into Shechem ready to carve out a whole new, independent existence for himself and his progeny. He knew he was a dead man walking; well, limping, to remind him of the serious implications of his surrender to God.

In Hebrew, the word shechem means "a ridge". It also signifies the neck and shoulders as the place for a yoke to bear heavy burdens. Spiritually, often when we think that we are "all set"; the truth of the

matter is that we are really “all wet”. Jacob-Israel settled in Shechem, a place of his own choosing, still exulting in his favored position with God. He had made his peace with God but was unaware he had still yet to reap so much of what he had sown.

The noted British bible expositor, Oswald Chambers, explains it this way:

“In the meeting with Esau and the marvelous experience of reconciliation with him Jacob had an expansion of heart, but he did not pay for it afterward in concentration. He lived loosely in the exalted peace of the expanded life, and suddenly a terrible tragedy breaks up the whole thing.

“In our personal lives every expansion of heart ... must be paid for by watchfulness; if it is not, looseness, ending in moral collapse, is sure to result. Because people do not understand the way they are made, havoc is produced in the lives of those who really have had times with God and have experienced expansions of heart. But they have forgotten to concentrate, and the general feeling of looseness is a sure sign that God’s presence has gone.

“Jacob settled down in the peace of Shechem. Dinah went to hell, and her brothers to the Devil. Then God spoke to Jacob. If you forget to concentrate on God, the thing that happened in Jacob’s domestic life on the big scale will happen in your bodily life on the narrow scale. The vision of what God wants must be paid for by concentration on your part; if it is not, in come ‘the little foxes’, in come a hundred and one things that were never there before and down you go. It is not that these things may happen; they will happen as sure as God is God, unless you watch and pray – that is, unless you concentrate until you are confirmed in the ways of God.” (Knowing Not Whither, The Story of Abraham, published by Christian Literature Crusade, Ft. Washington, PA)

For all that he had gone through; for all he had learned and been delivered from; for all the very real encounters with the Living God and the deep life-changes these had affected, Israel – a name and a reality that would bless the whole world – was yet to be confirmed in the ways of God! What more would it take? Further personal loss.

His beloved wife, Rachel, dies in childbirth just outside of “the little town of Bethlehem” (Gen 35:19). Stricter obedience to God. “*And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there; and make there an altar unto God that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother*” (Gen 35:1). This command was tantamount to “go back to START!”

I still keep and treasure the stained and torn cover to a pad of stationery that was on the night table beside me when the Lord once spoke powerfully to my heart. The writing paper was called “Softouch Stationery”. In the middle of the night, I grabbed a felt pen and in the dark scribbled a most important word of wisdom the Lord had just imparted to me. “Do it right the first time without fear of personal error or other’s condemnation.” That precious word came to me more than two decades ago. Whenever I’ve been faithful to follow it, I have been spared mountains of difficulty and frustration.

Jacob also needed to be disabused of a fallacious fatalism: “*Che sera, sera*” (What will be, will be), as the Italians says. Going up to Bethel (house of God), dwelling in the presence of God, allows for a lot of things, but a laissez-faire attitude is not one of them. Another very early warning from the Lord keeps me examining my motives, intentions and attitudes whenever and wherever I attend a prayer meeting. If I truly believe the Holy Ghost is present and moving among us when we come together in the name of Jesus, who am I to interrupt Him, let alone contradict or try to exploit His precious presence and awesome power? Besides starting all over again, the Lord demanded of Jacob that He pay more attention to and take stricter charge of his own family. “*Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him,*

- *put away the strange gods that are among you;*
- *be clean;*
- *and change your garments*” (Gen 35:2).

Jacob-Israel’s intimacy with God at Bethel would be a peaceful end to a turbulent saga; a satisfying scene of this patriarch being daily blessed by God and surrounded by his remaining loved ones,

especially his favored sons, Joseph and Benjamin. But the drama does not end there. Like an intriguing mystery, the plot continues to thicken. I won't give away the ending for those who haven't yet read through the book of Genesis. I'll simply close with a couple of lines from a highly respected bible teacher with the hope that his comments will spur the reader on to solve the Jacob-Israel mystery for himself. E.A. Bullinger remarks: "Thus the book of Genesis begins with God and ends with man. It begins with the creation of the heavens above, and ends with 'a coffin in Egypt'."

70. I Am Crucified With Christ

Nevertheless I Now Live

by T Myers Smith

Other men were crucified with Christ that day on Calvary. Only one of them understood what was taking place. Only one found the freedom that comes from being, as the apostle Paul said, “crucified with Christ”. That repentant sinner was the fleshly example of what Paul later pinpointed as a spiritual reality when he testified to the Galatians.

This, even in a land of freedom like America, is the path which leads to true and lasting freedom. Fundamental to all Americans is the question of freedom. Our forefathers crossed great oceans, blazed trails through frightful gaps and over granite mountains, settled hostile territories, fought wars ... even gave up their lives, for the right to be “free”. Today freedom is not merely an American’s heritage, it is an inalienable right. But Christians ought to know that there is more to freedom than what our socio-economic, political system can provide.

Though we are grateful to God for the freedoms we enjoy to worship and gather together unrestricted in His name, we are also doomed to bondage if we confuse this and other base worldly “freedoms” with the kind of freedom which breaks the shackles of sin and delivers us from our natural entanglement with the world. The Jews, who protested to Jesus that they were free men solely because they were of the seed of Abraham, serve as an example for us. We Americans fall into a similar delusion, believing we are free because our political heritage guarantees it. But, real freedom is only gained through Christ and we can acquire it only on a different road, a road past a place called Golgotha, on top a hill called Calvary.

There can be no short cuts past this place called “skull”, no way around this hill of death. As the saying goes, “Any place worth going to offers no short cuts to get there.”

Be Crucified With Christ

Yes, others were crucified with Christ on Calvary. Matthew, Mark and Luke all mention that these dying criminals reviled Jesus and tempted Him, urging Him to come down from the cross and save Himself and them. They were like the people scolded by the old gospel song, “Everybody wants to go to heaven but nobody wants to die.”

But the gospel of Luke reports one dissenter, a convicted thief who spoke in defense of Jesus. This man, this condemned sinner, accepted the justice of his crucifixion and testified with his last breath that Jesus deserved to live. In essence, this is Paul's testimony to the Galatians. In one verse of Scripture, the pathway to freedom is carved out – Death to Self.

The Galatians had become bogged down in ritual, seduced by false teachers who taught them that they had to follow the law in order to be righteous, in order to be free from sin. Though Paul had been instrumental in founding their faith they had been wooed away from the sound doctrines of faith, losing sight of the necessity of being crucified with Christ, if they were to come to perfection. They had limped off the path because they were no longer being led by the Spirit, but were being cajoled and bewitched by self-willed men. Now Paul was insisting that they return to that Gospel which they had heard at first – a gospel that, because it was free from their own fleshly inability to fulfill the law – would lead to true freedom and righteousness in Christ. By dying to self they could walk in the spirit. Only the dead can breathe, stand, live and walk in the Spirit. When walking in the Spirit they would be able to fulfill the law, just as Paul had told the Romans. (Romans 8)

Broken down point-by-point we can see the simple truth of the miracle of the cross. Like Simon, who picked up Jesus's cross and followed Him to Calvary on that day, we must do the same and go straight up the hill to Calvary. First, the Christian must know and strive to make a reality out of the saying, *"I am crucified with Christ."* Gal 2:20 We must go to our own spiritual Calvary. We must tack our flesh (hopes, ambitions, attitudes, ideas, conceptions) on the cross. Jesus told his disciples *"Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."* (Mark 8:34) And, *"He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."* (Matt. 10:38-39) And perhaps most significant of all is what Jesus said in Luke 9:23 *"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his CROSS DAILY, and follow me."* This is not a one and done deal.

Faith To Die To Self Is Needed

Surely this may only apply in an area or to situations at the beginning, but its reality will grow as our faith to *"die to self"* grows. When picking up our cross becomes the rule, the 'natural' instinctive thing, rather than the exception, we will be able to say as Paul said, *I do this that I may win Christ, "for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ."* Phl 3:8 Because Paul was crucified with Christ he could say, *"And the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God."* Gal 2:20 If the life Paul lived was one sustained by the faith of the Son of God, then why should that not be the case for any Christian who seeks it? We are fed, sustained, fulfilled and directed because we are His sheep and we hear the Master's voice. We do not seek to follow the Law, not even our own inclinations. We are not slaves to rules, but we are obedient to His Word and voice, which we know is love – and *"against love there is no law"*. Gal 5:22-23 How is this

possible? Or, why should I seek to die to myself, so I can let Christ and His faith live through me? Because, as Paul concludes: *“He loved me and gave Himself for me.”* Gal 2:20 Are we not asked and then told by the Scripture, *“Know ye not that you are the Temple of the Holy Ghost and you have been bought with a price and you are not your own, glorify therefore the Lord God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.”* 1 Co 6:19-20 No greater love has any person than to lay down his life for his friends. Just as the thief on the cross, we know in our heart that we should accept our own crucifixion, trusting that we shall see God and be with Him in paradise. And we know that Jesus is the one who deserves to live in us. After all he died for us. This is the real meaning of the resurrected life, and there can be no resurrection unless our ‘death’ (spiritual) takes place. That is one of the great mysteries of our faith. Through the miracle of the cross, we who deserve to die, can die without fear (in the Spirit), so that He who deserves to live can live (through us in the Spirit).

God’s provision as usual is not Man’s way, but it is His glorious unimaginable loving eternal way. The pathway to freedom and perfection goes through the cross, not around it. It goes up the hill called Golgotha and to the top of Calvary. Finally, take note that the Gospel written by the apostle of love, John, shows us a remarkable thing, that there was a garden situated at the foot of the cross on Calvary’s Mount. God makes no big deal about it, just takes note of it for those who might have eyes to see. *“Now in the place where he was crucified there was a GARDEN; and in the GARDEN a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. John 19:41* Jesus went before us, never before was there a man who was laid in a tomb that would be his booster for resurrection. The first man died in a garden, the second man was resurrected to life in a garden, a garden that sprouted eternal life; a garden able to bring forth everlasting life because it was fed and nourished by the death of flesh on the Cross. How lively, how good, how sweet the garden of death is in Christ for we can find total freedom there and like Jesus whom Paul followed, say, *“Father, into thy hands I COMMEND my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost”.* Luke 23:46. We can give

up our 'ghost' in favor of the Holy Ghost whereby we can find a new life, a resurrected life following in the footsteps of Christ, daily without fear.

Like the literary character, the Scarlet Pimpernel, we Americans "*seek freedom here, we seek it there, we seek it everywhere.*," but it is nowhere to be found except on that high and lifted up place, that gardened, fragrant hill, where we can testify as Paul did, "*I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I now live. ...*"

Anyone who tries to keep the law is doomed to ultimate failure and will be considered a transgressor and sinner, because we are told that sin is the transgression of the law. We are reminded of Jesus' doctrine; that we are not to seek our own life, but to lose it. That is a prime doctrine of Jesus which he lived and can identify with our sufferings and experience of the cross. We are to seek our spiritual death by being crucified with Christ, picking up our cross daily and following in His footsteps closely behind. We are to seek to 'die'. We must trust the Holy Ghost to bring about the circumstances and the grace needed to climb Calvary and mount our cross. He is the master architect of this high and lifted up spiritual process of the 'cross' experience for the individual saint.

Those that try to master the Law and attain righteousness by keeping the Law are trying to stay alive rather than seeking the death of their Will, exploring their ethereal demise and swallowing their pride and exterminating the natural desire to keep their own righteousness and ego alive and well. It is a bad sign to the Holy Spirit when a person wants to seek to hold on to their own ideas and will. If one is clinging to the Biblical Law in any form that person is living under a bad sign. It is the greatest indicator of resistance in a Christian soul, of resisting being 'crucified with Christ', of not taking that solemn climb up to a personal Calvary experience of ultimate deliverance from fear of death.

Paul told the Romans if a person follows the Law hoping to be righteous then that person will live in them, or in other words, have life sustained by their own ability to be righteous and keep the Law. Then he gave all those who might seek to live by keeping

the Law this devastating warning of judgment about that sort of self-righteous deception. He noted that, whoever offends even in one slight point of the Law offends the whole Law and is guilty of transgressing the entire Law. Those who broke the Law died without mercy. For instance, a thief may keep every other law, but he is convicted as a criminal because he has stolen. He is a convicted criminal against the Law though he may have been 99.9% legal and law abiding. The Bible says, *“Those who observe lying vanities, forsake their own mercy.”* Jonah 2:8

Being crucified with Christ is just that – being – crucified with Christ. We are as sheep accounted for the slaughter. We die all the day long; we are told Yet Paul proclaims that he lives through his death by the resurrected life of Christ. *“Nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.”* Gal 2:20 If we are willing, as Paul was, to pick up our cross and then do it daily, then we can share in Christ’s resurrected life. Along with Paul, we can start to say, I live, but it is Christ and His love which lives in us. What freedom is brought when we “die” and Christ lives in us. What can be done to a dead man? The bible says only the dead are free from sin.

This lack of climbing up Calvary where one can meet the Spirit on His terms, is why Paul called out the churches of Galatia and confronted them with this blistering question: *Having started out in the Spirit why have you turned back to the flesh?* He even admitted his fears for them when he said, *“I stand in doubt of you.”* Gal 4:20

71. Through the Eye of a Needle

Extraordinary story of Death and Life Gained

by T Myers Smith

I remember the first time I saw John. I was waiting for news that could have had a lasting impact on my life, but that wasn't the reason that my first meeting him became etched in my memory. Nor was there anything startling about the way we met. A receptionist at a desk called out to me to say that the doctor was coming out of O.R.. I looked up from my chair to see John walking toward me. I can see it all so clearly. He was still wearing his surgical gown and cap, and his mask hung wearily around his neck. The only part of his garments that he had time to strip off were his gloves; I remember because we shook hands and he had a firm handshake, the kind surgeons ought to have. He looked and acted composed, especially for just having stood over a man to perform a complicated and lengthy operation. No, that first meeting wasn't memorable for any of the reasons you would figure. No, it was because in that moment, before John even had a chance to speak, my fears and anxieties for the patient were quelled and replaced by an inexplicable pity for the physician. I didn't have the time or the inclination at that moment to consider what my feeling meant or why on earth I was having it, it wasn't till later that I realized the extraordinary irony in it; that my mother and I were waiting for news about my stepfather's life threatening condition, news that would have lasting effect on our home and family, and I was feeling sorry for the doctor as if HE were the patient. Little did I know that John would become my parent's spiritual patient before the year was out.

John spoke first in that initial meeting, giving us the worrisome news that Roy's cancer was too involved and too large to remove,

and that radiation therapy was probably necessary. His tone was apologetic and disappointment was written all over his face. I had no desire to quiz him, I just had an urging to console him. I asked him if he was alright. I told him how I figured he must be very tired after such a long ordeal, and that I and my family appreciated everything he was doing. It was nothing I had planned to say, and I suppose, way out of character for me. I had no inherent liking for the medical field, in fact I was suspicious of it. I disdained the godlike arrogance that can sometimes ooze from the medical establishment and distrusted the profession that can so easily turn healing into business for profit. But the more John talked the more I felt sorry for him. I saw a man who cared, a man who believed that he had taken on the responsibilities of restoring life and defeating death and that the balance lay in the success of his skilled hands. I felt both admiration and reassurance, but I felt great sympathy too. This man who had stood and sweated, and labored over my friend and step-father for so many hours, was carrying as big a burden as any of his patients. In that moment of time I sensed, as I stood and looked at his face, all the pressures, the frustrations and dashed hopes, and the heavy burdens, that were on the back of John Eielson.

Some of John's burdens were his own doing, some came with the territory, his profession of healing. He wanted to cure every patient, be the healer of all, see no suffering and wipe away death. I sensed how hard it must be to tell parents, children, friends, the worst of possible news. I felt how difficult it must be to believe that you're responsible for whether a man lives or dies. That dealing with the patients was bad enough, but how did one cope with the bitterness and hatred and grief of families and loved ones. I sensed the frustration and disappointment at each failure and that no matter how many successes came before, not one hundred cures could soothe the loss of a single battle. I saw that this surgeon was frustrated, tired, constantly threatened, and often abused, deified and worshipped and at the same time hated. Later, after getting to know him, I knew that John took it all very seriously, his role as a healer, as a physician who wanted to give the gift of health and life

to all of his patients. In that moment maybe I sensed that also, his love and generosity, that is. Maybe it was in his eyes just before he spoke, or in his voice as he told my mother and me the bad news, I don't know for sure, I just know today that John cared about his oath and about his responsibility as a doctor. Maybe he cared too much, and maybe that's part of the reason God chose to take him home to be with him, because he was locked into an impossible job, a job where his standards of perfection were unattainable, and yet anything short of that perfection was unacceptable failure to him. Maybe he could not have ever overridden his feelings of guilt. Maybe he could never have been detached enough to be happy and at peace.

Over the years John had gotten more and more frustrated in his work. His worsening temper and unbridled cursing were signs of his heightening frustration, but thank God for his frustrations, because his frustrations, as it turned out, worked for his salvation. That was one of his tough lessons I guess, finding out that he was not responsible before God for a man's life. God over the last five years of his life relieved John of the burden of having to be "god". In the process, God used John to heal People in a way that truly fulfilled the desire of John's heart. John's deliverance was truly marvelous and at the same time hard to watch, it was lovely and inspiring and at times frustrating and anxious, it was edifying and encouraging and always interesting, and in the end it was both miraculous and merciful, and we love God all the more for loving John the way he has.

Roy and Neena did most of the work of anguishing over John's trials and tribulations in Christ. Like spiritual surgeons, they labored over John as he was laid open on the Holy Ghost's operating table. They, through Roy's illness and God's use of John's care and talent which was instrumental in bringing Roy back to health, preached the gospel to John. They coaxed him to receive the Holy Ghost and were delighted to water baptize him. They crawled with him when he crawled, gave him rein to run as he explored his new world in which he was a new creature, comforted him during his

trials, and loved him enough to say no when it needed to be said. In return, John was honest and sincere and he seemed determined to be among the few who leave that wide and well travelled road that leads to Hell for that narrow and less traveled path.

John pricked my heart the night he testified that he wanted to be a righteous man. That in fact was the motivating force behind his accepting Christ as his personal savior. All his life John had striven to be a righteous man and, like myself, had failed, but he found righteousness in Christ that night when he knelt and invited the living God into his heart, beginning a four and a half year walk that produced a bright and burning fervor for God's word in his life.

From almost the very moment that John accepted Christ, things in this world got tougher for him. Maybe that's the way of things for the rich man who comes to Christ and truly decides to follow him whithersoever he goeth. John seemed to have everything before he accepted the Lord. He had a wonderful family and wife, a fine professional career, money, respect, and friends. He summarized it by saying, "I had it all, even the house on the hill". But after giving his life to Christ he began to trip down off that hill that was to be his deliverance and freedom. The Church is filled with wonderful testimonies of impoverished people that come to the Lord and find prosperity and hope and are lifted up out of the gutter to meaningful lives. But John's ultimate testimony is something entirely different. For John, who had it all, it was a time of turmoil and trouble on nearly every earthly scale, instead it was the spirit, the deep inner things, his fears, and guilt, his disappointments and lies, that God planned to take out of his life, and the cost was every bit of John's world. But don't be sad, or confused. Praise God, because I believe John was willing to pay the price for righteousness sake and for the cause of Jesus Christ. Some of the personal victories I can only guess at, others John confessed and testified to, and still others were played out before our eyes. Unlike the young rich man who asked Jesus what he should do to be saved and was told to give up everything and follow Jesus, but couldn't do it, John was able to do it. John wanted to be free of worldly burdens, to lay

all his burdens down, and let Jesus carry them for him. The four years leading to his death were spent in getting free from the sorts of misconceptions, burdens and fears that are common to us all and yet so contrary to God's love. God gave John all the tools that made him complete in Christ by making him a new creature, giving him the gift of the Holy Ghost and instructing him to have the faith to die to self. Because John was a public man God saw to it that the whole process was a public affair and John testified to these things without shame or reservation. God's power made them real in John's life.

John's zeal for God's word, his generosity and desire to heal, and his honest desire for righteousness was a source of edification for the Church wherever he fellowshipped. I believe God took John home to be with him because it fit his plan perfectly. John knew that he was like the young rich man in the gospel who had to give up everything and follow after Jesus. He also testified many times that his salvation was like a camel going through the eye of a needle. It may have been necessary for John to give up everything, including his life, so he could be threaded through the eye of that needle. I know in my heart John's life, salvation and death were God's mercy on a man who was called according to God's purpose.

Shortly after John's brain tumor was diagnosed, I found myself at the hospital where John was head of Thoracic Surgery working on a story. The hospital had just gotten in a new mobile Magnetic Resonance Imaging unit and was looking for publicity. It was exactly the same type machine used to detect John's tumor and as I sat in the lobby waiting for my contact, the Lord spoke to my heart saying, "It's all right to live, get sick, and die." There in that hospital surrounding – the same one where I had had my first memorable meeting with John – where everything, every living movement and inanimate object existed in opposition to that statement, God was giving me reassurance about John. At the time I didn't think it necessarily meant that John would die from his cancer, I just knew that God was telling me that it can be all right to live a good life, in other words to have life in abundance, then to get sick, never

recover from that sickness and then die. He also wasn't merely saying that it could be OK, that it would be alright, God was telling me, I knew, that it could be all right, as in perfectly good, as in all things would be exactly right, all of it would be right. As I looked around, heard the murmuring conversations in the background and heard the intercom summoning doctors to their patient's sides, I knew that what might look like a tragedy, would be God's mercy instead, and could be happening to John. Here was a man who had it all, the house on the hill, a life of abundance, and he was sick, and in spite of his lifelong commitment to medicine, and how contradictory and unacceptable it would be for the medical community to believe, it might be possible for everything, all things, concerning John to be right, even if he never recovered from his cancer.

That of course eventually happened. John never recovered, and yet I believe everything concerning his salvation and eternal life is all right. The camel has gone through the eye of the needle and as the miracle was worked I beheld God's power of love for John Eielson. To be sure Roy and my mother have more to share than I about John's salvation, all those who watched this miracle have their reassurances, and it all goes to God's glory.

John's death has sealed his eternal reward – and it is always wonderful to be able to say that without reservation. John was healed as he would have others be healed, in spirit and righteousness. Hopefully, his healing will be a testimony that will heal many others. For those of us who got to know and love John Eielson in Christ and remain here to work out our salvation, we are split. We rejoice because John has gone home, but we are sorry because we miss his fellowship. But even our longing for John's fellowship is used by God to deliver us from this world, and from our own "houses on the hill". The Lord has taken one of his jewels home, a jewel close to us and our treasure is increased in heaven because we look forward to meeting with him on that beautiful shore. John's presence there is used by the Lord to help us place our heart's

desire in heaven, for as Jesus promised, “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”.

72. Intro to: Repentance from Dead Works

Come out of the night

by T Myers Smith

Just as our journey to Brideship with Christ begins with being born anew by the Spirit into the kingdom of God, among our first baby steps will be a definite kind of repentance, of doing a complete about face. The young Christian is called upon to turn. The sooner the better. We are urged by Word and Spirit – Spirit and Word – to turn from our own ways, which we may think are tried and true, but actually are far from it. The young Christian ought to turn wholeheartedly to God. Novice Christians can never hope to get their feet under them in order to commence their adventurous walk unless they, with their full heart and spirit, are willing to submit to the flowing will of God which is being broadcast mercifully now in their newly created supple and airy heart.

Do not be alarmed, however. We may not readily or easily submit everything in our spirit and life. Deliverance from ourselves and our past lives often takes extraordinary measures by God. This requires experience and faith and a maturity. Regardless, we must be willing to submit to God in everything we do. Well, actually, in all things. There is no substitute for a speedy and honest devotion to repentance before God. Repentance flings opens the gates of freedom from self and lets us walk away from our old life, into the new. We are urged in the Scriptures to flee corruption and sin and follow after the abundant good things of God, like righteousness, faith and love. If we are willing to throw open the prison gate of selfishness and worldly desire and repent from our cherished ways, we shall be able and successful in learning how to walk through that gate and into the ‘marvelous light of God’s dear Son’. If not we will

be confined to our crib, many disturbing dark nights of the soul and the chilling cold of this present evil world. Repentance is the key, but not just to escape, also to come into those good things of God. God has given us a way out, the means of full escape. If we do not repent of our own works, from thinking they are purely and fundamentally good at any time, then we shall be unable to embark on the journey that God has planned for our life by faith. The Bible terms this crucial spirit of repentance: REPENTANCE FROM DEAD WORKS. The following segment of articles about Dying to self are designed to help Christians understand this ever important set of heart and action of our Will.

Another way of perceiving this activation of our new beginning is that it is akin to coming out of the woods, or out of the dark, because unlike a newborn babe in the flesh, we have a former life with former knowledge with which we must contend and be freed from its errors, misconceptions and general perverse ways. The born-again Christian must come out of this darkness, walk into the light, the light into which he and she has been called. Their own dark misunderstanding and ignorance must be forsaken for the vain things which they are. We usually come into this new world of God's kingdom with a lifetime of baggage and a full repertoire of worldly mischief and tedious misconceptions about who God is, imposing on Him the idea of who we think He is supposed to be, or ought to be. It is vital that we repent of these things also.

Essentially, we must turn from ourselves. To repent of our own works means to drop our own ways without reservation or equivocation; as if they were a glowing red hot iron branding our bare hands. We may recognize that we have even long meddled in the affairs of God without understanding or true knowledge, even becoming a hindrance to Him. We may have been like a little child wanting to help their parent but without discernment, skill or ability. We only have gotten in the way. Now God calls. He says to His newborn to turn with vigor and trust, turn to Him with full assurance of faith that He will give light and warmth and they can grow strong. They can begin to walk in the new path set before them

by THE WORD and THE HOLY SPIRIT under the instruction of God Himself.

73. Step Into the Light

by T Myers Smith

The idea is that one should realize in these most incredible of times that; *“The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.”*

The born-again Christian must never be content with just being spiritually alive without purpose or consideration toward growth and maturity, any more than it is reasonable for a person in their fleshly existence to expect to remain an infant or never mature to adulthood. It is God’s desire for all that are allowed to live and walk in His saving Grace to mature and become a disciplined follower of Jesus Christ. But the reality of things are such that some, even most, born-again Christians follow at such a great distance behind Jesus that He has to continually yell at the top of his lungs just so they can hear Him. Others follow here and there as it suits their purpose, swerving off the path into the woods or taking illicit excursions to unseemly places. Some don’t even care to follow, thinking it is no concern of God’s, now that they are saved from going to Hell. They are quite happy to believe the fallacious doctrine of ‘once saved always saved’ and that God is content with having them be content with just being ‘saved’. They feel that if he wants them for some reason he can look them up on facebook or get in touch with them somehow. He knows where they live. Others think that God needs their good judgment on matters and their wise help. How has God ever gotten along without their wise counsel. They run ahead of Him, telling Him where to go, what to do, why He should do things, or what is needed. They think He should be happy to get their counsel on important matters. But get real. He’s not.

These things only amount to ‘leading’ Him, which it is not hard to see is a really ridiculous thing for someone to do who claims to be a follower of somebody.

Then there are those, real disciples, who follow so closely that

they are following in His footsteps one step behind, so close they can hold His hand and hear His most quiet and intimate whispers. They cleave to Him and do not let the World, their Flesh or Satan cleave them from Him. Regardless of your distance, whether you need to get closer and stop fooling around, or whether you are close enough to touch the hem of His garment and look into His eyes the big question will always remain – did you seek the righteousness of God today and forsake your own ways and your own forceful Will? Did you? Did you repent from self.

Not That Hard a Concept;

Though it May Be Hard to Do

Dying to self may be a simple concept, easy to understand. The incredibly hard part is having a sentence of death worked in us.

But the Holy Ghost is faithful to work this “operation of God” for us, if, and only if, we will allow Him to perform it. If we have faith that God’s power of love is great enough to perform a death in us, as the sign of water baptism shows, then we can be free. Not until this happens, however, can we be free to move on in our journey to perfection, for spiritual perfection requires we be ‘dead’. The Bible tells us in Romans that only the dead are free from sin. Without faith it is impossible to please God; because anything that is not of faith is sin and faith is demanded if spiritual perfection in Christ is to be achieved. Therefore if we want to go on unto perfection (as Hebrews 6:1-3 tells us) in our journey to bride-ship of Christ we must die in order to be free from sin, free to live in the Spirit, free to live by faith. Then we can be raised up in the likeness of Christ, to the resurrected life, having our worldly and carnal desires and aspirations converted into His spiritual will by believing and trusting in the Spirit of Christ to manufacture this in us. We can be perfect in that we are freed up to “*hear the Word of God and do it*” Luke 8:21.

74. Discipleship: Seeking God's Righteousness

Turning From Dead Works

by T Myers Smith

The born-again Christian must not become content with just being spiritually alive with no purpose or consideration to growth and maturity, any more than it is right for person in their fleshly existence to expect to remain an infant, or never mature to adulthood. It is God's desire for all that are allowed to live and walk in His saving Grace to mature and become a disciplined follower of Jesus Christ. But the reality of things are such that some, even most, born-again Christians follow at such a great distance behind Jesus that He has to continually yell at the top of his lungs just so they can hear Him. Others follow here and there as it suits their purpose, swerving off the path into the woods or taking illicit excursions to unseemly places. Some don't even care to follow, thinking it is not a concern of God's now that they are saved from going to Hell, and they are quite happy to believe the fallacious doctrine of 'once saved always saved' and that God is content with having them be content with just being 'saved'.

Others think that God needs their good judgment on matters and their wise help. They run ahead of Him, telling Him where to go, what to do, why He should do things, or what is needed. It amounts to leading Him, which is not hard to see is a really ridiculous thing for someone to do who claims to be a follower of somebody. But then there are those, real disciples, who follow so closely that they are following in His footsteps one step behind, so close they can hold His hand and hear His most quiet and intimate whispers. They cleave to Him and do not let the World, flesh or Satan cleave them from Him. Regardless of your distance, whether you need to get

closer and stop fooling around, or whether you are close enough to touch the hem of His garment and look into His eyes the big question will always remain – did you seek the righteousness of God today and forsake your own ways and will? Did you?...

Seek Ye First The Kingdom of God and His Righteousness

In the following passage from the Word, Jesus proposed a shocking and highly radical way of life to all would-be disciples. Addressing them with boldness He told them about a spiritual way in which they could be obsessed with seeking God's righteousness and the glories of the kingdom of heaven. They could turn from residing in the fleshly way in which earth-bound people naturally find themselves, always obsessing on the carnal, servants of mammon (material), serving with conviction and devotion the things of this temporary life, rather than the eternal things of salvation. Jesus told them all things will be provided when we seek the righteousness of God and not our own.

"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” Matt 6:24-34

Jesus taught the crowd that they could not serve two masters. He summarized the battle as the opposing ideals of God's goodness versus material goods and money. We will love one and despise (or forget) the other. That is just the way reality works. He warned potential believers that food, drink, raiment and the general provisions of life were what unbelievers continually sought after and habitually pursued, when in fact, it was not necessary to live that way in such dread and fear. He encouraged the people to trust God and believe that God would be so impressed with any soul that sought His will and His righteous goodness above everything else, including the necessities of carnal life and that he would be sure to provide them with all their material needs as well. He would not necessarily let them store up or get ahead, but He would provide them with their daily portion on a daily basis. He does this because it requires that one keep trusting and faithfully following Christ each and every day; even hour by hour. Their Father in heaven would provide; if they would only trust and believe in Him.

It was then that Christ issued His famous challenge of believing-

faith toward all would-be disciplined followers. *“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.”* Matt 6:33 Jesus advised those who would be His followers to have two primary pursuits in their spiritual life: God’s kingdom and God’s righteousness. But Christ coupled these two challenges of faith together, the kingdom of God and His righteousness, because they are *sine qua non*, meaning that one cannot exist or occur without the other. He wants His Church to understand that finding the kingdom and having God’s righteousness are indivisible and inseparable. Finding one is contingent on finding the other. It is paramount that the born-again Christian who aspires to the highest faith (that which we call the Philadelphia Faith after the letter the Philadelphia faithful) realize that finding true righteousness is the key that unlocks the door to the blessed realm of God’s kingdom. Christ is the one who bound seeking the kingdom of God together with seeking GOD’S righteousness because no one can attain the kingdom without casting off their own righteousness and putting on the righteousness that is of God. The prophet Micah summarized the process at the close of his prophecies: *“I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness.”* Micah 7:9

The prophet saw the light and stepped out into it ...

The journey starts with being born-again

..... and we soon realize we have born the indignation of the Lord because we have sinned against him. Christ has stood up for us and plead our cause with power because He performed ultimate love when he shed His holy blood on the cross for us. When we accept His appeal and our stay of sentence, He brings us into the light where we can see and live in His righteousness. We no longer have to wrestle with the frustration and guilt of our own ever-failing,

impotent 'righteousness'. We are able and free, free to live a life that pleases God because we can walk in His righteousness by the Spirit. Micah saw this power and grace coming. He saw its promise in and for his own life. *"I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me."* He will acquit us so we may turn from our unholy works and our vain trust in Flesh. *"...He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness."* We can step out of the night of our soulish life, and step into the light of His Spirit. His Word and the right paths in which to make our way, to walk and even to breathe the spiritual breathe of life are now wide open and laid clear before us. Micah had not only sought the righteousness of God, he believed in the righteousness of God, had seen it and made it his dwelling place and was saved.

He was spared the imprisonment of the cares of this world, including having them become a ruling force in his sojourn and his daily struggles of life. So, why then, did Christ not simply tell us to seek righteousness and leave it at that? Every born-again Christian knows that they cannot enter the kingdom of God by virtue of their own righteousness. It has to be a righteousness of faith that trusts only in the righteousness of the life, death and resurrection of Christ. *"For with the heart man believes unto righteousness."* Rom 10:10

The prophet Isaiah was clear about our own righteousness when he said, *"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."* Isa. 64:6 We can only enter into the kingdom by putting on the righteousness of Christ, by being covered in His shed blood which gives us forgiveness of sin. But the reason Christ has made a point of noting a difference between righteousness and God's righteousness is that there are two very different forms of righteousness that can be aspired to and understood in the Christian life: one is God's righteousness; the other is our own righteousness. It is easy for the immature or carnal Christian to confuse the two and end up sinning the great

sin of 'self-righteousness'. We cannot enter the kingdom by our own righteousness. The early Christians of Galatia, for example, had slipped into a form of self-righteousness by trusting in the works of the law rather than trusting God by faith. God's righteousness is gained by faith through reliance on and yielding to the Holy Spirit; the other is often sought after by following some form of Christian legalism, trusting in our own personal ability to make right judgments, confiding in our own sense of right and wrong, good and bad, true and false, helpful and harmful. All these are exceeding forms of self-righteousness. Regardless of the brand of self-righteousness we choose, it is fatal to the quest of which our Christian journey ought to be devoted – seeking the kingdom of God with all our heart, mind, body and soul.

The Bride Will Wear Christ's Righteousness and Will Be Called by Her Husband's Name.

Job stands as an eternal example for the Christian. He shows us that there are two types of righteousness which a man can seek after – his own or God's. He shows us the error and misery of relying on our own goodness and righteous judgment. The Biblical emblem of the quintessential and universal man, Job and his delusional self-righteousness are a common affliction of all men. We all acquire a pride that gets us to think that we know. Not just head knowledge which puffs up, but thinking we know what is good, what is best. From this pier of deception we launch out into our good works and will ultimately disgrace ourselves by excluding the one thing needed for all righteous judgment and goodness to be performed – the grace of God, who, as the prophet Jeremiah declared on a few occasions – is our righteousness. This is what 'marries' together worthy saints with Christ the Bridegroom and makes them the bride. Jeremiah first reveals the name of the Messiah – 'the Lord Our Righteousness' and identifies him with Jacob, the man christened,

Israel. Hosea prophesied that like Jacob/Israel, Jesus would be the ultimate representative of Israel, that one *“who has prevailed with God”*, when he said, *“and Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he kept sheep.”* Hos 12:12 Jacob kept the flocks of Laban so that the patriarchs of Israel might come into being and the seed of the Messiah might be furthered along to its ultimate glory in Christ. Jesus has kept the great flock of the new-born. It is the flock of the separated ones of the commonwealth of Israel, in which someday Jew and Gentile will be joined. Some, the holy ones (holy by living in His righteousness), will be joined to Christ in a most intimate way, and will be eternally, as it were, His wife. He has kept His flock, fed them, they hear His voice and he watches over them as the Great Shepherd and Pastor, with hopes of presenting unto himself, we are told, a ‘separated people’ purified in obedience to the Spirit and in subjection to His righteous will, and not their own self-righteous pride and arrogance.

This is the Bride, prophesied in Isaiah 61-62, if you will, which is glorious and has a end-times work to do in issuing the invitation the wedding supper of the Lamb for anyone who might hear this message that he is our righteousness and repent from any idea of their own goodness. This is the phenomenon of Brideship eluded to in Ephesians 5:27; *“That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or WRINKLE, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”* The Brideship journey begins with being born-again, the first steps are taken in entering to the understanding and living faith of the fundamentals principles of the doctrines of Christ. The very first step is taken in repenting from our own dead works, which is the Scriptural way of concisely telling us to turn from our own righteousness and be absorbed into the righteousness of God Himself.

God first revealed this powerful name of Messiah, Jehovah-Tsidkenu, during the judgment of Israel in Jeremiah's time. *“In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”* Jer. 23:6 The ultimate savior and seed of salvation has been given

another name, a name to cap-off the new name of 'Israel which God had christened Jacob at Bethel, the house of God. Jesus is ultimate Israel, but also ultimate righteousness. Later, as judgment progressed and the sin of the people was revealed more and more, God revealed a second righteous one – THE BRIDE. She is not to be conceived as righteous in her own right, but righteous because she has been made one with Christ, as man and woman are meant to be one flesh, so she is one with Christ. Ephesians tells us that this is the whole point of man and woman being married, to show the ultimate marriage between the Church and Christ. She is now concluded as righteous because she has clothed herself in His righteousness, trusted in His judgment in all things, the way a loving woman might do for a perfectly loving and righteous husband. We ought to be astounded when we realize that Jeremiah 33:16 changes the person who is called Jehovah-Tsidkenu from the first person masculine, who rules over the whole kingdom of Israel, into the first person feminine who lives securely in the heart of God's kingdom, Jerusalem, that jewel in the crown of God. Notice that Jeremiah's words change to that effect: *"In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."* She shall be called the Lord Our Righteousness. It is clearly in the sense that on that day of the prophesied marriage supper of the Lamb she will be introduced to the universe, along with Jesus, as Mr. and Mrs. THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. One and the same. She has taken on his name and character and become like her husband whom she adores with pure love and devotion. What sense does this make unless God is calling her the Bride of Christ who is the same as the LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS because she has joined herself totally to Her husband's righteousness by subjection, humbly obedient to His will.

If we do not seek His righteousness but think we have some righteousness we can rely upon then we mistakenly think of ourselves as being right and justified in our judgments and our sense of justice. We inherently believe we know how the world should work, that God should act according to our idea of fairness

and goodness. We mouth the Scripture that God's ways are not our ways and that as the heaven is higher than the earth so His thoughts are higher than our thoughts. We are still inclined to impose our ways and thoughts, not just on our fellow man, but on God, while we inwardly question His way of running the world, doubting His method for bringing people to salvation, questioning His mercy and judgment. We may wonder how He can let children in Africa die, or how He can permit a tornado in Tennessee to destroy property and lives. When we silently question these things, and much more besides, we are actually saying in our heart that we know better than God, we are declaring, without declaring so, that we are more righteous than He. And after all, is it not stated clearly in the Bible that *"with the heart man believeth unto righteousness"*? Rom 10:10 If we believe in our heart that God is unrighteous in any of His ways or that we are more righteous, that in certain matters we could do a more fair and just job at running things, then is there any reason for us to believe that we have put on the righteousness of God? If we are truly seeking the kingdom of God we will allow it to invade our mind and inhabit our spirit, control our words, morals and thoughts. We will make room for God's judgments and His righteousness. Did not Jesus say; *"The kingdom of God is within us."* Lk 17:21 We are taught by the Bible that the kingdom of God is not outside in things we can eat and drink and touch and smell, but they reside in the fruits of the Spirit of the living God, which are grown inside of us by obedience to His voice. *"The kingdom of God is not in meat and drink, but in righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost."* Rom 14:17

Job, too, believed that he was righteous, as righteous as God, and for his folly God mercifully judged Job and saved him from the fate of all self-righteous people: the pit of Hell. How often have men thought, as Job did, that they knew better how to dispense justice and mercy than God Himself? How often do we think we are right and good when we have no notion of what God's will is concerning a given matter? James tells us that *"the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God"*. James 1:20 Man by himself, cannot bring about righteousness. The epistle to the Romans schools us that, *"There is*

none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” Rom 3:10-12 Jesus drove home this hard to be believed point by this startling exchange with a young man:

“When he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?

And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God.” Mark 10:17-18

Jesus was not saying He Himself was not good (because He even then counted Himself equal with God), He was emphatically declaring that no other man was inherently good. Jeremiah 17:9 described the raw unrighteousness of every man this way: *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”* The point is: it is not enough for the disciple of Christ to want righteousness or believe in righteousness, disciples must diligently seek HIS righteousness if they hope to stand righteous in the presence of God and attain the glorious Church that is called the Bride. We must trust and believe that, no matter how things look, God’s ways and actions are perfect and righteous altogether.

All true righteousness begins by accepting the fact that we must serve somebody. No man can serve himself and the kingdom of God, any more than he can serve money and God at the same time. True righteousness begins when we make a decision to seek and do God’s will rather than our own. This is why Jesus spoke as He did, saying, *“Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.”* Matt 12:48-50 Seeking God’s righteousness means, then, that we seek the will of God and not our own. For this we must begin by trusting Him implicitly.

We must lay aside our righteous notions and the way we think the

world should operate. We must step down from the judgment seat which we occupy in our own deep-rooted ideas of righteousness. We are not the righteous judge, but God is. The disciple of Christ is freed from the law, free to love, when he has decided to trust in God's righteousness. Forgetting our sense of right and justice and letting Him show us His true ways through His Word and by the guidance of the Holy Ghost, this is the only way to seek His righteousness. This is the only way we can approach Him with confidence and assurance. Then we can *"draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."* Heb 10:22

75. Heading into Deep Water

by T Myers Smith

Faith is the great adventure of the Christian life. It is a sea voyage of the spirit; A pilgrimage on earth. We launch ourselves out into the deep blue waters of God's ways and thoughts. We begin riding the waves of His majesty and His wonderful works. This happens to the soul who has faith to give their life over to Him by believing wholeheartedly in Him. As the Psalmist sang out three millennia ago, *"They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep."* Psalms 107:23-24

To be sure, faith is the thrill and excitement of the intrepid Christian's sojourn in this life. And yet, we Christians often make living by faith much more complicated than it really ought to be. We think by making it complicated it will be easier to do and follow, when actually the opposite is true, for faith is simple and uncomplicated, but often hard to put into practice.

Hearing and Obeying is Key to Living by Faith

To begin with let us whittle down the matter. Faith can be defined as hearing God's voice and obeying it. As God's word declares, *"Faith cometh by hearing and hearing (comes) by the Word of God."* Romans 10:17 Granted this is a sort of catch 22 (which came first the chicken or the egg kind of thing) but Christians must learn to live everyday by faith if they want to live vital and pleasing lives for God. Our ears are opened to God by His Word (through the Spirit and by the Bible primarily, but the Word means Jesus generally speaking) and by the Word coming to us we have the ingredient needed for

our faith. We are to live by His voice, that's why the Bible can say: *"Without faith [His voice, His Word] it is impossible to please him."* Heb 11:6 Yes, hearing the voice of the Shepherd of our soul is critical to living out our faith before God and man.

Even hearing God's voice is a pure gift of God. God initiates the sound of His voice so that we can hear it in our heart. To be equipped with a heart that can hear God is a gift. Granted it is a gift offered to all men, but still, it only comes by God's mercy. The gift of the Holy Ghost enhances our hearing. He can raise the volume, increase the sensitivity and speak to us in a personal way that is unique to our understanding, personality and immediate need. But this is only half the equation. Responding to the voice of the Good Shepherd is another matter. Hearing and obeying, responding to God's voice is our decision and our decision alone. Hearing God is the way faith begins; obeying God is the most basic thing on which faith is built. The scripture quoted above which says *"Without faith it is impossible to please him,"* continues by saying, *"for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him"*. Heb 11:6 One of the primary rewards God will give to anyone who is willing to believe in Him and listen to Him is an ear in their heart that can hear His voice. We must believe that he recognizes obedience to His voice and rewards it accordingly. But the contrary is true also. This is the down-side, if it can be called such, to hearing God's voice, because if we do not respond to it we are found faithless and unfaithful. We probably would have been better off if we never had heard it. Jesus revealed this attitude of the Father toward not responding to the voice of God, and thus not living by faith. *"And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be BEATEN with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."* Luke 12:47-48

Once We Begin to Trust God...

Faith then becomes a two way venture. It is both a gift of the Spirit and a fruit of the Spirit. It is given as a supernatural gift for special needs and it is grown in us by trials and experiences so that the sound of God's voice becomes detectable in every valve and fiber of our heart and we are able to discern it over any other voice that will continually be clamoring for attention there. Yes, faith is initiated in us by God but we also contribute to its increase by the prayers and petitions of hope which we bring to Him. Jesus made it clear to His disciples that they should always be cognizant that their faith could fall short of God's expectation and could therefore be improved. Seeking the fullest measure of faith that God will allow in us, plays a large part in having our faith increased. Faith, therefore, is given to us in measure by God according to His will, and according to what we can handle, but we obtain more and more of it by seeking God to give us more. Jesus said to his closest disciples that if they had faith so much as a tiny mustard seed that they could say to a mountain 'get up and be cast into the sea' and it would be drowned in the ocean. Those are mighty big words. There is an aspect of faith that does not need growth or anything. If that faith exists it is all-powerful in terms of faith's properties and power to do and bring into existence those things hoped for. But there is an aspect of faith that requires a growth, a maturation: – even a discretion of waiting and praying.

Jesus, whom Scripture names as the Author and Finisher of our Faith, will see that we are given enough of a measure of faith so we can live day to day in the beauty of obedient holy faith thereby pleasing the Father. And he will begin to hone our faith into a fine razor-edge getting us to believe in God more and more by experience in the actual matters of faith, which is a fundamental requirement of trusting and believing unto a living faith. In the end, God wants to instill faith, a faith which teaches total reliance and

trust in the Trinity in every situation no matter what the appearance or circumstances may be.

There Is a Difference between Hope and Faith

To live by faith, the Christian must also learn to differentiate between faith and hope. To mistake hope for faith, is to flirt with disappointment and even bitterness against God. The Scriptures say, *“faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”* Heb.11:1 Couple that with the biblical tenet *“faith without works is dead”* James 2:20 and we see that the things we hope for are not yet reality. But faith is reality. We can act upon faith because God has said, *“It is real, it is done”*. Don’t get it wrong, though, hope is a vital part of the Christian voyage. We may have many legitimate hopes, just as God hopes for all men to come to salvation, but our hopes and expectations are not always realized. We need to understand that men’s wills enter into the process of salvation and redemption and often hope is not turned to reality because of the stubbornness of their hearts.

Only when God’s word (the Good Shepherd’s voice in our heart on a given subject) comes to us can we then know we have faith for something, for it has been delivered to us, as the Bible says, *“faith comes by hearing and (our) hearing comes by the word of God.”* Rom 10:17

When we hear Jesus’ words on a matter it requires action, some sort of spiritual action, because faith without works is dead. When Jesus speaks we can believe that those things we hoped now have the evidence to support their reality and though they are unseen and the circumstances and appearance are not yet apparent, we can act. Faith through Jesus’ voice gives them substance (form, shape, and reality). So, living by faith on a daily basis hinges almost exclusively upon hearing Jesus’ words on a subject because He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. And we must be willing to be delivered

from the voices of Satan, the world and, of course, the vanity of our own mind.

Spiritual exercise, trials and tribulations, experience, God's admonishments, and His chastisement, all work to increase our discernment about hearing His voice and enable us to recognize and reject all other voices (spirits). Jesus said, *"My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God and do it."* Luke 8:21 The Psalmist said, *"Seek the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding."* Prov 3:5 Remember hope is not faith; because faith comes by hearing and hearing comes by the word of God. Don't fall into the traps of presumption telling God what His word says and demanding He apply it when, where, and how you say so. Living by faith is obedience. Want to be Jesus' brother, sister, or as His mother? Hear the word of God and do it. Solomon summarized his search for wisdom and the true way of life in the book of Ecclesiastes by saying this, *"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man."* Eccl. 12:13 Solomon was only saying, "We should live by faith".

Faith is key to pleasing God, *"For by it the elders obtained a good report."* Heb 11:2

Alarmingly the Bible even says, *"Anything that is not of faith is sin"*. If you want the adventure of the Christian life to come alive in your voyage with Christ then you must seek the obedience of living by faith every day. When all's said and done, faith is hearing and simply, as a child, obeying God. Anything not done by faith is sin – think about that when considering the importance of living by faith, brothers and sisters!

Three Enemy Voices Counter Faith: Each Voice Must Be Resisted

So, young Christian, and fellow saints, the key to living by faith is

learning to hear and discern God's voice, which is none other than the voice of the Good Shepherd, Jesus. We must be taught that all the other voices (of which there are three primary fountains) that press in around the psyche of our soul, and continually clamor for air time in our minds and hearts must be totally rejected. These three powerful enemies try to influence us through their persistent voices. The first comes from Satan, an intimidator, liar, and accuser; the second is the World, the great voice of mankind that deceives and seduces; and the last, and most dangerous, is Self: the voice of our mind and our flesh. In many ways, we are our own worst enemy because by nature we can't help but love the sound of our own voice. Eph. 4:17-18

There are three enemies that try to undo our relationship with Christ. All three of these enemies must be resisted constantly as we negotiate our way through life waiting for the ultimate deliverance by Jesus from heaven. The three enemies are: 1) Satanic wickedness: i.e. Satan and his minions; 2) The World: i.e. all that it teaches and preaches to us from the day we are born, and 3) Self.

Often we focus in on Satan when we talk about deliverance but it is much more involved than that. Though we all need deliverance from bad spirits we also need deliverance from the other two enemies. The Book of 1 John talks about the enemy of the world, we are told in Scripture that anyone who is a friend of the world is an enemy of God. The world engulfs us and subtly tells us good is bad and bad is good; its ways of pride and ego and selfishness are contrary to God's ways and the Spirit of truth and mercy and judgment. That is why God has said that His ways are not our ways and our thoughts and not His thoughts. But the most vital of all these enemies to defeat is – ourselves. Paul speaks of this great conflict in Romans chapter 7. *“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. ... O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself*

serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.” Romans 7:18-19, 24-25

The apostle Paul touches on what we need Christ to deliver us from, so that we may be delivered from sin and death and live by faith. The three major enemies that seek to rob or inhibit or otherwise confuse our faith are exposed in the opening chapters of three of his epistles. These three examples from the Scriptures show the daily deliverance needed from these basic enemies of our faith which equates to being any enemy of the salvation of the soul.

1. **DELIVERED FROM SATAN** – Colossians 1:13 says, that the Father *“hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son.”* We can be delivered from the hold Satan has had on us and brought into God’s kingdom.
2. **DELIVERED FROM WORLD** – In Galatians 1:4 Paul mentions deliverance from the second enemy when he thanks Jesus *“who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world.”* God can make it so we live as he asked us, as being in the world, but not of it.
3. **DELIVERED FROM SELF** – And perhaps most critical of the three, we can follow what is declared in 2 Corinthians 1: 9-10 and be delivered from Self. Paul told the Church that *“we had the sentence of death working in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver.”* For deliverance from self we must be delivered today, tomorrow and every day. And we must trust God to deliver us from trusting in ourselves. We must have the sentence of death “working” as Paul has said, “working” in us at all times. Do not shy away from learning to identify these voices in the heart and soul, rejecting them is a paramount deliverance needed by all the faithful saints of Christ. It is good; and God’s full mercy on us.

Deliverance for those that have been bruised by these three lying voices is one of the six mission points of Jesus as declared in the Word in Isaiah 11 and Luke 3. To live a life of faith on a daily basis we must learn to discern the voice of God in our heart, reject, or at least filter through the Word, all voices that are not the Good Shepherd's, and be delivered from love of self, entanglement with the world, and from making concessions to the demonic bullies under Satan's evil power. Jesus promised – *“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”* John 10:27 We must believe this wholeheartedly if we are to live by faith. If we are born-again by inviting Jesus into our heart then we should know beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus has the power to make His voice known in our heart.

76. Presumption is not Faith

by Eloise Gardenier

About two months after I was born-again and filled with the Spirit, I began to see and believe that God not only had the power, but would actually heal our bodies at times. Prior to that, the only faith I had for any kind of healing was by the medical profession.

To build my faith in His power God poured out his mercy upon me by making me the recipient of His love. When I was about five months old in Him I went back to my former home to attend a huge meeting at Notre Dame Stadium in South Bend, Indiana. I had suffered from a rheumatic heart murmur since childhood. Over the years I had experienced much emotional heartbreak and a lot of it took place right there in South Bend. As thousands sang to Jesus, I felt intense heat in my heart and chest, like nothing I had ever known before. It was beyond description. No doctor has ever been able to hear that murmur since, including my present doctor, whom I asked to check it as a confirmation. The healing took place twenty years ago. I can only ask you to take my word for it that my broken heart was also healed. Those who knew me before will attest to that.

The Lord also healed a cyst on my hand that had been operated on, returned, then drained, and returned again. I had prayed for my cat's eczema and the Lord healed the cyst as well. We were both healed in a week's time. I didn't ask for anything for myself, nor did I ask or demand to be healed in South Bend. I was so high and happy on the Lord, I wasn't thinking of my needs or that I even had any. I know that both of those things were pure gifts of God's loving mercy for me, although I had done nothing to earn or deserve it except to come to His Son. I share these two blessings to establish that I most certainly do believe; in fact, have great faith for the literal healing power of my God. Our family has been visited by His supernatural healing many times. This was done by His will, not by the sheer will of our faith or upon our demand.

The enemy of our souls wasted no time in trying to ruin the faith God was building in me for His healing. As a newborn Christian, filled with enthusiasm for the gifts of God, I wanted everything I could get, and this included teachings of God's Word. Even though I was forty-seven years old, I was a baby, and my zeal made me naive enough to believe almost anything I was told by those who had known the Lord longer than I. One of which was a man who happened to be much younger than me in years, but who had known the Lord quite a bit longer. He certainly knew the Word enough to preach the gospel convincingly. However, he did injure me in the area of physical healing and set me back for some time to come.

I had been having some nagging health problems and he heard that I was ill, and came to my house, unannounced, to see to it that I was healed. At that time he was being schooled by one or more "positive confession" groups. That evening our friend employed the "God said it, I believe it, that settles it" practice. He left telling me that I was healed. All I had to do was claim it and have faith. The bottom line was; I was not healed and now I felt guilty because it didn't happen. I felt it was my fault because my faith was too weak, so I was sicker now than I was before he came. What faith I had already been given through my other healings was greatly damaged for some time.

Presumption can get us in trouble

After a couple of years, a small booklet was put in our hands called *Faith or Presumption* by Dr. Charles Farah. The way Dr. Farah rightly divided the Word of God and gave personal accounts of his own experiences showed me there was a great difference between faith and presumption. He taught: "I think that if we do just a little study, two Greek words for the word "Word" will help us to understand. One is the word *Rayma*, the other is the word *Logos*. The *logos* is universal Jesus Christ, the universal Lord of the earth, sky and

seas whether anyone believes that or not. Jesus Christ is the eternal Word of God. But the Rayma is subjective; it's God's word to you." He goes on to explain that the Bible is the Logos and the promises of healing are general, not specific, and one must receive Rayma or a personal word from God for a specific healing. Dr. Farah also says;

"Bad theology is a cruel taskmaster. He flogs and beats those who fall into his possession as surely as physical sickness or the torture cages of Vietnam. Many people have been destroyed by a few words of bad theology. Bad theology says, in essence, If the facts don't fit the case, then stretch them until they fit. If there are more facts than the case allows cut off the excess facts.

"There are wrecked lives left all over the Spirit-filled community because people have been victims of bad theology. Bad theology says miracles cannot occur in this day. They ceased with the first century. Bad theology says a Christian cannot be bothered by the enemy because the enemy is off-limits for him. Bad theology says everyone who is prayed for must be healed since the only condition is faith. Bad theology is presumptuous and there is a thin hairline between bold faith and bad presumption."

Praise God! Beware of presumption. God eventually healed me from the wound I suffered from that bad theology and turned it around because I was not willing to settle for anything short of the truth. I truly wanted a deep walk with Him, including all the bearing of burdens, tribulation, persecutions, and sharing of His sufferings, as well as all the benefits and promises.

I spoke with a friend recently who was a member of a "positive confession" church for some years and she described their teachings in this way; God is a giver of gifts – all loving, all forgiving, never brings judgment. The members must never admit anything is wrong; they must not give a "negative confession". She said she didn't know who God really is. There was no balance of sound doctrine. They appeared disinterested in the real truth or true faith.

Example of Infirmities

I believe God allows us to bear physical infirmities for His purposes. The following are a few examples of this:

1.) To teach us.

The story of Lazarus being raised in John 11:14-15 is an example of God using affliction even unto death so that we might learn of heavenly things. Jesus said; *“Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him.”* *“...And when He thus had spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. He that was dead came forth,... ”* *“Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on Him.”*

2.) To chasten and test us.

Job is the most perfect example of both reasons. There is a lot more to Job's story than boils and patience. *“And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life.”* Job 2:6 God did allow Job to be tested, in many ways he was found righteous. It was because of these trials, along with the exposure of his self-righteousness (not the righteousness of God) that he was able to come to the end of himself, repent and come to know God in a personal way, not just by the hearing of the ear or hearsay; but know Him face to face. The same is true of us before we come to know our Savior and have new lives as Job did. When Job prayed for his friends he was set free, and the Lord blessed him more than his beginning. So that our faith in a given area may be strengthened, we may be tested. Do yourself a favor and read the entire book of Job!

3.) The prophets were used as examples.

God had many of the prophets afflicted in strange and frightening ways in order to demonstrate certain things for all who would come after them. Some became so ill from depression and felt so hopeless they even asked God to kill them. Moses' burden of the ungrateful ones in his charge was so great at one point he did ask God to kill him. (Numbers 11:15) But God personally buried him when he died.

Other prophets of God joined Moses in this plea for death. Elijah, after killing the prophets of Baal, ran for his life from Jezebel and asked God to let him die. He was allowed to go out in a blaze of glory, caught up to heaven in a chariot of fire, never having to see death. (A type of the rapture) 2 Kings, Ch 2

4.) To intercede for others.

In the New Testament Paul is our prime example of one who suffered for those of his day and the gospel's sake, but also as a testimony left for all of us to live by. His willingness to suffer these things for the brethren and the gospel gives us a shining pattern for our own Christian walk. Read 2 Corinthians 11:23-33. In 2 Corinthians 12:10 Paul encourages us in this way; *"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."* Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, *"For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost; so that ye were examples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia."*

5.) To make us weak so that He might be strong in us.

Afflicted For The Gospel's Sake

It is a strange and wonderful thing when the Lord allows us to share in His affliction for the benefit of the gospel. It isn't anything we can decide to do or implement on our own. We may ask God to use us but God Himself will decide and choose. Romans 15:1 says; *"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak; and not to please ourselves."* Asceticism pleases the flesh and one may draw improper satisfaction from being a "martyr" or having pride in one's own works. This is not the kind of bearing of another's burden I am talking about. When God chooses to use our bodies for the sake of others the workings of it are truly a mystery.

The most dramatic example of this that I know of personally is my own husband. From January 1986, when he was diagnosed with cancer, until March 1987, when he returned to work he had two

operations and 30 days of radiation treatment. All the while both he and I were sharing our testimonies with his surgeon. We were living examples to him of our faith, we trusted our God no matter what the outcome would be. The only scripture the Lord gave me during that time was Romans 8:28, *“All things work together for good to those that love God and are called according to His purposes”*. I shared this with the Dr. and made it clear that I was standing on that, because God had given it to me personally (Rayma). After it was all over and my husband was given a clean bill of health the doctor received Jesus Christ as his Savior. He shared with us that he knew Roy’s body was used to bring him to salvation. *“So then death worketh in us, but life in you.”* 2 Corinthians 4:12 I must add, the doctor confessed later that he didn’t think Roy would live to the second operation. This is typical of God’s irony that the patient healed the doctor.

We have matured in our constant search for the truth; we have sought the full counsel of God through His Word, and by the Holy Ghost. Having desired to make the prophets of God our examples, and looking to some of the true saints of God throughout the church age to teach us, we have found many reasons for God to allow affliction upon His people.

We should pray for one another’s infirmities, knowing, however, that the Spirit of God always has the final say. It doesn’t necessarily depend on how strong or weak our faith is. God can’t be ordered, coerced or blackmailed into healing us because we claim it. It is His mercy, and we know that His ways are not our ways as acted out through my husband’s cancer ordeal. Death worked in the vessel of God so that life could work in the lost soul.

Faith is not measured by finding a healing or producing prosperity on demand; faith is obedience to the Father’s will, who is faithful to *“supply our every need according to His riches in glory”*. Phil 4:19 It is not according to the riches of this life, but according to His riches of that glorious eternal home where we store up our treasures even now.

77. Altar of Burning Flesh

Repenting From Ourselves

by T Myers Smith

We're all in the same boat. Every Christian ever born, every Christian ever to walk the face of the earth suffers from the same infirmity. This brothers and sisters, is the plain simple truth. Sure, each one of us suffers from our own unique set of infirmities which is different from anyone else's. Infirmities are imposed on us by the enemy of our soul, they stick to us from contact with the world, they are inherited through the sins of our fathers by way of spiritual inheritance, clearly, we are beaten and battered by the wickedness of the sin of other men, and this beating we are given is not our fault.

But, it has to be admitted that we also pick up infirmities and sins along the way by our own indiscretions, unchecked lusts, inordinate fears, selfishness, even by our reactionary anger to the abuse laid on us by the forces of evil. Each infirmity can be dealt with or shaken off, mostly we have to repent of our sins and let them be covered by the forgiveness of Christ's blood, the sacred blood, shed for the remission of our sins. We have to let him heal us of a broken heart, our blindness, cowardliness, hopelessness, fear, and such.

There is, however, a universal infirmity that is common to every member of Christ's body; young and old, strong and weak, an infirmity that will never go away, and not even the power of God can make it disappear. The infirmity common to us all is the one spoken of in The Book of Romans (chapter 7) by the apostle Paul. He wrote;

"I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh." Rom. 6:19

What Paul is talking about here is not an infirmity of the corporeal body of flesh, brothers and sisters; not an illness, a disease, or a singular battle against the sin of our soul. It is the infirmity of the flesh, of material existence and its constant tug and lure. The

problem is our flesh. It is what the Bible calls our carnal nature, and there is no victory over, no compromising with it, or negotiating a suitable peace. The one remedy is to kill it dead, because if we do not it will produce dead works, temporary things which will be exhausted and destroyed by the temporary nature of this earthly habitat in which we walk. We cannot, and do not want to commit suicide – this should be obvious, so the Scriptural suggestion to kill the Flesh is not literal and must be taken only on spiritual grounds. It is simply and directly what the Bible means when it says to pick up our cross and die to self. Paul's words are perfection on this matter.

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Galatians 2:20

What to do then? We must defeat the flesh with weapons of the spirit. We must have faith in the operation of God to subdue and bury the flesh. *"Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the OPERATION OF GOD, who hath raised him from the dead."* Colossians 2:12 So – here is how it works. God does it for us. We must repent even of trying to crucify ourselves under our own powerful will and courage for this would be a dead work of our own flesh if we even tried it, never mind the fact that we could never do it in truth. This death operation by way picking up our cross is performed by the Spirit of God in us. He sets the tone, gives the grace, makes the arrangements, in short, God performs the operation of our 'death to flesh' like a surgeon operates on a patient, with skill and with a designed end to raise the patient up in newness of life, freed from the disease and corruption of the infirmity of the Flesh. God will lead us to the cross, make all the arrangements and make it possible for us to pick up our cross, but we must do it. *"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. Luke 9:23 "And whosoever doth not bear his CROSS, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."* Luke 14:27 Burying the Flesh then

is a matter of daily denial, or ongoing repentance from the dead works of our flesh. God will perform the operation and make the arrangements for the grace we need to submit, but we must take up the cross; we must bear its 'shame'. If not we cannot be His disciple. That's what Jesus said. If we do not disdain the dead works of the Flesh, turn fully from them, in all their variegated infestation of our Flesh, we cannot be following Him. You can't follow both. You cannot serve two masters, is the way Jesus put it in another sermon. We must put away the Flesh by the spirit, by obedience and faith in the Holy Spirit and faith in the operation of God to bury us and raise us up with Him. This is a completely spiritual operation. It is unseen to others, only visible in the changes of repenting from our outward trust in our own Will. The only visible and tangible proof of it is the fruits of righteousness, joy, love and peace; and the shriveling away and death of our sinful behavior. The outward effects enjoyed by the society of God's people will be evident. Deliverance from sin and increased godliness will be felt, maybe even noted, by those living and working with a repentant Christian. The change will be more than noticed, it will be appreciated.

What to do about 'The Flesh'

Paul goes on in Romans to say:

"For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.

For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.

If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.

Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that

which is good I find not.

For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.

Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.” Romans 7:14-25

O wretched people that we all are, who shall deliver us from this body [this flesh] of death?”

That part of man which the New Testament has revealed to be “the flesh” cannot be healed for nothing within it is sound or good. But God can deliver us from this wretched situation of terminal illness. He can because, in His wisdom, He sent His Son to earth and, “*the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.*” John 1:14 That’s right! The Word, Jesus Christ, was made into flesh and came to us, and walked with us, and defeated the flesh, as only God could do. He confronted sin in the flesh and beat it. What does this declaration that the Word became flesh really mean?

Well, it means this. It means that everything God ever hoped for, everything He ever desired in a relationship, everything He ever wanted, imagined, and needed in a human being was fulfilled in Jesus. It means that in Jesus a person can find power over the Flesh. Everything the Father ever uttered that should be in Man, Jesus did it, was it, became it – is perfectly it. That is what is meant by “*the Word became flesh*”. God’s Word, His Will, became reality in the flesh.

“It is finished!”, John 19:30 said Jesus on the cross at Calvary. Because of Jesus’ work, flesh was transformed into godly reality, the Flesh was overcome by the perfect submission of the Son of God to the Father’s loving Will. The Word, the Law, God’s love, and all His hopes have been perfectly fulfilled in Christ’s Flesh; not in some ethereal being or by some theological or theoretical statements from God but performed in the Flesh to perfection and dismissing the Flesh as a ruler in the lives of men. Also, Jesus can comfort and identify with all our needs, including our need to crucify the flesh by the power and comfort of the Holy Ghost who was ever present with Jesus to comfort him in all his great human trials. The perfect Word perfectly formed in perfect flesh. THE WORD BECAME FLESH AND DWELT AMONG US. God became human, took upon himself, human flesh with its spiritual ills.

Defeating the Flesh

Who then shall save us from our infirmity of imperfect flesh? Jesus can. He defeated the flesh so that our flesh could walk in all reality in accordance with God’s Word. God’s hope for us is that we walk in the footsteps of His Son and let the righteousness of Jesus Christ so control us that the word becomes reality in our flesh also. If the Word became flesh, as in the Head of the Body: – Jesus. Should not the Body aspire to have the WORD become flesh in itself also? In Christ this can happen. Jesus is not only able to perform this miracle in His believing ‘body’, – He shall do it. And you and I can be part of this miracle if we will be willing to give all we have to its pursuit. John wrote about this in his first epistle.

“Whoso keepeth His word, [has the will of God control his actions] in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.” 1 John 2:5-6

When we are born-again, God takes our heart of stone and miraculously turns it into a heart of flesh. The Word (God's will) can now begin to become flesh in us. To have the word become flesh in us we must walk even as he walked. Through allowing God to have reign over our Wills we can fulfill the law. It bears repeating, *"Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected..."* How profound is that! This also bears repeating, *"He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked."* Return to the book of Romans and Paul's dialogue on the infirmity of our flesh where we get this further instruction, *"for as ye have yielded your members as servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members as servants to righteousness unto holiness."* Romans 6:19 In other words, stop sinning and giving into lusts of the flesh and, instead, seek rightness with God and live a holy reverent life. We should not kid ourselves. Our carnal (sinful) character can be steeped in intellectual pride, or rebellion; it can be full of self-pity or hatred; or we can be dedicated to dead works, which seem good and helpful but are not really God's will at all. Our sinful flesh might be compulsive or inclined to indulgence; we might continually give into the lusts of the eyes; the weapons of intimidation or manipulation might be our stock-in-trade; maybe the desire for revenge is in our heart; or we may battle one of the simplest sins of all, just taking things into our own hands because we think we know the best way to solve things. The Word of God as recorded in the Bible is a source of knowledge to give us understanding of these things in our own soul so we can, with the help of Jesus through the Spirit confront and defeat these things of ill-repute and sin, putting them to death in our flesh.

The flesh is Man's way, it is the arm of Man, it is self-reliance, it is leaving God out, promoting self, vaunting self, which is one of the things denoted as not being of love (1 Cor 13). It is the way we work before we are born-again of spirit. We must take on the Mind of Christ and reject these things, do it once and for all as a matter of principle and then keep at all times a willingness to repent, from these 'Dead Works' of ours. These works that are dead to spirit can

only produce dead things; they must therefore be put to death in us, unless we become ministers of death by our self-righteous sins. We speak now of fundamental spiritual realities for the true believer. Yet it is one of the most difficult things to accept and to maintain in the life of the believer, though it is among the first of the problems we must resolve if we are to spiritually progress.

Unfortunately for most Christians, this concept is incomprehensible. They befuddle themselves by thinking shedding self-righteousness and putting on the righteousness of Christ is a work of pride and flesh itself. They have been persuaded by faulting doctrines in the Church to flip-flop the truth. Total failure is to rely on the arm of flesh. Total failure will come of anything in which we rely on ourselves or get entangled with things of the Flesh. Christians must walk not by sight (or the flesh) but we must walk by faith. We must walk in God's instruction, in hope of Him, in reliance of Him, in trust of Him. Ephesians tells us that he has prepared works for us to walk in. He does the work, creates the work, we are only supposed to obediently reside and walk in those works. We merely need to walk in them and follow his directives. We praise God in our churches, our homes, in our daily walk, and in prayer (or at least we should be continually doing this) and we offer it up to God on the altar of sacrifice. This is good. It is pleasing to God that we offer, as a royal and holy priesthood, sacrifices of praise. God loves it. It blesses Him and it blesses us. It can be fun and exhilarating. But there are other sacrifices not always so fun to offer and God wants us to put these on the altar of spiritual sacrifice as well. He wants us to do it with joy. The Bible says God loves a cheerful giver.

The Sacrifice of Flesh

One such sacrifice is this sacrifice of our flesh. This sacrifice will bring forth the fruit of righteousness, peace, great inner joy, and

fulfillment. That is why Paul goes on in chapter 12 of Romans vs 1 to beseech us that we *"present our bodies as a living sacrifice,"* which he says is our reasonable service. We are all in the same boat. Not only are we in the same boat spiritually and figuratively, but all Mankind literally floated to safety in the same boat. When the floods receded and the door to the Ark fell open, when the gang plank came down and God told Noah to go out and replenish the earth; every Christian ever born, every man and woman alive today, came out with Noah. We are all his direct descendants. Every black, brown, yellow, white or red man is a descendant of Noah. And if, as the Bible says, that Levi gave tithes to Melchizedek (by extension through his great grandfather Abraham) so all Mankind walked down the gangplank with our great, great, great, Etc., grandfather Noah. And if that is so, then on that bright morning when the new rainbow glimmered high in a sunny sky, the very first thing our long ago father (and we also by extension) did was build an altar and offer sacrifices of burnt flesh on it to our Father in heaven. The Bible tells the story of that glorious day:

"And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord; and took every clean beast, and every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the Lord smelled a sweet savor" Gen 8:20

Most believers wonder, at some time, why the smell of roasting flesh would be sweet to the merciful and loving God who sent His only Son, while we were yet unclean enemies, to die on the cross for us. But now we can see why the smell of burning flesh is precious to God. When we, who are made clean by the blood of the Lamb, offer our flesh on the altar of spiritual sacrifice we are like the clean beasts offered long ago on Noah's altar. Noah's offering was only a shadow of the true offering we can make today because of what Jesus has done for us. The smell of spiritual flesh offered on a spiritual altar is a sweet smell to God. When we lay our methods of doing things, our lusts, our sinful ways, on the altar of sacrifice and let them go up in flames, God is truly edified and excited for us because we are taking up our cross and following in the path of

Jesus His dear Son. When we forsake the arm of the flesh and the lust of the flesh to walk in the way of Jesus (the Word that became flesh), then our flesh can be transformed into God's word and this makes it, oddly enough to our senses, a smell of perfume in His nostrils. But God's ways are not our ways, now are they?

This sacrifice of our own flesh is not as easy to offer as the sacrifice of praise. It ought to hurt to have our flesh burnt up by the fire of God. Maybe that's why God is so blessed by it, because it is a sacrifice close to His heart. It is the sacrifice His Son made and it allows His Son to live in us. It is following in the Son's footsteps as we ought to do. It is picking up our cross and following close after the Son.

"Forasmuch then as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." 1 Peter 4:1-2

Dare to put your flesh on the altar fire. We all came out of the same boat; we all suffer from the same infirmity of flesh. As we are able let us sacrifice our "flesh" to God. Trust not in ourselves, but in Him. Yield.

78. There are Many Kinds of Faith but Only One is Important

by Eloise Gardenier

The following article was taken from *The Christian Spirit Magazine* May 1992 – When my husband, Roy, and I talk about how faith saw us through the ordeal of his cancer we are talking about a specific kind of faith. Faith is a word widely used and with many different meanings. When someone uses the term we can't presume we know what that person truly means.

The dictionary says, “1.) confidence or trust in a person or thing, 2.) belief which is not based on proof, 3.) belief in the doctrines or teachings of religion, 4.) the doctrines which are or should be believed. 5.) a system of religious belief, the Christian faith, the Jewish faith 6.) that trust in God and in his promises as made through Christ by which man is justified or saved.”

So we see that when one speaks of faith we can't be sure what he means by that. There are many ways to have faith as well as many things to have faith in. When one confesses having faith with no explanation of what his faith is, it could be in a wide range of things, or people, or systems. The person could have faith in himself; in positive thinking or positive confession; faith in the medical profession; or the religious organization he belongs to; the support of his friends; his pastor, priest or rabbi; his family; his good luck; his doctor; or even the occult. A person can place his “faith” in just about anything.

Then there is number six on the dictionary list: trust in God and in his promises as made through Christ by which man is justified or saved. This is the kind of faith that leads us to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and not a relationship with a religious system. I

think I can safely say that many, maybe most people, have their faith nestled snugly in their religion and not in a relationship with Christ. That personal relationship with Christ is available to all however, and is the kind of faith Roy and I are speaking of when we speak of the faith that got us through the trauma of his cancer.

Because our faith helped us through the illness does not mean that we did not have the same problems and difficulties that many others have had when battling with cancer. One difference is that both of us had peace through it all, a peace that we know we would not have had except for our relationship with Jesus Christ and the comfort and reassurance that goes along with knowing Him. One thing we both knew from beginning to end was that things would be alright no matter what the outcome.

As soon as we knew Roy had cancer the Lord gave me this Scripture. *"All things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to his purposes."* Rom. 8:28. I knew it meant that no matter what happened it would be for our family's good. I always had that promise to hold onto no matter how bad things looked.

After his first operation, the Lord told Roy that "it would be alright" and he knew it meant whether he lived or died – everything would be alright. If he died he truly knew where he was going and that he would be with his Lord forever. That blessed assurance cannot be equaled by any other kind of faith. Faith in a person, or group, or system, organization or religion cannot give us this kind of faith nor can it produce this kind of peace which *"passeth all understanding"*. It is a relationship with a person not a religion, and that person is the living Jesus Christ, the only one that will never let us down.

79. God's Ways Are Not Our Ways

by T Myers Smith

We mouth it all the time in church: “God’s ways are not man’s ways”. But do we expect and allow for his unimaginable and marvelous ways to surface and take precedence over our ways, or do we still expect that God ought to do things the way we think is fair, just, and good?

“Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” Isa. 55:7-9

We ought to forsake our own ways and our own thoughts and listen for Jesus’ voice because He is *“the Way, the Truth and the Life”*. John 14:6

Jesus said of the faithless, *“Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God”*. Luke 16:15

Let God deliver us from our own ways and thoughts, let our minds be washed by the water of the word. Remember and believe it, *“that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.”* God’s ways are higher than ours and we cannot see them. Who would have thought to save man from sin by sacrificing his only son in place of the condemned? Only God could have thought of such a perfect plan and so it is with all of his unthinkable ways. They are beyond our comprehension.

Step Into THE LIGHT...

Our journey starts with being born-again and we soon realize we have born the indignation of the Lord because we have sinned against him. Christ has stood up for us and plead our cause with power because He performed ultimate love when he shed His holy blood on the cross for us. When we accept His appeal and our stay of sentence, He brings us into the light where we can see and live in His righteousness. We no longer have to wrestle with the frustration and guilt of our own ever failing, impotent 'righteousness'. We are able and free, free to live a life that pleases God because we can walk in His righteousness by the Spirit. The prophet Micah saw this power and grace coming. He saw its promise in and for his own life. *"I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me."* Micah 7:9 He will acquit us so we may turn from our unholy works and our vain trust in Flesh.

"...He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness." We can step out of the night of our soulish life, and step into the light of His Spirit. His Word and the right paths in which to make our way, to walk and even to breathe the spiritual breath of life are now wide open and laid clear before us. Micah had not only sought the righteousness of God, he believed in the righteousness of God, had seen it and made it his dwelling place and was saved. He was spared the imprisonment of the cares of this world, including having them become a ruling force in his sojourn and his daily struggles of life.

80. “I’ve Got The Power”

by Holly Bedard

When the Father in Heaven speaks to you, you should listen. Not that you should ever ignore the voice of Jesus or the Holy Ghost for that matter. They do all have a distinct voice. In my personal experience of walking with the Lord, the Father does not speak directly to the believer very often. It usually comes through Jesus our mediator or through the gentle instruction of the Holy Ghost or an angel or messenger of the Lord. If the Father gets involved, He is insisting we listen or else we could face serious judgement for our lack of Godly fear and reverence toward him. An example that comes to mind in the scriptures is when Moses was on Mount Horeb and the Father spoke to him about bringing deliverance to the children of Israel.

“Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.

And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.

And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.

And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses.

And he said, Here am I.

And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.

Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.

And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people

which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows;" Ex. 3:1-7

In the Bible, God often sends His message through an angel. Abraham was visited by an angel or angels several times to caution him or inform him in advance about something God was going to do, like the birth of Isaac, and its significance and promise. Lot was visited by a pair of angels to warn him of the coming judgement on Sodom and Gomorrah, and to warn him to flee from Sodom, so he and his family would not perish in the coming destruction. The angel, Gabriel, visited Zacharias to inform him of John's birth, he also visited Mary, Jesus' mother, to tell her she had found favor in the Lord to bear the Christ. An angel appeared to reassure Joseph her betrothed husband that Mary was carrying the child by the Holy Ghost. The shepherds tending the flocks at the birth of Christ were reassured that the Savior had come and to go and witness it. There are far too many instances like that to mention here. Tidings of great joy or prophetic events are often delivered through an appointed messenger from Heaven. The Father will at times deliver a truth or declaration to the believer personally, to emphasize something of great importance or urgency but more often His word is delivered through a messenger. A message whether from an appointed messenger of God, or from the Father himself should be taken with all gravity and reverential fear, to be sealed on your heart. It very often relates to your personal testimony and relationship with the Lord, as well as those people you have relationships with. God is doing you a real kindness to speak to you directly because he does have pity on us in our struggles if we aren't stubborn.

One day I was going about my business. I had some tasks to do for our website and was working on that when the power went out unexpectedly. It was a sunny spring day, no weather that would have done any damage to take the power out, nor any accidents in the area, it was unusual. Now, I might have worked under battery power with my computer, except we lost our internet connection, which

kept me out of the network we use. So I sat down and considered how I should use my time next, until the power was restored. I decided I had some errands to run so I got my purse and car keys and headed out to my car. I attempted to start it, and all it did was click. It had almost no juice, not enough to start my car, so I couldn't go anywhere. Now, I thought to myself, this is really weird. I looked for some way to jump my car, but I had no cables and all the other cars were gone from the household. I called my husband to see if he could help, and he was too far away at work to be able to come give me a jump on that particular day. I then asked the Lord about it, and The Father Himself said to me very clearly, "I've Got the Power". That stopped me in my tracks and I paused to consider what He meant.

I sat in the warm sun of our garden to listen to what the Lord wanted me to hear from him and I realized that it was actually quite simple, but some people want to make it more complicated than it really is, and I count myself among them. Despite all our modern conveniences and technology, which makes us believe we are in control of our lives and in what we do, in truth, we can go nowhere and do nothing unless the Lord allows it. God did some extraordinary things, interrupting my day as I had planned it, to make me believe it and begin to comprehend He is the Lord overall, all things. In reading God's Word, we should be able to understand this, but often God has to impress these things upon us, so we really can get it and apply it to our faith. The sooner we can do this the better off we will be if we are to walk in His realm.

Upon hearing from the Lord and considering it, I decided to call AAA to help me with my car battery. When I went back into the house to get my phone, I discovered the power had come back on. About an hour later, I had a new car battery and went about my errands and was able to complete the tasks I had originally undertaken, later on in the day. This time though, I did these tasks with the understanding that I was only able to by God's will and not my own will alone. If you endeavor to do any work for the Lord, be sure you are doing it at His behest, not something contrived by yourself, which will result in dead works. Not only that, but we

might think it is an appropriate use of our time to do some task at hand, when in reality, the Lord would prefer we listen to Him and consider what He is saying to us about something far deeper. The real work of waiting on the Lord and listening is the important work we have to do in learning to follow the Lord and repent from trying to lead Him.

“For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

And for this cause he is mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.” Hebrews 9:13-15

8I. Security Guards For Your Faith

by LeRoy J. Gardenier

Relying mainly on the King James Version of the Bible, I rarely use the many and varied translations that I have purchased over the years. I do own a copy of James Moffatt's Bible and in it I came across the adjacent sentence from 2 Timothy. That particular wording seemed to express perfectly an idea that I had hid in my heart for some time. Some of the most profound guards of my faith have been provided by the following scriptures.

The first of these scriptures came to me after my son had previously taught on Romans 14 and the wonderful freedom we have in the area of faith. In that chapter and elsewhere in the Epistles, the Apostle Paul emphasizes certain matters, especially truths of faith that we need to be "fully persuaded" about. I know from 2 Tim 3:16 that *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness..."* I certainly believe that important truth with all my heart. But when my son read from Romans 14:23 *"...for whatsoever is not of faith is sin"*, I realized that that scriptural reality would be especially helpful, not just to memorize, but to get a hold of fully and make it an integral part of both my being and my living. At the time I was pondering the implications of this foundational verse I was employed by the security department of a local company. Naturally, I was very "security conscious" because of my job. Perhaps that influence helped me view this and other scriptures in a different light. But I know that the Lord used both our study of Romans 14 and my current job to make me appreciate more fully the wonderful protective power of God's almighty Word! I knew that if I could truly apprehend and be able to act on the simple, but profound, reality expressed in Romans 14:23, then I'd be delivered from and securely

protected against innumerable plans and projects that appeared to be sound but, because they were not of faith, would be not only displeasing to God but would, in fact, be an offense against Him. That one scripture verse has helped me sort out and discard both obviously sinful matters as well as many apparently good things that are prompted not by faith, but by my own flesh.

Another verse that has weighed on my heart and has kept coming back to me over the years is taken from Psalm 49. Actually, verses 12 and 20 in that unique psalm addressed to all the inhabitants of the world, says just about the same thing: *“Man being in honor and understandeth not, abideth not; he is like the beasts that perish”*. Those words, directly from the Holy Ghost, have done more to inspire and incite me to share the Gospel with every person that I possibly can more than any other incentive. Those verses so strongly, but simply, express the true plight of unsaved humanity. These solemn words are a powerful stimulus for me to preach the Gospel, not only through this writing but also to anyone I personally encounter who I discern the Lord has prepared to receive. The “understandeth not” of verse 20 is not knowing Jesus! It implies not having the revelation that He suffered and died to atone for my sins personally, to wash them away and to fill me with the Holy Ghost. All those who are related to me; those who I call friends and neighbors; all who are in any way associated with me – I don’t want them to be without that understanding!

Proverbs 12:10 has spared me a lot of grief, disillusionment and multiplied disappointments. The Word here informs us: *“... the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel”*. From God’s viewpoint “wickedness” certainly admits of degrees, but here “the wicked” refers to all those still under the curse of fallen nature and still sentenced to the condemnation of the law. From the purely natural perspective we tend to separate people into “good people” and “bad people” according as we estimate they will either do us good or cause us harm. God sees things quite differently. Our Lord Jesus taught this measure of God’s goodness to the rich young man who called Him “Good Master”. The Master pointedly replied: “Why

callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God..." (see Matt 19:16/Mk 10:17/Lk 18:19). As Christians we ought to know beyond doubt, be fully persuaded, that all the truly good things in this life are associated with and come from Him, His Son, the Holy Ghost, and only those people and things the Blessed Trinity uses to bestow blessings and benefits upon us. All others should at least be suspect. The point is, only God knows what is genuinely good and what we really need. We should be cautious of people and things that merely appear good. At best the so-called good people and excellent things can provide us only with what we might want. God alone can arrange for us to obtain what we actually need and by that fulfill the deepest desires of our hearts.

Satan is a formidable foe. His devices for evil should never be underestimated. God's Word informs us that we need not be ignorant of his plots and plans (see 2 Cor 2:11). The Lord informs us: "... greater is he that is in us than he that is in the world" 1 John 4:4. But the revelation of Jeremiah 17:9 "*The heart is deceitful above all else and desperately wicked*" provides a perfectly balanced insight to our focus on spiritual enemies. This guardian statement is a vigilant sentinel against the fallacy of the frequently quoted accusation: "the devil made me do it!" Just as we should be loathe to get entangled in the restless activities of unbelievers who strive and strain, plot and plan to seek and enjoy the ever elusive "good life", so we should understand that the source of much evil is an unconverted heart that is sick unto death. And, let it be added, Christians who are more concerned about what they put into their bodies than what proceeds out of their hearts and mouths are not in line with the sentiments of their Savior. "*And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him: Because it entereth not into the heart, but into the belly ... that which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an*

evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man". Mark 7:18-23

The final scriptural security guard I'd like to consider for now comes from Luke's Gospel, chapter 16, verse 15. The biblical context is important for our Lord has just related to His disciples the parable of the unjust steward. In His follow-up to the story the Lord Jesus contrasts the unrighteous mammon (reliance on money and wealth) with the true spiritual riches. He concludes by warning that *"No servant can serve two masters... ye cannot serve God and mammon"* Luke 16:13. Now the Pharisees who overheard all this, being covetous, began to deride Jesus. His reply to them contains that portion in the verse that I would like to highlight. *"And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God."* Luke 16:15 In Jim Bakker's prison story, *I WAS WRONG*, the most powerful and telling chapter is the 48th, which repeats the title of the book. It took the loss of his fame, reputation, material possessions and savings as well as the breakup of his family and loss of his personal freedom to bring him to the realization that he had been consumed by the love of money. He wrote; "I often preached a prosperity message", he writes, "at Heritage USA and on our PTL television programs. But when I began to study the Scriptures in depth while in prison, something I am embarrassed and ashamed to admit that I rarely took time to do at PTL, I was distressed at what I discovered. I realized that for years I helped propagate an imposter, not a true gospel, but a gospel that stated 'God wants you to be rich'. Christians are 'King's kids', as I often put it. And shouldn't the King's kids have the best the world has to offer? The more I studied the Bible, however, I had to admit that the prosperity message did not line up with the tenor of Scripture. My heart was crushed to think that I led so many people astray. I was appalled that I could have been so wrong, and I was deeply grateful that God had not struck me dead as a false prophet!" (*I WAS WRONG*, p. 394).

How cautious we must be not to get entangled in schemes that

only appear to be good. How discerning we must be in the area of faith, lest we presume we're building on the solid rock of "the faith of God" when all the while our foundation is nothing more than the slippery sand of presumption. What a danger and what deep disillusionment follows when we equate the highly esteemed accomplishments of man with the preferences that God values and honors! As I write this article, the winter Olympics are being played out at Nagano in Japan. On the opening day, the first questions out of the mouth of a stateside anchorman to his television colleague across the Pacific were: "How's the security over there? Is it tight enough to prevent a tragedy?" We are living in tense times that require strict vigilance. I've mentioned just five separate Bible verses that can aid us "in keeping the great securities of your faith intact". The Scriptures are full of many more solid, reassuring truths that stand watch over the precious deposit of faith given to us. Besides the eight Beatitudes connected with the Sermon on the Mount, there are also seven separate blessings sprinkled throughout the gospels. The promise from Luke 12:37 is most pertinent to our present subject: "*Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he comes shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.*" Let us all be more scripturally vigilant. For this is one blessing we surely won't want to miss!

82. The Seven Pillars of Knowledge

By T Myers Smith

These seven exhortations are worth our constant review. They are critical to sound doctrine and a clear understanding of God's plan for the house (we, His church) which He has built for His habitation. Truly they are the seven pillars of knowledge for the Church, which wisdom has hewn out and positioned securely in the framework of our spiritual building.

Paul wrote to the churches in Galatia because they had fallen away from true righteousness by following the law instead of spiritual perfection: *"My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be FORMED IN YOU."* Galatians 4:9

One night many years ago, God awakened me in the middle of the night and asked me; "Did you ever notice that the Star of David is made up of two triangles?" I had to answer that I hadn't noticed that. He went on to say that one triangle represented the Church, and the other, Israel, and that the three points of each triangle each stood for the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. He said that it represented a time when both groups would truly be under the Trinity and that the core that lay at the center of the two triangles symbolized the Godhead.

Sadly the Church all too often has this advice of Paul flip-flopped. They want to judge the world (which is the job of the Holy Ghost) and not judge themselves within the Church. But it is clear we are to judge sin within the Church and leave the world to the judgment of God.

For I would not, brethren, that you should be ignorant....

FORWARD

Religionists of any era “love the praise of men more than the praise of God”. John 12:43 In our Lord’s time, it was the chief rulers of the synagogues who believed on Him but refused to confess Him because they didn’t want to lose their jobs. It was as simple as that. This is an ongoing problem. The Lord Jesus forcefully dealt with it when He warned His power-struck disciples not to exult over spiritual gifts but, rather, to rejoice that their names were written in heaven. We can never be reminded enough that Jesus told us that some would do mighty works, even cast out demons, in His name. Yet, He would have to say of them: “I never knew you.” Matt 7:23

In John 7:24 our Lord both warns and commands: “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment”. Just as it was not enough for the ancient synagogue rulers to believe on Jesus, yet refuse to confess Him; so, it is not enough for modern Christians to receive the Holy Spirit with His spiritual gifts without the determination to continually yield to Him. Seven times the Spirit speaks to the churches in the book of Revelation so that we may understand what the church consists of and is really all about. Seven times in the Epistles the Holy Ghost inspires the writers to expound upon those foundational topics of which we must not be ignorant. As it was prophesied that the Messiah’s presence and preaching would dissipate the gloom and bring brightness to a land and people dwelling in darkness and the shadow of death, so it was promised to the Church that vast areas of ignorance and confusion would be enlightened and clarified by the teaching office of the Holy Ghost, the One sent by Jesus and given by the Father to lead us into all truth. Seven is God’s number for perfection and completion. In both the Old and New Testaments, God used units of seven to represent perfect or complete service: the seven years that Jacob labored for Rachel and the seven deacons chosen in Acts. Important life-

fulfilling or life-threatening events such as years of fruitfulness and famine, degrees or levels of punishment, formulas for obedience, a spirit of perfect prayer, as well as the perfect completion of Messiah's mission are all described in segments of seven. In the Gospels, forgiveness is related to multiples of seven. We mentioned that Seven Churches are addressed in Revelation. It should also be noted that Paul's Epistles are sent to Seven distinct Churches. The consummation of all things, especially the important topic of judgment is connected with the number seven. Hebrews 6:1 gives perfection itself as the seventh item or goal in a series of doctrines the Holy Ghost wants to teach us: repentance from dead works, faith toward God, the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, eternal judgment.

Most of us feel fairly confident in handling the problems and situations that life throws at us. We rely instinctively upon our innate ability and our past experience. The challenge of "the Seven Pillars of Wisdom" is to set aside these carnal weapons, repent of our spiritual ignorance, listen attentively to what the Spirit is saying to the Churches, and learn from His quickening Word where the battle really is.

Introduction

Wisdom hath builded Her House

Leroy Gardenier

The church has a perfect and everlasting example of wisdom in everything that our Lord Jesus has ever done or said, and will ever do or say. Jesus and wisdom are one and the same. The Scriptures say that in Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

The marvelously rich treasure house of wisdom and knowledge is revealed throughout the Bible. The booklet, *The Seven Pillars of*

Knowledge, expounds on the seven places in the New Testament where God's Word expressly tells the believer "not to be ignorant". These seven plainformences, which we have dubbed "pillars of knowledge", are by no means the only areas in the Gospel where God would have us to be instructed in. These are, however, fundamental areas of knowledge so basic to our walk with Jesus that God has warned us to be alert and schooled in them so that they are incorporated into our faith. In Proverbs wisdom is personified and it is said that she "*hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars.*" Prov. 9:1 Those seven pillars are the seven pillars of knowledge revealed in the Epistles of the New Testament.

We, the living stones (through our faith in Christ), are the building. "*Ye also as lively stones, are built up to a spiritual house, a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God, by Jesus Christ.*" 1 Peter 2:5 The pillars of knowledge are the backbone of our spiritual house upon which our faith and understanding of God's will must securely rest. The seven areas are:

- 1.) The True Nature of Salvation (1 Cor. 10:1)
- 2.) The Jews: God's chosen people (Rom. 11:25)
- 3.) Fellowship: The Sharing of Fruit (Rom. 1:13)
- 4.) Gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12)
- 5.) Our part of the cross (2 Cor. 1:8)
- 6.) Judgment (2 Peter 3:8)
- 7.) The Rapture of the Bride (2 Thes. 4:13)

These seven exhortations are worth our constant review. They are critical to sound doctrine and a clear understanding of God's plan for the house (we, His church) which He has built for His habitation. Truly they are the seven pillars of knowledge for the Church, which wisdom has hewn out and positioned securely in the framework of our spiritual building.

Peter, on the day of Pentecost, declared, "*this is that which the prophet Joel prophesied.*" Acts 2:16 The Holy Ghost had fallen on the multitudes and they had spoken in other tongues. The old men dreamed dreams, the young men saw visions, and the young women prophesied. But Pentecost was only the start. Joel spoke of the

two rainstorms, the former and latter rains and the restoration of all things. The day of Pentecost was the former rain. Today's revival is the latter rain and now the fruits of God's fertile rain are ripening and bursting forth. Wisdom "hath builded her house" and the knowledge of Christ's principle doctrines has restored many things and made the Church strong again. Wisdom "hath hewn out her seven pillars"!

Consider the pillars if you have not already done so. Review them. Believe God's Word about them. Take seriously the announcement made by the Spirit in those seven scriptures where He has said, "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning...". God is asking each member of his household – and remember we are the lively stones built up to a spiritual house – to get their pillars firmly fixed and situated in their active faith so they then can move on to higher ground.

"Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God. Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this we will do, if God permit." Hebrews 6: 1-3

As Jesus declared to the religious leaders, "Wisdom is justified of her children.". We are not only wisdom's children if we follow Christ but we are the house which wisdom built. Be wise. Do not be ignorant. Check out these seven pillars so you can go on to perfection!

I The True Nature Of Our Salvation

Terry Smith

Growing up in the Episcopal Church I was surrounded by regular church goers, sincere in their belief that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. We were all baptized into church membership; we all shared

the liturgy; we all fellowshiped together; we all kissed the bishop's ring upon our confirmation, did good works, and worshipped together. But with us, I now know, "God was not well pleased".

Unfortunately, none of us had a clue about real salvation or what it takes to live a life pleasing to God. The result of our ignorance was gross blindness about God's ways and, as a result, we were perpetual sinners. The fruit of our lives, which is the undeniable proof of faith, was not the fruits of the Spirit, as they must be for those who claim to follow Christ, but instead, they were the fruits of the flesh, and they were in evident abundance.

Lyings, stealings, backbitings, hatred, and all sorts of lusts of the flesh, such as adultery and greed were common works. Instead of being Christians in word **and deed**, our faith was dead. We were Christians in word only. As our Lord's brother, James 2:26, said in his epistle, "*For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*" And brother, me and my fellow worshippers were dead – dead as doornails. The hypocrisy I saw within those beautiful but dead walls of stone drove me to a cynicism about Christ and eventually to a loss of faith in God altogether. But God, in spite of the confusion and darkness of the religion of my youth, brought me to the light and gave me a saving knowledge of His Son, and to God's glory I have been reaping the benefits of salvation ever since.

It did not take long after I was born again to realize that many Christians (truly born-again Christians) are like the Episcopalians of my youth. They say they are Christians, but they live like the Devil. They think that just because they are Christians by some commitment or experience and because they continue to rub elbows with true Christians, they will be saved by their association with the "Church". We born-again Christians should know better, but do we? It is not enough to be a Christian by label or word only. Simply answering an altar call is not the end-all either. We must put away sin in our life and live in obedience.

Paul, speaking to the body of believers at Corinth, a church which allowed sins to intermingle among their fellowship and worship, warns us all in 1 Cor. 10:12 saying, "*let him that thinketh he standeth*

take heed lest he fall". There is no such thing as eternal security. God will never take away our free will. As Peter says in his second epistle to the faithful believers in Christ, we must do the will of God to make our election sure. A man must repent, accept Jesus and be born again, but he must learn obedience and how to walk humbly in the love of God.

One of the seven pillars of knowledge (all seven are antidotes administered by the Holy Ghost to inoculate us against ignorance) is this:

"Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;

And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

And did all eat the same spiritual meat;

And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness." 1 Cor. 10:1-5

God is pointing out to His people that it is not enough to be with Christians, to just be around when His Spirit moves or heals, or even to eat and drink of the same spiritual food and drink. Paul openly says that the things which happened to Israel in the wilderness were written as warnings for us. *"Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted."* (verse 6)

Warning Not to Murmur Against God

Righteousness and faith do not rub off on us just because we associate with Christ's people. Let me say it again, righteousness and faith do not rub off on us just because we associate with God's

people. This scriptural pillar of church knowledge from 1 Corinthians continues on by noting that the faithless Israelites had fallen into four sins, all of which are common seductions to those called to a life of faith.

- 1.) They had committed idolatry.
- 2.) They had committed fornication.
- 3.) Some had tempted God.
- 4.) They had murmured (complained) against Him.

In other words, they had gone a whoring after other Gods, they had fallen into lusts of the flesh, had accused God of evil intentions against them, and had complained that He didn't know how to take care of them properly. All these and more are the sins which easily beset any Christian or member of the Church. Think about it. How often have we heard these sins, seen these sins, even flirted or committed these sins ourselves?

Paul repeats the earlier warning: *"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall"* 1 Cor.10:11-12. This passage, this exhortation to knowledge, this plea to "not be ignorant" is not a threat, and Christians should not take it as a threat from God. Those with a dogmatic view of the Scriptures may argue about God's intent here, but Paul states that this passage is simply a word to the wise when, a few verses later in verse 15, he says, *"I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say"*.

Joshua's Mountain Pass of Choice

As the things in 1 Corinthians 10 were written for examples to us, so God had Israel act out the simple choice He gives us concerning hearing His voice and obeying it, or opting to do our own thing instead.

Just after entering the promised land, Joshua (who had been

instructed by Moses, who had been instructed by God), had all of Israel walk through the small mountain pass between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. As they funneled down through the narrow way, God told Joshua to take the leaders of the 12 tribes and split them into two halves. The leaders of six tribes were to stand on the slopes of Mt. Ebal and the leaders of the other six tribes took up their places on the side of Mt. Gerizim. As the people of Israel marched through the narrow mountain pass Joshua read all of the laws and statutes that Moses had written down (Deuteronomy) so that everyone could hear them. The leaders on the side of Mt. Gerizim then read a list of blessings which God promised to give Israel if they would be obedient to His voice and follow everything that was commanded of them that day. The leaders on the other side of the narrow strait, on the side of Mt. Ebal, then pronounced the curses that would befall Israel if they were rebellious and refused to listen to God's voice. (Deut. 27)

What a majestic sight! What a wonderful moment it must have been in the history of Israel to be moving into the Promised Land and have the simplicity of Christ laid so perfectly before them. The way before them was straight and narrow, the blessings for obedience to His voice simple and clear. The penalty for ignoring His voice and loving commands made obvious. What electricity must have been in that ravine! What Holy Ghost goosebumps must have come upon all the people. (Joshua 8) Like those who passed between Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim we come to Christ and we are called to walk the straight and narrow path. Jesus told this parable about people who hang around and partake of God's things and never really repent of their rebellion or of doing their own thing.

“Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are:

*Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.
But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are;
depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity” Lk 13:24-27*

If we do the works of the flesh we are none of His. We should not kid ourselves about that. People do not prove their love for the Lord by words only, they prove it in word and deed. Just because we come to Christ, it is not a given that we will do His will or flee the world and its sin. In another parable Jesus said, “*Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of the Father which is in heaven.*” Matt. 7:21 He concludes the parable by telling people that those who hear His sayings are like those who build their house on solid ground and those who hear and ignore are like those who have no foundation for their house and will someday come to ruin with a great crash.

Paul says of himself, what a shame it would be if he brought so many to salvation but he himself became a castaway. Why would he say this unless it were a possibility, no matter how remote? If he, the model in New Testament scripture for us, can say this, then we should also monitor our own hearts as he did his own. The truth of salvation is that those who do the will of the Father are saved and not those who simply say “Lord, Lord”.

The apostle John put it this way in his first epistle: 1 John 2:6

“But whoso keepeth His Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him. He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked.” Brothers and sisters in Christ, all equal before God, let us take heed how we walk and thereby make our election sure.

2 The Jews: God’s Chosen People

“For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this

mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part has happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in.

And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:

For this is my covenant to them, when I shall take away their sins.

As concerning the Gospel, they are enemies for your sakes but as touching the election, they are the beloved for the fathers' sakes." Romans 11:25-28

God has clearly warned the Church not to think of herself more than she should, that blindness came to the Jews so there could be a time of salvation for the whole world. This "suspension" of time for the Gentile's sakes has a prescribed end. In due course, the Jews will be saved. Yet in its dark ignorance, the Church has often forgotten this truth and ignored the promise to the Jews who are the seed of Abraham. Over the last thousand years the Church has belittled, accused, persecuted, and even killed the Jews. Christianity as a whole has condoned their hatred of the Jews by believing that it was the Jews who killed Jesus and that because of that God has cast them adrift forever. The Church has used this rationale to feed its self-righteous attitude and to excuse persecution of the Jews. But no matter how or why this attitude and spirit has prevailed it has been one of deep ignorance and is scripturally wrong.

The Jews were no more responsible for the death of Christ than the Gentile world, and the Gentiles were no less responsible than the Jews. Let this truth be established in your heart and mind, as Jesus said;

"Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again.

No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." John 10:17-18

Jesus **surrendered** his life for our (Jew and Gentile) sakes. Those involved in making the trap for Jesus are still guilty, however. Remember, it was not only the Jews (with their trumped-up charges) that bear the blame, but ROME (representing us Gentiles) approved the execution and it was the Gentile soldiers who mocked and scourged Jesus, placed the crown of thorns on His head, made Him carry the cross up Golgotha, and pierced Him in His side. Yes, we all bear responsibility for hating and crucifying God. It was a conspiracy of all mankind.

That the Jews shoulder sole responsibility for the death of Jesus is the first great misconception the Church has carried against the nation Israel and it inevitably leads to a very serious mistake. Wherever this ignorance persists it is believed that the Jews have been cast off forever by God. Romans chapter 9, 10 and 11 should be studied carefully by every Christian and taken to heart. It establishes who we are and who the Jews are in the face of God's plan of redemption.

"I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.

Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fullness? ...

For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches.

And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree;

Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root but the root thee.

Thou wilt say then, The Branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.

Well; because of unbelief they were broken off and thou standest by faith. Be not high minded, but fear:

For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.” Rom. 11:11-12, 16-21

But, glory to God, the Holy Ghost has lifted this condition. The knowledge about the nation of Israel and its election has been restored to the Church in our lifetime. In every denomination and group the truth about the chosen nation has come to light. The establishment of a Jewish state in Israel in 1948 and the great outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the denominations during the sixties and seventies has forced the Christian believer to look at the Jews with greater compassion. Churches everywhere have decided to support the Jewish cause and to sing the praises of God’s chosen nation. The Holy Ghost has confronted us with this marvelous truth and it is up to each individual believer to receive it in his or her heart. As the prophecy says, all Israel shall be saved. The time of the Gentiles shall come to an end just as God has declared. The Church had forgotten these basic promises and God’s sure word of prophecy. Becoming wise in her own conceits and puffed up in the spiritual pride of the blessings which God had bestowed upon her she became ignorant and injurious.

Yet, to indiscriminately support the Jews in everything they do may have peculiar dangers lurking within it, too. We must use keen discernment. The day is shortly coming when the Jews and lukewarm Christians will again be in league against God. The two will conspire with the antichrist to set him up in the temple in Jerusalem as God Himself. To the Jews and Christians involved in that work we owe no loyalty. God will not require that His people support apostate Jews working for humanism even if they are of the chosen nation. We cannot give all Jewish causes and action carte blanche support.

*“(God) will render to every man according to his deeds:
To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for
glory and honour and immortality, eternal life.
But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth,
but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,*

*Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile:
But glory, honour and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:
For there is no respect of persons with God.” Rom. 2:6-11*

How then should we support the Jews?

What then should we do? God wants us to acknowledge and help Israel doesn't he? Yes, we should defend the Jews and respect the fact that they are heirs to the promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. We should rejoice in the fulfilling of prophecy and aid them in their spiritual fight against the antichrist spirit of the world; and we should promote the re-establishment of Israel in today's world because it is God's plan being manifested. We should be careful not to be influenced by the humanistic arguments that ever rage against the Jews in today's atmosphere of international power politics regardless of how logical or compelling they seem. Yet, in another sense, all that is happening in Israel is none of the Church's business. If we are not to be deceived by events shortly to come to pass we must be wise as serpents but gentle as doves. Much of what we are witnessing in Israel today is a sort of family squabble. What is happening in the Middle East, with the violence, intrigue and jockeying for peace, is the fulfillment of end-time prophecy.

God's workings with the Jews, even to the Church, remains a mystery and a paradox: like a father chastising his son. Through the prophet, Micah, God announced that He has a controversy with his child.

“Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel.” Mic. 6:2

But through his prophet, Zechariah, God has also established Israel as his dear child, saying,

“Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon.

For thus saith the Lord of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you; for he that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye.” Zech. 2:7-8

He loves the child but there is a breach between them, one that only the parties involved can resolve. The Church has as much insight into this controversy as a stranger, who passing by, sees a father chastening his child and has no perfect understanding what is really happening. I look forward with great anticipation to the day when the controversy that God has with the “apple of his eye” comes to its saving conclusion. What a day that will be, I am sure. As the scripture says,

“For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?” Rom. 11:15

We can only now guess at the full meaning of this scripture. Until then we ought to have compassion on Israel and aid them in their battle against the antichrist spirit and the spirit of a world always ready to persecute them. I believe time will reveal that the born-again, Spirit-filled Christian walks a tight-rope of faith concerning the Jews and how to react to their plight. Therefore, I will not support those Jews who betray the calling of the nation Israel by compromising with the spirits of the antichrist and humanism. For the day is fast approaching, and has even started, when Jews in power will support and uphold the Antichrist in return for peace with the nations of the Gentiles. Just as this is now happening we can be sure that the days are rapidly approaching when the Jews and the Gentiles will conspire together, just as in the days of Christ’s first coming, against the plan of God. This time, instead of trying

to kill God, the conspirators will attempt to depose God and usurp His Lordship by worshipping the antichrist as he sits on the throne of God, in God's temple, in God's city. We can be certain this conspiracy will take place because it is written in the books of the prophets, in Daniel, and in Revelation. It will be a time of great evil and holocaust for the Jewish people and for all those who hold fast the testimony of Jesus.

The leaders who guide the world into the conspiracy of the antichrist, I will not follow, we should not follow, nor am I required to follow. Isaiah heard and recorded these words over 2500 years ago but the Spirit now speaks them to the Church today:

“For the Lord spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying,

Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom, this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid.

Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.

And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem .

And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken”. Isaiah 8:11-15

When we start to understand the nature of end-time prophecy it becomes apparent that the Christian must stand by and, in many ways, be content to watch the drama unfold, to watch the conspirators swarm together. But we must also be ready to help the afflicted Jews who refuse to be part of the “confederacy” that was prophesied so long ago. In the meantime, we should not look down on the Jews or be prejudiced against them, or proclaim the Gentile world as the chosen peoples of God. Instead, I will look for the fulfillment of prophecy, which includes the salvation of Israel, the judgment of the

world, the redemption of the Church and, of course, the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ in the clouds.

3 Fellowship: The Sharing Of Fruit

For many people, fellowship means going to church and listening to a sermon. To others, it means gathering together around a table, sharing a meal, remembering good times, and looking toward the future with a mix of desperation and hope. To Christians, fellowship ought to be something deeper, however, something more purposeful and fulfilling, a sharing of mutual benefit which will provide nourishment for the soul. The apostle Paul wrote the Romans exhorting them not to be ignorant about fellowship and told them of the great desire he had to exchange spiritual fruit with them.

“For I long to see you that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end you may be established;

That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that often times I purposed to come to you, (but was let hitherto) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.” Romans 1:11-13

For centuries Christians more often than not came together ignorant of true fellowship and its spiritual purpose. They came together for every reason but to sharpen their personal relationship with Jesus and share the good fruit of God. Many church-goers still believe that any gathering under the Christian banner, for whatever purpose, is fellowship. They believe singing hymns, or receiving communion, or talking over coffee and donuts is fellowship; and in worldly terms that is the sum total of most fellowship.

The common dictionary defines fellowship as camaraderie, but in God's world that definition is far too shallow. A deeper look into

the root of the Hebrew word reveals that sharing is synonymous with fellowship. Among the called out ones (the Church), fellowship means sharing the fruits of God. The exchange of the fruits of the Spirit (or fruits of righteousness as it is called in many places in the epistles) encourages us in God's Word and helps to make it a reality in our daily lives.

Sharing and Washing Are at The Heart Of Fellowship

Any group or place that claims to provide fellowship will make it possible for the individual believer to share the fruits which God has grown in them. Saints will not be required to sit silently like wooden people in a row watching the back of one another's heads while one or two people do all the ministering and sharing.

Further, any true fellowship will make it possible to test the fruits. Believers will be able to have the dust of the world washed from them by the comfort, encouragement and gentle admonitions of fellow saints. True fellowship will allow a saint to grow according to God's time-table. The fruits of patience and longsuffering will be in evidence so new, or less mature, believers can "catch up" with the older, wiser brethren. Immature brethren seeking deliverance and freedom will be allowed to confess their sins and faults openly in an atmosphere of love, thereby having their "feet washed" from the dirt that clings to them through unavoidable contact with the world. In Christ's name sin will be forgiven. In love and faith, unruly and unlearned believers will be taught, and even rebuked when necessary, to the end that they are delivered from their sins. Body ministry, the type spoken of in 1 Corinthians 12, will be employed and practiced in the spirit.

Paul longed to have fellowship with the Romans. To Paul that meant imparting spiritual gifts to them, encouraging their faith and sharing spiritual fruit with them. Paul, being wise in the Lord, knew

that all of his knowledge, all of his freedom and all of the gifts of the Spirit were useless unless they produced fruits for God's use. He also knew full well that where there is no sign of fruit then all of the fellowship, or rather presumed fellowship, in the Church is in vain. If no good fruit is growing in our personal lives we have nothing to share of any value when we come together as believers. Our fellowshiping, no matter how impressive the music and the worship, is, in a manner of speaking, fruitless.

Jesus taught His disciples to beware fancy talk and hypocrisy. He warned them about watching for fruits. He said, *"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves. "Ye shall know them by their fruits."* Matt 7:15-16 Paul gave the Church at Galatia an outline of what God says are good fruits and what are bad fruits.

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have told you in time past, that they which sow such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

If we live in the Spirit let us walk in the Spirit." Gal.5:19-25

Everyone who is honest must admit that at some point during their life he or she has been well acquainted with the works of the flesh. The nature of the fruits of the Spirit, on the other hand, is a mystery to the unconverted heart. It is the personal ministry of the Holy Spirit that reveals them to us after we are born again. The list in Galatians is a summary of the fruits, but only a summary. To that list,

we might add things like honesty, patience, humility, and kindness also.

We must learn what the fruits are before we can detect them

Learning and detecting the fruits is not something we can treat like Psychology 101. They are much more than a list just to be memorized. Knowing what the fruits are is one thing; knowing what they really mean and how they affect our lives is another. Worldly ideas about such things as love, joy, peace, etc., are quite different from God's truth about them. We may be very happy that we made a dishonest buck, but is that the joy of the Lord? We might find peace by compromising the truth or someone else's interest, but is that spiritual peace? The greatest example is in the greatest fruit of all, love. It has been said, love is never having to say you're sorry. That's garbage. It is not love to allow people to have their own way regardless of their treatment of others, or to simply give them anything they want. That's deadly. Nor is love indiscriminate unity, as ecumenism teaches; look what a unified Germany did in World War II. Nor is love to be confused with reconciling sin to Christ; Christ came to destroy sin. God and sin will never be brought together, never be reconciled. Instead, love is a mixture of truth and mercy, as the pair so often appears side by side in Psalms. God's love never ignores the truth, but rejoices in it, and yet it mixes compassion with truth in a way that works salvation and righteous judgment at the same time. God's love is a miracle; it is beyond our highest thoughts. It is Jesus hanging on the cross, the truth about our condition, and God's wonderful mercy compressed into one enormous act of love. Love is embodied in a person. Love is Jesus.

Brothers and sisters, it is not enough to know the words or throw around Christian platitudes concerning fruit. The Church must know how to detect them if they are to benefit by the sharing of

them. We must not settle for a basket of pretty looking plastic fruit. Do not settle for anything but the real thing. If we are to be nourished by the fruits then we must detect the real thing first in our own lives and spirit, and then look for them in those around us. We must not be ignorant about the fruits and that true fellowship is about the sharing of those fruits so everyone can be mutually nourished.

Paul wrote to his friend and fellow soldier in Christ, Timothy, about the realities of fellowship.

“And let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor.

If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.

Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” 2 Timothy 2:19-22

Fellowshipping among the saints, partaking of the good fruit of God, one with another, is one of the greatest joys of the Church. The God-given purpose for the gifts of the Spirit is to produce fruit for God’s use. As the parable of the sower of the seeds shows: some hear God and immediately forget about it; some do God’s bidding for a short while but persecution scares them off, some grow but get choked by the cares of the world and never bring fruit to perfection; and some, with patience, slowly, just the same as the fruits of nature grow, bring forth spiritual fruit for other saints to be nourished by and comforted. If we have love (and the other fruits) then we will have something to share when we come together with other saints.

4 The Gifts: Given by the Spirit

Few things, during the revival of our times, has stirred more controversy than the rekindling of the spiritual gifts. Citing both real and imagined abuses, some have preached against the gifts of the Spirit; others have dismissed them as emotional superstition; and still others have gone so far as to say they are out and out Satanic. No matter the objections, God desires to give us gifts. First and foremost, will always be the gift of His Son and the work Jesus did on Calvary. But close behind the gift of the 'cross' are the gift of the active presence of the Holy Ghost within us and His spiritual gifts given in order to help and mature the body of Christ. Whatever the abuses (and there have been abuses), or whatever the fine religious arguments fashioned to oppose the free-flow of the gifts in the Church, one thing remains sure in God's Word: **We are told not to be ignorant of the gifts.** The twelfth chapter of 1 Corinthians vs 1,4-11 is explicit:

"Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant...

Now there are diversities of gifts but the same Spirit. "And there are differences of the administrations, but the same Lord.

And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which works all in all.

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; "To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;

To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another the discerning of spirits; to another diverse kinds of tongues; to another interpretation of tongues;

But all these worketh that one and selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."

If we refuse the gifts of the Holy Ghost we will remain ignorant, not only in this crucial area, which is meant to help in our walk, but in other areas of our Christian life as well. Throughout the Age of the Church, the Christian world has maligned the Jews for rejecting Christ, the one whom God had sent; and at the same time we have been horribly guilty of rejecting the Holy Spirit, the one whom Jesus sent. What sort of hypocrisy do we engage in when we judge the Jews for rejecting Christ and turn around and reject the ministry of the Holy Spirit? The Holy Ghost is the Comforter, the Teacher, the Judge; He is the one sent of Jesus to lead the Church into all truth. Yet we have preferred to lead ourselves. Regardless, Christ's words are no less true today than they were the moment He first spoke them to his disciples at the Last Supper.

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of Truth, is come he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he hears, that shall he speak and he will show you things to come.

He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." John 16:13-14

There can be no question: the single greatest factor in the lifting of the apostasy of the Church has been the outpouring of the Holy Ghost on our generation. The gifts are given to help believers enter into the resurrected life. The gift of wisdom is given to the Church to help her in situations that are impossible to cope with by human means. The gift of knowledge is given to enlighten the Church in time of special need; supernatural faith is given to accomplish the impossible; healings are brought forth to aid salvation's work; miracles are performed to witness to the Gospel; discerning of spirits is given to protect and deliver the Church; and prophecies come forth to edify the believer and give praise to the Lord Jesus.

These and other gifts are bestowed on the Church as the Spirit wills, in the manner the Spirit wills.

Do Not Let Abuses Stop You From Receiving Gifts

Some churches have fallen into the mistake of thinking there is a set pattern which the Holy Ghost uses in bringing forth the gifts. There is, however, neither a pattern nor a single way in which the gifts are administered. As the Scriptures plainly say there are differences in the way gifts are administered and a diversity of ways in which they operate (1 Cor.12). But they are not for entertainment either. In some places the gifts have been exploited as entertainment, P.T. Barnum style. Some charismatic groups have wrongly invited people to be baptized in the Holy Spirit never considering whether the person has even been born again. Others, preferring power, have forgotten their first love – Jesus, and sought the gifts above hearing the voice of God and being obedient to it. Do not, dear brethren, let these abuses deter you from receiving the blessings that the gifts of the Holy Ghost provide. If abuses were an excuse for discarding the truth then the whole world would only need to cite the abuses perpetrated by “Christianity” in the name of Christ as an excuse for rejecting Jesus. There are no excuses for rejecting God’s gifts and if we do we will remain ignorant.

In preaching to the Corinthian church, a church that had been abusing the gifts, Paul first warned them to do things in order, but still used words like “desire” and “earnestly covet” to teach them to want the gifts. A word to the wise. Often, if not always, the controversy over the gifts settles on the gift of tongues. Relying on their intellect, Christians become embarrassed by the gift of tongues; to them the gift of tongues is absurd, or foolish, or even demonic. Ignorant men say that God gave it to the Church, but doesn’t any more, and now only Satan has it and uses it to mock

God. If what they say is true then God gave a gift to his Church, took it away, let Satan have control of it, and now allows His Church to be tossed round and round in total confusion. It is clear from the full context of 1 Corinthians (especially chapters 12 & 14) that Paul and the Holy Ghost agree: tongues is a purposeful and valid gift of the Spirit. Any honest searcher of the Scriptures will come to know that tongues are very closely associated with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is, in its prayer form and not its prophetic form, the confirmation to the believer that he is immersed in the Holy Ghost by faith. Paul ended his teaching on the gifts and speaking in tongues to the Corinthians with this: *"Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophecy, and forbid not to **speak with tongues**. Let all things be done decently and in order."* 1 Cor. 14:39

How Do the Gifts Come Forth?

The gifts will be given to us and administered to us by a dream, or vision, or a still small voice, but when and how the gifts come forth is often up to the discretion of the vessel receiving them. *"The spirit of the prophets are subject to the prophets."* 1 Cor. 14:32 This means that the recipient of a gift will have to initiate the operation of the gift. The feeling to bring forth the gift may be so intense that the person feels like they will explode if they do not get it out. Or, it may be just a gentle prodding of the Spirit. People often think they have to be put into some kind of spiritual trance before they can bring forth a gift of the Spirit. Not true. Not all times are proper, but when the time is right I have to act by faith and let the gift flow. *"Let all things be done decently and in order."* 1 Cor 14:40

What then do the various gifts of the Spirit have in common? If it is not the way they are administered, or how they are given, or in their operation, what, then, makes the gifts true gifts from God? The test of the gifts is not in their glamour or even in their miraculous nature. Satan can, and will, perform miracles of his own. The

proof of the gifts lies into whom and to what they testify. The single common thread running through all the gifts of the Spirit is that they edify the Church while they sing the praises of Jesus Christ. If the gifts are not to be abused, then the recipients and the beneficiaries must test them with all diligence. Dreams, visions, prophecies, and all profound words, must be tested. They must conform to the Good News. The operation and administration of the gifts may vary, but the one thing which will never vary is their Gospel truth. The Holy Spirit praises Christ and never lies or blasphemes about God in any way.

To have gifts flowing in our church increases our responsibility as believers, for it means added responsibility in testing their truth, and that means we must be knowledgeable in all areas of the Gospel, especially where the Holy Spirit has told us to beware and to “*not be ignorant*”. We must know God’s Word in order to hold the gifts up to the proper scrutiny. We cannot rely on a pastor or leader to know God’s Word for us. The gifts mean added responsibility. We must be able to detect which spirit is speaking, whether it is the good Spirit of God or the wandering, fallen spirits of Satan. And for that, we need to be of good understanding. We must not be ignorant, brethren.

5 Taking Up Our Cross

“For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead:” 2 Corinthians 1:8-9

Many churches and preachers preach the message of the cross. They preach that Christ left His glory in heaven, shed His blood for

us, died on the cross, was buried, and rose again to sit at the Father's right hand, so we, sinful mankind, could be saved. And we, as Paul did, praise God for anyone and everyone who preaches the Good News. But that is only the beginning of the truth about death and life, only the first half of the message of the cross.

Oh! Don't get the wrong impression! Christ did it all on Calvary. There are no other and will be no other sacrifices needed to redeem man out of the deadly grip of sin. Jesus is the once and for all Lamb of God. He is the beginning and the end; the Alpha and Omega; our father, brother, sister, mother. We must pick up our own cross and follow after Him.

Like Paul, we must succumb to the Spirit. We must live in the Spirit and "kill" our flesh. That mystical, but very real, "*sentence of death*" should be active and working in the life of any true disciple of Christ. Desires and ambitions anchored in this present world should give way to hope in the Gospel and the life that is to come. Hope for a continuing better world built on the sandy delusions of humanism should be shattered to pieces by faith in God's prophetic word. Disciples who are buried with Christ will also be resurrected into new life, a life of love and power that the world cannot know.

The Bible frankly advises the Church "*to not be ignorant*" concerning the wonderful power of the resurrected life. By dying to self Paul could honestly say, "*For when I am weak then am I strong.*", 2 Cor 12:10 and also, "*I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me.*" Phl 4:13 The way to this kind of supernatural strength, unknown entirely to the ways of man, is to pick up our own cross and follow Jesus to our very own, personal death.

Everybody wants to go to Heaven but nobody wants to die

This, however, is not a popular stand to take. Getting people excited about healing and miracles is much easier and more acceptable by

far. Insisting on spiritual death is a hard thing, as a gospel song says, "Everybody wants to go to heaven, but nobody wants to die." Everybody wants the power of Jesus Christ to be active in their life, but very few are willing to give up everything in order to have it be a reality and the prominent force during their entire day. Christians often prefer to wallow in their own excuses for sin while searching for some hidden door that will lead them on some easy, self-gratifying way to spiritual perfection. The fulfilling of sacraments, giving of tithes, going to church, making confession, doing penance, good works, memorization of Scripture, and witnessing can all be neat little ways to think we are appeasing God's will; when in reality we are avoiding the nitty-gritty of the cross.

The flesh cannot obtain to the power of Jesus Christ. Paul told the Galatians (a church fallen into the snare of thinking they could live righteous lives by following rules and laws), *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."* Gal 2:20 Paul had crucified his flesh so that the righteous one, Jesus Christ, could live through him.

But what does it mean? How does one die to self? How is one crucified?

It is done through prayer and belief. Dying to self means yielding to the Holy Spirit. It means being obedient not just in word but in action. It means seeking the truth rather than our own selves, even to our own hurt. The prophet Micah asked this question over two millennia ago, *"Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"* Micah 6:6-7

And God gives Micah the answer...

"He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the

Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" vs 8

If that were the case under the law, how much more does it apply under grace? Infinitely more! But the believer cannot hope to have the fruits of love and justice brought about through a humble walk unless he has died in the spirit. Why else would Jesus have taught things like:

"And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."...Matt 10:38-39

And this parable:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.

If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour." John 12:24-26

Jesus taught about our part of the cross because it is a spiritual necessity for the Christian walk and to ignore it is to walk a fruitless walk. We are told fruitless branches are thrown on the fire because they have no other use. What seems to be a mysterious and frightening path – because no one wants to die – is actually the true garden path. If we believe by faith that the power of the Holy Spirit can bring about our spiritual death whereby the deeds of the flesh can be mortified and we can be resurrected into a life of victory; then it will happen for us.

Many Christians through this Age of Grace have lived the following scripture in such a way that they could testify in truth to its reality. *"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are*

above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Col 3:1-3

Only by believing in the power of dying to self does this great passage of the Bible have any substantive meaning:

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.

For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” Rom. 8:1-14

There is no other way to attain the righteousness of God than through the crucifixion of our own flesh by the spirit. There is no short cut. If you can hear this message, then by faith pray to God that He gives you the grace to die to your plans and your will, so you can live to His. I assure you God will smile on your prayer and will begin engineering your glorious demise in His own time, in His own merciful and compassionate way.

6 Fast Approaching: Judgment Day

The Day of Judgment is coming. Let the mocking movie, the scoffing co-worker, the doubtful religious man, and the ambitious political leader continue to walk in darkness; the day of coming judgment is drawing nearer as we draw each breath. God has promised that His only Son will return with armies of saints from heaven to purge the earth of corruption, injustice, and sin.

We who know and believe the words of the Bible take to heart this passage which Peter wrote telling fellow Christians not to be ignorant.

“But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the

elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” 2 Peter 3:7-10

The Holy Ghost has taught The Church in these past 40 years and continues to bear witness in our hearts that the judgment of the world is necessary if God’s promise of a righteous rule of Christ on earth is to be fulfilled. If heaven and earth are not purged then the new heaven and new earth promised in the last two chapters of the Bible would have no chance to exist. The Scriptures are explicit, the world is going to be burned up in fiery judgment. Revelation tells the story. Peter prophesied in his second epistle:

“... that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,

And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water:

Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:

But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.” 2 Peter 3:3-7

The world and its faithful followers believe that their governments, institutions and glorious ideas will all last forever. And though there is no reconciling the Spirit of God with the spirit of the world, many Christians have figured that God wants to save the “world”. But James declares: “... know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.” James 4:4

And John exhorted the Church in this fashion.

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world, if

*any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.
For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the
eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the
world,
And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that
doeth the will of God abideth forever.” 1 John 2:15-17*

We can be sure that if the world is going to pass away then they who love the things of the world will also pass away.

A fiery judgment is coming on the Earth

Christ first came in meekness, lowly, riding a colt, not a warhorse, and gave Himself into the hands of the world so that some would receive salvation, but that will not be His mission at His second coming. He will return with fire in His eyes and a sword of judgment in His mouth. An unusual way to express His appearance if it were not so spiritually perfect. Christ will burn everything that cannot stand up to the gaze of God and will cut to ribbons anything that does not measure up to His word. The world will melt and tremble at His presence. According to the prophecies written in Revelation, Christ and His saints (all true and **faithful** believers) will begin a thousand year reign, ruling with a rod of iron.

As the day of God’s terrible judgment draws closer and closer; God’s warnings echo louder and louder. Crime, corruption, sexual perversion, hypocrisy in government and religion, and lusts of all sort are rampant, false prophets are seducing the Church., lying spirits are working every kind of deceit inside and outside the confines of believers. Not even judgment like AIDS, war, or financial ruin can convince people to do the right thing. The cup of iniquity is filling and the signs of the time are shining brighter and brighter in every newspaper headline and on every 7 o’clock news broadcast. As prophesied in 1 & 2 Timothy, seducing spirits are selling

the doctrines of devils. Sin is said to be good; doing your own thing is righteous – indeed we live in the perilous times of the last days. Everything points to the soon return of Jesus.

Two thousand years, or just two days on the Lord's heavenly calendar, have passed since Jesus departed to be with the Father and it is very, very likely that Jesus will reappear on the dawn of the "third day", just as he reappeared on the dawn of the third day after His crucifixion. To escape the judgment that is coming upon all the earth, members of the Body of Christ must be willing and ready to receive judgment now, in their personal lives and in their hearts, as well.

There is no escape from God's judgment, neither should there be. Sacraments, tithing, good works; none of these can deliver us from our ultimate destiny. We must all face our maker. Either we can submit to His merciful and delivering judgment and let it produce love and freedom in us, or we can stubbornly hold out and fall victim to His terrible judgment. *"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."*, as it says in Hebrews 10:31. Instead, we are taught by the Bible that, *"if we judge ourselves we shall not be judged, but when we are chastened we are chastened of the Lord that we should not be judged with the world."* 1 Cor 11:31-32

Many aspects of our walk involve a process of being delivered from evil into goodness, of being brought from darkness into light; departing and fleeing and being changed into His likeness. If those things are to happen to us we must invite the judgment of the Holy Ghost. His judgment must win out over ours. Without accepting God's judgment in our walk we will remain in the world no matter how godly or pious we appear to be.

"Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,

Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.” 2 Peter 3:11-14

This is the only way to be spared the fiery judgment coming on the earth. If we live spotless and blameless lives for Christ, a spiritual perfection before Christ, then we can look forward to the judgment of the world and the second coming. We can hope in the rapture, which will likely come before the great tribulation that is to come on all the world according to Revelation. (Rev 3:10)To use the words of Peter, we can make our calling and election sure. (2 Peter 1:10) This perfection spoken of is not a carnal or intellectual perfection. It does not mean we will never make a wrong judgment or a mistake. It is a perfection achieved by obedience of faith. It can be detected by the faithful eyes of other disciples of Christ because the fruit of our actions is the evidence of our obedience. Our perfection hinges entirely on hearing the Word of God and doing it. It is important here to realize, however, that God does not want us to fear His judgment; in fact He wants us to invite it. Beautifully, this passage of Peter’s which exhorts us to not be ignorant, this pillar of knowledge in the Church, is the only one of the seven pillars which is addressed to the “beloved” instead of simply, the “brethren”. Being addressed to the beloved reassures the faithful that God’s love is with them always – even in judgment. For it is for our sakes that the world will be judged.

7 The Rapture The Bride Waits:

“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive [and] remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

Then we which are alive [and] remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” 1 Thess 4:13-18

Comfort one another with these words. How often are we comforted with the words of the rapture in our fellowship? The resurrection, whether of the dead or living, is the hope of the Church. It is the reward of our labor of faith and without a living faith for the rapture, without the constant nourishment it provides for our souls, we will suffer from spiritual malnutrition. The resurrection is the glorious moment in the battle of our salvation. If the goal – if the end of our discipline and trials – becomes vague and obscure, then our whole walk can become muddled.

Ignorance in these last hours of the Church Age can and will make us a lazy, sleeping, carnal body of misdirected believers. Historically, the Church has been so busy building a kingdom here on earth, or meddling in the politics of the nations that it has had little interest in the “vague and distant fables” about the rapture. But a new day has dawned in the Church. The Holy Ghost has renewed a spirit of faith about the resurrection of the living and given her faith for God’s promise that He will lift all faithful believers out of impending world tribulation. The Church has been informed by the Spirit that the time for the rapture looms closer and closer with each tick of the clock.

The revival of the ’60’s and 70’s opened every denomination’s eyes

to the signs of the time. Now, one fulfilled prophecy is following fast on the heels of another. Prophetic scholars all agree; the signs of the end-time are appearing and flashing like huge neon signs on the horizon of time, changing color and graphics as each prophecy is newly fulfilled.

Signs of Christ's Return

Jesus told His disciples to behold the fig tree, and all the trees, that when they begin to bud it would be time to look up, for our redemption would be drawing near. The fig tree represents Israel, the other trees represent the nations of the world. It is not a coincidence that just after Israel, once again, budded into a nation in 1948 after more than 2,000 years of lying dormant, that many of the ancient biblical powers also returned as forces on the world scene. Egypt, Iraq (Babylon), Iran (Persia), Syria, Libya and Ethiopia have all, for various reasons, reclaimed important positions in the affairs of the nations of the world, and all within the last two decades. These countries which were all but laughed at in elementary geography books a generation ago, are now forces to be reckoned with, and it is a miracle.

Another beacon blinking on and off almost every day is the warning given by Jesus on the Mount of Olives. Jesus promised that the end would be preceded by wars and rumors of wars and earthquakes in diverse places. Hardly a news day goes by when one of those things cannot be reported. On the day of this writing war was being rumored in Bosnia, and two violent earthquakes, killing hundreds of people, hit along the Pacific rim. Post-colonial Africa has been the scene of millions of murders and deaths with constant tumults and unceasing commotions, rebellions, coupes and genocides.

Along with these signs shine the brilliantly bright prophecies of Daniel serving as a tremendous warning of the nearness of the

rapture. Daniel was told that the meaning of his prophecies would be hidden away until the time of the end when travel and knowledge would be vastly increased. Today we can understand Daniel's prophecies in the light of history and current events. Our understanding of Daniel is partly due to the fact that we live in a world that has increased its knowledge a million-fold in this century alone. We live in a "global village" shrunk to miniature size by TV, computers, jets, satellites and automobiles. The Book of Daniel is, in and of itself, a sign of the end-times and the impending rapture. Every Christian who reads and understands the book of Daniel will be blessed by having their faith for Christ's return bolstered.

The New Testament's forewarning of the believer about the spiritual condition of people in the last days is yet another sign. Ask yourself if the following passage of Scripture does not describe an all too familiar world.

*"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.
For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters,
proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful,
unholy,
without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers,
incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,
traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasure more than
lovers of God;
Having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof:
from such turn away." 2 Tim 3:1-5*

A good and accurate description of the workplace and society in general, don't you think? Other signs of the end include the formation of the European Community (which is headed toward a powerful and unified Europe), the rise of ecumenism in religion, the taking of Jerusalem by the Jews in 1967, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in accordance with the prophecy of Joel concerning the former and latter day rain.

Exact Hour of Rapture not known

It is clear; Christ is getting ready to receive his bride. The exact hour of the rapture is a secret known only to the Father Himself, but the words of Jesus tell us that we can know the general time and season by discerning the signs of the day. He gave us signs to look for and warned us to be ready and watching, lest that day come on us like a thief.

Ask yourself this. If we could not know the time why else would Christ have scolded the religious leaders of Israel for knowing how to read the signs in the skies so they could determine the coming weather while they ignored the spiritual signs of their day that foretold of Jesus' first coming?

He said, "When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red.

And in the morning, It will be foul weather today the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?

A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them and departed." Matt 16:2-4

The sign of Jonah referred to is, of course, the sign of the resurrection. As Jonas had been in the belly of the whale for three days, so Jesus was in the belly of Hell three days before he rose again. The sign of the second coming will also be the resurrection, this time it will be the first-fruits rapture of the Church, those who are dead in Christ and those who remain alive (and have been faithfully watching for and listening for Christ's calling) will be taken out of the "belly" of a coming "Hell". Jesus refused to put on a supernatural circus for the faithless leaders of that day and our day will be no different. Jesus will not send lights flashing in the skies, or comets racing through space spelling out his name to herald the coming of the rapture. The signs of the rapture will be, and have been, prophe-

cy being fulfilled. The sign of His second coming with ten thousands of His saints will be the rapture. The warning is already given. The rapture (itself a sign of the end) will come in a twinkling of an eye and it will proclaim the soon return of Jesus to earth with his faithful saints.

Christ's beloved bride will be faithful while she awaits His call. She will be a spiritual virgin keeping herself clean from idolatry and fornication while making herself pure with the hope of His calling. She is striving for what the apostle Paul called "*the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*"; Phil 3:14 a calling so great he counted everything else as dung.

Get ready then, and as Jesus advised, pray that you be accounted worthy that you escape all the evils that are coming on the world so you can be found standing before the Son of Man in glory.

83. The Lord is Our Righteousness

Jehovah-‘Tsidkenu’

by LeRoy J. Gardenier

Over the centuries and under the ancient covenants the Almighty has progressively revealed the essence of His majestic personality through the profound significance of the Divine Names. To Abraham, He became JEHOVAH-JIREH, our merciful and all encompassing Provider. For the parched and panicky Israelites, led by Moses through the waste and howling wilderness, God stood as JEHOVAH-ROPHE, the loving, caring Healer. Against all enemies who threatened His Chosen Ones, He is the Lord our Banner (JEHOVAH-NISSI): the One who sets up a rallying point and an impregnable standard when the Enemy comes in like a flood. God is our Sanctifier under the title JEHOVAH-M’KADDESH. In the turbulent times of the Judges, He became JEHOVAH-SHALOM, the Lord our Peace. To David, the Shepherd-King, He revealed Himself as JEHOVAH-ROHI, the Lord my Shepherd. And, as the Omnipresent God, whose kingdom rules over all, God is JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH: “the Lord is there”.

At the time of Jeremiah the prophet, chosen to proclaim the “swan song” of the Judean Kingdom, God fittingly revealed Himself under the title: JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU, the Lord our Righteousness. This divine designation was eminently appropriate during the time when the fruits of religious and governmental unrighteousness had come to the full. But it was also a comforting, reassuring prospective name that guaranteed the availability of salvation for all mankind. To underscore the complete disparity between the awkward attempts of humans to attain or establish righteousness and the only One who is not merely called, but who is thoroughly and uniquely

righteous, God intervened in the last days of the Kingdom to stage a special, highly significant scenario. Mattaniah, a relative of the godly King Josiah came to the throne. Unlike his pious and obedient predecessor, this ruler was a rebel at heart. He defied both the dictates of God and of his conquerors. One of the last earthly kings in the line of David, Mattaniah became a mere puppet in the hands of the Babylonian overlords. Ironically, it was the infamous Nebuchadnezzar who changed Mattaniah's name (gift of Jehovah) to Zedekiah, which means "the righteousness of Jehovah"! This not so subtle name-change was both a rebuke to ingrained wickedness of shallow, professing believers and, yet, a promise of true righteousness for all those willing to repent and submit to God's plan of salvation.

With the advent of the New Covenant we now know that believing in Zedekiah's successor, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ makes godly righteousness available to all who will appoint Him King of their hearts, minds and bodies. As 1 Cor 1:30 states: *"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and RIGHTEOUSNESS, and sanctification and redemption."* Our inviting the Holy Spirit to show us how to acknowledge, accept and apply His atonement for our sins secures the way for us to partake of God's own righteousness. Our personal identification with the sufferings, death, resurrection and ascension of our merciful Savior fills us with His divine life and limitless love *"which is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us"* Rom 5:5.

Commenting on Rom 3:10-12: *"There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no not one"*, Dr. Scofield, author of the renowned Scofield Reference Bible, in his excellent monograph, "RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH", makes the following points: "God does not say that none of the unregenerate (people not yet "born-again") are refined, or cultured, or able, or sweet-tempered, or generous, or charitable, or religious even, but He does say that none are righteous, none understand

God, or seek after Him. It is one of the sorest of faith's trials to accept the divine estimate of human nature. To realize that our genial and moral friends, who not infrequently are scrupulous in the discharge of every duty, who are filled with sympathy for the woes and the aspirations of humanity, and strenuous in the assertion of human rights; are yet utter contemners of God's rights, and untouched by the sacrifice of His Son, whose divinity they contemptuously reject. A refined and gently lady who would shrink with horror from the coarseness of giving a fellow-creature the lie, will yet make God a liar every day! (See 1 John 1:10; 5:19). And this difficulty is vastly increased for thousands by the current pulpit laudation of humanity.

The false and deceptive gospel of both religious and secular humanism has always affirmed the basic goodness of mankind. Good intentions, sincere efforts preferably augmented by religious rituals, they claim, are more than enough to prove man's innate rectitude. But true believers side against themselves and agree with God's Holy word combined with the convicting power of the Holy Ghost. When submitted to, God's Agent of true righteousness convinces all mankind of sin – not just the evil that we do, but more so the evil which we are. The Spirit of God makes clear the availability of genuine righteousness through receiving the salvation won by the Lord Jesus. And this same Holy Spirit assures us that the ruler of this world has already been judged. The baneful effects of Satan, sin and even of self have all been effectively nullified by the Savior's Cross and His atoning blood!

During this earthly sojourn, there can be no real righteousness apart from being "in Christ". Aligned with Him and His saving work, we are supernaturally capable of enjoying all the precious promises and the spiritual benefits assured us in the Scriptures. And His Holy Word not only defines who we are "in Him", but also what we will become. The unstable King Zedekiah, mentioned earlier, underwent a significant name-change. To staunch, unwavering believers with Philadelphian faith, the righteous Lord promises: *"I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the New*

Jerusalem which cometh down out of heaven from my God, and mine own new name” Rev 3:12. Scripturally speaking, one’s name signifies one’s nature; what you are called is essentially what you actually are. Philadelphia believers who “keep the word of his patience” Rev 3:10 are promised nothing less than a divine position; a divine place; and a divine personality. Faithful Philadelphians can even now affirm: “Jehovah hath brought forth our righteousness: come and let us declare in Zion the work of Jehovah our God”. Jer 51:10

“Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure of things new and old.” Matt 13:52

We believe our mission is very much like this commission given by Christ. While we are writing of the “advent” of a new intense belief in the Philadelphia faith we recognize that we are bringing forth many old, established truths – we hope with a new vigor of faith.

84. We Can Be Perfect and Complete in Christ

by T Myers Smith

In the final chapter of Colossians the apostle Paul alludes to a man named Epaphras who had a zealous desire that the believers within his locality would be “*perfect and complete in all the will of God*”. Col 4:12 It says that this Epaphras labored fervently in prayer hoping that full maturity would become a reality in the lives of those beloved brethren of Colossae, Laodicea and surrounding cities and towns.

We have this same “hope of Epaphras” for our readers. To grow into a “perfect” and “complete” person in Christ is a wonderful ambition for any believer and its understanding, in purely spiritual terms, is not as difficult as people usually make it out to be. Epaphras worked in behalf of the believers who lived in Colossae, a fellowship of dedicated, earnest Christians, and for those who lived in Laodicea, a gathering which Christ scolded in Revelation for being “lukewarm” to the Truth, indifferent to spiritual perfection, happy with thinking they knew everything and that believed they were in need of nothing. They were over-confident, arrogant and prideful in their spiritual condition. It is no coincidence that this Epaphras was worried about these people, but also had hope for a wide range of believers because that is the way of the Holy Ghost in the Church. Epaphras and the Spirit issue the invitation to be “perfect” and “complete” to any and all, in any part or church of the greater Church; to any who can hear the call.

As Epaphras was led of the Spirit to issue the call, so we also are led to issue the same challenge. The following is to be seen as an essential part of the journey to Brideship; stating the case for the necessity of perfection in Christ, especially if a saint is to be reckoned as the espoused bride of Christ and positioned to be

accounted worthy to escape all those things that are falling upon the earth in these last days. The big hope is to be raptured into the waiting arms of Jesus. The sum of this section amounts to an exhortation to believe in the possibility of spiritual perfection and a fervent invitation to strive for it in one's personal walk with the Lord.

Why is it so hard...

For the faithful to believe that the power of Jesus Christ can transform them into perfect and complete Christians? Most Christians remain snagged in erroneous and worldly notions of perfection and then incredibly conclude that the one and only place where it is impossible to be perfect in conduct and life is in the economy of God? It is impossible for God to perfect and bring to completion a disciple.

Certainly, poor teaching is a major reason for the brethren's shallow, limited idea about God's means of perfecting and completing the saints. In the end each person will shoulder the responsibility for their own walk of faith, and everything hinges around a personal relationship with the Lord and how carefully it has been nurtured and preserved. Completion is a matter of yielding to the Trinity and abiding in God's love; perfection is a matter of our close and communicative personal relationship with Him through the living Spirit of God within us. While it is true that God is the only perfect and good One and Man is very, very far from it; it is true that God also does miracles. When one becomes born-again they get a new nature, the old heart of stone, deaf to God's voice, is replaced by a heart of flesh. That individual is no longer a mere mortal for they now have eternal life dwelling with and in their spirit. That person now lives in a brilliant new realm, one brimming with the promise of living a life that can be pleasing to God.

Hear God's Word And Do It...

Since God dwells in the born-again heart, that heart has something perfect in it – which is “Christ in us”. And that, brothers and sisters, is the key to the mystery of being perfect before God. To want this indwelling of God to OVERTAKE US AND GROW TO PERFECTION is to desire to be as perfect as a Christian can be. We find it by dying to ourselves and letting the Holy Ghost form Christ in us. Perfection in Christ is really just that simple. We must shed our preoccupation with natural notions of perfection; they mean nothing in the spiritual realm. Perfect before God has nothing to do with our limitations, poor judgement, assessments, or decisions. Perfection before God has to do with our willingness to hear God's word and do it.

The Christian who would be perfect must learn to recede in ego and will, and let the influence of God's Spirit increase and swell. He must learn the sound of God's voice in his heart and seek to be obedient to that voice. Remember when Jesus was informed that his mother and brethren waited outside to see him he turned to his disciples, spread His hands over the room, and said, *“My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God and do it.”* Luke 8:21 Jesus repeatedly testified that he came not to do his own will, but the will of his Father in heaven which sent him. That testimony is Christ's perfection, and is his disciples' perfection – we hear God and obey. Let's not make it more complicated than it is. Seek to hear his voice. Be obedient. Do what God directs. Find out what God is hoping for. There is a faith which God has, seek to conform to that faith.

How Do I Know God's Will?...

So then the inevitable questions rise to the surface. How can I hear

God's voice? How can I know his will? Where do I get the power to resist temptation, be freed of myself and become obedient to God's desires? I know my flesh is weak. How do I discover what He has faith for?

That is where being complete comes in. Being complete merges the two: one must seek His will and once discovered must then walk in it. We must be willing to throw off the presumptions of our family traditions, our religious stereotype and get fully equipped for the work of "perfection".

Just as God is three persons so Man's completion in Christ is grounded in three critical spiritual experiences in God.

1. We must be born-again which means we must repent, accept Christ as Lord and Savior, and be fitted with a new heart, one with spiritual eyes and ears so we can see and hear Christ.
2. We must be baptized in the Holy Ghost: like a newborn babe we can see and hear, but we can not comprehend the meaning of anything. Just as maturity and experience is needed until a baby can understand the will of those who communicate with it. The new babe in Christ must be equipped with the means and power to communicate and comprehend what God is saying to him or her. To help us in our new world, God has sent the Holy Spirit to minister all sorts of power and gifts. We need to be empowered, showered, and baptized with the Holy Ghost by Jesus.
3. Water baptized: We have to get ourselves out of the way. For that God has provided the spectacle of water baptism which is a symbolic action of dying to ourselves and our distorted natural life, so that Christ may be raised up in us. This is a public profession of our desire to have God's desires and hopes rule our lives as if we were "dead".

This does not speak in respect to being saved from death and having a stake in eternal life with God, these matters are of a higher realm of perfection that not all believers with eternal life must advance to. These three acts: 1) accepting Christ, which is to be made a new

creature; 2) being imbued with the power of the Holy Ghost; and 3) water baptism, which is the acting out of desire to die to self so Christ may fully live in us are the highest which only some will experience. They give one a kind of completion that will enable us to go on to the sort of perfection that is not of the flesh, but is of the spirit. Just as there were apostles and offices of teachers and pastors etc., just as there are differences of glory in the stars, so there are differences and heights available to believers that are more than the requirements for salvation and getting out of here alive.

Though it is not critical to winning life eternal, some may grow into a faithful servant of God “complete” and “perfect”. They are able to ‘put on the full armor of God’ wherewith the complete Christian, as a spiritual soldier in Christ, fights the battles of faith. Through the power of Christ and the might of the Word of God we can be fully equipped to win the battles of life and of the Lord by spiritual means through His gifts and faith given to us.

*“Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God ...
having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the
breastplate of righteousness;
and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;
above all taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able
to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.
And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit,
which is the word of God:
praying always with all prayer and supplication in the
Spirit”...Eph. 6:13-18*

Granted, most Christians never tap into the blessings of living “perfect” and “complete” before God and never become righteous soldiers in the Lord. This failure takes place for a variety of reasons; lack of faith, personal fears, resistance to the Holy Ghost, to name a few. The Christian remains imperfect and incomplete in his faith. Many, if not most, believers let themselves believe their imperfect walk with the Lord is the best that can be had. On the threshold

of freedom and holiness, they stop, see that the price they must pay is yielding and dying to self, and never enter into that close relationship which leads to discipleship.

Call us cynical, but the prevailing resistance to the notion of a perfect and complete Christian is not from Scriptural influences, to the contrary, Scripture exhorts us to be perfect, full, victorious and complete. No, the prevailing attitude is because the Church desires to excuse its imperfections, tries to cover its blemishes, tries to rationalize its marriage with the world, tries to conceal its weakness to temptation by doing penance. The Church is intimidated by their own weakness when they should be freed by it. Once a person realizes that God will give the strength and infuse it in us when we concede to His Will, God, then, can provide the strength and the steadfastness we as if we were taking some sort of spiritual steroid that gives us a spiritual insight and power that is not of our own. We must be sensitive, attentive, faithful to His Word within our heart. It is by faith that we are 'perfect' not in the world's eyes or in accord with its standard of perfection, but in God's eyes we are perfect when we are walking by the faith for things which we have acquired from Him alone, when we walk in His strength which is provided for us by the Holy Spirit. The general Church is too quick to excuse its selfish presumptions of His will with a shrug, and a quizzical "after all we're only human." It often pays the price of living out needless struggles because what it wants and what God wants for them are two different things.

If this remains confused, this matter of perfection, there are only two possibilities: 1) Accept an imperfect life in Christ and ignore Christ's call to spiritual fitness and perfection or believe that 2) Christ and the Scriptures are laying an unbelievable guilt trip on his friends and believers. Which is it? We the Church can not have it both ways.

The Bible says:

"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Matt. 5:48

“Be Holy as your father in Heaven is Holy.” and...

“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.” Heb 12:14

Paul Considered It His Obligation As a Pastor...

to strive to bring together every person in his care to perfection. He told the saints at Colosse:

“We preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.” Col 1:28

Scriptural Context – Colossians 1:21-29

“And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.

In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in his sight:

If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;

Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:

Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:

To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in

you, the hope of glory:

Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:

Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily."

EQUIPPING US COMPLETELY with *The Three Baptisms* that can make us whole in Christ!

1) Repentance – The Father draws us to Jesus John 6:44; “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” He does this that we might partake of the baptism of repentance, leading us to being born again, by showing us we need a Savior – Jesus. Jesus also set the example by partaking of John’s baptism in obedience to the Father, even though He did not need to repent, but we do. “John did baptize in the wilderness and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins”. Mark 1:4 Other citations are; Luke 3:3, Acts 13:24, Acts 19:4. When Jesus, in obedience to the Father, was baptized by John, they saw “the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him: and there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Matt 3:16-17

2) Water Baptism – When we choose to yield and be water baptized in the name of Jesus, we are testifying publicly to our desire to die to self and become more and more like Him. Once more we see Jesus as the central figure. By being baptized in His name and after His example of death and resurrection we have completed the three parts of that one baptism mentioned in Ephesians 4:5 “One Lord (Jesus) one faith (in Jesus), one baptism (3 parts, but all depend on Jesus)”, making it one, in the sense that He makes it all possible, for without Him none of the three parts can happen. Completion in Christ takes place by being immersed or

baptized in the Father's baptism of repentance, by being baptized in the name of Jesus and into a complete death and life in Him, and by being immersed in the Holy Ghost by Jesus. Again, I say completely furnished and able to go on unto perfection.

3) Baptism in the Holy Ghost – Jesus offers to baptize us in the Holy Ghost for He is the baptizer as John the Baptist announced in Matthew 3:2. He warned; *“Repent ye for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”* He also prophesied in verse 11; *“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, ... He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.”* As we call on the Holy Ghost to possess us, or engulf us in God's very Spirit, we can be sure that God's Love, which is embodied in Jesus, will be faithful to baptize us. Mark 1:8/Luke 3:16/John 1:32-34 *“And when the day of pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place... And they all were all filled (whelmed) with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.”* Acts 2: 1 & 4

85. We're Not Alone When It Comes to Believing In Christian Perfect

John Wesley – On Christian Perfection

by T. Myers Smith

John Wesley is one of the finest Christians who ever ministered in the name of Christ. Like any and all of the very finest, he fell short of being absolutely correct in all matters of which he spoke or preached. As the apostle Paul freely admitted in behalf of all preachers: “Who is sufficient for such things?” 2 Cor 2:16 In many regards Wesley was a prisoner of his times, chained to the epoch of church history in which he lived and preached. He labored for God in a day most demanding, for it was his lot to clear a pathway through the thicket of darkness which had been piled upon the churches through hundreds of dismal years of ignorance and false beliefs. Still, he strove with heroic fortitude until in his 90's to allow the light of the pure Gospel to shine its way through that darkness of so many centuries.

Though it may seem a contradiction, the fact that he was not perfect in all details of the Gospel he preached, in no wise diminishes the perfection of his heart, the holiness of his career, or the work which God had given this ‘angel’ of the church to do. He was an ‘angel’ (a messenger, leader and minister) of the church and it was his lot to add on rungs to the ascending ladder which advanced the churches of Christ out of the hole dug by the great apostasy of centuries of worldly Christian Church ambition.

The climb out of the hole was begun by The Reformation but by no means was it accomplished to the full. It had started with Luther was furthered by Calvin, Zwingli, Knox, and others of their ilk. The

reformers had forged a rung or two, but hardly more than that. After they had started the ascent out of the depths of satanic influences and Jezebel ruin it was Wesley, his brother Charles and George Whitefield, along with pedigree movements like the Moravians, Pietists, Hutterites, Anabaptists, etc., who took up the mantle and were part of a spearhead of the Spirit to lift the Reformation to holier ground, to bring in a spirit of Restoration, to usher in the era of the Holy Spirit. Things long destroyed were to be rediscovered and regained and Wesley's Methodists were key in making the way clear for Renewal that would be in full gear come the middle of the last century when 'new' wine fit for the end of the age and the Bride's preparation would be introduced in a Cana-like fashion.

Wesley did not see his labors in the restoration of the good things in the churches as prophetic, leading to the Renewal of the end, but he did see that it was a work of restoration. For more than half a century he adamantly preached the revival of the doctrines of godly perfection which had been directly taught by the apostles of Christ in the first generations of the church saga. Wesley was a lifelong proponent of the search for true perfection of faith by the Spirit. He sought to leave no stone unturned, addressed each question and sought every answer in his sermons and writings. This perfection was not well understood by anyone in his day, but he undertook the enormous task of both relating its truth and encouraging the common believer to enter into its blessings and life.

How well is perfection even understood today? Though we are in the final hours of this Age of Grace when Christ is seeking to adorn and prepare His wife as He has never done before, only the few are excited and determined to become the Bride in the fashion that John Wesley was determined to bring the Holy Writ to light and encourage people to walk in its illuminated paths.

Perfection had never been perfectly or rightly defined inside or outside of the Scriptures, and the apostles who declared its necessity in the cause of Christ were not much heeded, except in the first two or three generations of the faith. As the churches began to focus on other causes rather than waiting patiently for the

bridegroom's return, the Christian believer lost sight of this prime goal, even though Christ had warned us all to Watch, Wait, Pray and Take Heed, for He would return at a time we thought not. In the first few centuries there were men, mostly scorned by popular consent, who taught that a Christian ought to strive to give his or her whole being to Christ – but there grew fewer and fewer who declared such dedicated faith. Wesley revived the spirit of full dedication to the Spirit. As leader of the Methodists, he was among the most staunch proponents of perfection, but due to its doctrinal infancy he and Puritan and other Separatist like the Quakers and groups in Europe made understandable mistakes in doctrinal nuances which now more easily have come to light because the Church age draws to a close and the glory days of the Bride and her joint invitation with the Holy Spirit is more properly and perfectly issuing forth in legible hand of the finger of God Himself.

Wesley grappled with the incomprehensible idea that a perfect Christian could still commit a sin of commission or omission. In the end, he finally got a fair idea of sin and perfection, and even attained through much investigation and faith, a way in which to clearly express this most difficult of questions concerning perfection, holiness and truth. In the process he gained perhaps a clearer more full conception of what sin really is, more so, than those great leaders of the Reformation had ever realized or attained. He died at the very doorstep of the 19th Century in 1799, and due to its infancy, he, therefore, had trouble seeing how perfection was a daily matter like bodily hygiene, like prayer, like standing before God for daily marching orders. Not surprisingly, it would take more experience by the Church and the advent of the great outpouring of the latter day rain of the Holy Ghost which began in the early nineteenth century and hit its crescendo in the Post World War II dramas of the second half of the Twentieth Century, for the truth of spiritual perfection in Christ to come into its own for the Church. Because of this, anything that Wesley or the 'angels' of Reformation or early restoration did not see clearly, let alone know how to express, cannot be held to

their account or used to deny their personal perfection of faith in Christ.

Perfection with God is not contingent on knowing or knowledge; the outcome of perfection with God is determined in the arena where spiritual perfection is seated – in the heart. That Christ was going to be the beautician, butler, valet, hairdresser, instructor, do the laundry and wash our feet, iron out the wrinkles in our garments, be our chauffeur, and otherwise take out every spot in the Bride's garments and bodily features as needed; that this perfection to holiness would be needed on a daily and continual basis, was not understood as ongoing and a matter of daily detail, of walking in the spirit. It was not fully comprehended how completely Christ would do the work of perfection in His Bride. The key for the perfection of soul and spirit would be to submit in every conceivable way to the perfect, loving hand of Christ, to give Him everything without argument or debate, abstaining from hesitation or mistrust. Wesley was still locked into method, not fully delivered from a legalist and academic mind. But he should not be faulted. The deluge of the baptism of the Holy Ghost had not yet watered the earth.

Wesley lived at a time when the Holy Ghost was misting in a few select places over the earth. The Spirit was raining upon him. Wesley was a pioneer of the great Restoration (in a limited way, sometimes called the Great Awakening) replacing that which the worms had eaten away, first knocking down the rotten posts and beams and then considering what materials were needed to replace the old. Some work he could not do, for it was not the time. He did not take down all of the idols of the high places in the Church, just as many of the great kings of Judah who had pleased God, were not able to do in their day. Nevertheless, Wesley's ministry lit up the sky and the churches of the entire 18th century, but the finish work was not his to do. Restoration always begins with demolition. How would it be any different with so great a property as Christ's churches? The roof, interior and finish work had to wait for the skilled interior experiments at the end. Nevertheless, Wesley's doctrines on perfection and his devotion to its cause shows he was in the spirit

of the Bride and that he understood, and would not be moved; He knew our Savior deserves all of us and only the best.

As a pioneer of sorts, Wesley laid a solid foundation so that Finnish men could do all the necessary finish work perfectly. Christ will have only the best. Wesley surely has taken his place among 'the great cloud of witnesses' who await their crowns on that day when all the 'perfected' will be given them at one time. Our hats are off to him and others who labored for the cause of Christ and our Lord's search for a perfect wife, one without spot or wrinkle who is holy. Pressure came at him from every side but he withstood, never wavered. Since perfection is a humanly un-achievable condition and a romantic utopian hope without chancet (within the scope and realm of man, I mean) it can only be defended and asserted by faith and can only be received by the few who by faith are willing to subject themselves to the world's indignation and by full submission to such an impossible high calling and goal. It can become actual and real only by first believing it can be. Perfection is the trousseau of the Bride, she must put it on, allow Christ to adorn her in it. It is impossible to achieve by one's wit or discipline. It is given, one must be dressed in it. Yet it remains a request of God, a goal placed upon a soul's soul, a hope of one's spirit.

With Man things are impossible. A perfect bride is one of those things. The doctrines surrounding perfection are as impossible to relate as they are for Man to achieve because we innately cannot conceive of a perfect wife, a perfect Bride. All those who strive for the mark of the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus (the Bride) are well aware of this mission impossible. We stand with our mouths open, our hands raised in submission toward God, with hope in His mercy. Wesley did also. He had faith for perfection, faith to believe that though it is impossible with Man, with God all things are possible. Christ can make, and will make, as Ephesians 5 declares, his wife without spot or wrinkle or blemish, or any such thing, even – holy.

(I have placed editorial comments within the text of Wesley's sermon wherever clarification or explanation of a matter is

warranted. In a few places, concerning sin and thoughts, for example, I have made lengthy comments addressing Wesley's lack of understanding concerning the nature of their perfection and their origin. Mainly, Wesley's insistence on seeking perfection and its complete reality in the whole man, body, soul and spirit, is a great testimony to God's unrelenting quest to find a perfect wife for His Son, an eternal mate that is without blemish and holy. For anyone desiring to have a testimony that they please God, Wesley's discussion of perfection is well worth chewing on.)

CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

by John Wesley

"Not as though I had already attained , either were already perfect." Phil 3:12

There is scarce any expression in holy writ, which has given more offense than the quote above. The word perfect is what many cannot bear. The very sound of it is an abomination to them; and whosoever preaches perfection, (as the phrase is) that is, asserts that it is attainable in this life, runs great hazard of being accounted by them worse than a heathen man or a publican.

And hence some have advised, wholly to lay aside the use of those expressions; "because they have given so great offense." But are they not found in the oracles of God? If so, by what authority can any Messenger of God lay them aside, even though all men should be offended? We have not so learned Christ; neither may we thus give place to the devil. Whatsoever God hath spoken, that will we speak, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear; knowing that then alone can any Minister of Christ be "*pure from the blood of all men,*" Acts 20:26 when he has "*not shunned to declare unto them all the counsel of God.*" Acts 20:27

We may not, therefore, lay these expressions aside, seeing they are the words of God and not of man. But we may and ought to explain the meaning of them; that those who are sincere of heart may not err to the right hand or left, from the mark of the prize of their high calling. And this is the more needful to be done, because, in the verse already repeated, the Apostle speaks of himself as not perfect: "Not." says he, "*as though I were already perfect.*" And yet immediately after, in the fifteenth verse, he speaks of himself, yea, and many others, as perfect: "Let us," says he, "*as many as be perfect, be thus minded.*" Phil 3:12-15.

In order, therefore, to remove the difficulty arising from this seeming contradiction, as well as to give light to them who are pressing forward to the mark, and that those who are lame be not turned out of the way, I shall endeavor to show, First, In what sense Christians are not; and, secondly, In what sense they are, perfect.

In the first place, they are not perfect in knowledge: They are not so perfect in this life as to be free from ignorance. They know, it may be, in common with other men, many things relating to the present world; and they know, with regard to the world to come, the general truths which God hath revealed. They know, likewise, (*what the natural man receives not; for these things are spiritually discerned*, 1 Cor 2:14) "*what manner of love*" it is, wherewith "the Father" hath loved them, "*that they should be called the sons of God.*" 1 John 3:1 They know the mighty working of his Spirit in their hearts; and the wisdom of his providence, directing all their paths, and causing all things to work together for their good. Yea, they know in every circumstance of life what the Lord requires of them, and how to keep a conscience void of offense both toward God and toward man. But innumerable are the things which they do not know. Touching the Almighty himself, they cannot search him out to perfection. "*Lo, these are but a part of his ways; but the thunder of his power, Who can understand?*" Job 26:14 They cannot understand.

... Neither is it for them to know the times and seasons when God will work his great works upon the earth; no, not even those which he hath in part revealed by his servants and prophets since

the world began. Much less do they know when God, having “accomplished the number of his elect, will hasten his kingdom;” when “*the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.*” 2 Peter 3:10 They know not the reasons even of many of His present dispensations with the sons of men; but are constrained to rest here, – Though “*clouds and darkness are round about him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his seat.*” Psalm 97:2 Yea, often with regard to his dealings with themselves, doth their Lord say unto them, “*What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.*” John 13:7 And how little do they know of what is ever before them, of even the visible works of his hands! – How “*he spreadeth the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing?*” How he unites all the parts of this vast machine by a secret chain, which cannot be broken? So great is the ignorance, so very little the knowledge, of even the best of men!

No one, then, is so perfect in this life, as to be free from ignorance. Nor, secondly, from mistake; which indeed is almost an unavoidable consequence of it; seeing those who “*know but in part*” 1 Co 3:12 are ever liable to err touching the things which they know not. It is true, the children of God do not mistake as to the things essential to salvation: They do not “*put darkness for light, or light for darkness;*” Isa 5:20 neither “*seek death in the error of their life.*” For they are “*taught of God;*” John 6:45 and the way which he teaches them, the way of holiness, is so plain, that “*the wayfaring man, though a fool need not err therein.*” Isa 35:8

But in things un-essential to salvation they do err, and that frequently the best and wisest of men are frequently mistaken even with regard to facts; believing those things not to have been which really were, or those to have been done which were not. Or, suppose they are not mistaken as to the fact itself, they may be, with regard to its circumstances believing them, or many of them, to have been quite different from what, in truth, they were. And hence cannot but arise many more mistakes. Hence they may believe either past or present actions which were or are evil, to be good; and such as were

or are good, to be evil. [This is why we are advised to judge nothing before its time. ed. com. website] Hence also they may judge not according to truth with regard to the characters of men; and that, not only by supposing good men to be better, or wicked men to be worse, than they are, but by believing them to have been or to be good men, who were or are very wicked; or perhaps those to have been or to be wicked men, who were or are holy and unreprouable.

No, with regard to the Holy Scriptures themselves, as careful as they are to avoid it, the best of men are liable to mistake, and do mistake day by day; especially with respect to these parts thereof which less immediately relate to practice. Hence, even the children of God are not agreed as to the interpretation of many places in holy writ: Nor is their difference of opinion any proof that they are not the children of God on either side; but it is a proof that we are no more to expect any living men to be infallible, than to be omniscient.

If it be objected to concerning what has been observed under this and the preceding head, that St. John, speaking to his brethren in the faith, says, *“Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things:”* 1 John 2:20: The answer is plain: “We know all things that are needful for your souls’ health” That the Apostle never designed to extend this farther, that he could not speak it in an absolute sense, is clear. First, from hence; – that otherwise he would describe the disciple as *“above his Master:”* Matt 10:24 seeing Christ himself, as man, knew not all things: *“Of that hour,”* saith he, *“knoweth no man; no, not the Son, but the father only.”* Mark 13:32 It is clear, Secondly, from the Apostle’s own words that follow: *“These things have I written unto you concerning them that deceive you;”* 1 John 2:26 as well as from his frequently repeated caution, *“Let no man deceive you;”* 2 Thes 2:3 which had been altogether needless, had not those very persons who had that unction from the Holy One been liable, not to ignorance only, but to mistake also.

PERFECTION IS NOT EXEMPT FROM

MISTAKES

Even Christians, therefore, are not so perfect as to be free either from ignorance or error: We may add to this, nor are we free from infirmities – only let us take care to understand this word aright: Only let us not give that soft title to known sins, as the manner of some is. So, one man tells us, “Every man has his infirmity, and mine is drunkenness.” Another has the infirmity of uncleanness; another that of taking God’s holy name in vain; and yet another has the infirmity of calling his brother, “Thou fool,” or returning; “railing for railing.” It is plain that all those who thus speak, if ye repent not, shall with your infirmities go quick into hell! But I mean hereby, not only those which are properly termed bodily infirmities, but all those inward or outward imperfections which are not of a moral nature. Such are the weakness or slowness of understanding, dullness or confusedness of apprehension, incoherency of thought, irregular quickness or heaviness of imagination. Such (to mention no more of this kind) is the want of a ready or retentive memory. Such, in another kind, are those which are commonly, in some measure, consequent upon these; namely, slowness of speech, impropriety of language, ungracefulness of pronunciation; to which one might add a thousand nameless defects, either in conversation or behavior. These are the infirmities which are found in the best of men, in a larger or smaller proportion. And from these none can hope to be perfectly freed, till the spirit returns to God that gave it.

Nor can we expect, till then, to be wholly free from temptation. Such perfection does not belong to this life. It is true, there are those who, being given up to work all uncleanness with greediness, scarce perceive the temptations which they fail to resist; and so seem to be without temptation. There are also many whom the wise enemy of souls, seeing to be fast asleep in the dead form of godliness, will not tempt to gross sin, lest they should awake before they drop into everlasting burnings. I know there are also children of God who, being now justified freely, having found redemption in

the blood of Christ, for the present feel no temptation. God hath said to their enemies, "*Touch not mine anointed, and do my children no harm.*" 1 Ch 16:22 And for this season, it may be for weeks or months, he causes them to ride on high places, he bears them as on eagles wings, above all the fiery darts of the wicked one. [We call this a 'honeymoon' experience. ed. com.] But this state will not last always; as we may learn from that single consideration, that the Son of God himself in the days of his flesh, was tempted even to the end of his life. Therefore, so let his servant expect to be; for "*it is enough that he be as his Master.*" Matt 10:25

Christian perfection, therefore, does not imply (as some men seem to have imagined) all exemption either from ignorance, or mistakes or infirmities, or temptations. Indeed, it is only another term for holiness. They are two names for the same thing. Thus, everyone that is holy is, in the Scripture sense, perfect. Yet we may, lastly, observe that neither in this respect is there any absolute perfection on earth. There is no perfection of degrees, as it is termed; none which does not admit of a continual increase. So that how much soever any man has attained, or in how high a degree soever he is perfect, he hath still need to "*grow in grace,*" 2 Peter 3:18 and daily to advance in the knowledge and love of God his Savior.

In what sense, then, are Christians perfect? This is what I shall endeavor, in the second place, to show. But it should be premised, that there are several stages in Christian life, as in natural; – some of the children of God being but newborn babes; others having attained to more maturity. And accordingly St. John, in his First Epistle, (2:1, etc.,) applies himself severally to those he terms little children, those he styles young men, and those whom he entitles father, "I write unto you, *little children,*" saith the Apostle, "*because your sins are forgiven you.*" Because thus far you have attained, – being "*justified freely,*" you "*have peace with God through Jesus Christ*" "I write unto you, *young men,* because ye have overcome the wicked one;" or, (as he afterwards addeth,) "*because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you.*" Ye have quenched the fiery darts

of the wicked one, the doubts and fears wherewith he disturbed your first peace; and the witness of God, that your sins are forgiven, now abideth in your heart. *"I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning."* Ye have known both the Father, and the Son, and the Spirit of Christ, in your inmost soul. Ye are "perfect men," being grown up to *"the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."*

It is of these chiefly I speak in the latter part of this discourse: For these only are perfect Christians. But even babes in Christ are in such a sense perfect, or born of God, (an expression taken also in diverse senses,) as, First, not to commit sin. If any doubt of this privilege of the sons of God, the question is not to be decided by abstract reasonings, which may be drawn out into an endless length, and leave the point just as it was before. Neither is it to be determined by the experience of this or that particular person. Many may suppose they do not commit sin, when they do; but this proves nothing either way. To the law and to the testimony we appeal. *"Let God be true, and every man a liar."* Rom 3:4 By His word will we abide, and that alone. Hereby we ought to be judged.

Now the word of God plainly declares, that even those who are justified, who are born again in the lowest sense, *"do not continue in sin,"* that they cannot *"live any longer therein."* Romans 6:1, 2 that they are *"planted together in the likeness of the death" of Christ;* verse 5 that their *"old man is crucified with him,"* the body of sin being destroyed, so that henceforth they do not serve sin; that, being dead with Christ, they are free from sin; verses 6, 7 that they are *"dead unto sin, and alive unto God;"* verse 11 that *"sin hath no more dominion over them,"* who are *"not under the law, but under grace;"* but that these, *"being free from sin, are become the servants of righteousness."* vs. 14, 18 The very least which can be implied in these words, is, that the persons spoken of therein, namely, all real Christians, or believers in Christ, are made free from outward sin. And the same freedom, which St. Paul here expresses in such variety of phrases, St. Peter expresses in that one:

"He that hath suffered in the flesh, hath ceased from sin – that he

no longer should live to the desires of men, but to the will of God.” 1 Peter 4:1, 2: For this ceasing from sin, if it be interpreted in the lowest sense, as regarding only the outward behavior, must denote the ceasing from the outward act, from any outward transgression of the law. But most express are the well known words of St. John, in the third chapter of his First Epistle, verse 8, etc.: “He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: And he cannot sin because he is born of God.” And those in the fifth: (Verse 18) “We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keeps himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.” Indeed it is said, this means only, He sins not willfully; or he doth not commit sin habitually; or, not as other men do; or, not as he did before. But by whom is this said? by St. John? No: There is no such word in the text; nor in the whole chapter; nor in all his Epistle; nor in any part of his writings whatsoever. Why then, the best way to answer a bold assertion, is, simply to deny it. And if any man can prove it from the word of God, let him bring forth his strong reasons. [A reason to accept that even the perfect may sin or effect sin by disobedience to the voice of God or rashly swayed by the provocation of the flesh, Satan or the World Spirit comes from John himself who notes that when we sin we have an advocate with the Father who can buy it back (propitiation, is the word the KJV uses) so that in the eyes of God it effectively never occurred and the clean perfection is restored in all reality and truth. ed. com.] And a sort of reason there is, which has been frequently brought to support these strange assertions, drawn from the examples recorded in the word of God: “What!” say they, “did not Abraham himself commit sin, – prevaricating, and denying his wife? Did not Moses commit sin, when he provoked God at the waters of strife? Nay, to produce one for all, did not even David, ‘the man after God’s own heart’ commit sin, in the matter of Uriah the Hittite; even murder and adultery?” It is most sure he did. All this is true. But what is it you would infer from hence: It may be

granted, First, that David, in the general course of his life, was one of the holiest men among the Jews; and, secondly, that the holiest men among the Jews did sometimes commit sin. But if you would hence infer, that all Christians do and must commit sin as long as they live; this consequence we utterly deny: It will never follow from those premises.

Those who argue thus, seem never to have considered that declaration of our Lord: Matthew 11:11: *“Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: Notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”* I fear, indeed, there are some who have imagined “the kingdom of heaven,” here, to mean the kingdom of glory, as if the Son of God had just discovered to us, that the least glorified saint in heaven is greater than any man upon earth! To mention this is sufficiently to refute it. There can, therefore, no doubt be made, but “the kingdom of heaven,” here, (as in the following verse, where it is said to be taken by force) or, “the kingdom of God,” as St. Luke expresses it, – is that kingdom of God on earth whereunto all true believers in Christ, all real Christians, belong. In these words, then, our Lord declares two things: First, that before his coming in the flesh among all the children of men there had not been one greater than, John the Baptist, whence it evidently follows, that neither Abraham, David, nor any Jew, was greater than John. Our Lord, secondly, declares, that he which is least in the kingdom of God (in that kingdom which he came to set up on earth, and which the violent now began to take by force) is greater than he: – Is not a greater Prophet, as some have interpreted the word; for this is palpably false in fact, but greater in the grace of God, and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore we cannot measure the privileges of real Christians by those formerly given to the Jews. Their; “ministration,” (or dispensation,) we allow, “was glorious,” but ours “exceeds in glory.” So that whosoever would bring down the Christian dispensation to the Jewish standard, whosoever cleans up the examples of weakness, recorded in the Law and the Prophets, and thence infers that they who have “*put on Christ*” Gal 3:27 are

endued with no greater strength, doth greatly err, neither “*knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God.*” Matt 22:29

But are there not assertions in Scripture which prove the same thing, if it cannot be inferred from those examples? Does not the Scripture say expressly, ‘Even a just man sinneth seven times a day?’ I answer, No: The Scripture says no such thing. There is no such text in all the Bible. That which seems to be intended is the sixteenth verse of the twenty-fourth chapter of the Proverbs; the words of which are these: “*A just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again.*” But this is quite another thing. For, First, the words “a day,” are not in the text. So that if a just man fall seven times in his life, it is as much as is affirmed here. Secondly, here is no mention of falling into sin at all; what is here mentioned is, falling into temporal affliction. This plainly appears from the verse before, the words of which are these: “*Lay not wait, O wicked man, against the dwelling of the righteous; spoil not his resting place.*” It follows, “*For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again; but the wicked shall fall into mischief.*” As if he had said, “God will deliver him out of his trouble; but when thou fallest, there shall be none to deliver thee.”

“But, however, in other places,” continue the objectors, “Solomon does assert plainly, ‘*There is no man that sinneth not;*’ 1 Kings 8:46; 2 Chronicles 6:36 yea, ‘*There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good, and sinneth not.*’ Ecclesiastes 7:20” I answer, Without doubt, thus it was in the days of Solomon. Yea, thus it was from Adam to Moses, from Moses to Solomon, and from Solomon to Christ. There was then no man that sinned not. Even from the day that sin entered into the world, there was not a just man upon earth that did good and sinned not, until the Son of God was manifested to take away our sins. It is unquestionably true, that “*the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant.*” Gal 4:1 And that even so they (all the holy men of old, who were under the Jewish dispensation) were, during that infant state of the Church, in bondage under the elements of the world.” “*But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons;*” – that

they might receive that “*grace which is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.*” 2 Timothy 1:10 Now, therefore, they “are no more servants, but sons.” So that, whatsoever was the case of those under the law, we may safely affirm with St. John, that, since the gospel was given, “*he that is born of God sinneth not.*” 1 John 5:18 It is of great importance to observe, and that more carefully than is commonly done, the wide difference there is between the Jewish and the Christian dispensation; and that ground of it which the same Apostle assigns in the seventh chapter of his Gospel. (Verses 38, etc.) After he had there related those words of our blessed Lord, “*He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water,*” John 7:38 he immediately subjoins, “*This spake he of the Spirit, – which they who should believe on him were afterwards to receive. For the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.*” John 7:39 Now, the Apostle cannot mean here, (as some have taught,) that the miracle-working power of the Holy Ghost was not yet given. For this was given; our Lord had given it to all the Apostles, when he first sent them forth to preach the gospel. He then gave them power over unclean spirits to cast them out; power to heal the sick; yea, to raise the dead. But the Holy Ghost was not yet given in his sanctifying graces, as he was after Jesus was glorified. It was then when “*he ascended up on high, and led captivity captive,*” Eph 4:8 that he “received” those “gifts for men, yea, even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might deal among them.” And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, then first it was, that they who “*waited for the promise of the Father*” Acts 1:4 were made more than conquerors over sin by the Holy Ghost given unto them.

That this great salvation from sin was not given till Jesus was glorified, St. Peter also plainly testifies; where, speaking of his brethren in the flesh, as now “*receiving the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls,*” he adds, 1 Peter 1:9, 10 etc., “*Of which salvation the Prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace,*” that is, the gracious dispensation, “*that*

should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory," of the glorious salvation, "that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven;" viz., at the day of Pentecost, and so unto all generations, into the hearts of all true believers. On this ground, even "the grace which was brought unto them by the revelation of Jesus Christ," the Apostle might well build that strong exhortation, "Wherefore girding up the loins of your mind, – as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation."

Those who have duly considered these things must allow, that the privileges of Christians are in no wise to be measured by what the Old Testament records concerning those who were under the Jewish dispensation; seeing the fullness of time is now come; the Holy Ghost is now given; the great salvation of God is brought unto men, by the revelation of Jesus Christ. The kingdom of heaven is now set up on earth; concerning which the Spirit of God declared of old, (so far is David from being the pattern or standard of Christian perfection,) "He that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them." Zechariah 12:8. If, therefore, you would prove that the Apostle's words, "He that is born of God sinneth not," are not to be understood according to their plain, natural, obvious meaning, it is from the New Testament you are to bring your proofs, else you will fight as one that beateth the air. And the first of these which is usually brought is taken from the examples recorded in the New Testament. "The Apostles themselves," it is said, "committed sin; nay, the greatest of them, Peter and Paul: St. Paul, by his sharp contention with Barnabas; and St. Peter, by his dissimulation at Antioch." Well: Suppose both Peter and Paul did then commit sin; what is it you would infer from hence? that all the other Apostles committed sin sometimes? There is no shadow of proof in this. Or

would you thence infer, that all the other Christians of the apostolic age committed sin? Worse and worse: This is such an inference as, one would imagine, a man in his senses could never have thought of. Or will you argue thus: If two of the Apostles did once commit sin, then all other Christians, in all ages, do and will commit sin as long as they live? "Alas, my brother! a child of common understanding would be ashamed of such reasoning as this. Least of all can you with any color of argument infer, that any man must commit sin at all. No: God forbid we should thus speak! No necessity of sinning was laid upon them. The grace of God was surely sufficient for them. And it is sufficient for us at this day. With the temptation which fell on them, there was a way to escape; as there is to every soul of man in every temptation. So that whosoever is tempted to any sin, need not yield; for no man is tempted above that he is able to bear. [We do not necessarily agree that Paul's contention with Barnabas was a sin, though it could have been and it would not have had lasting effect on that apostles perfect walk; we do believe that Peter's dissimulation was sin because it was disobedience to God's word given to him in a vision and was done out of fear of man, rather than fear of God, and therefore a sin in that regard, and should be considered as flawed part of the condition even in that perfect man. Perfect man because Peter repented and this proved an aspect of perfection that is granted to those who concede to the forgiving advocacy of their Savior, what Wesley has noted as a privilege of those who live in this age of Grace, the privilege to be sinless in the sight of God by forgiveness of a regrettable lapse of separation from He that is holy. ed. com.] "But St. Paul besought the Lord thrice, and yet he could not escape from his temptation." Let us consider his own words literally translated: *"There was given to me a thorn to the flesh, an angel"* (or messenger) *"of Satan, to buffet me. Touching this, I besought the Lord thrice, that it"* (or he) *"might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: For my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in"* these *"my weaknesses, that the strength of Christ may rest upon me.*

Therefore I take pleasure in weaknesses; – for when I am weak, then am I strong.” 2 Co 12:7-10

As this scripture is one of the strongholds of the patrons of sin, it may be proper to weigh it thoroughly. Let it be observed, then, First, it does by no means appear that this thorn, whatsoever it was, occasioned St. Paul to commit sin; much less laid him under any necessity of doing so. Therefore, from hence it can never be proved that any Christian must commit sin. [This is a perfect and excellent point as to the difference between affliction and weakness and sin. ed. com.] Secondly, the ancient Fathers inform us, it was bodily pain: – a violent headache, saith Tertullian; (De Pudic.;) to which both Chrysostom and St. Jerome agree. St. Cyprian expresses it, a little more generally, in these terms: “Many and grievous torments of the flesh and of the body.” [It could have had something to do with his eyesight, which he makes allusion elsewhere, or a nerve disorder that hampered his ability to write which would have surely caused him distress. ed. com.] Thirdly, to this exactly agree the Apostle’s own words: – “A thorn to the flesh, to smite, beat, or buffet me.” *“My strength is made perfect in weakness”*– Which same word occurs no less than four times in these two verses only. Fourthly, whatsoever it was, it could not be either inward or outward sin. It could no more be inward stirrings, than outward expressions of pride, anger, or lust. This is manifest, beyond all possible exception, from the words that immediately follow: *“Most gladly will I glory in”* these *“my weaknesses, that the strength of Christ may rest upon me.”* What! Did he glory in pride, in anger, in lust? Was it through these weaknesses that the strength of Christ rested upon him? He goes on: *“Therefore I take pleasure in weaknesses; for when I am weak, then am I strong;”* that is, when I am weak in body, then am I strong in spirit. But will any man dare to say, “When I am weak by pride or lust, then am I strong in spirit?” [We must agree, this is unthinkable and downright stupid. ed. com.] I call you all to record this day, who find the strength of Christ resting upon you, can you glory in anger, or pride, or lust? Can you take pleasure in these infirmities? Do these weaknesses make you strong? Would you not

leap into hell, were it possible, to escape them? Even by yourselves, then, judge, whether the Apostle could glory and take pleasure in them. Let it be, lastly, observed, that this thorn was even to St. Paul above thirteen years before he wrote this Epistle; which itself was wrote several years before he finished his course. So that he had, after this, a long course to run, many battles to fight, many victories to gain, and great increase to receive in all the gifts of God, and the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Therefore, from any spiritual weakness (if such had been) which he at that time felt, we could by no means infer that he was never made strong; that Paul the aged, the father in Christ, still labored under the same weaknesses; that he was in no higher state till the day of his death. From all which it appears, that this instance of St. Paul is quite foreign to the question, and does in nowise clash with the assertion of St John, *“He that is born of God sinneth not.”*

“But does not St. James directly contradict this? His words are, *‘In many things we offend all.’* (3:2) And is not offending the same as committing sin?” In this place, I allow it is: I allow the persons here spoken of did commit sin; yea, that they all committed many sins. But who are the persons here spoken of? Why, those many masters or teachers, whom God had not sent; (probably the same vain men who taught that faith without works [doctrine], which is so sharply reprov’d in the preceding chapter;) not the Apostle himself, nor any real Christian. That in the word we (used by a figure of speech common in all other, as well as the inspired, writings) the Apostle could not possibly include himself or any other true believer, appears evident. First, from the same word in the ninth verse: – *“Therewith,”* saith he, *“bless we God, and therewith curse we men. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing”* True; but not out of the mouth of the Apostle, nor of anyone who is in Christ a new creature. Secondly, from the verse immediately preceding the text, and manifestly connected with it: *“My brethren, be not many masters,”* (or teachers,) *“knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.”* *“For in many things we offend all.”* James 3:1 We! Who? Not the Apostles, nor true believers; but they who

knew they should receive the greater condemnation, because of those many offenses. But this could not be spoke of the Apostle himself, or of any who trod in his steps; seeing there is no *condemnation to them who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*" Rom 8:1 Nay, thirdly, the very verse itself proves, that "*we offend all,*" cannot be spoken either of all men, or of all Christians: For in it there immediately follows the mention of a man who offends not, as the we first mentioned did; from whom, therefore, he is professedly contradistinguished, and pronounced a perfect man.

So clearly does St. James explain himself, and fix the meaning of his own words. Yet, lest anyone should still remain in doubt, St. John, writing many years after St. James, puts the matter entirely out of dispute, by the express declarations above recited. But here a fresh difficulty may arise: How shall we reconcile St. John with himself? In one place he declares, "*Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin;*" 1 John 3:9 and again, – "*We know that he which is born of God sinneth not:*" 1 John 5:18 And yet in another he saith, "*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us;*" 1 John 1:8 and again, – "*If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*" 1 John 1:10

As great a difficulty as this may at first appear, it vanishes away, if we observe,

First, that the tenth verse fixes the sense of the eighth: "*If we say we have no sin,*" in the former, being explained by, "*If we say we have not sinned,*" in the latter verse. Secondly, that the point under present consideration is not whether we have or have not sinned heretofore; and neither of these verses asserts that we do sin or commit sin now. [This follows the same point Wesley was making about James' argument when he used we as sinners he is speaking of us in our former un-regenerated condition and of mankind in general. So, he also says John is talking here of mankind as sinners and that we were once among the sinners and un-regenerated. Of this distinction we generally agree, but as stated above we are not able to be as dogmatic as Wesley was that the 'perfect' heart

and well kempt spirit of the Bride cannot possibly fall or commit a transgression or sin when provoked, even bushwhacked, by our flesh, Satan, or the world. This is why even the ‘perfect’ prove their perfection when they are still able to recognize and appeal to the advocacy and saving forgiveness needed by Christ in times of needed repentance. This is shown by John, who insists that righteous and pure living is possible and needed, when he says that when the righteous do sin they have an advocate with the Father. [ed. com.]

Thirdly, that the ninth verse explains both the eighth and tenth. *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness:”* As if he had said, “I have before affirmed, ‘The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin; but let no man say, I need it not; I have no sin to be cleansed from. If we say that we have no sin, that we have not sinned, we deceive ourselves and make God a liar: But ‘if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just,’ not only ‘to forgive our sins,’ but also ‘to cleanse us from all unrighteousness:’ that we may ‘go and sin no more.” St. John, therefore, is well consistent with himself, as well as with the other holy writers; as will yet more evidently appear, if we place all his assertions touching this matter in one view: He declares, First, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin. Secondly, no man can say, I have not sinned, I have no sin to be cleansed from. Thirdly, but God is ready both to forgive our past sins, and to save us from them for the time to come. Fourthly, *“These things write I unto you,”* saith the Apostle, *“that you may not sin.* But if any man” should “sin,” or have sinned, (as the word might be rendered,) he need not continue in sin; seeing *“we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous”* 1 John 2:1 Thus far all is clear. But lest any doubt should remain in a point of so vast importance, the Apostle resumes this subject in the *third chapter*, and largely explains his own meaning: *“Little children,”* saith he, *“let no man deceive you:”* (As though I had given any encouragement to those that continue in sin:) *“He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the*

beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin: For his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil.” Verses 7-10. Here the point, which till then might possibly have admitted of some doubt in weak minds, is purposely settled by the last of the inspired writers, and decided in the clearest manner. In conformity, therefore, both to the doctrine of St. John, and to the whole tenor of the New Testament, we fix this conclusion, – A Christian is so far perfect, as not to commit sin.

This is the glorious privilege of every Christian; yea, though he be but a babe in Christ. But it is only of those who are strong in the Lord, *“and have overcome the wicked one,”* 1 John 2:13 or rather of those who *“have known him that is from the beginning,”* 1 John 2:14 that it can be affirmed they are in such a sense perfect, as, secondly, to be freed from evil thoughts and evil tempers. First, from evil or sinful thoughts. But here let it be observed, that thoughts concerning evil are not always evil thoughts; that a thought concerning sin, and a sinful thought, are widely different. A man, for instance, may think of a murder which another has committed; and set this is no evil or sinful thought. So our blessed Lord himself doubtless thought of, or understood, the thing spoken by the devil, when he said, *“All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.”* Matt 4:9 Yet had he no evil or sinful thought; nor indeed was capable of having any. And even hence it follows, that neither have real Christians: Therefore, if He was free from evil or sinful thoughts so are they likewise.

And, indeed, whence should evil thoughts proceed, in the servant who is as his Master? *“Out of the heart of man”* (if at all) *“proceed evil thoughts.”* Mark 7:21 If, therefore, his heart be no longer evil, then evil thoughts can no longer proceed out of it. *If the tree were corrupt, so would be the fruit: But the tree is good; the fruit, therefore, is good also;* Matthew 12:33 our Lord himself bearing witness, *“Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit,”* as *“a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit.”* Matthew 7:17,

18. The same happy privilege of real Christians, St. Paul asserts from his own experience. *"The weapons of our warfare,"* saith he, *"are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations,"* (or reasonings rather, for so the word logismouv signifies; all the reasonings of pride and unbelief against the declarations, promises, or gifts of God,) *"and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."* 2 Cor 10:4-5 [Here and what follows, shows the state at which the 'Reformation', revival of knowledge and rebuttal against the great apostasy of ignorance in the Church had gotten evolved. The evangelists of the 18th Century, and especially Wesley, had opened up the notion of Christian perfection and taken extreme criticism and harassment from the religious powers such as the Bishop of London and leaders of the highest leaders in the Anglican and Presbyterian Churches in particular. But they still had not understood some things concerning the perfection of the Bride and how it comes about and is maintained and in the common believer. There is a certain laundering that must go on, that the perfect must submit to, which is part of the perfect heart, if they will be perfect. The symbolic act of washing the feet of His disciples at the Last Supper was done along these lines, was it not? If you will be clean all over or perfect, he told Peter, you have to let me wash your feet. Here in Wesley's discussion about the perfection of thought is a case in point as to how far the understanding of perfection, so necessary to the day of the Bride, had gone to this point in the restoration of knowledge among the churches. He had not rightly considered that many thoughts come to us the very same way they came to Jesus. There are three opposing voices to the Spirit, our flesh, Satan and the World. Wesley rightly understood and always declared that the only valid voice upon which to act was the Holy Ghost. But thoughts come to us from other voices, we must learn to distrust our own thoughts. Deny Satan's voice. And, shun the voice of the World. Wesley misses the point that if we are called to bring into captivity all thoughts to the obedience of Christ, that everyone, even the

'perfect' must have thoughts not captivated by the mind of Christ and therefore they must be corralled. We may get thoughts from all over the place. The perfect will know what to do with every thought and how to bring them under Christ's rule. ed. com]

And as Christians indeed are freed from evil thoughts, so are they, Secondly, from evil tempers. This is evident from the above-mentioned declaration of our Lord himself: "*The disciple is not above his Master; but everyone that is perfect shall be as his Master.*" Lk 6:40 He had been delivering, just before, some of the sublimest doctrines of Christianity, and some of the most grievous to flesh and blood. "I say unto you, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you; – and unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek, offer also the other." Lk 6:27-29 Now these he well knew the world would not receive; and therefore immediately adds, "*Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into the ditch?*" Lk 6:39 As if he had said, "Do not confer with flesh and blood touching these things, – with men void of spiritual discernment, the eyes of whose understanding God hath not opened, – lest they and you perish together." In the next verse he removes the two grand objections with which these wise fools meet us at every turn: "These things are too grievous to be born;" or, "They are too high to be attained;" – saying, "*The disciple is not above his Master*"; therefore, if I have suffered, be content to tread in my steps. And doubt ye not then, but I will fulfill my word. '*For everyone that is perfect, shall be as his Master.*' Lk 6:40 " But his Master was free from all sinful tempers. [If Wesley here means that Christ was free from anger and showing his anger he is not in the least way correct. Temper or anger is not always sinful. Wesley needs to be more specific here. Jesus was angry at the money changers and showed it to the point of acting violently on it when He fashioned a scourge, kicked over their money tables and whipped them out of the temple. He had lost his temper, or whatever you want to call it because he said "*the zeal of my father's house has eaten me up*". John 2:17 The bible says "*be angry but sin not*" Eph 4:26. Sometimes we do not have a clear knowledge of what is sin and what is not. Wesley was too methodical and even legalistic

in his view of sin, which is too narrow and not broad enough at the same time. It does not mean, either, that everyone is immune from attack and succumbing even briefly to that assault. We are told that only the dead are free from sin, and Jesus tells us we must die daily, pick up our cross day by day, so we are never 'dead' for good, so to speak, we must 'die' daily. So we must be freed from sin daily, and in this on a particular day even the 'perfect', who are perfect by dying as symbolized by picking up the cross, may not be sufficiently dead to some temptation of provocation and thereby be found in the grip of some sin. Therefore, a spirit of repentance must be present at all times, for all their lives, even in the perfect. This, matter of a spirit of repentance, ready to be activated, [Wesley did not recognize or comprehend in his otherwise excellent doctrines of perfection. ed. com.] So, therefore, is his disciple, even every real Christian. Every one of these can say, with St. Paul, "*I am crucified with Christ: Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me:*" Gal 2:20— Words that manifestly describe a deliverance from inward as well as from outward sin. This is expressed both negatively, I live not; (my evil nature, the body of sin, is destroyed;) and positively, Christ liveth in me; and, therefore, all that is holy, and just, and good. Indeed, both these, Christ liveth in me, and I live not, are inseparably connected; for *so what communion hath light with darkness, or Christ with Belial?*" 2 Cor 6:15

He, therefore, who lives in true believers, hath "*purified their hearts by faith;*" Acts 15:9 insomuch that everyone that hath Christ in him the hope of glory, "*purifies himself, even as He is pure.*" 1 John 3:3 He is purified from pride; for Christ was lowly of heart. He is pure from self-will or desire; for Christ desired only to do the will of his Father, and to finish his work. And he is pure from anger, in the common sense of the word; for Christ was meek and gentle, patient and long suffering. I say, in the common sense of the word; for all anger is not evil. We read of our Lord himself, (Mark 3:5) that he once "*looked round with anger.*" But with what kind of anger? The next word shows, *oullupoumenov*, being at the same time, "*grieved for the hardness of their hearts.*" So then he was angry at the sin, and

in the same moment grieved for the sinners; angry or displeased at the offense, but sorry for the offenders. With anger, yea, hatred, he looked upon the thing; with grief and love upon the persons. Go, thou that art perfect, and do likewise. Be thus angry, and thou sinnest not; feeling a displacency at every offense against God, but only love and tender compassion to the offender.

Thus doth Jesus “save his people from their sins.” And not only from outward sins, but also from the sins of their hearts; from evil thoughts, and from evil tempers. – “True,” say some, “we shall thus be saved from our sins, but not till death; not in this world.” But how are we to reconcile this with the express word of St. John? – *“Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment. Because as he is, so are we in this world.”* The Apostle here, beyond all contradiction, speaks of himself and other living Christians, of whom (as though he had foreseen this very evasion, and set himself to overturn it from the foundation) he flatly affirms, that not only at or after death, but in this world, they are as their Master. (1 John 4:17.)

Exactly agreeable to this are his words in the first chapter of this Epistle, (verse 5, etc.) *“God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we walk in the light, – we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”* And again: *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* Now, it is evident, the Apostle here also speaks of a deliverance wrought in this world. For he saith not, the blood of Christ will cleanse at the hour of death, or in the day of judgment, but, it “cleanses,” at the time present, “us,” living Christians, “from all sin.” And it is equally evident, that if any sin remain, we are not cleansed from all sin. If any unrighteousness remain in the soul, it is not cleansed from all unrighteousness. Neither let any sinner; against his own soul say, that this relates to justification only, or the cleansing us from the guilt of sin; First, because this is confounding together what the Apostle clearly distinguishes, who mentions first, to forgive us our sins, and then to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Secondly, because this is

asserting justification by works, in the strongest sense possible; it is making all inward as well as outward holiness necessarily previous to justification. For if the cleansing here spoken of is no other than the cleansing us from the guilt of sin, then we are not cleansed from guilt, that is, are not justified, unless on condition of *“walking in the light, as he is in the light.”* It remains, then, that Christians are saved in this world from all sin, from all unrighteousness; that they are now in such a sense perfect, as not to commit sins [This is a good point: we are perfect in that we are freed so we do not have to sin anymore. This does not, however, mean or suggest that we can't fall anymore, and when the perfect do fall they have an ongoing purifying advocate if they are faithful to recognize, confess and repent of that transgression, sin or imperfection. If they do not confess and repent they will remain imperfect. ed. com.] and to be freed from evil thoughts and evil tempers.

Thus hath the Lord fulfilled the things he spake by his holy Prophets, which have been since the world began; – by Moses in particular, saying, (Deuteronomy 30:6) I *“will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul;”* – by David, crying out, *“Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me;”* Ps 51:10– and most remarkably by Ezekiel, in those words: *“Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: From all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; – and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. – Ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleanness. – Thus saith the Lord God, In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities, – the Heathen shall know that I the Lord build the ruined places; – I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it.”* Ezekiel 36:25 etc.

“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved,” both in the Law and in the prophets, and having the prophetic word confirmed unto us in the Gospel, by our blessed Lord and his Apostles; *“let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in*

the fear of God.” 2 Cor 7:1 “Let us fear, lest” so many “promises being made us of entering into his rest,” which he that hath entered into, has ceased from his own works, “any of us should come short of it.” Heb 4:1 ” This one thing let us do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, let us press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus;” Phil 3:13-14 crying unto him day and night, till we also are “delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God!” Romans 8:21

86. Always Seek The TRUTH

A Christian's Duty

by T Myers Smith

On July 4th when we Americans celebrate independence from European domination and the iron grip of British oppression, politicians and educators always seize the opportunity to speak of the things which have made our country a powerhouse among nations. Not least of the “virtues” that are touted is the need for the people to have a sense of duty and the necessity of protecting our hard won privileges.

Amid the colorful displays, the band concerts, and the lighting of the sky with majestic fireworks, the contemporary fathers will make speeches about duty and the protecting of these precious privileges that were won on various battlefields, both domestic and foreign, by the courage and blood of our forefathers. It was their sense of duty that often gave them the wherewithal to risk their lives for neighbor and community. It is a sense of duty and the full allegiance to this obligation that makes any culture or civilization great. History teaches us that a people void of a sense of duty and respect for the general people are also unacquainted with communal and civil discipline. As a natural result they are dominated by some outside force, nation or people that is duty bound, committed, focused, and disciplined. When sense of duty begins to erode, and people only look to their own welfare, then that body which was made strong by commitment to its principles will surely begin a rapid decline into disaster, even oblivion. History is our witness to this “natural law” of societies. It has been the pattern followed by the rise and fall of the world's empires and her great social, ideological and political movements. This principle also holds true in spiritual matters, and particularly is reflected in both the condition of the individual Christian believer and the Church at large. When there

is an erosion of a sense of duty to others and a discarding of the privileges that were won by the shed blood of its courageous “forefather” (Jesus) then her strength is sapped and she will surely become dominated by some other outside force. Those forces that wait to dominate Christians lurk at the gate just as sure as the Vandals and the Goths lurked outside the city limits of Rome waiting to bring her to her knees. Just as certain as the Nazis skirted the heavy French defenses and easily overran Paris in 1940. It is a work of ravishment, once inside it carries weakness and cowardice and brother betraying brother, and inglorious death. They chip away at a people’s heart, these monsters of neglect, they feed upon the soul until it is made to fall away from the backbone of their original purpose and principle. Their faith becomes confused, their faith atrophies then disappears, any spiritual mettle they had is gone. So God brings judgment on them, just as it happened with Israel.

The Truth Perishes

The enemies that wait at our doorstep are not only sin but those creeping serpents of humanism, ecumenism and false religion that turn lies into the truth and suggest that God’s truth is a relative thing subject to our discretion and our cultural manners. Like enemies waiting at the gate, the World and the Devil seek to dominate every true believer they can get their hands on. If they can badger or deceive the believer into forgoing their duty to respectfully and obsessively seek the truth then they will be able to dominate them. The World says, “You aren’t loving if you insist on and speak the truth.” But it is the duty, as well as the blessed privilege, that was won by the blood of Jesus at Calvary, of every Christian to pursue and seek the truth. Why else would Proverbs 23:23 say, “*Buy the Truth and sell it not.*” Every Christian is duty bound to relentlessly and aggressively pursue the truth and to just as aggressively hold on to that truth.

The Truth, however, is not what the World believes it to be. The Truth is not a set of principles, an ideology, or adherence to some system. It is not what a brilliant man may say or something which the eyes can attest. The Truth to a Christian is known and it is not debatable. The Truth is Christ. When we say we seek the truth and reverence the Truth, we are actually saying we seek Jesus. We seek His opinion, His assessment, His direction, His call to action, His advice to passively withdraw, His counsel, His desire, His hope and not ours, and His welfare. When he said, *"Ye must be born-again"* John 3:7, we know that is a fact that is irrefutable. Because Jesus is the Truth and He cannot lie. When he said, *"All others that came before me were robbers and thieves"* John 10:8 we know that is an absolute fact, inarguable, immutable. He declared *"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."* Matt 7:13-15 We know that He is the only way by which a person can be saved.

Once a church, a Christian movement, a denomination, a leading Evangelist, or an individual born-again believer abandons their duty to seek and follow the truth in favor of making this a more palatable place for Christians to live, or because they will be rejected or shut off by the world, or they might look bad, they are being deceived and well on the road to being dominated by a "foreign power", that road that is broad and well-traveled and leads directly to Hell.

This is one of the major reasons why we have objected to any leader in the Church who suggests that duty to truth is less important than living peaceably with everyone and mollifying their fears. We have nothing personal against these men or their ministries, but we do take it seriously because of the harm it does to true believers. Without a sense of duty to follow after the truth we will be dominated by some other force than the Spirit of Jesus Christ. We are duty bound to refute and resist the selling of the

truth for any kind of gain. Does God do this? Has he ever dishonored the Truth or ignored it just to placate man's indignation about the truth?

The truth is highly offensive to the unsaved soul. We are told we are a sweet smell to God but to the godless, we have the stench of death. The truth is in opposition to the World, Humanism, False Religion or unrepentant Man. The Lord warned His disciples, *"Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake."* Matt 10:22 At the Last Supper he told them, *"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."* John 15:18-19

The religions of Mohammed, Buddha and Hindi are rightly called world religions. They do not confirm nor regard the Divinity of Jesus Christ as the ONLY begotten Son of God. They do not acknowledge that His shed blood on the cross, and only His shed blood on the cross, can save man. They spread the deception of the serpent that says there are many ways to come to God. They believe in reincarnation and salvation through good works and not by faith through the mercy of God. Any backpedaling from the truth of Jesus as the only Savior of Man is a denial of the entire gospel and a shirking of the duty to truth that makes a believer strong in Christ. Fudging on the truth simply will not do, even if we are doing it to have "fellowship" with all religions and leaders that might add to our power and importance.

Did Christ ever do that? Would He have said, "Yeah Caesar and the gods of Rome can help to save you too", just to get people to listen to Him? No. Of course not. Don't be ridiculous. Then how can a Christian do it?

We see the morals and ethics of our youth in decay. Students are capable of gunning down classmates and teachers without the slightest remorse. Satanic worship is on the rise among the younger generation of narcissistic self-worshippers. Our nation falters because the generations that are ascending to power and position are all too committed to self-gratification rather than honest civil

service. If you can get away with it then it must be OK. Our national sense of duty has been exchanged by an expectation that we should be served rather than serve others. Christians of every stripe, across this land, believe that God is their errand-boy or Satan Claus who came down and died on the cross just to supply their worldly needs and level out the roller-coaster ride of life to make it safe and amusing. During the holiday of the fourth of July there will be plenty of flag waving, at Christmas plenty of gift-giving, on Memorial Day plenty of remembering of heroes. Our Politicians make political hay and will insist on looking at the bright side of things. Rather than taking a hard look at the truth they will be looking hard for votes. Pastors and evangelists will tickle the ears of their congregants in search of votes and larger revenues. They will be seeking the safe ground, being careful to be politically correct, looking anxiously for nodding heads, smiling faces, approving amens and hallelujahs. While they lament the condition of our country and the direction in which she is heading, they will try to assure us that everything is going to be all right and that men ought to love one another and not stir up a fuss about their religion.

The world will do what it will do. It will continue to fight against Christ and everything that the cross of Calvary has done for men. Christ taught us to let the World do its thing. The World will not be converted. This is why Jesus, just before going to the cross, said, *"Father... I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine."* John 17:9 This is why we are taught, *"know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."* James 4:4 And, *"what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?"* 2 Cor 6:15 We are chided to *"come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."* 2 Cor 6:17

It is our Christian duty to defend, honor and preserve the Truth that Christ purchased for us with His very own blood. It is this

blood and only this blood that can wash us clean and make our sins, though they be as scarlet, white as snow. Mohammed, Buddha, and others cannot wash my sins away by anything they ever did or claimed. Only the Son of God, Jesus Christ, did this for me. How can we fudge on this? How can we give away such a gift of love? Though there are evangelists who sadly take this gift and sell it we shall be wise students of Proverbs. Every day is Independence Day for the Christian if they take serious vigil and maintain their freedom. For we are told we can know the truth and that it will set us free indeed. A wise Christian will be a fanatic about the Truth, take hold of the Truth, which was purchased for us by Jesus, and the wise Christian will sell it not, not at any price!

87. Our Cross Means Denying Self

Sacrificing Self on the Wheel of Perfection

by T Myers Smith

The gospels are replete with great challenges from Christ to His followers. There is no doubt that a person could not possibly incorporate or experience all of them in this life. We can only be obedient to His voice as we hear it spoken in our heart by the agent of Christ's word, the gentle Holy Ghost. This is all God requires of us, hearing and obeying. It is as the Preacher says in Ecclesiastes: it is "*the whole duty of man*".

Herein lies real perfection. We put on the 'breastplate of righteousness' which protects our spiritual vitals against the mortal wounds that Satan and his agent called sin seek to inflict upon all people, especially the 'righteous' saint. Like the knights of old, the white and pure linen of pure righteousness soothes the soul of the warrior of Christ cushioning underneath the protective hard shell of the breastplate and armor of God. The challenges of fighting the good fight of faith, though vital to the dynamic Christian life and the convictions of a higher spiritual condition and manner, are often laid waste by an imbalanced encumbrance of the great commission to preach the gospel, as well as the two greater spiritual necessities – water baptism and communion with Christ and His body.

Each of Christ's challenges presented in His Word should be met with reverence and determination to faithfully be performed. Each imperative should carry the weight and authority of any directive or challenge given by a Lord and Master to a disciple. Getting the Gospel 'in' must precede getting the gospel 'out'. The disciple will not fall prey to the errant ideal of preaching the gospel without having it taken hold of the preacher first. All too many churches

and denominations have no regard for this wise and prudent truth about witnessing for Christ. If the armor of God and the breastplate of righteousness inadvertently prohibit the gospel from being able to penetrate a soldier's heart it is an utter disaster. If the armor ward's off the nutrients and strength needed by the warrior then the soldier may die of malnutrition. The so-called 'manna of heaven', which is Christ Himself, must be what sustains the spirit in this earthly body.

Far from being least among the challenges of faith is Christ's plea that we should seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness, then everything else is added upon this foundation. We must then trust God that all our needs will consequently be supplied in the wake of virtuous abiding in the kingdom through living in Christ. Matt 6:33 In other words, get the beam out of your own eye brothers and sisters before worrying about the speck in the vision of others.

Attached to this challenge is the challenge of seeking God's righteousness and forsaking our own ideas of justice and goodness, loyalty and correct beliefs. We must be willing to cast things away to make room for new and worthy beliefs, unless we remain running in circles, racing round and round in the dark on the false track of self-righteousness holding on to deceptions that we have blindly inherited. Though seeking the kingdom of God first is a challenge shunned by the majority of Christians who are slothful and weak in faith, it is a calling that has a rich reward and wonderful promises of liberty to the diligently faithful. No one should blindly put their spiritual life in the hands of the teachers and pastors and priests of the churches. Everyone is responsible for their own faith, for their own soul's relationship with God and we shall never be able to blame someone else, pastor or no, for our ignorance or inappropriate faith.

Hope for deliverance from all of the weighty concerns of this life become a daily mark of the soldier in Christ. The born-again believer must take this seriously to the point of increasing his or her faith for attaining a better working knowledge of the righteousness that pleases God. Taming the tongue becomes a life-long vigil, for an

unbridled tongue causes endless and needless conflagrations that distract the warrior of Christ from the real battles of the Lord. The battles are spiritual and to know where the battle is we must abide in His word at all times. The soldier in Christ is instructed that the kingdom of God is *“not meat and drink but, righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.”* Rom 14:17 To this credo of Scripture, a disciple should submit his or her faith and their warrior will.

WHAT SEEK YE?

On a bright, sunny day nearly two thousand years ago, at the dawn of the age of grace, two men stood side by side in the wilderness of Galilee listening to a prophet preach about the coming of the kingdom of God. The prophet, named John the Baptist, had labored untiringly for many years, eating only locusts and wild honey, preaching to the poor, rebuking the religious hypocrites of his country, and preparing the way for the coming Christ. Then, suddenly, the moment the prophet had anticipated came. When John first laid eyes on Jesus he at once declared Him to be the long awaited Messiah. *“Behold the Lamb of God!”* John 1:29 was his bold and exciting announcement. Instantly, John’s two disciples turned from him and began to follow Jesus. Without saying a word they followed Jesus along the dusty road, wondering who or what He could possibly be, until unexpectedly Jesus turned to them and startled them with this simple but hard-hitting question: WHAT SEEK YE?

The incident cited above comes from the Gospel of John 1:35-38. As stinging a question as ever there was, so it remains one to this day for anyone who would consider following Jesus Christ. If Jesus turned to you suddenly right now and asked, “What seek ye?” how would you answer Him?

For a stranger to ask such a blunt question, as Jesus did to the two men, may at first seem rude or forward, but it is a question that God

has a right to ask any person, at any time, who shows an interest in following Him. What are you after? What do you want? No matter who we are, whether we are Christian or Atheist, we are all looking for something. We are all spurred on to action by certain motives and inner drives that are aimed at a desired end. Christ wants to know what our motives are for following Him and He wants us also to know what our real motives are. He wants us to be honest with ourselves about what we are actually seeking, so we can understand what the driving force in our life actually is. Each day, every hour, we seek to achieve an end to our goal. Whether we know it or not we are all after something, it may be as simple as a bed upon which to lay our weary head or the best sandwich we can find for lunch. It may be something as mundane as a new job, or as carnal as a good-looking spouse. Christ hopes we are seeking after spiritual riches: like peace and holiness and a new and better life in God. But one thing is sure -everybody is looking for something, everybody is seeking after some desired result, seeking a new acquisition. Most people are seeking a myriad of things all at once. What we seek after compels us to action, in a way it controls our behavior. This is why Jesus asked these two followers bluntly, "What seek ye?" He wanted to know, and wanted them to know, that what ye seek after is a huge determining factor in our behavior, whether we will be holy or unholy, whether we will act and be righteous or unrighteous.

Jesus declared two things that should be sought after, first and foremost, by anyone who would want to be an intimate disciple of His: God's kingdom and God's righteousness. (Matt. 6.33) We invite the Born-Again Christian to search their immortal soul in the light of Scripture to see if one of the things they are pursuing in Christ is true Christian righteousness. We urge readers to ask themselves, "If Jesus had turned to me this morning and asked, 'What seek Ye?' what would I have been able to answer? Were the primary things you sought today God's kingdom and His righteousness? Or was it low on the list, or not there at all? Perhaps you're not even sure what is meant by HIS righteousness. You may say, "Why not just plain old righteousness and leave it at that." The following tries to answer this

question and give direction to those who are seeking after God's righteousness.

Seek Ye First The Kingdom of God

By rights, the Born-Again Christian ought to be a sincere follower of Christ. But some follow at such a great distance behind Him that Jesus has to yell at the top of his lungs just so they can hear Him. Others follow here and there as it suits their purpose, swerving off the path into the woods or taking illicit excursions to unseemly places. Some unwise servants like to get ahead of Him and are constantly trying to lead Him, which is really ridiculous for a person claiming to be a follower of someone. But then there are those faithful servants who follow so closely that they are walking in His footsteps one step behind, these people are so close they can hold His hand and hear His most quiet and intimate whispers. Regardless of your distance, whether you need to get closer and stop fooling around, or whether you are close enough to touch the hem of His garment and look into His eyes, the big question is: Did you seek God's righteousness or your own today?

THE ARTICLE'S TEXT IS FROM MATTHEW 6:24-34

24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are you not much better than they?

27 Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his

stature?

28 *And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:*

29 *And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.*

30 *Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?*

31 *Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?*

32 *(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.*

33 *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

34 *Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."*

While preaching to the multitude Jesus taught that we cannot serve two masters. He used for His example, God and money, for we will love one and despise (or forget) the other. He warned potential believers that food, drink, raiment and the general provisions of life were what unbelievers continually sought after, and generally, this is what they pursued with their whole heart. He hoped to encourage them to trust God enough so they could believe their Father in heaven would provide those things for them. They only needed to trust and believe in Him. It was then that Christ issued His famous challenge of faith to His disciples: "*See ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.*" Matt 6:33 And what a challenge of faith it is.

Our first impression may be that Jesus was advising His disciples to have two primary pursuits in their spiritual lives: His kingdom and His righteousness. But Christ coupled these two challenges of faith together because they are *sine qua non*, for one cannot have reality in action and faith without the other also being vibrant and active. He wants His Church to understand that finding the

kingdom and having God's righteousness are indivisible, inseparable and indispensable to one another. They must be held in tandem. It is paramount that the born-again Christian who aspires to the highest faith (that which we call the Philadelphia Faith) realize that finding true righteousness is the key that unlocks the door to the blessed realm of the Kingdom of God. Christ is the one who bound seeking the kingdom of God together with seeking GOD'S righteousness, because no one can attain "citizenship", with all its spiritual privileges, in the kingdom without casting off their own righteousness and putting on the righteousness that is of God by walking in the Spirit. This is why Christ did not simply tell us to seek righteousness and leave it at that. No Christian may live well if they try to enter the kingdom of God by virtue of their own righteousness.

Christ Is Our Righteousness

We enter by faith into Christ's righteousness which His innocent death on the cross provided the way. *"In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."* This is one of the titles which Jesus the Son of God holds – The Lord our Righteousness. He is the needed substitute for our unrighteous ways. He has bought our entrance into God's kingdom. *"For with the heart man believes unto righteousness"* Rom 10:10 The prophet Isaiah was clear about our own lack of righteousness when he said, *"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."* Isa 64:6 We can only enter into the kingdom by putting on the righteousness of Christ, by being covered in His shed blood which gives us forgiveness of sin. But the reason Christ has made a point of noting a difference between plain righteousness and God's righteousness is that there are two very different forms

of righteousness that can be aspired to and understood in the Christian life: one is God's righteousness; the other is our own self-righteousness. We cannot enter the kingdom by our own righteousness. The Galatians, for example, had slipped into a form of self-righteousness by trusting in the works of the law rather than trusting God by faith. Paul asked, "Who has bewitched you?" Gal 3:1 God's righteousness is gained by faith through reliance on and yielding to God. Our righteousness is often sought after by following some form of Christian legalism or trusting in our own personal ability to make right judgments or leaning on our own sense of goodness. Either one is a form of self-righteousness. Regardless of the brand of self-righteousness we choose, it is fatal to the quest of seeking the kingdom of God.

We have clear examples and precedents for repentance from our own righteousness set in Scripture. Job stands as an eternal example for the Christian showing us that there are two types of righteousness which a man can seek after—his own or God's. The Biblical standard of the quintessential problem for universal man, Job and his sin of self-righteousness, stand as common to all people. We mistakenly think of ourselves as being right and justified in our judgments and that we have seated within us a sound sense of justice and what is good. We inherently believe we know how the world should work and that God not only should, but will, act according to our idea of fairness and goodness. Oh sure, we mouth the Scripture that God's ways are not our ways and that as the heaven is higher than the earth so His thoughts are higher than our thoughts and this we usually apply to some other person's struggle or trial, but personally we remain inclined to impose our ways and thoughts on God while we inwardly question His way of running the world, sometimes even doubting His method or tactics for bringing people to salvation. We may wonder how He can let children in Bosnia die or how He can permit a tornado in Tennessee to destroy lives and property. When we silently question these things and many more besides, we are actually saying in our hearts that we know better than God, we are declaring in our hearts that we are

more righteous than He. We are showing that we are like Job. And after all, is it not stated clearly in the Bible that “*with the heart man believeth unto righteousness*”? Rom 10:10 If we believe in our heart that God is unrighteous in any of His ways or that we are more righteous, that in certain matters we could do a more fair and just job at running things, then is there any reason for us to believe that we have put on the righteousness of God? If we are truly seeking the kingdom of God we will allow it, not only to inhabit our spirits on Sunday, so to speak, but we will allow it to invade every part of our thoughts and mind. We will make room for God’s judgments and His righteousness. Did not Jesus say; “*The kingdom of God is within us*.” Luke 17:21 We are taught by the Bible that the kingdom of God is not outside in things we can eat and drink and touch and smell, but it is the fruits of the Spirit of the living God that take root and grow inside our heart and mind. “*The kingdom of God is not in meat and drink, but in righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost*.” Rom 14:17

Job, too, believed that he was righteous, even more righteous than God, and in spite of his spiritual folly God mercifully judged Job and saved him from the fate of all self-righteous people: eternity in the pit of the lake of Hell fire. How often have men thought, as Job did, that they knew better how to dispense justice and mercy than God Himself? How often do we think we are right and good when we have no notion of what God’s will is in a given matter?

James tells us that “*the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God*”. Jas 1:20 Man, by himself, cannot bring about righteousness. The epistle to the Romans schools us that, “*There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one*”. Rom 3:10-12 Jesus drove this hard-to-be-believed point home in this startling exchange with a young man: “*...when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one,*

that is, God.” Mark 10:17-18 Jesus was not saying He, Himself, was not good (because He even then counted Himself equal with God, and we know that Jesus was without sin and is perfectly good), but He was emphatically declaring that no human man is inherently good. The prophet Jeremiah put it this way: *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”* Jer 17:9

The point is: it is not enough for the disciple of Christ to want righteousness; we must diligently seek HIS righteousness if we hope to stand righteous in the presence of God. We must trust and believe that, no matter how things look, God’s ways and actions are perfect and righteous altogether. *“The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.”* Ps 19:9

All true righteousness begins by accepting the fact that we must serve somebody. No one can serve himself and the kingdom of God, any more than one can serve money and God at the same time. True righteousness begins when we make a decision to seek and do God’s will rather than our own. This is why Jesus spoke as He did, saying, *“Who is my mother? And who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.”* Matt 12:48-50 Seeking God’s righteousness means, then, that we seek the will of God and not our own. For this we must begin by trusting Him implicitly. We must lay aside our righteous notions and the way we think the world should operate. We must step down for the judgment seat which we occupy in our own deep-rooted ideas of righteousness. We are not the righteous judge, but God is. The disciple of Christ is freed from the law, free to love, and, when he has decided to trust in God’s righteousness, he is also free from the misguided belief that he is somehow responsible for being judge and jury of mankind. Forgetting our miserable and limited sense of right and justice, and letting Him show us His true ways through His Word and by the guidance of the Holy Ghost is the only way to seek

His righteousness. This is the only way we can approach Him with confidence knowing we are pleasing to Him.

Ultimately, we can then *“draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.”* Heb 10:22

88. The Triad Circle of Perfection

The Way of The Bride

T Myers Smith

The great account of the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31 reports in a span of 31 verses no less than 44 spiritual attributes she does in regard to her husband Jesus. All are a credit to a perfect wife. She has a full array of praiseworthy qualities indicative of those who have the greatest love in their hearts for Christ. They who have the greatest cause to love are they who are forgiven much. They are most likely to be the people who will fulfill the first and greatest commandment: i.e. that we love God with our whole being, body, soul and spirit. How many verses of the Bible, Old and New Testament declare this highest and most significant and fundamental of all spiritual directives. Peruse just a handful of them and ponder one of the great duties of every man or woman ever born.

Matthew 22:37 – “Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt LOVE THE LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.”

Mark 12:30 – “And thou shalt LOVE THE LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.”

Luke 10:27 – “And he answering said, Thou shalt LOVE THE LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.”

Deuteronomy 6:5 – “And thou shalt LOVE THE LORD thy

God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.”

Deuteronomy 11:1 – *“Therefore, thou shalt LOVE THE LORD thy God, and keep his charge, and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments, alway.”*

Deuteronomy 11:13 – *“And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to LOVE THE LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.”*

Deuteronomy 11:22 – *“For if ye shall diligently keep all these commandments which I command you, to do them, to LOVE THE LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, and to cleave unto him;”*

Deuteronomy 13:3 – *“Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye LOVE THE LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.”*

Deuteronomy 19:9 – *“If thou shalt keep all these commandments to do them, which I command thee this day, to LOVE THE LORD thy God, and to walk ever in his ways; then shalt thou add three cities more for thee, beside these three:”*

Deuteronomy 30:6 – *“And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to LOVE THE LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.”*

Deuteronomy 30:16 – *“In that I command thee this day to LOVE THE LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it.”*

Deuteronomy 30:20 – *“That thou mayest LOVE THE LORD thy God, [and] that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he [is] thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD*

sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them."

Joshua 22:5 – "But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the LORD charged you, to LOVE THE LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul."

Joshua 23:11 – "Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye LOVE THE LORD your God."

When God's people moved into the Promised Land to possess it He gave them this stern advice when He reiterated this command from the law:

"But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the LORD charged you, to LOVE THE LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul." Joshua 22:5

God's expectations for His people was not only to love Him wholeheartedly and completely, but that a person should walk in all His ways (walk in the Spirit) to cleave to Him like a dutiful wife, and to serve Him with all (not part) of their heart and soul. This condition in the law was what they were to diligently heed above all else. If they achieved this perfection there would be blessing in abundance. If they failed to heed the call to love God there would be curses and disaster. This either-or edict showed both the gravity and the profound nature of the command to love. There was no second option or discussion of the matter, as we so-called evangelicals love to debate.

Keeping the law, in general, has proved impossible for Jews and Gentiles, let alone this greatest of all laws, which immediately proved impossible for corruptible man to walk in successfully. The law is perfect, right and holy, of this we can all be sure, but man

without walking in the abiding love of God by the Spirit, frustrates the Law and makes it impotent. Not that it is weak or imperfect, but our sinfulness made it weak and unable to convert the heart. The shame is on us, not on the Law of Moses and the Ten Commandments, for they are right and healthy. The husband of the Bride, even Christ, is the provider of the solution for man's unsolvable dilemma, for at His direction the Holy Spirit is sent to us to lead us into a walk of deliverance, freedom and Truth. Paul explained it to us in this way:

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Rom. 8:1-4

It is our flesh that made the perfect Law impotent and unable to make us perfect. Only Christ's love (activated by His death and resurrection) and allowed to live in us and we then, reciprocating His love back toward Him, which permits us into a perpetual life of 'true life-action' which amounts to the existence of the perfect and virtuous woman in reality and not mere religious idealism. God declared in the Law that it was His undying objective to have this kind of actual reciprocating vital love instilled into the individual person so that they could become worthy of 'marriage' to Him forever. It seems true, as Jesus said, the more we realize how much we are forgiven, the more we can find it in our heart to reciprocate His love with fervent spiritual passion.

In our desire to pursue this kind of love for God in our own heart, those who experience the love of Christ first and foremost are able to love God with a passionate zeal more so than those who think

they have little or no need to be forgiven for their offenses against God or man. Jesus pointed this out to Simon the Pharisee in the famous parable about the debtors. This was immediately after Mary Magdalene had anointed his feet with expensive perfume, showing her great love for her Master. One may recall how the parable goes. There were two debtors, one owed 50 dollars and one owed 500 dollars, but both debts were forgiven. Jesus asked Simon, "Who will love most?" Simon correctly answered the one who was forgiven most. Then Jesus declared this fact about loving God: *"Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are FORGIVEN; for she loved much: but to whom little is FORGIVEN, the same loveth little."* Luke 7:47

The only way to achieve the perfection of the virtuous wife is to enter into it, be immersed in it by the Spirit. This 'perfection' is the call of the last days just before His appearing in the clouds according to His promise. *"Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous one, shall give me in that day, but not only to me but also to all those that love His appearing."* 2 Tim. 4:8 We say this is the crown of the Bride, the one who will sit upon the throne of Christ judging the nations and dispensing the love of her fair and mighty King. Rev. 3:21 By loving Christ (our husband) *"with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength with all our heart"* Mark 12:30 we have accomplished the first of all Christian goals.

As the widow who gave her last penny into the temple coffers, we have given Him all our living. It is the perfect woman, what is first called the beloved one, a virtuous woman, the virgin and chaste espoused wife, and finally in Revelation, the Bride, who realizes with passionate joy how much Christ has forgiven the sins of the lost souls.

The one and only gateway to the perfection the Bride seeks is by loving Christ with her whole heart, soul, mind and all thy strength (giving everything, body, mind, intellect, pride, ambition, reputation, power, spirit) and without restriction, lays her life before Him in complete trust. Only then can she be able to serve God as described

in the perfect service as the virtuous wife, which she renders willingly and lovingly to her perfect Husband, Jesus Christ. Only by giving her heart to Him can she fulfill the command to love. This is a critical point whereupon we must now stop and take notice. It will be helpful for us to make a closer more detailed examination of how love is able to carve out an exclusive, singular passageway through our hearts, so that we may enter into the hallowed and ideal realm of God's spiritual perfection...

Part II

There is a Tri-Fold Perfection for Three Spheres of Our Spiritual Life

The following teaching is devised to lend understanding for the very real, but acutely ethereal, perfection which can be realized by any soul hoping to be reckoned as Christ's Bride "in-waiting". This is possible when love's power exists in us in a dynamically reciprocating way so that we are able to return our love to Him.

Consider that there are three separate identifiable spiritual realms within the believer. Within each one of these three realms exists a three-tiered application of our faith. In turn, within each of these three tiers within the three realms, exist three expressive ways by which our love for Christ find substance and evidence of reality. If this triad of love is proven to actively exist within a believer, which is the evidence of our reciprocating love for Christ, the Father will reckon us perfectly in love with His Son, which is to say, perfect in His eyes. If this be the case, what other opinion could possibly count as to our being accounted worthy? Jesus suggested we be wise and not fear what men can do to us, but fear only what God's opinion about a matter is, and what He can do.

This triad of perfection cannot be understood (or actualized in the believer) through religious devotions or by striving and straining to do right by our own works, no matter how pious they seem

to us or other people. Only by Christ's love-power working in us can perfection of love be achieved in us by faith. Only through and by faith. These triads of perfection are the primary works of faith for and about love. This is the applied meaning from the Epistle of James 2:26 where it says, "*Faith without works is dead.*" Just do not forget, that our works are to be works of faith (in God's power), and not works of the flesh, our strength, or our intellect. Our works do not require faith; they only require our will, our ingenuity, our arm, our muscle, our connivance. God is never impressed with these because they fall short of that designated perfection which He has willed that we should devote our faith. If one does not understand this they cannot hope to understand 'perfection'. One must pray for understanding with a believing heart, then by faith one can receive the truth of these triads of perfection of Brideship. They can help us to discern how we are to obtain the 'unobtainable' perfection which is characterized in the virtuous wife and the other portraits and parables of Brideship woven throughout Scripture. None of these reports on the three divisions of perfection ought to be taken as ways to build our own righteousness. Each of these should be used as more of a monitor in us to detect if love's power, nurtured by the Spirit, is growing into perfect faith.

God will accomplish Believing, Walking, Dying For Us

First, as depicted in the graphic above, it can be said that there is a circle of perfection. Each of the three basic elements of faith interacting at all times with each other in an endless cycle. Actively believing in redemption and ultimate perfection, which is to be realized for the Bride in her deliverance by the promised Rapture is one of the three elements. This is part of the triad of faith, among the three essential ingredients which prove to our own heart that we are on track for a fruitful and perfection of faith. Walking in

the Spirit is another essential. This requires an obedience and yieldedness of faith in the Holy Ghost that of daily, faithful rigors.

The other essential is termed by Jesus as, picking up our cross daily, denying self and following after Him. Jesus and the Holy Ghost set the pace, direct the path, call the shots, and hear the prayers of those who are 'perfect' with special interest and delight. Those who are believing in His delivering imminence of the Rapture, who are also walking in the Spirit, while uniformly dying to self daily are living in the homogeneity of the circle of perfection, experiencing by faith the life of the Bride-in-waiting.

Our Part of Perfection: Desiring, Asking, Doing

God will empower us to become different, successful in escaping this homogenized life that demands of us that we be regular and average, that our faith follow the herd mentality of sterilized Christianity, by giving us gifts of the Spirit, adding to our faith such things as knowledge with genuine living circumstances helpful to teaching us about real love of God, our fellow Man and all of God's creation. The Lord can get us in touch with some place or person to aid us in our 'journey to Brideship'. We must enter and stay with it, by our own free will, through the learning pains and trials. We must persevere, though we still live in a cold, harsh world surrounded by fearful circumstances and false friends and brethren.

Therefore, the triad of perfect life of love is: first, *Desiring*, second, *Asking*, and third, *Doing*. Each hinges on our will to have them accomplished by God in us. The Lord, through comfort, exhortation, spiritual inspiration and epiphanies given by the Holy Ghost, build these things and ingrain them in our core being, so that what is wholly supernatural and godly becomes natural, though not automatic reflex, but an automatic compulsion the way greetings, gestures and proper responses become automatic to a civilized human being. But we must provide the courage to separate

ourselves, to suffer affliction in the cause of Christ's love and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Believing, walking and 'dying' to self – these essentials can never come to life in us by complacency neither can they come about by presumptive faith in our own good nature, nor by demanding that God do it for us.

We must desire spiritual righteousness and goodness if we are to find it. When we desire it then we come to the conclusion that we must ask God to tailor our lives so that we can ask Him to make our lives suited for a spiritual way, then we will have the courage to stand up, and do it. We must desire, then we will ask, then we will hear the answer to our prayer and have faith to do the perfect works of love. Jesus said to be perfect even as our Father in heaven is perfect. He would not have told us to reach for this goal if it were not possible.

Part III

Perfection's Promise Is For: Today, Tomorrow and Forever

The third of our triad of perfection is its reality in time and space. There are three separate realms of reality in which we live. God is not subject to time and space. This we know intuitively and by the Scriptures. It is written, that "*by Him all things consist.*" Col 1:17 He is the creator of all things including the universe as we know it and He has constructed it for His good pleasure. Some things He has revealed, but as the Scripture says, the "*hidden things belong to God.*" But when we live in the Spirit (the Spirit not being subject to time and space) we, too, no longer are confined to the simple realms of this world and the physical laws of the structures of this universe. The sought after perfection of love, if realized in truth, is therefore not confined, it too is everywhere alive through Christ and the Holy Ghost. It is today, tomorrow and forever. Just as Jesus is "the same yesterday, today and forever".

Perfect Today

First off, our perfection is for today, this very hour. What is meant by this is that it is to be alive, real and effective in the moment. I do not mean in a moment of time, but in a moment, an act. It is homogenized perfectly when it occurs through obedience to the Holy Ghost, accompanied by denying self and bolstered by the humble confidence of believing God. There is nothing futuristic about this action in the moment, in the sense that we shall someday be perfect, or I will do perfection tomorrow, or in the life to come. It is in the now, this moment, a moment not limited by time or excused by procrastination or apology. It is the vital love of Christ alive and operating on the world through His disciple. We can enjoy it in the here and now, not by our will power but by the power of His Word as it resounds in our heart and directs us to do God's Will. The perfecting saint must not live for tomorrow but in the moment trusting Christ by the Spirit to direct us in what is righteous. Obviously, we need the Spirit of God residing in us, actively having the final say in what we do and think.

Experiencing a challenging maintenance of an ongoing perfection of faith day to day, regularly and in the moments and circumstances of our life, the disciple can actually follow in the footsteps of Christ. This perfection is as a house that is cleaned perpetually and daily in a sound and perfect fashion, or as a machine needs to be maintained by preventative maintenance regularly if it is to operate efficiently; these are done in that day, in the present for present need. There is a perfection of the now, it is called for in the moment, it has to be spontaneous and it will be well done and correct. There is no law, no rules but they are the operation of the 'fruits of *The Spirit*'. As the Scripture declares: "*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*" Gal. 5:22-23

Perfect Tomorrow

Second, there is a realm of approvable perfection if we maintain faith for the hope of our calling, the way one rallies in energetic confidence for an inspirational cause. One gets ready for the rally and looks forward to tomorrow's opportunity that by believing and faith that it shall happen.

Perfect Forever

And thirdly, the believer is perfected in the unswerving and abiding knowledge that they will be ultimately and irrevocably perfected in the life to come and for all eternity.

This homogenous perfection of eternal existence is a testament to the power of the love of Christ. There are three who bear witness in heaven, three which bear witness on earth. Permit me to say there are at least three sets of triads which testify to love's perfect fruits in man, which can, by the strength and glory of Christ's sacrifice on the cross and His shed blood, testify sweetly to the love of God, so that a believer has it as a possibility one may be actually and miraculously perfected now, tomorrow and forever in eternity, and that by desiring, asking and doing, one can be schooled and trained to believe God, walk with the Spirit and deny self.

Part IV

The Ultimate Wife – She is Perfected

Admittedly, this is not the run of the mill believer. The person of Proverbs 31 is the 'perfect wife'. People object to this notion thinking that all believers are equal in the eyes of God, but this human notion

of fairness is nowhere born out in the Bible. Scripture shows all variety of faith and all degrees of pleasing God by people called by His name.

When pursuing the conduct of the ultimate wife we come to realize that this is not only the picture of a perfect wife, but it is a character portrait of the spirit of the Bride of Christ. Most times, if not at all times, this sketch of the Bride's makeup and spiritual constitution is grasped as a study in how one is to turn oneself into a perfect wife for an earthly husband and then, by projection of spirit, into a perfect minister and servant of Christ. Women it is seen, have a scriptural model, a role model, placed before them for the understanding of duty and calling toward her husband. Down through all the epochs of church history this has been the rendering of the perfect wife of Proverbs 31. Only in the apostolic age, with Peter, Paul and John and the other disciples and fellow-laborers in the newly born church, was this possibly looked upon with a more spiritual focus and insight, with a more true perspective having nothing to do with gender or marriage in this life.

Perfection does not come by works or through keeping the law. Paul spent his life, teaching, re-teaching, informing and testifying, urging and educating the churches as to the difference between living by the law which is death and failure, and living in the spirit which is life and glory. Much of the letters of his hand which became Holy Writ grind out this most fundamental change proclaimed in the transition from the Old Testament to the New Testament which applied to Jew and Gentile alike. The letter of the law kills, he wrote, the spirit is life and liberty. God taught this essential truth of salvation and perfection in one felled swoop when he gave the vision of clean and unclean things to Peter telling him not to call anything He said was clean, unclean. He can make us good, and even perfect, if we will submit like a good wife to our loving husband, Jesus. He has given to us all the means to make this possible. Man and woman are in the same boat on this critical issue of spiritual perfection. Earthly marriage is only a living similitude, an analogy of truth that all can understand. The ultimate marriage is with Christ

in heaven for all time. Note that Jesus told the legalists of his time, the Pharisees and Sadducees, that there is no marriage in heaven.

A small laundry list of these portraits and parables serves to help us see the wide-ranging theme of Brideship across the landscape of Scripture:

1. The 'Great' Mystery: Christ and the church: Ephesians 5
2. Adam: not good to be alone Genesis 3
3. The Song of Solomon The Book
4. The Virtuous Wife, Prov 31
5. Ezekiel 16 *God Divorces unfaithful wife*
6. The Book of Esther; *Chosen Bride of the King*
7. Book of Ruth; *From out of land of Unbelief*
8. Great Bride Roll of illustrious women: Sarah, Deborah, Hanna, Mary, M. Magdalene, Anna, (as well as, men: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; Moses, David, Joshua, Samson, Elijah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Simeon, the apostles, Paul) *et.al.*
9. Isaiah 62
10. Joel 2
11. Many parables of Jesus Matt 25, etc.
12. Philippians 3
13. The Sun-Clad Woman, Rev 12
14. The 144,000 of heavenly Mount Zion Rev 14;
15. The Bride, City from Heaven Rev 21

The epochs of the church are a bit different than the way they are told or are being realized by the typical church history gathered by such men as Eusebius, and early historians, or the scholars of the recent past, Renan, Gibbon, Schaff, Milman, Liemann and such. The epochs of church history we should be most interested in these last days are the ones which lifted the churches out of extreme ignorance (called apostasy), into which it had fallen in the so-called Dark Ages and Medieval Times when the church was dominated exclusively by the institution that lusted after the temporal power of the world and mortgaged its spiritual future in a bid to be ruler of

the world. The Epoch commonly called by historians, Reformation, began the uphill climb out of godless oblivion, but got only a few steps out of the deep and slippery hole of ignorance and delusional darkness. The period of Restoration, beginning in earnest around 1800, was an epoch of shining light in which the Holy Spirit revived His relationship with the Church to what it had once been in the beginning days of the apostolic churches. Christ was given a renewed reverence and whole-hearted attention.

As God had promised in his prophets, the things eaten away and seemingly lost forever, would be restored to the church. Men like the Wesley brothers, Jonathan Edwards, Edward Irving, Joseph Seiss, Arthur Bloomfield, Gordon Lindsay and an array of others were used by God to begin the long climb toward a new and glorious day – the day of the Bride, a day in which some believers are now living as they wait to meet their bridegroom on the day of their wedding, the Rapture...

Part V

As God is Perfect:

“He is the Rock, his work is PERFECT: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.” Deut. 32:4

Jesus said: “Be ye PERFECT, even as your Father which is in heaven is PERFECT.” Matt. 5:48

“The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is PERFECT shall be as his master.” Lk. 6:40

Any religion which calls itself Christian, and allows one of its members or patrons to acquire good standing while not paying heed to the urgency of loving God with their whole being, or living in substantial truth with proof of loving God substantially in their life, is no Christian religion at all. No matter what it declares, has

obtained in reputation, or whether it has a billion or two adherents. Before any objections, remember this, loving God with our whole heart and being is the very first commandment.

Declaring our religion as Christian is the only grounds which institutions, governments, nations, most all churches and every official census bureau considers as what makes a person or church Christian. Nevertheless, even the unanimous consent of the entire world does not make it so. If it is not paramount to you and you are not earnestly striving to love God with all your being: body, soul and spirit you are not living as a Christian and therefore that makes you not a Christian. We repeat, it is not deserving of being called Christian, neither should it be thought of, nor treated as such, if one is not willing to be in love with God act – being one of those who seek to love God according to the first command which God has issued, i.e. that we love Him with all our being.

The second most important commandment, as we are told by Jesus, is like the first. We should try the best we can to love our neighbors as ourselves. Any denomination known to Christianity that does not insist on these two primary pursuits, no matter how frustrating it may seem to obtain the summit of love's lofty heights, and no matter how many times we slip and fall on our ascent, is a slacker's religion. Every Christian teacher is obliged to more than teach, they are obliged to urge with vehemence of heart, no matter that we all seem so little when cast before love's halogenic light, is not worthy to be accepted or thought of as a true teacher, any institution that does not do this, is not worthy to be called Christian.

And so, the Bride of Christ will love in deed and not merely in word. Any man or woman who dares to call themselves Christian without caring to pursue the task of loving God wholeheartedly should not have their name etched upon a fellowship, church, or denomination's membership roll.

FURTHER –

We are compelled by truth to note that PERFECTION is often the OPPOSITE OF WHAT WE THINK it might or should be – Isaiah 42 and 43 are very important about antithetical ideas of perfection. Spiritual seeing requires that we admit we are blind; hearing that we are originally born deaf; spiritual health demands that we first recognize that we are ill and that we need desperately to have of sickness treated by the true physician.

Christ's actual Bride-in-waiting will have a different form of beauty than what is known in the world, a beauty not consistent with carnal ideas or fleshly opinions but it is a higher and truer beauty nonetheless. She will not be wise in worldly ways, not be strong in fleshly might, not be applauded by the devotees of this present life. She will look weak, beleaguered, unworthy of noticed. She will be shunned those who are otherwise impressed by physical beauty, even disdained. By all appearance in this life she will not be desirable or esteemed, or fawned over by fans and admirers, like some movie star debutant. She may be called a whore and a Jezebel by the church, even though the opposite is true.

Ironically, she is the one beloved, chaste as a virgin and waiting for her wedding day. She is the one who loves her fiancée with her whole being, body, soul and spirit, without wavering. As Revelation 14 declares there is no guile in her. She is not trying to profit by her relationship with God for personal worldly gain. She does not sell the gospel as a means for paying her self-aggrandizing luxury taxes. The world hates Jesus; it will hate her nearly as much. Jesus, her espoused husband shall not cry in the streets and make a huge show over her, but He, like her, waits for the wedding day. Then, as Isaiah informs us, He will roar and not be silent.

Out time is a time of a new thing, something never done before, something that will only be done once. It is a time not only of reform, but of restoration and of Christ's marriage to Man, but not only a time of restoration, it is a time for reconciliation with God and

His Christ, and He will have a spiritually perfect and glorious wife without spot or wrinkle, we are told. She is exclusive, she is holy and without blemish, washed under the power of the Word and without wrinkle, she will never age, always be at His side for His adventures in eternity.

“Thou shalt be PERFECT with the Lord thy God.” Deut. 18:13

“And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou PERFECT.” Gen 17:1

“As for God, his way is PERFECT; the word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler to all them that trust in him.” 2 Sam 22:31

“Let your heart therefore be PERFECT with the LORD our God, to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments, as at this day.” 1 Kings 8:61

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and PERFECT, will of God.” Rom 12:2

“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, PERFECTING holiness in the fear of God.” 2 Cor 7:1

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” 2 Tim 3:16-17

89. Walking Perfect In The Spirit

An Analogy of the Trinity

by T Myers Smith

The optimism of Philadelphia to walk apart from our sin and to be crucified with Christ, to pay the price we must pay for a certain spiritual perfection in the eyes of God and Christ, can be expressed in the following analogy of an oil burner I once owned.

I was having a great deal of trouble with it. It spewed soot, leaked oil and water, and produced far more noise than heat. When the electrode failed to fire the oil would accumulate in the burner and the fumes would stink up the entire house. It always seemed to fail when it was needed most when the weather was coldest. It tried to do its job, even sounded like it was putting in the effort, but it fell far short of getting the job done at the most inopportune times.

Being a Scottish skinflint by nature, I tried to fix it myself. How pathetic was that. Finally, and wisely, I broke down and decided to call a professional repair man in to take a look at the problem.

After examining the furnace the repairman gingerly approached me and said he had a bad news, good news scenario for me. As a natural pessimist, I asked for the bad news first. He told me frankly that the furnace was hopelessly gone, absolutely beyond repair. I needed a completely new burner and furnace. Not totally surprised, I wondered out loud what the heck the good news could possibly be?

The good news, he told, me was that he could put in a completely new system and that I would not have to pay for it, or the installation, right away. In fact, he would not make me put anything down on it for six months and after that I would start making some regular monthly payments. Being short on liquid cash, as they say,

I was thankful for the installment plan and instantly agreed to the terms. All I needed to know was what the final price would be and how much it would cost me per month once the payments began, so I could fit them into my budget. What started out pessimistically ended with utter optimism. I did not have to struggle through the winter of another discontent. Thankfully, I could be sure I would have a warm house, hot water and a safe home for the future.

So what does this have to do with Becoming free from our sinful condition?

It was the great American thinker Will James who turned his back on the field of psychology calling it, 'a nasty little science'. His disgust was due to its pessimism about the human condition, a belief that he simply could not abide. Having been Harvard educated he had also felt the oppressive influence of Puritan theology. Though Puritanism had rightly emphasized the depravity of human nature, James was deeply offended because it offered no hope for change, no route for the improvement of man's sinful condition. He saw Evangelical religion as a pessimistic theology, as well, one which conceded to man's sinful plight as inalterable, offering no hope for escape.

Will James was right to be offended by the 'nasty little science' of psychology and the theology of raw Puritanism. In desperation, like so many 'foolish' wise men, James turned to his own brand of Evolution hoping that man would somehow evolve through philosophy, or improve by introspection, or somehow be freed by his rational mind from the iron shackles of his degenerate nature. He had hoped in man. He vowed to do at least one deed of kindness every day, to build in himself a righteous love for mankind.

As a result, he gained a reputation on the Harvard University campus as a man with a generous and kind spirit. James' vow to do good seems quite laudable, but it does not solve the problem

of our sin which can so easily boil over and beset the soul of the most well-intentioned man. James, of course, missed the boat, for he overlooked the solution – the true Gospel of Jesus Christ – and was unable to see that the Gospel had provided a means for man to walk upright before God by faith. In spite of being engulfed in Puritan pessimism by the traditions of his famous family, Will James had been unable to break out and see the light of the Gospel's great optimism about man and his nature. That optimism is centered wholly in being born again and that man can be given a whole new nature through the power of the shed blood of Jesus Christ to pardon and sanctify man in God.

Though the Philadelphia faith agrees with Puritanism about the depravity of the human heart – for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God – and we know that there is none that is righteous no not one – the Philadelphian has great hope because there is perfection, even in this life, in Christ. If Will James had only known he could have lived out his life's hope by walking in the Spirit through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. We hope somehow that Will James was saved, but we doubt it.

The Philadelphia faith, while honest about sin, and the battle we must wage all our lives against it, is the most optimistic because it believes in the victory of righteousness in the human soul and heart thanks to the living power of Jesus and the Holy Ghost. It believes that God's commands to us to love him and love our neighbor are not given in vain. They are given because mortal man, through Christ, by the power of the Holy ghost can have access to the mercy seat of God Himself and can keep the 'law of liberty' to love God and one another.

Overcoming sin, not in the world, but within willing man, was the business of Jesus. He did his business and returned triumphant to His Father. This is why Jesus could say: *"Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."* John 16:33. Jesus did His work to overcome sin, now we must do our job. Our job is to overcome tribulation by walking in the Spirit. But this should not be done with doubt, or pessimistically. It should be done in hope and with an optimistic

spirit and ready and willing frame of mind. Just prior to telling us that he has overcome the world Christ informs us: “*In the world you will have tribulation*.” By this, He obviously means we will have pain, sorrow, distress, mistakes, failures, misjudgments, persecution and betrayals to overcome, to deal with, to forge through. We shall all suffer fiery trials of personal disappointment and seducing temptations. This is life. Christ is our advocate, protector, provider and counselor through them all. We shall have a lifelong struggle against our mortal enemy and the voices of sin: the flesh, the world and Satan. But sin, whose wages are death, does not have to hold sway over the born again believer, for we have been bought with a price we are told. And we are no longer our own, but Christ’s blood has purchased our temple for a dwelling place for the Holy Ghost that we might in all truth be the Temple of the Holy Ghost.

This we concede to not only in principle or mind but in all truth and deed. We give our body, soul and spirit to the rightful owner, which is our reasonable service. This is the great and daily good deed we must faithfully perform every day. Then we can truly accomplish that daily good deed to which Will James aspired and have goodness flow like a river by the power of the Holy Ghost as opportunity is presented by God’s doing and His Will.

The only pathway to victory and a ‘certain kind of perfection’ over sin that tends to reign over us, is by way of Jesus Christ. As he said, we must pick up our cross and follow after Him and any disciple who is not willing to do this is not worthy to be his disciple (Matt 6:24, 10:37; Mk 8:34; Lk 9:23). We must deny ourselves if we are to serve Him perfectly as righteous stewards of the good things of God. How can anyone doubt that Christ has declared that the pathway to righteousness goes through him by way of the Holy Ghost and our taking up our personal cross. A man must first lose his life if he is to find it. We must die to self. For, yes, they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and the Word of their testimony and that they loved not their lives to the death. All too often we overlook the third part – they loved not their lives unto the death.

The Christian who breaks free of the shackles of sin is the one

who will do as Paul advised to Timothy. *“Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.”* 2 Tim 2:3 The crucified Christian will disentangle himself from this world as much as he can while faithfully picking up the cross of Christ, not loving his life more than his service to his master. Persecutions, struggles and lesser, even trite, inconveniences will be endured. *“All those who will live godly lives in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”* 2 Tim 3:12 If we do it with understanding and trust, it can be done with optimism that God is doing this to build us up and make us into free and righteous men and women.

The goal of picking up our cross and being crucified with Christ is so we no longer walk in the flesh but start to walk in the spirit. The overcomer must be walking in the Spirit and not the flesh (or ways of the world).

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.” Romans 8:1-6

True Christian optimists will shed off the hopeless ways of the world, not lean to their own understanding, let the Spirit lead them to love and righteousness and be freed from the depravity of the fallen human heart into the righteous, holy realm of the Divine

Nature which resides in Jesus Christ, *“in whom is all the fulness of the Godhead bodily”*. Col 2:9 Peter tells us that the Gospel promises man that he can be free from sin and become a partaker of God’s nature in this life when he says; *“Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”* 2 Peter 1:4

Our nature is to doubt, but God’s nature is to believe. Our nature is to sin, God’s is to be righteous. Our nature is to despise, God’s is to love. Our nature is to defile ourselves with lies, God’s is to honor only the Truth. Our fallen nature is to be unholy. God’s is to be holy. We are fearful. God is fearless. Without God, lost in the world, man is in terrible darkness and cannot help but end in a pool of pessimism. With God, and walking in Him, we should be full of optimism. We have a future in eternity. We have the chance to walk free. But there is a cost; the cost of the widow who gave everything she had (Mark 12:44), a cost to be counted. The cost David was willing to pay: repentance and all his being and earthly wealth for the glory of God in His service (1 Chronicles 28-29). The cost is that we love not our lives (more than Christ) unto the (day of our) death.

The oil burning furnace represents man’s spirit, his true inner being. The oil burner itself is symbolic of the Spirit of God and the heat that is supposed to be thrown off by the oil furnace stands for love, or, in other words, the opposite of sin.

Before being born again, man is like that old oil-burning furnace. We are unable to produce any warmth (love) because of our broken, useless condition. We cannot be overhauled. We must be entirely replaced, turned into a new creature and be given a new spirit (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15; Eph 4:24; Col 3:10, and so on). We are always on the verge of self-destruction ready to explode, throw dark clouds of soot and make a lot of threatening rumblings while producing very little good, if any at all. The repairman represents Jesus. He talks us into replacing the entire unit (spirit) and gives us a new heart, one that can receive a brand new oil burner that will work perfectly if we let it. The oil burner, of course, is the Holy Ghost and it is His oil that

burns in us to produce the warmth, or love, of Christ which radiates from us into the world.

But remember the good news, bad news part. Christ gives us a new spirit free, just for the asking. There is no down payment or set-up fee just as in our analogy, but Christ told his disciples they must count the cost Luke 14:28 of the installation and what it will require to have the burner always operating in perfect fashion. It would have been ridiculous for me to keep the old dilapidated furnace out back of my house and try to reinstall it to correct any problems, or to avoid paying any of the agreed to payments when the time to pay came due. How absurd would that be? There are installment-like things we must pay after our initial born again honeymoon experience. There are adjustments and maintenance costs to be paid on the 'new furnace and burner'. There are such things to be done in the Spirit.

Among the installments and regular maintenance is carrying our cross daily as discussed in a previous part of this teaching. These are called "*enduring hardships as good soldiers in Christ*" 2 Tim 2:3-4 by letting God use our bodies as He did with Peter and Paul. They are in the fiery trials that must try every disciple 1 Pet 4:12. They come in the form of persecution, and we are told that every Christian "*that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*" 2 Tim 3:12. Killing the flesh within us hurts. It is a surgery of the spirit that requires endurance, steadfastness, patience and suffering – all things that are contrary to the way of the flesh and the flimsy 'gimme' doctrines of the modern Laodicean Christian faith which is to be loathed without apology.

These 'sufferings' may be euphemistically termed – the bad news. To defeat the flesh we must count the cost and pay the price. I am sure the reflective reader will be able to come up with even further instances of paying the price of killing the flesh. The true disciple knows that our hope is built on the solid Rock of truth, Jesus Christ. It is the Rock and the grace of Jesus Christ that will see us through so difficult a journey as triumphing over our flesh.

True Christian optimists will shed off the hopeless ways of the

world, not lean to their own understanding, let the Spirit lead them to love and righteousness and be freed from the depravity of the fallen human heart into the righteous, holy realm of the Divine Nature which resides in Jesus Christ, *“in whom is all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.”* Col 2:9 Peter tells us 2 Pet 1:4 that the Gospel, in fact, promises man that he can be free from the flesh and become a partaker of God’s nature in this life when he says; *“hereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust [of the flesh].”*

90. All Aboard the Cruiser: Disciple

The Journey of A Disciple

by Stuart and Jill Briscoe

Published by Regal Books

Ventura, CA. 93006;

1987; 163 pp.

Review by Roy Gardenier

Far Away places with strange sounding names

Far Away over the sea.

Those Far Away places

With their strange sounding names are calling, calling me.

Ready for a winter cruise? Had enough of the cold, the snow and the ice? Longing for some color other than sun-splattered, blinding white; drab brown; dirty gray and monotonous dark green under dead lead skies? Well, the brilliant sun-drenched Mediterranean vibrant with varying shades of blue-green and pleasing pastels, the exotic names, the excitement of a journey; the enchantment of a distant port of call as well as enthralling vistas from new and unexpected perspectives – all these are beckoning to you, dear reader, from the pages and photographs in this unique and distinctive little volume of Christian literature.

I'll probably wax even more lyrical and get positively euphoric about the wonderful Biblical themes of grace and prayer, of total surrender and submission to our Lord Jesus Christ that are so capably and interestingly treated by the co-authors. But I have to be up front and warn you that, as good as it is I do have a complaint about this book. My annoyance, and it is really only that, is not with the perfectly planned layout or format. It displays twelve superb

photographs, uses actual geographic locations familiar to most Bible readers to study important subjects like the call to discipleship; the commitment that it involves; the cost that is required; and, discipleship characteristics gleaned from the Sermon on the Mount – a very special analysis of the Beatitudes. For me, personally, this book is a truly sentimental journey that fully redeems the foundational concept of discipleship for those of us who saw the notion so severely maligned during the distortion of the “Submission heresy” that flourished in the early 1970’s. I have no criticism of the authors either. Stuart Briscoe is an able captain who pilots the reader through Scriptural themes and the sites associated with them beginning at Corinth and ends in modern Jerusalem. Stuart’s wife, Jill, is an engaging and enlightening tour guide introducing the reader to ancient Corinth.

She deftly describes the distinction between the three different types of love that the early Greeks labeled Eros, philos, and agape. She returns in section three of the book to produce a poignant chapter on the ancient tabernacle at Shiloh and the saintly Hannah, mother of Samuel, Israel’s last judge and first prophet. Leaving the geographical location behind, Jill Briscoe conducts a spiritual search of Hannah’s soul that begins in bitterness of spirit, develops into yieldedness to God and ends in such rejoicing in the Lord that her canticle echoes down the centuries reverberating in the exalted praise of Mary’s Magnificat: *“My soul doth magnify the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.”*

The reader could pause at any port or venue mentioned in this short, but excellent, book and, like the other Mary who sat at the feet of the Lord, listen intently to what these two talented writers have to say about “Him whom my soul loveth” and about some of His true disciples who are past, present, and yet to come. They clearly show that true followers of Jesus testify in their own personal way, their own time and place that far beyond and way above the most exotic locales and adventurous excursions that can be experienced and enjoyed on “this terrestrial ball” the least inviting but the most satisfying witness is: *“To live is Christ and to die is gain”!*

My wife and I collaborated in hunting down this book in hopes that I'd find something to write about regarding Easter and the Resurrection. I wasn't at all disappointed when I saw that two chapters focus in on the central doctrine, the basic belief of all Christians: "*The Lord is risen indeed!*" Luke 24:34 A significant stop on this "journey of a disciple" is the Damascus Gate located on the north side of the old walled city of Jerusalem. From there the author looks up the ancient Roman road that Saul of Tarsus, full of self-righteousness and religious zeal, stormed along in a fury of determination to eradicate what he thought was a heretical sect. Instead, he was gifted with such a blinding, glorious vision of the Resurrected Christ that not only his thoughts, ideas and beliefs were completely turned around, but this charismatic encounter was so indelibly etched upon his whole being that he surrendered all the dominions of his heart to the Lord of Life. From that historic moment on, the converted Pharisee's ongoing response to the ever-living Jesus was: "Lord what will you have me to do?"

We see this same person in later years, now known as the Apostle Paul, addressing a group called the Areopagites who met on Mars Hill in Athens. He is all alone, lonely, in need of killing some time. This tentmaker from Tarsus; this scholar from Jerusalem is definitely out of place in the cultural capital of the then known civilized world. Out of place or not; in season or out of season Paul boldly and clearly testified to the One True God, "the man He has appointed" and as Paul told the equally sophisticated Romans: "*..declared to be the Son of God with power ... by the resurrection from the dead*" Romans 1:4. May we become disciples, journeying through life, debtors to both Greeks and Barbarians because of our indebtedness to the Risen Lord who tasted death for us that we may enjoy the continuing Easter experience of the Resurrected Life.

Oh, I had a complaint. I almost forgot.

It's the book's binding. The binding doesn't hold; at least on the copy I purchased. The pages separate from the inside. I'm afraid they'll come out individually and get dog-eared, mangled or even

lost. Too bad, for such an otherwise sumptuous feast, but even with the chintzy binding, there is a kind of cruise ship quality about this minor flaw. Call me Pollyanna but the thought crossed my mind that the loose pages themselves tend to separate in tiers somewhat like the succulent, beefy slices of a steamship roast.

Bon Voyage to every dear disciple, and Happy, Happy Easter to you all!

91. “How’s it Goin’”; said the Man to the Spirit

“Maybe Not So Well”, said the Spirit to the Man

by T Myers Smith

“HOW’S IT GOIN’?” said the gregarious man one ordinary day in his most flat and meaningless tone, as the Spirit was passing by. Startled when the Spirit actually stopped and approached him face-to-face, the man became instantly flushed, a bit ‘put out’ as the Spirit began his response. I’m too busy for this, thought the man. The man was, as most of us are who use such greetings, way too disinterested, much too distracted by the real matters of life to spend time listening to the Spirit’s opinion. He had neither expected nor wanted a reply. Just move along – and I’ll see you later.

“How rude, how presumptuous, how invasive?”, thought the preoccupied man. But still, the gentle Spirit persisted, tarried with the man and began to engage him in spite of the cold mindless greeting – ‘How’s it goin’.

“How’s it goin’? Glad you asked. Let me tell ya.

“Some things you can see and answer for yourself. You don’t need me to tell you about them. They’re so obvious a bat could see them. You surely can see that the earth is in turmoil, trouble is brewing everywhere, even for the Eskimos and the Australian Bushmen. The seas overflow and earthquakes shake up the ground you walk on with increasing frequency. Natural disasters; storms, tornadoes, wind, snows and droughts pummel every continent. Famine and plagues are taking their toll as we speak. Disease and virus continue to penetrate man’s supposed impenetrable medical defenses. Flu from unclean sources ooze into the safest sterile protected, technologically advanced, places. And you know about the wars and civil wars how they continue on and on. How many

millions have died in Africa? Crazy men have access to nuclear weapons, their madness looms over the peace of the earth like poison waiting to rain from the sky. It's terrible, with no relief in sight.

"But all these things are in my hand, man; to humble you and the rest of the earth, to get people to look for deliverance from God. I created the earth. I will surely shake it to make known what is shakable and what cannot be is shaken. I am the blacksmith. The earth is my anvil, her moods are my hammer, forging by fire and force the spirit of man, showing the spiritual mettle of which each soul is made. I'll tell you now, how it's all going to shake out."

With boldness The Spirit proceeded.

I told people thousands of years ago about my original best friend Abraham. "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and **judgment**; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." That's what I'm talkin' about. Be my friend.

"Who's asking to be my friend?"

"You asked, 'How's it goin', friendly like? But the real question shouldn't be How's it goin'; the real question is: What's comin'? Everyone should honestly be asking, "What's coming?"

But He did not stop there.

"I am preparing hearts by a spiritual sort of 'research and development' so men can be ready for the appearing of Jesus in the clouds. This appearing is so improbable to Man's way of thinking, so removed from regular faith that the earth is in birth pains just to get people's attention about the approaching great event of this age. It's not World Wars, pestilence or natural disasters. It's the return of Christ, he's the one you have heard of; the one who died on the cross for you and was raised from the dead and promised to return to establish just government, restore order, and impose righteousness on the earth. He's the one who ascended up into heaven to be with the Father, but before leaving promised to return. He's what's comin'. How's it goin'? Everything is goin' in that direction, that

is exactly how it's goin'. The earth is my anvil, the disasters my hammer, together they are pounding away to forge out a people fit to be in my presence and waiting for the return of Jesus. They are the friends of God and have shown they are his friends by being friendly and believing and communing with him. And because they have been friendly first, true friends, they will be married to him. And that work is going on right now. Thank you for asking. My work is right on schedule. Everything the Father wants for His Son will be accomplished. Take some time to read about this plan, from beginning to end, in the book – you know the book you have heard of – you know – the Bible.”

How Can You Be Friends With Someone You Don't Know?

The gentle Spirit's expression changed to one even more stern and grave.

“But some other things aren't goin' so good. You, for instance, you aren't ready for what's comin', are you?”, he said and looked directly to the man's stony face.

The man looked at him with a forced quizzical look, shrugged, and with no little misgiving asked,. “What do you mean? I didn't know I had to be ready for Jesus' return.”

“What I mean would be clear if you took the time to read the Bible and honestly study it.” said the Spirit, with a tinge of indignation.

“You haven't made yourself ready to meet Jesus. Because you haven't gotten to know Jesus, you're in line to suffer the other thing that is comin' – judgment. The world will be judged by fire from heaven and the all consuming eyes of Truth. People will not be able to eat, buy, or sell if they do not worship Satan and his 'Evil One'. War, pestilence, famine and death will ride through the earth like a posse from Hell. They will consume and slaughter those who were unprepared for what was comin'. Death will drag the unbelieving and

unfaithful to eternal Hell fires. Blood will be man's drinking water. People will cry out to die but won't be able to. The world will be tormented by its own sin and by unleashed forces and demons from the pits of Hell. Look at the Book of Revelation instead of naked pictures on the internet and the foolish apocalyptic movies that come swarming out of the wild phantasmagorias of Hollywood.

"The day is comin' when men will ask one another, 'How's it goin'?' And they will respond with blasphemy and complaint. Out of pain and suffering, they will hate and deride God. They will curse and blaspheme God and His Son, and their hatred and bitterness will grow into rage against God.

They will never find peace or joy. No place will be found for them in Paradise because they will be full of hate for God and his people. They will be cast out into outer darkness where the fire is never quenched and the worm never dies, where there is perpetual weeping and everlasting gnashing teeth. Where they will be alone forever with no comfort and not the slightest relief, not so much as a drop of water for their eternally parched tongue. They will not ask 'How's it goin'', will never again give a generic reflex greeting that so blithely rolls off the lips of men this day. No one will dare ask, 'How's it goin'', because the answer they get will only increase their pain.

"As this judgment builds to its conclusion, I will gradually withdraw because I am not one to strive and argue with people. I won't always pass by the corner, or your seat in the church in which you merely are content to take up space; or stop to talk with you as I am doing now. It will be too late then. No, I won't acknowledge your casual greeting 'How's it goin'!

As For The Sincere?

"But those who ask sincerely, 'How's it goin'', who heed my counsel, take serious my warnings, and want the Son to be their light, in charge of their personal 'comin's and goin's', I promise a glorious future in eternity. And they will be excited about how things are goin', things will be goin' very well for them and their prospects will be golden, because I will have judged righteousness among mankind, the angels of Jesus will have separated the sheep

from the goats, the wheat from the chaff, I will have deleted the virus from the hard-drive. And everything will be fine. Obviously, the redeemed will not have to ask, 'How's it goin'?' They won't have to listen for me to tell them 'How's it goin'', because we will be one and they will be privy to 'How it's goin' all the time.

The Man stood wide-eyed, gaping, looking to see if anyone was watching, if anyone he knew overheard the conversation, or saw him talking to this strange stranger. He felt a bit uneasy, shaken and troubled. Part of him wished he had never asked the Spirit, 'How's it goin''. None of this would do his reputation much good if he was seen associating with such radical talk. Foolish and crazy would be the cry from friends and neighbors and fellow church goers. But he knew he should listen. He could pretend, however, that he didn't understand. He looked at the Spirit and knew the Spirit knew even his thoughts. He saw the Spirit and understood that the Spirit knew the conversation was over. The Man was finished listening.

As He turned and began walking away the Spirit called back over His shoulder with these final words; "That's how it's goin'! How's it goin' with you!?"

92. Judgment Day is Fast Approaching

by T Myers Smith

The Day of Judgment is coming. Let the mocking movie, the scoffing co-worker, the doubtful religious man, and the ambitious political leader continue to walk in darkness; the day of coming judgment is drawing nearer as we draw each breath. God has promised that His only Son will return with armies of saints from heaven to purge the earth of corruption, injustice, and sin. We who know and believe the words of the Bible take to heart this passage which Peter wrote telling fellow Christians not to be ignorant.

“But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” 2 Peter 3:7-10

The Holy Ghost has taught The Church in these past 40 years and continues to bear witness in our hearts that the judgment of the world is necessary if God’s promise of a righteous rule of Christ on earth is to be fulfilled. If heaven and earth are not purged then the new heaven and new earth promised in the last two chapters of the

Bible would have no chance to exist. The Scriptures are explicit, the world is going to be burned up in fiery judgment. Revelation tells the story. Peter prophesied in His second epistle:

“... that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,

And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water:

Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:

But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.” 2 Peter 3:3-7

The world and its faithful followers believe that their governments, institutions and glorious ideas will all last forever. And though there is no reconciling the Spirit of God with the spirit of the world, many Christians have figured that God wants to save the “world”. But James declares: “... know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.” James 4.4

And John exhorted the Church in this fashion:

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world, if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world,

And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.” 1 John 2:15-17

We can be sure that if the world is going to pass away then those who love the things of the world will also pass away.

A Fiery Judgment is Coming on the Earth

Christ first came in meekness, lowly, riding a colt, not a warhorse, and gave Himself into the hands of the world so that some would receive salvation, but that will not be His mission at His second coming. He will return with fire in His eyes and a sword of judgment in His mouth; an unusual way to express His appearance if it were not so spiritually perfect. Christ will burn everything that cannot stand up to the gaze of God and will cut to ribbons anything that does not measure up to His word. The world will melt and tremble at His presence. According to the prophecies written in Revelation, Christ and His saints (all true and **faithful** believers) will begin a thousand year reign, ruling with a rod of iron.

As the day of God's terrible judgment draws closer and closer; God's warnings echo louder and louder. Crime, corruption, sexual perversion, hypocrisy in government and religion, and lusts of all sort are rampant, false prophets are seducing the Church., lying spirits are working every kind of deceit inside and outside the confines of believers. Not even judgment like AIDS, war, or financial ruin can convince people to do the right thing. The cup of iniquity is filling and the signs of the time are shining brighter and brighter in every newspaper headline and on every 7 o'clock news broadcast. As prophesied in 1 & 2 Timothy, seducing spirits are selling the doctrines of devils. Sin is said to be good; doing your own thing is righteous – indeed we live in the perilous times of the last days. Everything points to the soon return of Jesus.

Two thousand years, or just two days on the Lord's heavenly calendar, have passed since Jesus departed to be with the Father and it is very, very likely that Jesus will reappear on the dawn of the "third day", just as he reappeared on the dawn of the third day after

His crucifixion. To escape the judgment that is coming upon all the earth, members of the Body of Christ must be willing and ready to receive judgment now, in their personal lives and in their hearts, as well. There is no escape from God's judgment, neither should there be. Sacraments, tithing, good works; none of these can deliver us from our ultimate destiny. We must all face our maker. Either we can submit to His merciful and delivering judgment and let it produce love and freedom in us, or we can stubbornly hold out and fall victim to His terrible judgment. ***"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."*** Heb 10:31, as it says in Hebrews. Instead, we are taught by the Bible that, ***"if we judge ourselves we shall not be judged, but when we are chastened we are chastened of the Lord that we should not be judged with the world."*** 1 Cor 11:31,32

Many aspects of our walk involve a process of being delivered from evil into goodness, of being brought from darkness into light; departing and fleeing and being changed into His likeness. If those things are to happen to us we must invite the judgment of the Holy Ghost. His judgment must win out over ours. Without accepting God's judgment in our walk we will remain in the world no matter how godly or pious we appear to be.

"Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,

Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." 2 Peter 3:11-14

This is the only way to be spared the fiery judgment coming on the earth. If we live spotless and blameless lives for Christ, a spiritual

perfection before Christ, then we can look forward to the judgment of the world and the second coming. We can hope in the rapture, which will likely come before the great tribulation that is to come on all the world according to Revelation. (Rev 3:10) To use the words of Peter, we can make our calling and election sure. (2 Peter 1:10) This perfection spoken of is not a carnal or intellectual perfection. It does not mean we will never make a wrong judgment or a mistake. It is a perfection achieved by obedience of faith. It can be detected by the faithful eyes of other Disciples of Christ because the fruit of our actions is the evidence of our obedience. Our perfection hinges entirely on hearing the Word of God and doing it. It is important here to realize, however, that God does not want us to fear His judgment; in fact, He wants us to invite it. Beautifully, this passage of Peter's which exhorts us to not be ignorant, this pillar of knowledge in the Church, is the only one of the seven pillars which are addressed to the "beloved" instead of simply, the "brethren". Being addressed to the beloved reassures the faithful that God's love is with them always even in judgment. For it is for our sakes that the world will be judged.

93. Who, What, Where, When and Why of The Rapture

Its Scriptural Foundation

by T Myers Smith

We submit this open letter to the students of our website in answer to questions most often raised in regards the Rapture. While the Rapture has gotten more than just a little play in Hollywood and Christian and secular fiction, as well as on TLC and other television channels, as well as gobs of Christian literature, wild and crazy ideas have added to the general ignorance rather than dispelled it. This glut of fabulous and sensational misinformation is nothing less than a transport full of useless baggage which exacts a great hidden price from those who might be inclined travelers along the way to Brideship. The cost of this bogus baggage is too high a price to pay. The weight of it has dragged the message and purpose of the Rapture to the ground and through the mud of ignorance so that the very word rapture is nothing but a worn out and meaningless cliché, an interesting fiction or fairy tale, like Jack in the Bean stalk, More's Utopia, Stoker's Dracula or whatever the latest outer space or alien craze might be. For the bulk of people, the word Rapture conjures up a quagmire of rumor, a quicksand of gossip, just another chapter in the fiction of apocalyptic mumbo-jumbo for Hollywood to cash in on. This hurricane of info constantly swirls about this great mystery of the Christian faith and generally flat-lines its living reality in the minds of otherwise and normally objective people. Even Christians have accepted all the stolid notions and have been thoroughly anesthetized having lost all vision of the great promise that is The Rapture. False spirits of man and demon demean those who hope for deliverance as cowards seeking escape from trouble even as deserters in the face of the enemy. If they are 'kind' they

chalk it up as hope for being raptured as the burden of weaklings who just want to get out of dealing with hard times. They're branded, however kindly, as weaklings and cowards, essentially. But these half-baked ideas just prove the cliché, 'A little knowledge can be a dangerous thing'.

There are a profuse number of people who also acquire just a bit of information here and a bit there, never really studying it, who end up with their heads spinning around so that they give up on the whole promise of promises. Or, they become beleaguered after waiting a measly handful of days, never mind years or decades, or a lifetime as the apostles and early saints, and thousands of other faithful Christians down through the centuries, all have done. Today's evangelicals are hardly better off. They have been cast into a hypnotic spell by presumptive ignorance and indoctrinated by years of repetitive teaching to believe that Christians, regardless of their life of faith, automatically deserve to be raptured because they know Jesus Christ – period! End of story, their 'saved' as far as they are concerned. They like to believe that how they live and what they do is essentially irrelevant. But here we shall try to give people (though they may only have just a smattering of mish-mosh knowledge) a good foundation for starting their study of the Rapture by answering the classic question of the honest news reporter: who, what, when, where and why of the Rapture. In the interest of the ABC's of good reporting- accuracy, brevity and clarity – we seek to supply the student with an outline of basic knowledge in which they can launch themselves into a full study of the all-important promise of the Bible. After cruising through this introductory report on the Rapture, the reader should be able to find a rather complete understanding of the subject in the various articles, testimonies, gifts of the Spirit and teachings published throughout *Elisha's Outcast Eagles* website. We begin with the question, what is the Rapture?

WHAT IS THE RAPTURE?

However, it must be said from the outset that the word Rapture does not appear in the Bible. It is the common name used by Christians to sum up an incredible promise of mercy made by God to His Church. The promise is that He will “catch up” faithful believers in the clouds to be with His Son Jesus forever. That is, in fact, what the word Rapture means, “To catch up”. This Scripture from the epistle of 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 expresses the promise more perfectly than any other place in the Bible. Let’s start at the beginning. The Bible is the one and only authoritative source for understanding the Rapture. The movies, The Learning Channel, professors from Princeton University or Books from The Church of the Latter-Day Saints will not give you the real dope. The Rapture is one of only a few subjects on earth that even non-believers have to agree is the exclusive property of the Bible. Hindus, Buddhists, Confucians, Zoroastrians, or Maharishi Hamburg-Yogurt have never had knowledge, let alone ownership of this great mystery. People who ask for a Biblical understanding of this event are very much on the right track. Again, the Scriptures are the one and only source that proclaims the promise of the Rapture.

“For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent (Old English for, “go ahead of”) them which are asleep.

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.

Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

(The Scripture 1 Corinthians 15:50-55 also adds to the overall picture. Both of the passages cited above should be read in context.)

And that – in a nutshell – is the Rapture. The catching up of Christians, both those that sleep and those which remain alive at the time of Jesus' calling, to meet Him in the air to be with Him for evermore. But this only tells us what it is, not, who, why, or when. To understand the Rapture we must answer those questions as well.

WHEN Is It Coming?

During His three year ministry on earth, Jesus referred many times to this “mystery”, as it is called in 1 Corinthians 15. More than once, Jesus warned us to “watch and pray” and to be “ready” because His call, and His ‘appearance’ to believers, would happen suddenly and unannounced. He said that it would “*come at a time when you think not*” Matt 24:44.

The epistles and Jesus both declare that the day of the trumpet sound, when Christ will call His faithful people into the clouds, will come as a “*thief in the night*”. 1 Thes 5:2. His appearance will come suddenly, without warning, it will be unseen and unheard, just as a thief might come and go in the middle of the night without anyone ever knowing he had been there except for that which was missing. The image is one of total surprise and vanished goods. In a parable He said, if the good man of the house knew when a thief was coming he would be ready for him and not suffer loss, but we are to be always ready, on our toes, looking, waiting, watching, praying, and living as if His return is scheduled for that very minute, so we do not lose out on being part of the Rapture.

Jesus continues, “*Of that day and hour knoweth no man, except the Father in heaven.*” Matt 24:36 But why is its time withheld? Simple. God wishes to encourage Man to live rightly and expectantly day to day. To live in anticipation of the Rapture, is the true essence of taking life “one day at a time”.

But. Jesus did say we could get an idea about the general timing. We must live as if this sudden and instantaneous resurrection of

believers could take place in our next breath. Jesus said, when you see the “fig tree” budding (alluding to the Scriptural symbol, Israel) then we could know that not another generation would pass away before His promised gathering of the saints and the coming judgment of the world. The state of Israel budded again in 1948 and Jerusalem became the capital of a Jewish state for the first time in nearly 2,500 years in 1967, constituting the “*budding of the fig tree*”. Jesus said about this, “*When you see these things happening, look up for your redemption draws near.*” Matt 24:32-33

WHY A Rapture?

The Bible warns us that before Jesus’ return the world will be in a similar state of unrighteousness as it was in Noah’s life. This not only gives us insight into why God will catch up His faithful saints from the earth but it tells us something about the kind of faith people must have if they are to believe in the Rapture. The analogy speaks both of the condition of the unbelieving world and the condition of the faithful.

As in Noah’s day the world is turning reprobate. People are giving themselves over to sin, having as the Scriptures say, “*Their consciences seared with a hot iron.*” 1 Tim 4:2 We need only read the papers, listen to the conversations at work, or go to the movies to see and feel this unconscionable Noah like world. This reprobate condition not only assumes a lack of knowledge of good and evil but the inability to distinguish between truth and lies, even fact from fiction. For example, a completely fallacious idea from human pride is a current boast from Evangelical camps that the courageous will not desert the world but want to stay behind to punch the Antichrist right in the mouth and not run from a fight. This denies the primary purpose, the real why, of the Rapture, namely: that it is God’s mercy that some will escape the terrible, overwhelming and dreadful things that will befall the whole planet in those final days.

On the other side of the days of Noah analogy are the faithful. As Noah was faithful to believe that God would save him from the torrent of coming judgment, so today's faithful are being required to believe that they will be saved from the flood of God's wrath that is to come. As Noah was figuratively and literally lifted up by the waters and the people died beneath him in a flood of judgment so it will happen again. This time people of Noah-like faith will be lifted up, "caught up" and removed from the impending doom beneath and the world below will be deluged with disaster. The Rapture saves the believer from going through the judgment which is intended for the unrighteous and sinful world.

WHO Shall Be Raptured?

Here is the really all-conclusive question and the one most ignored and abused. Once we know the answers to what, why and when, then – the question, who becomes the million dollar question, the one demanded by the other three. This we know for sure from everything about the Bible – those who are offered this great deliverance must be believers and followers of Christ, they must be watching, praying, and waiting for their Lord's return. Jesus said to His disciples, "*pray that you be accounted worthy to escape all these things (judgments coming on the world) and to stand before the son of Man*". Lk 21:36

Jesus told many parables about lazy and unrighteous servants who did whatever they wanted and ended up being caught unprepared on the day of their Lord's return. He told a parable of 10 virgins who waited for the coming of a bridegroom. The wise virgins are destined to be Christ's Bride for eternity. They will go wherever He goes. They will be purified by keeping their lamp (light/Jesus) 'stocked' with oil (obedience to the Holy Ghost). They will be perfected by keeping their lamp 'trimmed' (taking care of spiritual business so that the light of Jesus can shine). The bridegroom's

appearance came in the middle of the night, came upon all of them suddenly. Five were ready, had their lamps trimmed, filled with oil, and burning bright. The other half, sadly, had let their light go out and had fallen asleep. When the sleepers heard Him coming they tried to prepare. They tried to get the others to help them, to give them oil, but it was too late and they were shut out of the wedding party. The imagery is simple. Be ready at all times! Those who are raptured will have taken heed! They will have been vigilant to the signs of Jesus' Return and have watched. They will have prayerfully sought deliverance. They will have made themselves ready by showing all preference to spiritual things, by preferring the Holy Spirit for Jesus' sake. They will have followed the Signs of His Return like a hunter follows tracks, like a fan follows his favorite ball club. They will have been poised themselves to be part of the great fulfillment of prophecy called the 'Firstfruits Resurrection' by the Bible, called the Rapture by us of the present day.

There is much more that can be expanded on concerning the Who, What, When, and Why of the Rapture. The Bible has much, much more that it can add to your faith about this great mercy of God, but we all need to escape from the wallboard halls of rumor and gossip so we can enter into the granite sanctuary of Scripture if we want to know the truth about God's "catching up" of the Church.

If you have not accepted Christ as your personal Savior, and that means much more than simply being a member of a Church, then do it today. Only then can you begin to make preparations for His coming and be ready on that day. Only then does one begin the journey to Brideship which ends with destination Rapture.

WHERE The Rapture?

Three of the Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, tell us this about where the Rapture shall take place: *"And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."* Lk 21:27 Also,

when we couple these announcements with the notification in 1 Thessalonians 4:17; *“Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.”*, it is clear that we shall be raptured into the clouds to meet Jesus in the air. In Matt. 24:31, Mk 13:27 we are informed of this: *“And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet and they shall gather together His ELECT from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”* and *“then shall He send angels and gather together His ELECT from the four winds from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.”* Take notice that the ELECT are gathered from the uttermost parts of heaven and earth. Where shall they be found? All over the earth and from around the heavens because the Rapture includes the dead in Christ (whose spirits wait in an heavenly abode) and those who living at the time of the trumpet sound. Two places, heaven and earth. This also takes us back to 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 *“the dead in Christ”* (who’s spirits wait in heaven) and *“we which are alive and remain (on the earth) shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”* The ELECT shall be gathered from both heaven and earth to one place with Christ in the ‘clouds’.

This is the literal physical place of our departure and the literal place of our destination. We are told where the gathering point of departure actually will be also. There are two most interesting verses that speak of a gathering of eagles. Matthew 24:28 says; *“For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.”* And in Luke 17:37 it is stated; *“Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.”* Isaiah 40:31 prophecies: *“They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint.”* The eagles represent those saints who soar by faith, who shall be *“caught up to meet the Lord in the air.”* Where they will gather is around the body, the carcass (dead body) which is symbolic of Christ. Where? The eagles from all over heaven and earth will be gathered around Christ. He will be the center and

drawing card of all the saints who stand and fly in the airy realms of faith for the Rapture.

These eagles shall have their strength renewed. They will have glorified bodies as spoken of in 1 Cor 15:51-54. *“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in a twinkling of an eye at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”*

We must lose our attachment to the world if we hope to be one of the ones taken. As Jesus warned, *“I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.”* Luke 17:34 & 36

“Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.” Luke 21:34 Matthew 24:40-41 says; *“Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken the other left.”* Anyone not prepared will be left behind. ARE YOU READY?!

Are You Ready?!

Here is the primer for what, when, why, who and where of the Rapture. The Lord exhorts His people to be vigilant and prepared for His call to “come up hither.”

“Watch therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth

come” Matt. 24:42 also in verse 44 “Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.” In Mark 13:23 & 37 Jesus said; “But take heed, behold, I have foretold you all things.” and, “what I say unto you I say unto all, WATCH!”

This firm instruction for us to watch is for us today, saints! From Luke 21:36 we have one of Jesus’ most loving and important pleas to us, that we might not suffer the horrors of the seven year tribulation which are “coming on the whole world.” One of the horrors will perhaps be execution by guillotine in order to escape taking the mark of the beast. “ ... and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and which had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their forehead or in their hands”. Rev. 20:4

“Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.” Luke 21 As always our Lord and Savior is faithful not to leave us without promises and rewards. “Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over his goods.” Matt. 24:45-47 In both Mark and Luke 21:31-32 we find this; “So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled.” Mark 13:27 I must repeat here. “And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.” God promises that He will gather His eagles, His elect, those who wait upon the Lord (Isaiah 40:31), together. They will come from heaven and earth to be “caught up in the clouds to meet Him in the air. And so shall we ever be with the Lord. So let us ‘comfort one another with these words’. 1 Thes 4:17-18

94. Caught Up in a Chariot of Clouds

Chariot of the bride: Solomon's Chariot

by T Myers Smith

The “catching up” or rapture of the church, as it is commonly called, has long been associated with a chariot. The prophet, Elijah, was caught up alive into heaven by a chariot of fire and serves as the spiritual precedent for those of us who believe in these words from 1 Thess 4:17; *“Then we, which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord”*.

Christian and non-Christian alike are familiar with the old spiritual, *Swing Low Sweet Chariot*, (“comin’ for to carry me home”), as a desperate, but beautiful plea for deliverance from this world through the hope of the resurrection, for those who “sleep” in Christ, but mainly for those who remain alive at the time of the Lord’s appearing. Paul made this reference to it also when he declared the prize that awaited him, and many ‘other righteous ones’, who after finishing their course, fighting the good fight of faith and being vigilant and victorious in the spirit will get their reward: *“Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”* 2 Timothy 4:8

But there is another chariot, one which also speaks of the Rapture, a chariot sitting in a hidden showroom, parked quietly among the verses of the greatest love song ever written, *The Song of Songs*, which we call *The Song of Solomon*. Amid the verses of hope for the appearing of our beloved and the outcry of a betrothed lover waiting for her bridegroom and champion to come and sweep her

away, our chariot, called Solomon's chariot, has been carefully and painstakingly built from the frame up with the finest materials expressly fitted for the great moment of the "catching up".

But instead of the chariot of Elijah, one of fire dressed and fitted out in the glory and majesty from which it came – God's holy heaven; our chariot has been furnished and built on this earth in the Spirit by the Spirit, for those who walk in discipleship of Truth, so they may be raised up to "meet the Lord in the air" and be with Him for evermore. The chariot for Elijah (because Jesus had not yet died and been resurrected) had to travel the distance through the heavens to earth to escort him home. Solomon's chariot, our chariot, the chariot of the virgin, undefiled bride, (figuratively and spiritually speaking, of course) will be activated in the "*twinkling of an eye*" 1 Cor 15:52, and will dart instantly out of that heavenly 'garage' of faith so we can fly away to meet the Lord, our beloved, in the air. We will be transformed instantly and this, Solomon's chariot, is symbolic of the preparation God wants of His people as they by way of installment of faith and obedience to the Spirit put all their life's hope in that promised moment which God has called the "*firstfruits resurrection*". This is not the only resurrection of the dead, but the first delicious and long awaited fruits of His burgeoning kingdom in His Son.

With great hope and expression of undying and unequivocal love, Solomon's great love song holds out this promise to a forlorn lover. In chapter three Christ's beloved searches desperately for her 'one and only'. For a brief moment, she meets Him and He takes her to her mother's house. (We have been born-again, gone back to our original birthing place and now testify to a new found life and an undying love.) But suddenly the mood of life changes – there are warriors, fear in the dark, a chariot, an instrument of war, and King Solomon is seen riding in it with a crown which he wore in "*the day of his espousals, and the day of the gladness of his heart*" Song 3:11. How apropos. He is decked out to win his espoused. In verse eight Solomon tells of a vision of mighty men of valor with their swords drawn because of fear in the night. Such a scene sets the

stage for the atmosphere that will prevail during the construction of Solomon's chariot. Is it not like the hour in which we live? Is it not an expression of the perilous times that have defined the Church Age? The world is a dark place and the darkness grows with every tick of the prophetic clock. Men and women of God must be armed with God's word to fend off the darkness. At times they must be on the offensive, all the time they must be armed with the sword of the Spirit (the Word of God) and dressed for battle with the armor of God against the forces of evil and wickedness in high places.

"In the last days perilous times shall come.

For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God:

having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." 2

Tim 3:1-5

In the shadow of this darkness, people are building personal, spiritual, Solomon's chariots. The frame is of precious wood, the pillars are silver, the bottom is gold, the covering of purple and the middle is paved with love.

THE FRAME OF WOOD: "OUR NEW LIFE IN CHRIST"

The frame of wood as described in verse nine, "King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon", is equivalent to our new life in Christ. All believers get this frame of beautiful wood when they become born-again. On this frame, we can begin to build our

vehicle, our passage to the resurrection, and if we remain alive at the time of its happening, God will spare his beloved from the terrible trials to come with catching them away in a rapturous moment like a champion snatching away his betrothed in the face of mortal danger.

THE PILLARS OF SILVER “KNOWLEDGE AND DOCTRINE”

The pillars holding up our frame are built from the silver of truth in God's Word. Verse ten says, “*He made the pillars thereof of silver*”. These silver pillars are representative of the foundational knowledge we are given from the Scriptures. The understanding and wisdom of the gospel revealed in the New Testament, revealed after the first coming of Jesus through His life, death and resurrection is basic to the strength and integrity of our vehicle which we must have prepared and ready to go when the trumpet blast is given from heaven.

In seven places of the New Testament, God exhorts the church “not be ignorant” of certain fundamental truths. As Proverbs 9:1 prophecies, “*Wisdom hath builded her house, she has hewn out her seven pillars*” Each one of the pillars in the Tabernacle of the Congregation was overlaid with silver. And it is true. For the last two and a half decades, while the darkness and blindness of the world has increased, the sight and enlightenment of God's Church, His household of faith, has also increased with much silver in the knowledge of the living God. Once ignorant on all seven counts, the Church is no longer ignorant but has been given wisdom and understanding in these crucial areas of knowledge. Without going into detail, the seven areas of understanding are:

- 1.) Israel, God's chosen people
- 2.) Dying to self
- 3.) The gifts of the Spirit

- 4.) Fellowship and fruits
- 5.) The true nature of salvation
- 6.) Eternal judgment, and finally
- 7.) The Rapture.

If we have received instruction from the Word, as we ought, then these pillars of pure silver have been placed securely in our Solomon's chariot. The Bride has made sure of it and has incorporated silver knowledge into the integral structure of her vehicle.

THE BOTTOM OF GOLD

“BEING COMPLETE IN CHRIST”

The bottom of our chariot is gilded with our experience in Christ. If it is perfectly covered then we are standing on the solid Rock, which is Jesus and His fullness. As Colossians 2:9 puts it, *“For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power...”*

Our chariot foundation will be cast totally in pure gold if we have received Christ in complete obedience. When we have done so we will have been baptized into repentance (been born-again), been baptized into the Holy Ghost (no doubt, with evidence of speaking in tongues), and been immersed in water to, as Jesus said, “fulfill all obedience”, to show our willingness to die with Christ and be resurrected into newness of life in the faith of the operation of God.

This is the foundation of gold on which the Scriptures and the Spirit have shown the Church that they can ride. It is important to be complete in Christ so we can move on to perfection. Heb 6:1-6. The Bride says, little sisters, if you have not experienced these things please, by all means seek the Lord for their meaning and value in your walk with God. Let no man rip you off, or talk you into selling God short for all He has for you.

COVERING OF PURPLE

“A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD”

Once we have constructed Solomon's chariot by yielding, patience, experience and devotion to faith and studying dutifully God's Word, Christ will call us to His service and bring us into a deeper appreciation of His royal priesthood. The covering over our Solomon's chariot is purple because it signifies royalty and majesty in Christ. Revelation 1:6 notes that Christ *“hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father ...”*

A basic commission and duty of the priesthood is to teach, comfort and exhort the people of God in the ways of God and to offer spiritual sacrifices, such as alms, good works, praise, the burnt offering of our flesh and prayer, which are acceptable to Him. Once we are strong and sturdy in faith Christ will call those who wait on His return to be in His service. As His servants, one of our great commissions is to invite others first to come to Jesus and second, to set the table and make ready the marriage supper of the Lamb. Until His return, we serve our betrothed in the power of the Holy Ghost. Our Solomon's chariot is covered in purple because we can say, and live, these two scriptures from 1 Peter 2:5,9 *“Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”* And, *“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”* We are royalty because we are the king's espoused wife.

MIDDLE PAVED WITH LOVE

“LOVE BINDS IT ALL TOGETHER”

Our chariot will be of no use if it is not bound together with the love

that Christ has loved us with. All our experience, understanding, faith and spiritual work, all sacrifices will be useless if it is not paved with love. Paul puts it, *“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.”* 1 Cor 13:1

But we will also have a special love for the “daughters of Jerusalem”, or as Paul suggests, *“As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”* Gal 6:10. If we will learn obedience and exercise our spirit so that we can hear the Master’s voice and do it then we will abide in His love and against such there is no law. What Jesus will require of us and ask us to do will always be the loving thing. Our battle is to hear and obey and not presume to know what is needed in situations, but rely on the leading of the Holy Ghost. As 1 Peter 4:8 says, *“Love covers a multitude of sins.”*

SOLOMON HAS HIS CROWN: “THE BETROTHED”

Now that the chariot is built and ready there is but one thing missing: the passenger. That person, dear saint, should be and can be, you. Solomon represents the diligent believer who has carefully prepared for that special and historic day of his Betrothed Lord’s return. Solomon is seen with a crown on his head and the daughters of Jerusalem go out to see him in the moment of his great triumph and immense gladness; the moment of the Rapture. As Roman generals and emperors once strode streets of gold in magnificent ‘victory’ celebrations, this is the real ‘victory’ scene of all time and forever. Those who have been accounted worthy to escape all the tribulations that will come upon all the earth and stand before the Son of Man, their espoused Lord and husband are the victors. It will likely seem to be a procession into heaven of all the victorious

believers in Christ who have readied themselves for the great Marriage supper of the Lamb.

How 'bout it saints? Is your chariot ready to meet the Lord in the air? Have you done all, so you can be ready for that moment when we shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye? The Lord may instruct His angel to sound the call at any time. Be ready. As you read this right now, if you listen carefully, the sound of rumbling wheels can be heard; clouds of dust can be seen on the spiritual horizon; saints around the world are sewing their purple covering together, fitting the silver pillars, lining it with gold, making the most beautiful tile work in the middle upon which to stand as they wait. They wait and watch and listen and look up. As Elijah they may travel about waiting for the day, going to one mountain top, looking, listening, going to another mountain top, waiting, watching, listening, their chariot polished and being made ready. Always they work on the chariot like an obsessed mechanic works on a race car. It is never perfect, but always ready as possibly can be done. Still, it is a beautifully constructed chariot. Each one has the frame of salvation, the silver of wisdom and knowledge, the gold of the fullness of Christ, the purple covering of priesthood and kingship, and the love wherewith Christ has loved us upon which we stand. All we await now is the crown we will be given in the day of our espousal, the day of His appearing.

95. Belief in The Rapture

A Purifying Agent on The Wheel of Perfection

by T Myers Smith

Because the Rapture is the “prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” Phil 3:14 It should be considered as the reward for the wife of Christ which is given to her for faithful service and full devotion and perfect fidelity toward her Lord and Master. (See Proverbs 31) The Rapture is the prize given for the highest calling possible, won for her total submission, for giving her all, yielding everything to Christ, and for believing in that great mystery of His promise to make her His wife. It is the reward for believing in those conjoined mysteries of dying to self and walking in the Spirit, which together with the hope in the Rapture which acts as a purifying catalyst and motivator, give reassurance that the believer will be accounted worthy to be part of the Rapture and thus, called out of troublous times to be with Him in one instantaneous moment.

Believing in the Rapture, walking in the Spirit and picking up the cross unlock the reality of two mysteries. The first is the great mystery of Christ and the church, the second is the mystery that comforts us in our journey because we know that He is true to His promise to save us from the misery of judgment that is to come on all the rebellious and faithless inhabitants of this world. Both the promises, of Brideship and rescue, keep us pressing forward, shaking the dust of the world from off our feet, casting our every care upon Him. We are energized to flee from any and all carnal lusts. We are enabled in all three areas of perfection which relate to one another on the perpetual wheel of perfection. The Rapture is a purifying effect; the walk in the Spirit which demands obedience amounts to all effective action and is our active life; denying ourselves and picking up our cross amounts to our passive existence because we are to dismiss our works as the vanity they are and

enter into the rest that is denying ourselves in favor of God. We are then perfected by purity, active spirit and passive flesh, three fundamental conditions to a perfect daily life each responding to one another and impressing righteousness in unison upon the body, soul and spirit of the faithful disciple. The conflict between the active and passive will in our lives is hard for many to grasp. It seems to the unspiritual mind a contradiction that tears at the soul and bites us with confusion that will never end. But there is a perfection that dissolves the conflict in us. We must put to rest our own will and thoughts and inclinations and sense of right and wrong, and everything for that matter. We must admit we are blind and cannot see – anything. This is how far and deep our passivity must reach and extend. But we must be active. We are the lights and salt of the earth. When we go passive then the Holy Spirit can go active, be activated, be set free to do His will in the ongoing estate of our lives.

This passive man and active spirit is accomplished by the daily walk of the tightrope of perfection. It is actualized by desire and prayed and maintained only by vigilance and a dogged determination to let God rule over the whole of our being. The believer has received the Savior, but the disciple must learn to let the Lord of Salvation rule over their walk in a daily fashion. This is a perfect walk, not always perfectly maintained for even the virgins that have their lamps trimmed with oil have fallen asleep, but one that is always willing to hear and to let the Spirit act instead of our urgent flesh.

We pick up our cross, put our last penny in the coffers, name his name in good times and bad. We depart from iniquity, shedding the weight and sin that so easily besets us, not only living but walking in the Spirit. Each one of these is a tall order. Many misled fundamentalists and ascetic monk-types have driven themselves mad trying to grow even one aspect of this spiritual righteousness in their life through their own intellectual skill, iron discipline or will to power. They fail. They fall short because they should not trust in themselves. The Preacher in Ecclesiastes makes this vanity of self very clear indeed. Nevertheless, the spirit of man insists that its

voice should be heard from and adhered to. A huge mistake they make is underestimating the power of the motivating force that hope in the Rapture brings to the Christian life. The Rapture is the essential hope that can keep us passive from self while allowing the Spirit to be the prime mover for all our action. If I do not believe, really believe then I will not have daily faith to give up my will and reject my fears. Living passive in self and active in Spirit is proof that I believe in another place and that the Rapture is the highest promise of deliverance into the hand of God and out of this transient world. Believe – true abiding, active believe – in the Rapture staves off despair, helps us to love our enemies and realize that those who live godly lives in Christ shall suffer persecution. Why else would Paul have told the Thessalonians emphatically to “*comfort one another with these (Rapture) words*” 1 Thes 4:18. Belief spurs man to action. If one does not believe something they will not act upon it. Belief in The Rapture spurs me on to Brideship and its intuitive knowledge of the Spirit that urges me to put on a true righteous brand of godliness and perfection. The Rapture is the promise of the Champion Himself that He has gone to build a mansion for us and that He will certainly return so that we can come to live with Him forever in His utopia. He and she, they are the beloved of the romance of Solomon’s Song. He peers at us now through the latticework of prophecy, bounding over the hills of time that separate the lovers, skipping suddenly as a swift deer into the waiting watchful promised moment when He shall awake like the morning light dawning, to take her away from ‘all of this’ darkness and chaos. This certain love with uncertain wedding day keeps the Bride on her toes, prepared and adorning herself daily, keeping herself in as beautiful state of spiritual perfection as possible. She stays Rapture-ready and poised for the day of embrace, looking for Her Champion’s sudden glorious appearance, the sun bursting through the clouds in a split moment, in only a twinkling of an eye when He shall briskly and suddenly take her home. The Rapture is a purifying agent. He said it would take place at a time when we think

not. It should induce the hopeful to walk in the Spirit and pick up the cross and to look for His sudden arrival.

These three are composed by the great Composer to work geometrically together to promote the perfection of the Bride 'so that Christ might present unto Himself a church, or separated one who is without spot or wrinkle, that is holy, and free of blemish or any such thing. Walking in the spirit will in turn help her put on the robes of righteousness so that she is decked out in the jewelry of humility and plain truth as she waits. This will in turn help her to pick up her cross. Her love and trust in Him will aid her in living for someone else (namely her champion) and to live for others. This is what He asks of her. And she firmly believes and acts on the belief that it is not about this life and this world but about the life and kingdom to come. Therefore she is not bound to this world by 'gravity' of temporal, worldly cares. She is a pilgrim, as Abraham was before. This is the great wheel of perfection which she must place herself upon with all devotion. This wheel revolves without beginning or end. Three things acting and reacting upon themselves and among one another to promote freedom and deliverance and a chaste virgin fit for Christ. Hope in the other world, walking in the Spirit and denying self. These daily revolve on the wheel of perfection spinning like a gyroscope and keeping us balanced in God's will just as long as the parts move in unison, though each spins in its one direction of purpose at a given moment and then perhaps in another reversing direction at the Lord's Will, adjusting and effecting a perfect balance. There is nothing routine about this perfection other than it must be maintained on a daily basis just as a machine might need to be oiled every day. Whether it begins with the belief in the Rapture, or picking up the cross, or loving the gentle guidance of the Holy Spirit, who can tell? They are revved up with the morning light if we will begin our waking moment with belief, faith and praise for God's good salvation in our life. We start the engine of perfection flip the switch on determination to let the Spirit have His way, turn off the dial of our own understanding, relieve the pressures of our fear and belief that the machinery

is perfectly suited to bring about that which it was designed to produce – eternal life and Brideship with the one and only, Son of God. The gears of hope in the future Utopia, the freedom worked by my cross and surging power of the Spirit perfectly oiled by belief and faith run efficiently, silently to produce God's will in me. I am passive, shut down. He is activated and productive because I am deactivated, out of the way. I am active only in His action produced in me. Like the wheel within a wheel in Ezekiel our gyroscopic existence can go wherever the Spirit has a mind to go. Where the spirit goes, we must tag along. Our machine can fly, soar like an eagle and few things from a spiritual dimension far above the visceral things of the restrictive spheres of this passing world. But we will only follow something if our hope conforms with the purpose of the thing we follow. That is our nature. If we do not believe something we will not act upon it. If we are dead to our own leanings and understanding and will, not following them as all men are inclined to follow their own heart or leading, if we are willing to move whichever way or direction in which the Spirit lites or moves, then we are on the right track. We can then, and only then, become a righteous follower of the Spirit and not only a called and chosen disciple of Christ, but a faithful one also. Belief in the Rapture tends to help make the Bride want to be ready, to be pure and perfect in God's sight, always seeking His will while enduring persecution and hardship for the glory set before her of being espoused and married to Christ. When we believe in the Rapture (by this I mean truly believe so that it affects my decisions and expectations of life in a real way, every day) then we come to believe that *"all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to his purpose"* Rom 8:28. We have confidence that God brings light out of darkness. But then again, believing in the Rapture seems to depend on yielding and listening to the advice of the Holy Ghost. Then again, yielding to the Holy Ghost (truly yielding) always leads to dying to self and living for Christ, the beloved savior and champion of salvation, the captain of our souls. So, round and round it must go just as life revolves day to day, each crucial spiritual frame of mind

and set of heart fixes itself to the other, passes by and affects the other, allowing the other to freely move while influencing its ability to move without friction, promoting by synchronization, the work of Christ in His Bride like no other spiritual or carnal working could ever do. Believing and living the requisites of the Rapture, believing and walking with the Spirit and believing in the power of the cross to deny self so that Christ may live more freely and fruitfully in us, these are the indispensable realities of spirit that must sprout and then find lively soil within the heart of a believer. Fruits of the spirit may then take deeper root and grow to thirty, sixty or even a hundredfold. Humility, meekness righteousness and love take precedence over worldly concern and the blessings promised on the mount of beatitudes of inheriting heaven and earth and great reward are insured.

We are without excuse if we are caught off guard, for the Word of God has instructed us in this matter of Brideship and we have been forewarned by Christ in many parables, dealings with saints and would-be disciples, as well as by His careful itemization of the prophetic Signs. We are led by the hand right up to the instant of Jesus' appearing and His Second Coming. When we understand the importance put on the Rapture by Christ and His apostles we should neither be cautious or fearful about delving into this mystery of the Rapture which accompanies the mystery of Christ and the church, nor surprised that Satan has tried to make it a matter of controversy and even fear among the churches. Paul pointed out that the Rapture is one of the mysteries of the Gospel. People have often become fearful, others discouraged in their faith, when the Rapture did not occur when they hoped it would. Wrong teachings and misunderstanding have wreaked havoc on whole segments of the Church over the course of this Age of Grace. A scatter-brain mentality about detecting and observing the Signs of Christ's Return has discredited the prophetic scriptures in the minds of otherwise astute ministers causing them to miss this most vital motivational tool of Christ's labor of hope to present unto Himself a church without spot or wrinkle, holy and without blemish. Christ chided

the smart men and know-it-alls of His day for knowing how to read the skies for accurate weather forecasts but not taking care to examine or notice the signs of the times that would have given them balance and bearings for salvation and spiritual matters. There is no substitute which can produce the fruitful effects in a prospective Bride like hope in the Rapture. Without hope in the Rapture and belief in the Rapture there will be no Rapture for that uncaring and faithless person. It will not matter how many times they have named the name of Christ or how many sacraments they compiled like merit badges. The complacent and uncaring will not hear the sound of the trumpet signaling the moment. Jesus said things like Watch! Pray! Take heed! See that you are ready! Do not say God is delaying His return! Many of the parables reveal details of instruction concerning vital matters of the Rapture. The Signs of the Return of Christ lead in a direct line to the Rapture and subsequent or related events, including the destiny and riches of the Bride of Christ.

The Rapture is the hope that purifies...

for when we see Him we shall be made like Him. It is the moment of consummation. We are told to comfort one another with these words, this means that hope in the Rapture is designed to be a consolation for trials and tribulations of the cross, and for the submission it takes to walk in the Spirit. Hope in the Rapture sustains the tougher requirements of perfection in the spiritual life: denying self and yielding the Spirit. Because the Rapture is a motivator to perfection and holiness, a source of consolation and comfort, and a hope for deliverance, as well as, the moment the Bride receives her reward for fidelity and steadfast love, it has been a primary target in Satan's battle against the churches. It is natural that something so spiritually profound and important like the Rapture would engender endless debate and massive controversy among the churches from the very first day Jesus began to teach on

it. Satan will stop at nothing to muddle so great a promise as the deliverance of His Bride from harm's way, especially when it is so important to the virtue and spiritual chastity of Christ's espoused wife.

Church leaders have fought against the idea of spiritual perfection tooth and nail, even though Jesus had clearly called some to perfection. Take, for instance, the rich youth to whom He said to give away all his wealth to the poor and come follow Him if he would be perfect. Suddenly the youth's spirit sank and he went away sad. So was Christ. The Rapture is the goal line, the tape, the moment of securing perfection eternally. Either we get there, run the race well, or we fall short. You do not want to fall short. The consequences will include a heap of trouble that will be so overwhelming that most humans will not be able to overcome. When the Rapture does occur in that split second, it will all be abruptly, irreversibly over. This is why it is the great prize, it secures ultimate immutable perfection, while escaping by God's grace that great temptation that is coming on the earth to try every man's soul and threaten their realization of ultimate immortality and eternally secure perfection. Should anyone be so arrogant, does the Bride-spirit lack so much in humility to think it can stand any temptation? Every human's life stands as a proof that no man can withstand all temptation without being overcome at some point. The Bride should not think of herself as the rock that her husband is, for only He can stand every temptation thrown His way. This is why he advises her and expects a reverence and submission to Him by His espoused wife. Not that He may lord it over her for power's sake, but that she can stand in His shadow and have Him defeat temptation for her and in her behalf. She needs to submit to His will and direction at all times for her own good. This is why the controversy rages. Satan wants to take away all the power of the Rapture, the power to console, purify with hope, to encourage to wait and watch for deliverance, to flee youthful lusts and to be found in a state of walking with the Spirit, shouldering our cross, rather than partying and living for ourselves or our own amusement or aggrandizement

or in dark fear because we do not know where we shall end up after our sojourn through this life. Do not be afraid of the Rapture, or prophecy, or judgment, but rather be prepared to meet Him on that day as a Bride looking for her bridegroom. Should not a bride be scrubbed, cleaned, adorned and beautiful when the ceremony begins? Believing in the Rapture makes us want to be Rapture-ready.

96. The Divine Nature

Introduction

by T Myers Smith

Striving For the Mark of the Prize of the High Calling in Christ Jesus.

Seeking to be imbued spiritually with the Divine Nature is the most direct way of gaining the approval of God. God came and died for us so that we could become like Him. Receiving Jesus as our mentor and leader in all things is the most certain way for us to pursue that quest when he said to us, “*Be ye perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect.*” This is not convenient for us but it is the best way to pursue the highest mark and to win the greatest prize which is the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

“Yes doubtless, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,

And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and

*reaching forth unto those things which are before,
I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God
in Christ Jesus.*

*Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and
if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even
this unto you.*

*Nevertheless, where to we have already attained, let us walk
by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.*

*Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which
walk so as ye have us for an ensample.” Philippians 3:8-17*

It is now time that we continue our Journey to Brideship by examining the rarified realm of the Spirit where the believer can be delivered from their own carnal degradation and be changed in the core of their being by being true partakers of God's perfect Divine Nature.

The very prospect of having our very nature changed is impossible, even unimaginable, except when one believes in the miraculous power of the Grace of the Almighty, who by His Will and love for us can deliver yielded believers from their bondage to sin and lead them into the glorious light of His dear Son, Jesus Christ by the wisdom of the Holy Ghost.

This, no doubt is one of the great mysteries of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But, the Bible tells all those who have ears to hear, that it is for believers to know the mysteries of God, and that God keeps them hidden from the faithless world.

It is not God's intent that people should just be born-again and live for themselves. All those who claim to love God with their whole being should strive for the highest things of godliness and love. What could be higher than to take God up on His offer to be freed from ourselves, to pick up our cross daily, walk with the Spirit and believe God for His promises of a life in the kingdom to come? What could be greater than His offer to allow us to be partakers of His Divine Nature?

Then we can understand why the three essentials of the wheel of

perfection (the cross, the Spirit and belief in the Rapture) are indeed essential to our perfection; to partaking of His Nature.

The greatest proof of our adherence to the demands of 'perfection' will be our ability to enter into the exceeding great promises which allow us to shed the influence of our human nature, enabling us to become regular partakers of the Divine Nature of God itself. This of course, is a miracle of miracles for it is not possible to have our nature changed in any other way, but in Christ it is more than a possibility, it is an offer no serious, sober minded believer could reasonably refuse.

Granted, the transforming of our nature is a momentous and humanly impossible thing. It surely requires a moment to moment vigil, a living in the now, where yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery but today is, as the scripture says, the Day of Salvation. It demands a vitality and dynamic life. The transformation is coaxed and generated only when we yield to faith and let the Holy Spirit direct the Divine Nature to trump our own frail and wispy nature. The rigors of 1. denying self 2. walking in the Spirit, and 3. believing God for all His personal promises to us, especially the Rapture are the focal points of a daily life that looks for the Divine Nature to dominate in our heart and soul.

A person can actually have the Divine Nature override the human nature which naturally opposes that of God. Point by point, our sub-section: entitled Partakers of the Divine Nature attempts to convey and instruct the believer on the finer points of each aspect of the Divine nature as outlined in the Book of 2 Peter chapter 1.

In the first section of the Bride Side (sanctified/perfect) we have taught that Christ resuscitates, invigorates and feeds His children with truth and faith, with the good things of God, so that He can build the child of God into a disciple of His, mature, spiritual, strong in knowledge, with understanding and wisdom, to perceive the difference between spiritual and carnal matters of the world from which He has extracted them.

Christ will fully equip any faithful believer with all the means to walk freely and humbly in this life, as long as that believer will

consent to cleave to Him and depart from iniquity; not casually falling back to old ways, but walking upright in newness of life as befits the new creation that he has made them.

We have begun our new life and its ways by being born again. The believer, if paying due attention, will be introduced to the basic building blocks (the proteins of spiritual life if you will) the Word of God, the nature and truth of Church, and the relationship and inner workings of the Trinity (Godhead) which is the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. These three essentials, Word, Church and Trinity serve as the platform upon which the foundational and fundamental things of godly growth can be taught and built. Once a person becomes born again (and we teach, not until then) the maturing process can begin in earnest.

The Bible itself has given us an outline of six fundamental spiritual truths, or requirements, to which the believer must conform if that believer is to move on to higher states of freedom and spirituality in Christ. These foundational and principal concerns are depicted in Hebrews 6:1-3 as such:

“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit.”

We have striven in the first section to go into detail describing the ‘nuts and bolts’ operation of each one of these six principle and foundational essentials with a handful of pages and articles on each to increase believer’s knowledge and wisdom. The seven great areas where God has pleaded with Christians not to be ignorant have also been elaborated on so that the student of God’s Word can consider them in deeper private study as they peruse the Bible’s depths for themselves. We have described how these essentials come to be a part of the believer to aid in true discipleship and various ways in which they come alive in the believer, so that a person can be led

out of darkness and brought into the marvelous light of Christ, so that their walk to Brideship may be hastened along. It is now that we begin to move beyond the fundamental matters of Christ and in faith we ask God to permit us and “let us go on unto perfection” – a purified/perfection.

The first article linked in The Divine Nature sub-section is somewhat of an introductory article itself and is entitled: Deliver Us From Ourselves. The article calls attention to one of the most critical mistakes that the children of Israel ever made when they rejected God's leadership and demanded a king to rule over them so they could be like the other nations. It brings home the point that the perfection of being purified in our very nature must begin by being delivered from self and accepting God's sovereign leadership and authority over our whole being, body, soul and spirit. This is the starting place for a higher perfection, where love, the promoter of reverence and duty to God, can find vigor and without which no proper perfection can be acquired or attained. As the section of being separated (or sanctified) began with new birth (born-again) this sub-section, Partaking of the Divine Nature also begins with a newness. It is the greater effervescence of God's power to reign within a believer's nature to subdue his carnal character and bring it under the sway of spiritual things with power. It is accomplished only when we have been willing to step fully into the what we have termed the 'wheel of perfection'.

Peter refers to the “exceeding great promises” in his second epistle which tips us off to the potential that we can be divested of our own earthly and sinful nature and actually be partakers of the Divine Nature. Primary among these “exceeding great promises” are the promises of the opportunity and reality of picking up our cross and denying self, living and walking in the Holy Spirit and having our hope pinned exclusively in the world to come (which is eminently represented in the abiding hope of the mystery of the Rapture.) 2 Peter 1:1-11 reports on the wonders of this high spiritual phenomenon offered to faithful believers in the following way.

“Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:

Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,

According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

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

And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” 2 Peter 1:1-11

This is the promise of perfection. By all diligence, by believing in these “exceeding great promises” we can become partakers of the Divine Nature by faith and thereby, “make our calling and election sure”.

How awesome a promise is this, given to those who strive to have

their human nature regularly capitulate to the Divine Nature! How awesome that we can partake of the divine in our soul and spirit by striving to have built in us by the Spirit the Tower of Love; God patiently allowing us to have each attribute built by experience and trial one layer at a time by faith through His power to do so. God will work to add to our faith – virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and finally, even love if we will be diligent in our concessions to His Spirit.

What a declaration of the Good News!

In this section: Partakers of The Divine Nature we hope to increase the understanding of these righteous characteristics of the Divine while also showing the contrasting difference between human and natural ways and the divine and perfect way. Divine love is not the same as human ideas and expression of love – far from it. The same holds true for virtue, knowledge, godliness and all the rest of the declared attributes of Divine Nature.

Each of the subjects of Divine Nature observed and discussed on our pages can serve the disciple of Christ best as “food for thought” for exploring and pursuing the unfathomable depths of every aspect of the Divine.

The exploration is an inexhaustible mine deeper than the universe itself. Who can know the depths of the beauty and majestic glory of God; the pursuit is new every day, because His mercies are new each morning. They are applied in the daily toils, conflicts and adventures of life. Partaking of the Divine Nature demands prayer regularly and deserves the vigilance of an eagle eye. Those who enter into the belief that they can become partakers of God's Nature will experience a death of self and the unspeakable exuberance of the resurrection of Christ in them.

There is no resurrection without a death.

We must have our nature die so that God's may find freedom and release through our denial of self. The believer must have a constantly fertile ground for the Divine to spring to life. This is the field we must first till.

97. Experience The Divine Nature

Peter Told Us Of God's Offer To:

by T Myers Smith

Enter by the exceeding great promises which God has made to us that we may be partakers of the Divine Nature ...

The Divine Nature is built in us through trials and experiences of our faith. Its builder is the Holy Spirit, who as the master of our experience builds this tower of spiritual maturity in any devoted and diligent believer who is willing to concede and yield to His gentle hand.

It is a building project not within the scope or power of man's intelligence, religion or philosophies. God is its architect; Christ is the supervisor, just as he is the author and finisher of our faith.

Through experience, both bitter and sweet, we learn to bow to His guidance and Nature and allow the Spirit to nurture it into godliness and true holiness so that it rules over the will of our own soul and spirit.

Our unholy and weak nature can be refurbished when we, with patience, allow God's makeover to transform us into a completely new creation. It is when we submit ourselves to this rebuilding and renewal process, so finely detailed in the apostle Peter's second letter, that the promise of "*old things are passed away, all things are become new*" 2 Cor 5:17 is formed and actualized in a believer's life, even in this world.

The pinnacle, the ultimate, the bell tower if you will, of this spiritual house is divine love. Each layer, each course and block is laid with the mortar of god's grace, each facet of its construction stands in contrast, for all the angels and all spiritually perceptible

people, against Nimrod's Tower of Confusion (Babel), as a tower of love and holiness.

Each level rests squarely upon the succeeding attributes of divine nature one after the other, until the perfect nature of God becomes a solid living part of the 'inner man'. By faith we have them added; they are living because we have believed in that 'exceeding great promise' that God can embed Divine love within our soul when we are ready and willing to receive the Holy Ghost, deny ourself and yield to The Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost and their glorious, miraculous powers of conversion. Who can deny that the word in 1 Peter is an exceeding great promise, one to excite us into higher faith, and that God wants the faithful believer to be 'perfected' in love?

The first level mentioned is Virtue, followed in order by knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness and brotherly kindness. the whole being capped off with the bright gilding of divine love.

On these pages of 'Divine nature' are offered insights and analysis of each of the layers of the Tower of Love which can be built in us by God when we desire to adhere closely to the voice of the Spirit and the Word of God.

God desires that we will be filled with His Spirit and Word and will have built in us, even in a perfectly and orderly fashion, this whole construction of love, until the whole is complete and we are walking and partaking of His Divine Nature in love and power.

98. Biblical Twin Peaks

Divine Knowledge

Mount of Beatitudes < | > Mount of Olives

by

LeRoy Gardenier

There's just something about a mountain
that reaches to the sky,
That speaks of things eternal;
of hope that never dies...

A quick glance at the index of any biblical map will indicate at least twenty different mountains named in the Old Testament. A total tally of significant spiritual experiences associated with geographical high places would probably exceed the most careful count. Mount Sinai is, of course, the most outstanding eminence of ancient times, but mounts Ebal and Gerizim, though lesser known, were remarkably meaningful in their own right. In chapters 27-28 of Deuteronomy, Moses and the elders of Israel publicly proclaimed what could be called their last will and testament. Knowing that they had forfeited the right to enter the Promised Land, these aged leaders commanded Joshua and all their spiritual heirs to assemble before mounts Ebal and Gerizim soon after they had entered Canaan.

Half of the twelve tribes were to gather over against Mount Ebal where an altar had been built and the commands of the Law were graven on whitewashed stones. On Mount Ebal the lengthy list of curses connected with disobedience were ominously announced.

The other group of six tribes stood before Mount Gerizim where the many blessings attached to obedience and faithfulness to God were joyfully proclaimed.

The dozen or so blessings are contrasted with twice as many curses provoked by persistent lack of gratitude and non-appreciation. As Deut. 28:47 puts it: "Because thou servest not the Lord thy God with joyfulness and with gladness of heart for the abundance of all things." If we get nothing else from reading the two chapters of Deuteronomy and their fulfillment in Joshua chapter 8, we should ask the Lord for a spirit of appreciation for the abundance of specific, generous provisions He has already supplied for us. Thus, the idea of twin peaks of God's knowledge were His Word came forth for His people was established.

CALVARY'S CURSE TURNS INTO SPIRITUAL BLESSING

The most meaningful mount associated with God's New Covenant is Calvary. It was there that: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Galatians 3:13 and made it possible for us to become knowledgeable in the mysteries of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. When we are living and walking in Christ our spiritual lives are freed from the curses and blessings of Ebal and Gerizim under the law and we are free to range the breadth of the hallowed way between two sacred spiritual mounts: the first of salvation and the second of Christ's promised Return. Symbolically the children's route now follows the broad and vast plain of Redemption freely won on Calvary's pinnacle. Our way begins at the Mount of Beatitudes somewhere in Galilee and ends at the well-known Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. Both mounts are stations of blessing connected by the path of the spiritual life. The nine beatitudes taught on the mount by our Blessed Savior in Matthew 5:3-12 are clearly explained and carefully elaborated on in chapters 5-7 of that same gospel. These "principles of Kingdom living," as they are referred to, are so contrary and opposed to all personal and public programs for happiness and success that only the Holy Ghost can make them real and meaningful in our supernatural lives. They must be comprehended only by spiritual knowledge, a knowledge that is acquired by only those who are willing to first admit that they do not know, cannot know them by earthly knowledge. If the pupil will allow God's Spirit to work these

precepts into our daily routine we are assured of salvific results - we become the salt of the earth and lights to the world (see Matt.-5:13-16).

TWIN PEAKS MARK SPIRITUAL BLESSING

We should know that the Second Coming of Christ comprises two distinct parts: His coming FOR His saints and His coming WITH His saints. The former event is called The Rapture, or the great catching up of both the living and the dead IN CHRIST (see 1 Thess 4:13-18). The latter aspect of His coming is clearly forecast in Zechariah 14: 4, "And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives which is before Jerusalem on the east and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south." So, we have the twin peaks of fullness of salvation in the Beatitudes and the glorious Second Coming as the sure promise of Jesus' soon return as shining beacons and prominent landmarks bracketing both the start and the goal of our spiritual walk. Lengthy discourses and profound supernatural truths are associated with each earthly location. We need to linger long at the Mount of Beatitudes. Sitting at the feet of Jesus and communing with the Holy Ghost, we learn to understand and apply the accomplishments of Calvary and the realities of "Resurrection" life. Through our salvation we are given ... "exceeding great and precious promises that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature." 2 Peter 1:4. Appreciating the Sermon on the Mount and applying its precepts of salvation to our workaday lives, we add to our faith - virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness and brotherly kindness with the guarantee of living gracious and fruitful lives (see 2 Peter 1:5-8).

Many notable events of our Lord's earthly life are associated with the Mount of Olives. The details of His second advent are paramount to the concept and reality of brideship. If we are "born in Zion," as the psalmist tells us, we have the right and duty to dwell in Zion with our eyes fixed on the eastern sky; that is, looking for His sudden appearing and soon return. That eastward perspective from

Mount Zion necessarily takes in the Mount of Olives which, in its spiritual symbolism, involves all commands and warnings about the end times given in Matt 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21!

VALLEY OF GOSPEL BLESSINGS

Besides the two lofty heights represented by The Sermon on the Mount and The Olivet Discourse, the Lord Jesus has given us the narrow, but secure, path of continued care and assured kindness. In between the essential teachings concerning salvation and the certain signs of His coming again, the Gospels reveal a corridor of blessings that are seven-fold. Starting with the proper personal attitude we should take towards the Savior recorded in Matt 11:6 and His closing warning to be watchful servants in Luke 12:37, our Lord mentions five other sources of special benediction. In Matt 16:17 Jesus tells Peter how incredibly beneficial it has been for him to have been given revelation knowledge. A study of these first three “blesseds” should help us all appreciate more deeply our intimate relationship with God through a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus. The final four citations confirm the importance of our continuing concern about His impending apocalypse. Matt 24:46 contains the promise of universal rulership given to faithful and wise servants who feed His flock with the meat of His Word. Matt 25:34 contains the blessing of Kingdom inheritance to be given at the judgment of the nations. Luke 11:28 reminds us of the superiority of spiritual kinship over even the deepest, most intimate and fondly cherished human ties.

The songwriter I quoted at the head of this article – I believe Bill Gaither was the composer – concludes the first verse by saying: So I'll look unto the mountains, and put my faith in Him.

The anointed psalmist asks and replies: “Shall I lift up mine eyes unto the hills? Whence should my help come? My help cometh from the Lord which made heaven and earth.” Ps 121:1-2 As we look unto the mountains where our loving Lord first revealed the awesome realities of His redemption plan - the availability of salvation and the assurance of His earthly return - we should pray for increased faith to follow the path of personal blessing so clearly outlined in

the Gospels. We should not misunderstand or be offended in any way by the Person of the Savior; appreciating the exciting spiritual era in which we now live (great prophets and many saints of old have longed to see and hear about the prophetic fulfillments that have already been shown to us). But we should have gratitude for the grace of revelation knowledge and the gifts of the Spirit; a fervent desire to share the good things of God with His household; anticipation of and longing for the eternal inheritance prepared for us at His coming; the determination to carefully hear and steadfastly keep the Word of God; and, an upward, vigilant vision should keep us on the royal road of satisfied living through His personal presence and Scriptural promises!

99. Joshua Teaches Us To Be Courageous

Virtue: Take courage and Stand

by T Myers Smith

Dear Christian – Be of good courage and you too will see the works of the Lord as you enter into his promises.

”Joshua fit the battle of

Jer-i-cho ...

Jer-i-cho ...

Jer-i-cho.

“Joshua fit the battle of Jer-i-cho. And the walls came tumbling down.”

These words from an old Black slave spiritual are about all I knew of Joshua while growing up. I was aware that he had led the army of God against the city of Jericho and at his trumpet blast the walls which secured the wicked city came tumbling down and Israel's army came pouring over the rubble.

It was a neat story, but I could not identify with the story's champion, Joshua. It was nothing more than a neat story about a legendary guy who did an incredible thing. But the Old Testament figure, Joshua, like so much of the Old Testament, is a shadow of spiritual reality which comes bubbling alive when we come to know Jesus. The Book of Joshua summarizes the story of Israel and how they took possession of the Promised Land. The book opens with Joshua, who has just been anointed as successor to Moses, receiving reassurance from God that he will be with Joshua the same as he was with Moses.

Every Christian can take heart in the exhortation which God personally makes to Joshua as Joshua prepares to embark on his mission of faith. God's exhortation is about courage. Four times in

the first chapter alone, Joshua is exhorted to be of good courage. Here is a man renowned in history for courage, whose fame as a mighty and courageous man of God has stood for thousands of years, and yet he had to be encouraged and reminded by God to be of good courage. Each one of us can identify with Joshua because no matter how brave we seem we need to gather our courage as Joshua did. Just as Joshua did, we can find courage in God's comforting words and the promises that God personally makes to us.

Learning to exercise faith creates a courageous heart in us. Just as Joshua had to be courageous enough to trust God so faith is built in us when we muster the courage to trust the Lord. Joshua oversaw the great miracle of Israel entering into the Promised Land and in the process saw many wonderful miracles. He saw the sun stop; the Jordan River dry up; the walls of Jericho fall; hailstones from heaven fall on the Amorite army; and more; but through it all Joshua had to trust God and be of good courage.

Dear Christian – Be of good courage and you will see the works of the Lord as you enter into his promises.

100. Gifts & Fruits

Also for the Unifying of the Body

by Eloise Gardenier

The purpose here is to show that the Gifts of the Spirit are indeed for today and are valuable tools for the maturing of the Church when properly used; and that they are meant to aid in the growth of the Fruits of the Spirit, leading to the ultimate of all fruits: love. Let us start with a scripture from 1 Corinthians.

“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren; I would not have you ignorant!

Now there are diversities of the gifts, but the same Spirit.

And there are differences of administrations but the same Lord.

And there are diversities of operations but it is the same God which worketh all in all.” Vs.12:1, 4-6

First of all, let's examine three particularly meaningful words.

1. Diversities– meaning variety and differences, showing us what the gifts are for and how they fulfill the various and complex needs of the body of Christ.

2. Administrations– meaning servants, aids, officials, ministration, ministries. We can assume that the gifts of the Spirit are administered by different servants, officials, ministries, etc.

3. Operations– effects and workings. The gifts take place in different ways with different effects and their operation can occur in diverse ways, even novel, or unconventional ways. To cite a few of the diverse ways the gifts are administered: dreams, through the word, by a prophet, visions, similitudes, miracles, a still small voice, teachings, testimony or direct revelation. Yet they must be a manifestation of the working Trinity; One Spirit, One Lord, the

One and same God that works all in all. Father, Son and Holy Ghost always in harmony.

“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal”. vs 7 The gifts are for everyone, so that all may profit from their flow among the saints. The gifts of the Spirit are: word of wisdom, word of knowledge, faith, healings, working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, divers kinds of tongues and interpretation of tongues. Vs. 11 and 12 say; *“But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit dividing to every man severally as He will. For as the body is one, and hath many members of that one body, so also is Christ.”* The last half of v.31 reads: *“But covet earnestly the best gifts”.* Paul exhorts us that we should not be ignorant of the gifts of the Spirit. But that we should know what they are, and should understand what they are for. There are a variety of gifts, they are administered by many different servants and ministries, and happen or are manifested in a multitude of effects, operations and workings. In this day of the restored Church, the gifts have become available for every person regardless of education or sophistication. The prophet Joel 2:28 promised that in the last days God would restore all things to the Church: *“And it will come to pass afterward that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions, and also upon the servants and the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.”* Over the past hundred to one-hundred and fifty years this promise has come to pass in the Church at a large. All people of every age and persuasion, of both genders and every class of society have become partakers of the unction and power provided by the gifts of the Spirit of God.

What else for, but to profit all of body of Christ. When the verse saying, *“But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit dividing to every man severally as He will”* is understood we should know that it is not by our will, but by the Spirit’s will that we are given and receive the various gifts. He gives to those of us as He chooses. *“For as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of that body, being many, are one body so also is*

Christ.” vs.12 Even though the body has many members it is meant to make up one unit, with Christ as its head. In vs. 31 Paul tells us to “*covet earnestly the best gifts*”. The word, covet means here: to have warmth of feeling for, earnestly have desire, move with envy, be jealous over, be zealous. So we are being told to earnestly desire these gifts, to even be jealous about obtaining them, and to be zealous in our search for them, in our willingness to receive them. In 1 Corinthians 14:38-40, Paul cautions us that “*If any man be ignorant concerning these matters, let him be.*” If someone wants to be ignorant of what the gifts of the Spirit are, what they are for, or that they are even for us today, let him be ignorant. But let it not hinder us, nor be a stumbling block to us. “*Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues.*” Once more the word covet is used. We should desire, covet, look for, hope for, search for the gifts of prophecy, and forbid not to speak with tongues. Most of us have encountered those who would like to argue with us about whether the gifts really are for today and are not used any longer, but I tell you saints – the gifts are for today! Naturally, it would be rude to reject a gift from a friend or family member at, say Christmas time. Why is it not rude and insulting to reject or disregard the gifts of the Holy Ghost?

Gifts of the Spirit are for growing fruits of the Spirit

Faith is the soil in which the fruits grow. The gifts are like the water, food and light that give growth to the fruits. The ministers of the offices of the Church, such as pastors, teachers, prophets, apostles and evangelists are the ones who are supposed to do the tending, the watering, the fertilizing, weeding and such so that the fruits may grow to maturity. We believe that the gifts of the Spirit are given to edify, encourage, and build up the body in Christ, but also to help us mature. When Jesus went away He left them as precious aids for

us, through the working of the Holy Spirit. They are there so that we might grow up into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ and, most importantly, to nourish and grow the fruits of the Spirit. It is not an overstatement to say that the gifts are given almost exclusively for our protection and for the growth of mature fruit in us, that we can render unto God what is his. Jesus told us at the last supper that the one thing will glorify our Father in heaven; fruit that he is able to grow in us.

Nine fruits of the spirit are enumerated in Gal 5:22-26; *“But the fruit of the Spirit is: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law”*. Only faith is both a gift and a fruit! I suspect this is because faith enables us to receive gifts and grow fruits. *“And they that are Christ’s; have crucified the flesh with the affection and lusts.”* If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit! If we desire and exercise the gifts of the Spirit and lay hold of the fruits, it helps us to shed the works of the flesh which are found in Gal 5:19-21. (Look them up!) Those who do the works of the flesh shall not inherit the kingdom of God! So it is that with the help of the gifts of the Spirit we are able to put aside the works of the flesh and have our lives more and more ruled by the fruits of the Spirit. Why do we want the fruits of the Spirit? I believe we find the answer in Eph. 4:11-16; *“And he gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”* Isn’t it wonderful to know what our ministers are for – 1.) the perfecting of the saints, 2.) the work of the ministry and 3.) for the edifying of the body of Christ! *“Until we all come in the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man”*. What a promise! It is possible for us to be perfect day by day according to how well we hear God’s voice and do it.

What will that do for us? *“We will henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine”* *“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things which is the head even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined*

together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." Love is the ultimate goal.

The second part of 1 Cor. 12:31 says; "Yet show I unto you a more excellent way". Chapter 13, also known as the "love chapter", follows. Here we are taught that if we have all the gifts and have not charity (love) then we are just a noise-maker – big talker – and nothing more. This chapter describes what love is and how it behaves. We are informed that when that which is perfect (Jesus) is come; we will no longer need the gifts of the Spirit for we shall see Him face to face as He is. We are also exhorted to grow up and put away childish things. We are told that we shall always have faith, hope, and charity (love); but the greatest of these is love. In John 13:34 we are reminded that Jesus commands us to love one another as He has loved us. What a difficult but desirable end to reach for, saints. The ultimate fruit rendered unto God by His disciple, servant, friend and child – heir to all things.

101. Deliver Us from Ourselves

Let Him Be Our Leader

by Roy Gardenier

In 1 Samuel 8 we read about a very significant event in the history of Israel. A delegation of elders comes to the aging Samuel to complain about the unjust rule of his two sons and to demand an unheard of thing: an earthly king to rule over them in order that their nation might become like the other nations. Samuel is upset by this request and seeks the Lord on the matter. God assured his faithful servant: *"Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee; for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not be king over them"*. 1 Sam. 8:7-9

Slowly, clearly, carefully Samuel spells out the situation and all the unfavorable implications of their request. He uses the very words that God has given him. He shows the people that their desire for a king involves a decided change of heart and spells out all the disadvantages of seeking an earthly king to replace God as their Ruler. God does not batter down the locked doors of hearts that are closed, but if the people hardened their hearts in this matter, things would never really be the same again for them as a nation.

God had led His people out of bondage of the oppressive Egyptian government, had guided them firmly but tenderly throughout the difficult wilderness years, had shown them, step by step how to defeat their enemies and how to secure the land He had prepared for them. As their sovereign King, the Lord was fulfilling in detail every aspect of the covenant that He had made with HIS Chosen Ones. But now the people as a nation were again not satisfied. Now they were demanding of God, through Samuel, something that God had never promised them – the hope of becoming a people who are

like the other nations. This demand would cause the people to lose their uniqueness and to fall into a more subtle type of bondage.

God knew that His people wanted and needed human leadership as well as His own Divine Guidance and He had made adequate provision for this. But God also knew that His chosen people, His elect, His called out ones, did not need to be “*like all the nations*” 1 Sam. 8:5. Israel was insisting upon a change in their position that would irrevocably alter their relationship with the Lord. But God remains faithful; He does not change. Men and nations do! They want deliverance – for a while; but then, it seems they want deliverance from deliverance which adds up to saying that, in some instances, humans really prefer bondage!

In Jeremiah 17:9-10 we read: “*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart; I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings*”

Bearing in mind the foregoing incident in Israel's history, I think we can draw a meaningful parallel in reference to some trends and teachings prevalent in the Church today. In inviting Jesus into our life as Saviour and Lord we accept Him as our King. Jesus is the Baptizer in the Holy Spirit, and wanting all that God has to offer us, we allow ourselves to be immersed in Divine Love and begin to experience what it means to be led by the Spirit of God. We exult in the reality of true freedom, “*the liberty of the children of God*” Rom. 8:21. Under the Lordship of Jesus, we become spiritual and take God's commandment seriously: “*Make not provision for the flesh*” Rom. 13:14. We submit to God's direct guidance and begin to be discipled by God Himself. Like the Israelites of old, we keep our eyes on the cloud and the pillar, as God Himself leads us out of bondage, through the wilderness, into the land that He must conquer and continually secure for us.

When we have yielded to the Holy Ghost we are given the understanding that God uses all kinds and conditions of men and all manner of circumstances and situations to keep us out of bondage and enable us to experience the imperturbable rest that Jesus has

secured for us in spite of and in the midst of the tribulation (pressure) of the world.

“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” John 16:33

Praise God! Jesus has overcome the world and in Him we have peace; in Him we have security; in Him we have confidence; in Him we have everything! The wise people of the world will always try to explain just exactly how God operates, but those who are directly submitted to God alone, their confidence, their assurance is not contingent upon the clearest explanations or the most clever systems devised by the most eminent and wisest of humans, for:

“The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; And ye are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s.” 1 Cor 3:20-23

It is so wonderful and exciting to lead a spiritual life! What a glorious adventure; what a magnificent challenge; what a beautiful relationship! God, our loving Father, knows just what we need and graciously supplies it. Usually, we ourselves only know what we want. By the living example of His life, death and resurrection, Jesus lovingly teaches us the truth about the two worlds that we continually experience and reassures us that His world is the real world. The Holy Ghost quickens the Word to our spirit, builds us up *“into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ”*. Eph. 4:15, reminding us that *“without faith it is impossible to please Him.”* Heb. 11:6

Satan, the enemy of our souls, the great deceiver, is determined that we will not become and remain spiritual. The devil is not at all disturbed about our becoming religious. We can become Baptists, Episcopalians, Roman Catholics, etc. without phasing him one bit.

I'm sure he's not overly disturbed if we become Pentecostal, evangelical or even Charismatic. And you can be doubly sure that our ancient adversary is working overtime to make certain that spiritual people fall into the trap of over-emphasizing some aspect of their spiritual walk. If Satan can get us tangled up in one or more doctrinal-moral disputes or side issues so that our eyes are more on human ideas rather than on Jesus, then he has caused us to fall back into a type of bondage more subtle than the kind from which we were delivered.

Satan would have us become more concerned about the idea that we've been baptized in the name of Jesus only, or that we have absolutely infallible knowledge about how and when to keep the Sabbath, or that we're a bona fide, card-carrying Children of God person, or that we're a sheep submitted to shepherd X who in turn is submitted to pastor Y, who is being discipled by Mr. Big Evangelist, etc. etc. Satan would much rather have us involved in this type of thing than to have us keep our eyes on Jesus as our King and our mind on the mammoth truth so simply stated in Psalm 23:1; *"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."* Our common enemy wants to do a number on us as he did upon our forefathers in the faith making us believe that there is something lacking in our walk with God. If he can't intimidate us in this area, the devil will try to make us strive for something that God has never promised us simply because we, like our predecessors, have an innate desire to be like the other nations. We thrill to the challenge of coming out from among them and being separate (2 Cor 6:17 & 18); yet, at the same time we still want to be like the rest of men in that we long to be assured that we belong to or are intimately associated with someone or some group closely connected with, yet distinct from, God. Herein lays the danger: the wrong desire to be like the other nations; the distorted determination to have a king other than God Himself. I believe that this is a rather subtle, but a very real temptation. The Israelites succumbed to it. I'm convinced it involves a failing of faith. God's Word tells us it involves a rejection of God. I'm certain that this temptation is prevalent today.

"Make us a king to judge us" 1 Samuel 8:5 is an imperious demand. I feel that this command can issue from the heart of any Christian at any time, no matter what the circumstances or the duration of his walk with the Lord. God is always faithful, but there is always the possibility of our becoming unfaithful, or at least less faithful. I know that this particular temptation is currently more acute owing to an inordinate amount of emphasis on submission and discipleship which sprang up in the Church in the early 70's. Having a king must have seemed like a good thing to the leaders of Israel. Being a disciple of this particular teacher, having pastor X for a shepherd must seem exceedingly good to many Christians, especially to new Christians, and particularly to Christians, who have recently been led out of some form of bondage, who are very eager to know and to do the perfect will of God, and who are longing for direction as to how to handle their new-found freedom in the Spirit.

I feel that those who are in authority in the Church today must make good and true use of God's Holy Word which does, indeed, contain a history of the human heart. Like Samuel of old, we must be upset at anything that could lead to a rejection of God. Like God's faithful servants throughout the ages we must seek the Lord about the validity of any teachings no matter what the source. Should we see any inherent danger in any teaching, then, under the Spirit's firm guidance, we must "protest solemnly" as well as lovingly pose the questioning plea:

"Before you Gentiles knew God you were slaves to so-called gods that did not even exist.

And now that you have found God (or I should say, now that God has found you) how can it be that you want to go back again and become slaves once more to another poor, weak, useless RELIGION of trying to get to heaven by God's laws!

You are trying to find favor with God by what you do or don't do on certain days or months or seasons or years.

I fear for you, I am afraid that all my hard work for you was worth nothing.” Gal. 4:8-11, Living Bible

102. Aren't We Always The Last to Know!

Deliverance from demanding my own way

by T Myers Smith

God wants His children to be free. This is one of the first dreams of true Fatherhood: freedom for the children.

This is a testimony about the sort of freedom God is most interested in giving us – freedom from the weight of that personal sin which “so easily besets us.” It is a testimony about hearing God’s voice of deliverance and rejoicing in its truth, even if it is not too flattering when it is first heard in the heart.

I was not a novice Christian when this deliverance took place. I had already been a Christian for more than four years. I had already been delivered, by the grace of Jesus Christ, from many of the usual lusts that plague a young man early in his life. I had been an alcoholic, a drug addict, and all-around renegade. I had chased after “youthful lusts as the Scripture so discreetly puts it, and had suffered the repercussions that go along with such imprudence, foolishness, and gross conduct.

God had shown me that these things were not so much the sin themselves, but more a symptom of sin in me. I drank and did drugs because I liked the false sense of power, the loss of inhibitions, the pathetic courage, and the spirit that they excited in my soul. The real sin in me was things like; fear, selfishness, envy, hatred and rebellion. In the four years that I had been a Christian, God had shown me a great deal about these destructive forces dwelling within my flesh. Like Paul, I had been convinced by God’s gentle criticism to the point where I could definitely say, “*For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing.*” Romans 7:18

But I was by no means completely delivered or perfect. By my

zest for sin, I had piled up a wide-range beliefs and actions contrary to God's nature and way of doing and thinking. My wife has stated from time to time that I am the most confrontational person she has ever met. Though I think that is a slight exaggeration, it is part of my character. I like to try and sort things out at the moment of the controversy, rather than letting, to paraphrase the Bible, the "sun go down on my wrath". When we do that in the right spirit for the right reason, to try and get at a beneficial conclusion or understanding for everyone we are peacemakers. When we intimidate people to get our own way we are merely bullies.

I had always hated bullies. Maybe I had been bullied as a youngster. I don't know. I know I really cared about my peers and what they thought about me, so I know I was 'bullied' in that way into doing many things to people that were regrettable and worse. As a child, I had moved from one neighborhood to another. I became an experienced hand at dealing with bullies and trying to handle intimidating situations. In this, I was not unusual. The world is an intimidating place. I had felt the cruel hand of a bully more than once. I had seen the effects on unfortunate others and despised it.

When I became a Christian, I understood quickly that intimidation was one of the greatest weapons Satan uses to rob people of all sorts of good things in the spirit. He robs us of truth, health, love and righteousness by bullying tactics if he cannot do it by stealth. He can rob us even of joy, even salvation if we allow him to. Intimidation and bullying is among the stock-in-trade of Satan and his minions, and, of course, the spirit of the world, and wherever false religion is to be found. How unfitting it must be when we find it in the brethren. But sadly, it can be found even in the pious and devoted follower of Christ without one even being aware that it is hanging on grimly to the soul.

I had no trouble seeing that Satan is the bully of all bullies. I already knew that bullies only went away when confronted. As long as they were given free reign they would steal, rob and terrorize. I hated bullies and was on a mission, self-appointed, not God appointed to erase their influence anywhere I found it. I was sort of

a spiritual Wyatt Earp deputized by God for cleaning up Dodge City. Or, so I thought.

But, alas, what do we know about the depths of our own sin? Sin is a great deceiver and I couldn't have been more deceived about myself and my "mission" against bullies. Only Christ can show us the real truth and deliver the "bad news" to us in such a way that we are not condemned by it, but excited and happy about it instead. Our spirit leaps within us because it is the truth and we sense that the truth will set us free. This particular moment of freedom, brought by the truth of Jesus' word spoken in my heart came as many powerful moments of deliverance come. It came unexpected, with no public display and no supernatural manifestation of a spiritual gift. It came in a private moment with no one around to talk me out of it, explain it, or convince me otherwise.

I had argued over finances with my wife earlier that afternoon. It was nothing too violent, just another controversy in what seemed to be a growing series of arguments about who would control the bank account. It was the same series of debates and arguments that take place in thousands upon thousands of homes of young married couples across America every day. In most cases this jockeying for financial control is brought on by fear, greed, or control issues or some kind of lack of trust or worthiness by one or both parties. In Christ, this series of debates is often what is needed for things to be sorted out so they can be done the Lord's way. I don't remember the details of the fight but I do remember it was over the checkbook and who would be in charge of "keeping" it.

I remember that nothing had been resolved by the time I was forced to leave to keep an engagement. I don't know what I thought about on the 45-minute ride there. I was probably asking the Lord to enlighten my wife so she would be reasonable and see things my way. I was probably fuming about not having things done the way they ought to be done – the Terry Smith way. That is as good a guess as I can make but I honestly don't recall anything about the ride down. I don't even remember who I was going to see, or

the reason for my visit. But I do remember with absolute clarity a specific moment on the ride back.

Somehow, as I drove along the Lord had managed to calm me down and bring me to my senses. There was no radio going, just the steady hum of the van tires on the black pavement. I was enjoying the peace and quiet of being alone with the Lord. The Lord and I were conversing about this and that, probably about my wife's problems and how I could help her – I don't really remember the topic, just that the Lord and I were communing and my heart was growing with the sound of the Master's loving voice in my heart. Then suddenly, out of nowhere, the Lord changed the subject. It was an interjection that seemed to have nothing to do with the subject at first, but actually had everything to do with it.

He said to me, "You know, you're a bully."

Instantly, I thought to myself "I couldn't have heard that right. The Lord cannot possibly be talking about me. I hate bullies. I have always hated bullies. Bullies are just about the worst thing there is." I was caught completely off guard. If the Lord had said I was crazy, or reckless, or weak, or too loud, I could have readily believed it. If He had told me I was too uncaring or selfish, or egotistical, it might have figured. These flaws I knew were part of my "fallen" character. But BULLY? A BULLY, Lord?

"Not me? Lord. How can I be a bully? I hate bullies" I said. The Lord simply answered softly. "No, you're a bully".

Just as instantly as I had thought I could not have heard correctly, I knew in my heart it was true. I was a bully and had been all my life. I had used intimidation to get my way and had preyed on anyone who would submit to my tactics. I had learned it the way a person learns any trade secret of sin, by experience, example and trial and error. I'm sure demonic spirits had helped me along and I know my hatred of bullies fueled my obsession. The irony of sin often is that the very thing we hate, because we are hateful of it and not forgiving, is the very thing we turn into ourselves. Sin is a deceiver in this way. The sin of being a bully, intimidating people and feeding on their fears to get what one wants, had come in the back door and lodged in

my flesh. My own blindness and form of self-righteousness had kept it under wraps. I truly had no clue I was a bully. But I was. When I heard this news from the Lord, as shocking as it was, I was excited and thrilled. The Lord had said it to me in such a compassionate way that I knew He would help me dispose of this sin in my life. He would give me the grace, if I wanted Him to, to resist the temptation to prey on the weakness of a person just to get my way.

He would increase my faith to trust Him to work things out. I could lay down my weapons of intimidation. Getting people to do things the godly way was His problem and responsibility, not mine. I was so ecstatic about the prospect of being delivered from this flaw in my character that I wanted even more deliverance right then and there. I asked the Lord, “Is there anything else in my life that I need deliverance from?”

I believe if the Lord can be astounded He was with me in that moment. His Spirit replied, “Yes, Terry, but I won’t tell you now because you would not be able to comprehend it.” Let’s just take care of the bullying for now. I laughed a little at my own foolishness for asking such a dumb question and went back to gliding happily home on the belief that my bullying days were numbered. When I got home I went straight in the house and was greeted in the kitchen (that place where so much spiritual discussion seems to take place in our house) by my wife and parents. They may have still been concerned about the argument and the stewing problem of unresolved financial conflict in our home. I don’t know. They weren’t overly concerned or stressed out about it, but it was still hovering in the air when I greeted them. Excitedly, I began telling them about my exchange with the Lord. I told them I had some news for them. I said God had shown me I was a bully. They didn’t say it, they were too polite, but I saw it in their eyes – they had known I was a bully. This was not news – except to me. Just as no one has to tell a person who gets stung by a wasp that they feel pain, and no one has to inform the guy who slams his thumb with a hammer that he just got hurt, no one has to tell the victims of a bully that they have been bullied.

Inside I had to laugh. I was the last to know. Isn't that always the way. We're the last to know. Our sins are often so apparent to others and we are blinded by our own self-righteousness. But Christ came to give us light. When that light shines into the dark recesses of our heart we become enlightened and then we are freed. Then the shackles of sin are broken and we are free to take another step toward walking even as the Master walked when He humbly strode among men. We talked at length about bullies and how contrary it is to God's ways and the fruits of the Spirit. We talked about Christ's walk and His meekness. We talked about the glee of knowing the truth about ourselves and the promise of having the old man peeled away to reveal the new man like a worm that has burst forth from its cocoon as a beautiful soaring butterfly. Man, was I excited with anticipation. Another change in me was in the works.

A by-product of the revelation about my sin was that I gave the keeping of the checkbook over to my wife. That was many years ago and she's been its "keeper" ever since. Though it was not the way my father ran his household, it was the way the Lord wanted our household to operate. I can't tell you the number of times over the years that I have thanked God for working it out that I did not have the additional burden of doing the finances. It's a tremendously hard job. My wife had the time and was far better equipped to do it than I ever would have been. Fortunately, God knows what He is doing, because we certainly do not.

The revelation of my bullying tendencies did not mean I would never again encounter the problem or have to fend off its influences on my soul. I stay on my guard not to slip back into the "old man". That is always a possibility and as soon as I am alerted to its presence in my behavior I have to be willing to repent of it and turn back to trusting God. When I fall I need forgiveness, have to ask for forgiveness. I have learned that if I want God's will to be done, as it says in the Lord's prayer, then I can trust Him that it shall be done. What God asks of His people is not bullying, or hounding, or hoarding, or harassing people into doing His will, but faith in him and trying to be like him, hoping to be like him, to be a true partaker

of the Divine Nature. God does not bully people into doing the right thing, He convinces them by the power of the sweet Holy Spirit to do the right thing. What He asks of me is prayer and trust and obedience.

I thank God that He showed me I was a bully. I never liked bullies and I know that if I had come to the conclusion of my life and found out the truth, that I had been a bully, I certainly would not have liked myself at all. Jesus, by His God's honest truth, has freed me from recklessly and selfishly hurting others, but He has also freed me from being extremely disappointed in myself, from hurting myself. How kind God is to us all.

103. God's Love: A Temperate Balance of Truth and Mercy

Ultimate show of Temperance

by T Myers Smith

A great part of our Christian life should be spent praying and waiting so that the Lord can bring out the truth about our own condition, our relationship with God, our relationships with others and our place in God's overall plan of salvation. Jesus declared himself that being led into all truth is a principle work of the Holy Ghost, and though it is promised that the truth will set us free, it is also equally certain that a good deal of personal truth about ourselves is usually difficult to swallow and hardly ever flattering. When confronted with the truth Man is wise if he leans on God's forbearing arms.

Fortunately, the Lord does not require his people to deal with the plain, unvarnished truth without comfort and hope. God's wonderful mercy, which keeps those who seek Christ's righteousness from being crushed by despair and guilt, is always there to save us from truth's uncompromising and otherwise deadly weight. God's love is weighed out on a heavenly scale with the counterweights of truth and mercy balanced so precisely and perfectly that it creates a unique and fearless kind of love that can only come from an all knowing and perfect God.

We cannot ever duplicate pure love we can only hope to be obedient to its direction and sensitive to its operation in all that we do. For example, we could never find the delicate balance of truth and mercy that can enable us to unequivocally love our enemies. Mercy and truth can be so delicately and exactly balanced that it cannot only save the repentant man from sin and death, but it can deliver him from every temptation and evil in his life and lead

him to victory after victory so as to make his life pleasing to God. Psalm 85:10 says, *"Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other."* Truth and mercy are love's two pillars which Christians must rely on, and heartily seek, if they want to experience the peace that comes with entering into the righteousness of Christ.

Do not settle for cheap imitations. Regardless of accepted definitions of love which include "tough love" and "never having to say you are sorry", and every imaginable bit of hogwash in between, the one and only true definition of love appears in 1 John 4:16 *"God is love."*

Humanly speaking it is impossible for Man to love as God; we simply do not have the knowledge of the truth nor do we have the grace to be patient and merciful as necessary. And since God is love then an important part of repenting and conceding to God is admitting that we have fallen short of God (love). Only by accepting the truth that we are sinners and incapable of love, and accepting his mercy, that His Son died in our place, can we enter into the love God has prepared for us. Every born-again Christian has personally experienced that wonderful miracle of God's truth and mercy that was so perfectly balanced out to save them. Unfortunately, many Christians lose sight of the continuing importance of the truth and mercy that combined to bring them salvation. Quickly they cast off truth and mercy in favor of religious systems, self-righteousness, or legalism. The Church at Corinth and the believers of Galatia are two Biblical examples of born-again Christians who were in danger of falling prey to religion and legalism.

The Christian ought to be on the alert so he is certain to establish the desire for truth and mercy as pillars of his daily faith. It is no coincidence that truth and mercy, the two counterbalances of God's love, appear side by side in 15 places in the Psalms and three places in Proverbs. And those are just the places it expressly uses the words truth and mercy. In a dozen or more places it uses similar phrases or words to express the same thing.

An example of the partnership of truth and mercy in the Psalms is

in the simple, but beautiful and profound, Psalm 117. Just 33 words long, the Psalm declares that we should praise God for his love. *“O Praise the Lord, all ye nations: praise him all ye people. For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the Lord endureth forever. Praise ye the Lord.”* Only God can balance the heavy gold of pure truth with the light and silky forgiving touch of his perfect mercy in just the right proportion so Man can be saved from his fallen condition. *“By mercy and truth iniquity is purged”*, says Proverbs 16:6. This is the wonderful touch of deliverance by the Master’s soothing touch. This balance of truth and mercy is God’s exclusive, “peculiar”, heavenly kind of love that no man can duplicate, but Christians can allow it to flow through them if they have yielded to Christ and are walking, not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. (Romans 8)

Do not be deceived by the gospel of the world. Humanists and lovers of the flesh would have us believe that Love is God. Whatever the antichrist spirit defines as “love” is able to fill the bill as God they say, but no matter how “loving” such philosophies and religions sound they are spiritual nonsense. Those who believe such things might just as well be worshipping the dumb idols of ancient Philistine.

God is love. Everything God thinks, says, initiates, and does is love, no matter what Man’s definition or opinion may be; and God is the only living being who can be merciful without compromising an inch on the truth. God does not have to go out and get some love, or find love, or learn love. Let’s not be ridiculous. Love is because God is. Whatever God is defines what love is. Because God is love and love is whatever God is like. God combines truth with mercy in a wholly unique way, which only he is able to do. It is a combination of his temperate, wise, knowledgeable, kind, forgiving and perfectly holy nature. That’s why nothing or no one in the universe can produce or reproduce it on its own, only God has the attributes and power to do so. We must get it from God and have it housed in us by the power of the Holy Ghost and the blood of the Lamb.

Truth and mercy. Mercy and truth. The two measures of God’s

love that he balances in an infallible and masterful way to add-up, if you will, to unselfish love. Agape, as my generation of Christians were wont to announce about love, meaning God's love as opposed to man's love. As if there were two kinds of love, or that man could love rightly on his own. As if there was any other kind of love than God's? Without truth, there is no love. Without mercy, there is no love. Without the two in balance there is no salvation, no deliverance, no maturity – ultimately, where could there be any victory in Christ. Though the moon, sun, stars and earth may pass away, as the Scriptures assure us they shall – God's truth and mercy, in perfect balance, will endure forever.

List of Truth and Mercy together in a single scripture:

Psalms: 25:10, 31:6-7, 40:10-11, 57:3&10, 61:7, 69:13, 85:10, 86:15, 89:14, 98:3, 100:5, 108:4, 117, 138:2. *Proverbs:* 3:3, 16:6, 20:28.

104. Temperance: Is Love's Enabler

by T Myers Smith

Just as the fruit of Love is needed as a nutrient for all the other fruits, temperance is an aggregate of all the fruits combined.

Temperance is more than just abstaining from lusts and carnal appetites, though it is certainly that. We should be filled with the Spirit rather than wine.

Temperance is the balance of all the fruits together so that nothing but love dominates. Temperance blends and molds joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness and meekness with the right proportions of faith and belief in the goodness of God and God alone.

Balance: Truth/Mercy as one in scripture:

Psalms (14 times): 25:10, 31:6-7, 40:10-11, 57:3&10, 61:7, 69:13, 85:10, 86:15, 89:14, 98:3, 100:5, 108:4, 117, 138:2.

Proverbs (3 times): 3:3, 16:6, 20:28.

The essence of temperance is the combining of Mercy with Truth that goes such a long way to producing the right blend that makes up love. Temperance sees to it that the fruits are put at God's disposal according to His timing and His need. Temperance is an enabler of love.

"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another." Rom 15:13-14

Our joy, peace, goodness and faith, along with the other fruits will be made evident in our natural and orderly routine of daily life in

Christ. Through our temperate and modest life, love can grow and be fruitful.

Dear Soul – Seek balance.

Truth and mercy can only be blended by the miraculous hand of the Spirit of God reaching in and changing the heart of Man.

105. Patience: That Bittersweet Thing

We Must Endure The Bitter To Have The Sweet

by Eloise Gardenier

Each and every Thanksgiving and Christmas for 22 years now I have gathered bittersweet that has grown on our property. I knew little or nothing about it, just that it seemed to be a nice natural, decoration for the fall holidays. In prior years I have always had to search for it as it grew in small amounts. This year I could not believe my eyes! It started with an unknown vine touching our sitting room window which began to develop little round, flesh colored berries. I was going to gather some of those but never found the time. Shortly after that, they began to open up and I realized that this process had been a two part symbolism of God's creation – our flesh, and Jesus' blood. He showed me that the flesh colored berry I had noticed symbolized the flesh of man, and the next thing to appear was the blood of Jesus which split open the flesh and take charge of our hearts, converting them. That hidden berry is on the inside, not to be seen until the cover is split open exposing the real treasure, then eventually falling off or away. Yet one thing I have always noticed over the years is that those berries/hearts will still be there as long as I kept the arrangement. Just as Jesus will remain with us as long as we cling to the arrangements He has made for us.

I began this by saying I had never seen anything like the crop of bittersweet this year. Our property and surrounding town almost looks like it is being taken over by the vine, which I believe to be a symbolic plant of the Lord Himself. Many tree tops are covered with their brilliance. I am completely certain this is yet another sign we are in the last days. It is a message from the Lord that prophecy is being fulfilled more rapidly day by day. Of course, if we

know prophecy and its meaning, we know that just by watching the nightly news. However, the Lord has provoked me and shown me more reasons to use this plant as an example for me, personally, and also to share with our readers at this special time of year.

The dictionary describes bittersweet like this; “the woody nightshade climbing, trailing plant with scarlet berries, with orange capsules opening to expose red-coated seeds. Both are bitter and sweet to the taste, both pleasant and painful.” This is also a description of our lives in the flesh. The Scriptures point out that life on this earth is one of both “bitter and sweet.” We can all tell of times in our lives when we suffered “bitterness” and sorrow, as well as other times when life was as “sweet as honey.”

As we give thanks for the birth of our Saviour, let us focus on the life of his mother at that time. Ponder what it must have been like for her, knowing his birth was at hand, with no place to even lie down. She had already been accused of being a loose woman, carrying someone else's child. If there was a midwife present to help her, we have never heard of that. Ponder also the fear Joseph must have felt for both himself and his wife. Let us imagine the “sweetness” of the safe delivery of this beautiful child who was placed in their care. How incredibly sweet the visit of the “Wise Men,” traveling so far and bearing precious gifts, giving them faith that this calling was indeed from God Himself, must have been. How bitter and grievous it must have been to receive word that they must leave their homeland and go to what was probably for them like a foreign land, to save their precious young child from being murdered. It was far beyond anything we can even imagine! Then, once again, the sweet relief came when news of the death of Herod reached them. At last, they could return to their homeland, family and friends.

The next incident recorded in Christ's life is of one when bitterness struck again. When in Jerusalem, Jesus' parents suddenly realized the youth Jesus was nowhere to be found. They probably felt anguishing guilty for letting it happen. The sweet relief when they found Him in, of all places, the Temple! The bitterness that came their way once again when, at thirty, His ministry began. Even

though both of them had heard from God personally, Mary and Joseph didn't understand what he would have to go through as the Son of God. At times I'm sure Mary felt baffled about His actions when he traveled to other places giving her the bitterness of worry. Mary may have felt abandoned and deeply and bitterly hurt. But that was only the beginning of the bitterness that was yet to come before His mission here on earth was finished and she could realize the sweetness of the victory He had won for her and all of mankind. Just imagine his mother's bitter sorrow as He hung there on the cross, and as He gave her to His beloved disciple John. And how about her heartache when Jesus refused to drop what he was doing in ministering to the crowd and seemed to say unfeeling: *"Who is my mother, and who is my brother, but those who hear the Word of God and do it."* Matt 12:48,50 But oh, the sweetness when He rose from the dead on Easter morn! The sweetness when his brothers Jude and James repented and they accepted Him as the Savior.

Throughout the Bible there are heroes and examples of those who lived bittersweet lives, symbolized by the plant created by God himself to show to those who can receive it; this life here on earth will always be bittersweet. We need patience in the spirit. God will turn our bitterness into sweetness in time. The bible says he will wipe away all tears from our eyes when we are residing in glory land.

Remember Elijah? Running from Jezebel in fear of his life as he bitterly cried out to God; *"...and I, even I only am left and they seek my life, to take it away."* 1 Ki 19:10 God's sweet reply was; *"Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him."* 1 Ki 19:18 And David, whom God Himself called *"A man after His own heart,"* Acts 13:22 could not escape the bitterness and sweetness of life here on earth. In 2 Samuel 18:33 we find that at the death of his son Absalom who had turned against his father even trying to have him killed, David *"the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"* How bitterly David was hurt. Yet

in Psalm 119:103-104 David proclaims: *“How sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea sweeter than honey to my mouth. Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.”* In Psalm 104:33 & 34 we find David singing to the Lord: *“I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. My meditation of Him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord.”* Here we see the spirit of a man who believes that life’s beauty and sweetness is not about Him, does not flow because he alone is happy, but that it is about the good of others, especially the Lord’s happiness from whom all happiness must ultimately flow.

And take our brother, Paul. Who could have had more than this man to feel bitter about? In 2 Corinthians 11:23-29 we read this list: *“Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labors more abundant in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of robbers, in perils of mine own countrymen, in perils by heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren: In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, and cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended and I burn not?”* It was not about himself, but about others. He was able to summon up the fruit of patience because he had the sentence of death working in him.

Paul rarely allowed Satan to rob him by bitterness (and that for only a brief moment here and there. Paul never allowed bitterness to grow in him against God. In fact, he goes on in the next chapter to focus on the sweetness of service to God. Though he does not expressly say so His being transported up to heaven for a vision probably happened during the dramatic and frightening incident in which he was stoned and left for dead, but remarkably raised up after his lifeless corpse was tossed outside the city. He says, “I

will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I cannot tell or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth) such an one caught up to the third heaven. How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.” 2 Cor 12:2-4 Also we might imagine how sweet the last two years of Paul’s life must have been. *“And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him. Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.”* This sweet thing happened while he was under the bitter duress of imperial house arrest in Rome. How bittersweet even the end of Paul’s career! (Acts 28:30 & 31)

Think also of the bittersweet life of Jacob the one who had seized the ‘blessing’ and prevailed with God. The betrayal of his sons, the rape of his only daughter, the murder by his sons of an entire town, the infidelity, lies, envy and hatred within his own household caused him the most bitter of grief. One final aspect of his testimony on earth was how difficult and evil had been his days, how much he had suffered. But how sweet was the blessing and the Lord’s love at the same time. Imagine the unimaginable sweetness when he was restore to his favorite son after thinking for so many years that he had been dead. Jacob would not have traded the bittersweet for any candy-coated life that was without the blessing.

During any holiday (if we choose to celebrate it in God’s name) let us take care to examine our lives. How do we handle the bitter, how do we revel in the sweet things of love and grace? With so many of us, I for one, if it had not been for the bitter in my life I would never have admitted that I needed the help, the salvation of my Saviour, Jesus Christ? Would I still be trying to be my own saviour, or make some man my saviour? I thank our God He allowed me to go on until I came to the end of myself where I had to call out to the only place left – up to the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. The “sweetest” thing for me that I ever did!!!

Now I look forward to “The Sweet Bye and Bye” because God sent

His only Son to be born of woman (flesh, just like us) that he might take our place on that cross once and for all! And all who can receive Him as their Saviour and be born again can look forward to the Sweet Bye and Bye as the song goes:

There's a land that is fairer than day, And by faith we can see it afar;

For the Father waits over the way, to prepare us a dwelling place there.

In the sweet bye and bye, We shall meet on that beautiful shore.

In the sweet bye and bye, We shall meet on that beautiful shore.

We shall sing on that beautiful shore the melodious songs of the blest,

And our spirits shall sorrow no more, Not a sigh for the blessing of rest.

In the sweet bye and bye, We shall meet on that beautiful shore.

In the sweet bye and bye, We shall meet on that beautiful shore.

"The full soul loatheth an honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet." Prov 27:7

Let the Lord fill your hungry soul with the sweet things of Christ and accept the bitter truth of your sin and your desperate need for a Savior and you will be blessed with the gift of everlasting life. And if God permits you may even go on unto perfection as Hebrews 6 suggests. You may enter into the reality that your happiness does not depend on everything going according to your good pleasure, but happiness depends on the welfare and blessedness of the one you love.

106. The Spiritual DNA of Godliness

*5th Part – Virtue, Knowledge, Temperance, Patience
– Brotherly Kindness – Love*

by T Myers Smith

*“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness:
God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of
angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world,
received up into glory.” 1 Tim 3:16*

Among the dozen mysteries relayed to us in the New Testament two are called great. One is about the Bride of Christ, the second concerns the mystery of godliness as described in the first letter to Timothy by the apostle Paul. We are told that this mystery of godliness is held without controversy. No debate, no argument or need for discussion is necessary as to whether this mystery is anything else than what follows in this verse. *“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”* One can take note that there are six elements that comprise the mystery of Godliness to make it whole.

Central to the call to be partaker of the Divine Nature is a call to enter into godliness, which is designated in scripture as one of the great mysteries of all the gospel. There are literally more than a dozen mysteries identified and enumerated in the New Testament. They are mysteries not because they cannot be known or because they are mysterious or incomprehensible magical things, but because they are mysterious to the nature of Man, that is until

they are revealed by the Savior, who among all that He is, is also the personification of Truth, Wisdom and Godliness. He is able to impart knowledge and wisdom to all those who come to Him with true and inquiring hearts; those who want not only to know the truth but live it in truth. Jesus is the essence of godliness. He and He alone. He is the harbinger of the Divine and living reality of those heavenly truths concerning God's nature.

“God was manifest in the flesh.”

God came into this world to, among other things, manifest godliness in all its perfection. God became man in the person Jesus. All things that Christ did and said were an act of Godliness, for it was God's Will that it be accomplished on earth by a man on earth, accomplished before all eyes to see and all ears to hear. Godliness had to be actualized on earth and it was deemed part of the mission of the Christ to prove that the person who is entirely submitted to God in any situation can be godly in the decisions made and the conduct of their actions.

It is imperative that the disciple (i.e. follower of Christ) be true and honest, without hypocrisy or deception. Jesus came to prove and show for all time that godliness could be performed, that this is the form of perfection of which the Scriptures so vehemently speak. The righteousness of God should not be left to speculation of preachers and conjectures of the proud. The righteousness of God is exhibited in Jesus for the clear understanding of Man so that we on this temporary earth would be instructed in the way of right and wrong, good and bad, holy and unholy doings. Jesus not only taught us the Ten Commandments and some of their finer nuances, he showed us how to live them. He walked before all eyes to see. He walked among us so He could show us the perfect way in which to walk, including what to believe and why we should believe it.

His primary mission, His greatest joy was to simply do the will of His Father in heaven. This pure uncomplicated love Jesus exhibited in many ways throughout His days of ministry, thereby putting on full display the purposes and essence of godliness according to God. Godliness cries out for expression and opportunity to help the needy and to set the course for what is good and true. Wherever it is called for to resolve or settle public matters of controversy Jesus was there. It is not simply a matter of Law; it is a matter of spirit in the highest realm of rightness. It is the sum and substance of the so-called fruits of the spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. As the scripture declares – against such there is no law.

“Justified In The Spirit.”

The manifesting of godliness cannot be accomplished in terms of Man’s ideas of what may be correct or anything that has been devised as acceptable behavior by our laws and regulations. Not in the least. Godliness is, therefore, held to the standards of the Spirit of God only. It is His declaration of what is righteousness, what is true, good and pure. The philosopher David Hume, though wrong on many spiritual accounts, was right on this matter when he said, “That which is perfect is that which conforms perfectly to its own standards.” So the Spirit of God sets the standards of godliness by His own perfect knowledge of goodness and truth. Godliness is in no wise subject to Man’s limited and corrupt vision. Godliness exists merely because it is an expression of God. It is identified and justified only by what God is by nature and it is the definition and perfect expression of godly, declaring what is godly in every given situation down to the minutest degree of thought and life.

Jesus was declared *just*, or to put it another way, blameless and upright before God the Father, according to the Spirit of God, not by men or any other imperfect standard, godliness exists because

God is godliness and it is nothing more than what He does, acts and walks.

When as a 12-year-old child he left Joseph and his mother without telling them and went to talk to the religious leaders at the temple in Jerusalem he was justified by the Spirit. No court of law, no social-worker, no neighbor or acquaintance would justify such a thing as Jesus did that day. Mary was frightened and indignant, but Jesus was justified by the Spirit. The tone of Scripture tells us something contrary to our sense of right. We are informed by Holy Scripture that The Spirit of God in Jesus calmly said to Mary, almost chidingly, *"You should have known I would be about my father's business."* This was no smart-aleck remark, Mary of all people should have been trusting and not fearful, fine with Jesus' addressing His Father's business at any time in His life. She was the only one who knew who He was. She was not justified; being out of line, not trusting God who had always taken care of her against the ungodly self-righteousness of those who thought Joseph should not have married her. She had been saved from the self-righteousness of the attempt on Jesus' life when two-years-old; her and Joseph having to flee to, of all places, Egypt to escape the king's sword wielding merchants of death.

Mary was afraid. We are bound by fear, often it keeps us from understanding godliness and its unbound actions of faith. The manifestation of what is truly justified by heavenly province can only be allowed when it engages in a violent faces off with Man's concepts of godliness and the true righteousness that is the sole province of the timeless wisdom of The Spirit of God overcomes what the flesh is trying to impose upon the spirit of Truth. Godliness must be manifested so that all can have a chance to understand it. It takes a battle in the spirit to allow it to be performed in those who can be used by God to perform the good works of spiritual salvation. It is justified because it is carried out in the light, imparted to our spirit by actual works in this world. Jesus became man to showcase the power of the Holy Spirit, to convert us from sinful

ignorant creatures into those who conform to Christ through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

The process that must take place to enter into godliness is three-fold. One must first be *reformed*. That is to say, reformed in Christ, reformed from our old sinful ways and life to wanting to be like Jesus. Second; one must be transformed, conceding to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit by partaking of a new spirit to replace our old spirit, that spirit is the justifying Spirit of God. And third; we must be conformed to the Divine Nature that is Christ. We must conform to Christ's godliness through the unction and power that can be infused into our being by the presence of the justifying Holy Spirit. – Reformed, Transformed, Conformed – Here is the transition path to the whole godly being. This is the means by which the Spirit manifests the change in a human from ungodliness to godliness. This is the justification of faith. It is not only our beliefs and actions on earth that are changed; but by reforming, transforming and conforming, our very nature is changed to the likeness of the Divine. This can never be done according to the genius, laws, wisdom or discretion of Man, but according to the life and actions of the living Christ who walked among us in this life. By this godliness is justified by the Spirit exclusively.

“Seen Of Angels.”

Jesus acted and spoke in the open so that all of creation could witness the manifestation of godliness on earth. This open show included all the angels, as well as those fallen with Lucifer. When it was done it was recorded in plain and universal language by simple and plain unrefined people, in the center of the earth so that north, south, east and west could digest the reality of godliness to understand that it was available to any who would listen and believe and enter into its perfect ways by allowing the Divine Nature to trump their own corrupted nature.

It is by no means acceptable that actual godliness should have been witnessed by a mere handful of people in a single moment of time. All of heaven must be made aware of godliness, that it is within the province of any creature through Jesus Christ whether in heaven or on earth. It must not remain theoretical, it must be seen, observed and realized by seeing and experiencing its behavior in the individual soul the way Man's behavioral sciences observe and study the human condition in its carnal laboratory experiments. The reality of godliness and its behavior has been defined in Holy Scripture through the history of God's relationship with Man, in particular Israel and the Church. Godliness had to be put on open display and it was the task given to Jesus by the Father to that He might establish godliness so that it might be imbedded in the believer. This is why he was crucified in the 'center of the earth' openly before all men, Jew and Gentile alike. This is why Jesus preached while dying on the cross.

“Preached Unto The Gentiles.”

Christ was the first to preach godliness to the Gentiles while He hung on the cross in agony, saying: “Forgive them Father, for they know not what they do.” This message from the cross was the start of a two thousand year effort by the Spirit of God to preach the observations and teachings of true godliness throughout the whole world. All methods have been employed by God: by pen, with voice, by martyrs, by governments, kings and presidents, by internet, by satellite, by events, by disasters, by prophecy being fulfilled and literally every conceivable means. The truth about the existence of godliness and its infusion into submissive followers of faith is proof that God's message has filled heaven and earth. It has not been accomplished by Man teachings his ideas of rightness or our example of what is fair or good and charitable works, or by our achievements in science, religion or social science or medicine; but

it has been done solely by what God has promised as salvation and a by his ability to actually change the nature of human beings into the Divine; which includes godliness as one of His most remarkable, even miraculous works within the soul of any malleable spirit of Man. It points to the future heavenly utopia that man can never achieve himself here on earth, in spite of all our efforts and naïve hopes to achieve the perfect society, either with or apart from God. Only those who concede to what God has revealed as justifiable godly behavior, only those who accept that there is only one path, that is, through Christ and His Spirit to gaining it, only those who concede to God can obtain to godliness. Therefore it has to be preached to unbelievers so they may come to believe.

Not only did Jesus come to fulfill what the Jewish prophets of God had foretold but He also came that all men might be saved, including the pagan and heathen ones called Gentiles. In fact (another mystery) God has blinded the Jews for the sake of the Gentiles that they might inherit with the Jews the promises God has made to mankind.

“Believed On In The World.”

Believing is thought to be simple and axiomatic; but it is an amazing miracle when a person believes God. That any mortal man in this life and in this un-Godly world would trust in, rely on and adhere to Jesus and his gospel of reconciliation to our Creator is the beginning of wisdom, the start of salvation.

It is not enough that we should see and be told about godliness, for there are many who have seen and heard but have not believed. That godliness can saturate the spirit of Man must, in the end, be believed so that it become part of the comprehensive Divine Nature living within our soul and spirit. It must, in the words of the Bible, bear fruit within us so that it has a dominating effect upon our thoughts and actions.

The living essence of godliness in a soul, as all things, is subservient to what one actually believes. For what a person believes will dominate and direct their behavior in any given circumstance subject. Belief persuades the Will and commands the decisions which are the cause by which one acts. They are the cause of our fears, true or otherwise. They coach our apprehensions which act automatically upon us to act 'instinctively'.

Godliness must be worked within Man because our actions are subject to instinct, coached within us by what we believe. Godliness is proven by our actions, godliness is accomplished by deed not word alone; this is so that it may be "believed on in the world." Believing that godliness is the way to live is necessary, for godliness in ungodly humans is unbelievable. Therefore it must be proven so that the miracle of godliness in us can be believed. It must be manifest by sight so that it can become manifest in the observer's life for one has to believe that it is possible.

"Jesus said... If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes". Mk 9:23 This principle applies to godliness which abiding in the soul of the individual by faith becomes acceptable to God as true godliness. It is not justified in its working by Man, but by the discretion of the Holy Spirit only.

Each of the seven parts of the Divine Nature are added together as single blocks one at a time being connected as one, by as it were, the enzyme of faith. Faith is that spiritual protein by which this new DNA of godliness is built and becomes alive in the individual believer. It is faith that allows the personal elements of Divine Nature to be made accessible to the person who desires God's nature rather than their old nature to live. It is that 'tower' of a new nature, God's Nature, which can grow into a real, but godly tower of divine character which has been so wonderfully described for our faith in the letter written by the hand of God through the ministry of the Apostle Peter.

“Received Up Into Glory”

Just as Christ's death would have been in vain had He not been resurrected and received into glory, so all acts of godliness are validated when God receives them thereby confirming them as godly. After Jesus was crucified God raised him from the dead which is the eternal validation before all creation that Jesus is the Christ and the very Son of God; the one who left heaven, became a human and by a perfect godly life paid the price for our sin when he became sin in our stead, thereby paying its price. God is just. The debt of sin must be paid. This is the law of godliness by which the angels, both loyal and fallen live by according to God's stated Will and His declared godliness. Christ paid the price and was taken up not by rumor or suggested trust, or spiritual analogy, but in the flesh, in all actuality, before the eyes of men and angels, in a glorified state into Heaven where He now waits at his Father's right hand for the command to come and gather up the first fruit of resurrected saints. This is why there were both men and angels at Christ's ascension into heaven and why it was recorded in the Scriptures. It was dutifully recorded.

The first fruits of harvest, of persons godly, are otherwise known in Bible prophecy as 'The Bride'. She shall someday soon be received into heaven in that electrifying moment euphemistically called the Rapture. Those who are godly, for the Bride is godly, will be "received up into glory". The mystery of godliness will have been performed in humans within the infusion of the Divine Nature through faith by the process declared in Peter's epistle. Its final validation is the receiving of it in heaven's domains. Those that are partakers of divine godliness, having expressed and realized them in actuality in their lives shall find that they fit in with the spirit and society of heaven; and therefore they rightly belong in heaven and have an eternal home in paradise.

This composite work of God; that godliness be first manifested, then all its performance and acts be justified solely by the Spirit

Himself, that it should be on open display for the eyes of the whole of creation, that it would be preached the world over, that it would be believed by humans and finally received into heaven's realms as a finished reality, this is the mystery of godliness accomplished by the marvelous gospel of truth through the triune workings of the Godhead of The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Father commanded that godliness should reign in heaven, Jesus brought it to heaven by His obedience to the Father's will, the Holy Spirit as the judge and justifier of all things godly validated the work of salvation so that it could be received through the gates into paradise.

107. The Mysteries of Heaven

more about godliness: Seek to Know Them

AIDS TO PERFECTION OF THE BRIDE – *enumerated with brief discussion*

INTRODUCTION

Some of the mysteries come forth in parables, symbolically as metaphors. Others are more directly referred to and require an understanding of spiritual things revealed only to the primary initiate (born-again) Christian. The *Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven* are mysteries veiled, only the pure of heart can have them uncovered for it takes the understanding of the Holy Spirit. The symbolic ones require knowledge of God's Word revealed also by none other than the Holy Spirit and His interpretive powers. Some of the mysteries need only be received by faith, their knowledge acquired by believing that they are not natural things of Man's wisdom, but truths never before revealed to the heart of Man until the advent of the all-wise Savior, Jesus Christ.

Two of the Gospel's mysteries are designated as 'great, therefore they have to be given a special place, an even higher significance in the mind and heart of the disciples of Christ. Both of these mysteries appear in the New Testament: the first appears in the Book of Ephesians chapter five where *Christ and His Church* is revealed as husband and wife (which is the subject of the extensive chapter of mystery under #9 below); the second "great" mystery of God is in association with the *Mystery of Godliness* which was written of by Paul in one of his letters to his young helper, Timothy. This great mystery is complex having six dynamic components.

Each of the components are analyzed in an article/chapter in this pamphlet under the section entitled: *Godliness*.

The other mysteries, amounting to twelve plus some general remarks about mysteries of the Gospel, are discussed below in this chapter and should be helpful for those who want to more than whet their appetite on this engrossing subject of Scripture. Those intrigued by the notion that the mysteries are important to anyone interested in being closer to God and having their nature miraculously transformed into one like the Divine will find this article more than helpful for understanding the Will of God.

In the New Testament, there are many mysteries for the Christian to discover. They cover Christ Himself, the Bride of Christ, Satanic things, the spirits of false religion, the mysteries of heaven, paradise and godliness, what paradise will be like, the gift of speaking tongues, and so much more. They are free for the taking of every believer to help build faith and make them wise according to godly wisdom. God recommends that every disciple of Jesus dig them out of the Word and investigate them wholeheartedly. Even though it is to the great advantage of every saint to do so, very few believers actually do dig to uncover the mysteries of the faith.

If one does however search them out, that person's walk will be enriched beyond a king's ransom. Their knowledge will help to guide them on their way past pitfalls that often become a snare to health, and even a place of abiding faith. Any snare can enslave a believer in the chains of ignorance. It can blind faith, bruise hope and imprison the soul. God would like to build in each maturing believer a knowledge and faith for the secret things of truth, the mysteries of God and Christ.

Through the understanding of these mysteries, one may understand and believe in the calling of the Bride of Christ. Through the power of the Holy Ghost, Christ holds out to his Church great wisdom by disclosing the mysteries. Any believer is freely offered the understanding of these just for the asking. Seek and you shall find as the scripture advises. Understanding the mysteries, hoping to have them incorporated into one's faith will strengthen the

relationship with the Trinity and make more certain our ability to serve and please God with our whole body, mind and heart.

The mysteries are first broached in the teachings of Jesus Himself. Jesus teaches that the mysteries were ‘hidden from the foundation of the world’ only to be revealed by Him at His first coming. Jesus taught in parables so that those of pure hearts who hungered for deeper understanding could learn about the riches of the Gospel and so that those of dubious contriving type faith would not understand. This was to exclude the unrepentant heart from the knowledge and understanding of sacred things. The mysteries are sacred. They are the true ‘sacraments’ of the Church (not the ones devised by orthodox Christianity) and should be seen and received as such. As the apostle Paul clearly stated the case for true reverence of the sacred, it is not touch not, handle not, taste not, the sacraments are not a date on a calendar, a wafer, the cup, the marriage ring or the baptismal fount, or repetitive cardboard prayers. Christ handled the mysteries as the high priest of the gospel truth. We ought to receive them as such. The believer must handle sacred things with reverence and discretion according to the will of the Father. He distributed the sacred mysteries with devout reverence. Christ declared that heaven and earth shall pass away, but God’s Word shall last forever. What could be more sacred than His Word? He, therefore, with reverence for the Truth and the mysteries of the Gospel, imparted them carefully and did not cast them as pearls before swine, but moved by wisdom, wanted to keep them from men of the wrong selfish spirit who could not help but ultimately use them for their own ill purposes.

This, therefore, is the reason why Jesus taught in parables:

“And Jesus said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables:

That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.” Mk 4:11-12

AND

“All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them:

That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.” Matt 13:34-35

Further on in the New Testament, we discover that the apostle Paul mentions mysteries many times and tells about the importance of their careful stewardship. In the book of Revelation, there are mysteries that Jesus himself speaks of and some are shown to the apostle John, which are expounded upon by angels. They all amount to great wisdom when considered with the heart. In these last days, their consideration is imperative. We hope you will consider them with your whole heart and mind and incorporate their faith into your own.

The following report is compiled by EOE editors citing the mysteries of Christ in the order in which they appear in scripture. Each being worthy of further study by the individual believer in Christ.

#1 – Twelve Parables that are The Mystery of the Kingdom of Heaven

Jesus taught in parables to his disciples and after one such teaching

“...the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?

He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.” Mat.13:10-11

So it is shown to us in the Gospels that Jesus taught almost exclusively in parables, each one revealing some aspect of God's

kingdom. The Bride will inherit all things with Christ and here within the mysteries lie the treasures of Godly wisdom to enhance the beauty of Christ's loving Bride who wants to know everything she can about her husband's kingdom and the life He lives.

The following 12 scriptures, all from the Book of Matthew are where the curious believer can find the parables related to Jesus' teaching about the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. Each mystery is identified by Christ so the faithful might know, understand and gain wisdom about the realities of the mysteries (or secrets) concerning the Kingdom of Heaven.

1. Mat.13:(3-9)(18-23) Parable of Sower of the Seeds
2. Mat.13:(24-30)(36-43) Tares Among the Wheat
3. Mat.13:31-32 Parable of a Grain of Mustard Seed
4. Mat.13:33 The Hidden Leaven
5. Mat.13:44 Parable of Treasure Hid in a Field
6. Mat.13:45-46 Parable of The Pearl of Great Price
7. Mat.13:47-50 Parable of a Net Cast into the Sea
8. Mat.18:23-35 Parable of the Unforgiving Servant
9. Mat.20:1-16 Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard
10. Mat.22:2-14 Parable of the Wedding Feast
11. Mat.25:1-13 Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins
12. Mat.25:14-30 Parable of the Five Talents

#2 – Mystery of Jews Blinded by God *Romans 11:25*

*“For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this **mystery**, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.”*

Seven times in the New Testament there is a plea that we not be ignorant of certain knowledge the Spirit would like to furnish to the saint. On this occasion in Romans, we are shown a mystery that

God wishes all Christians to understand and not be ignorant. The fact that the Jews are not cast off by God but rather have been made blind (for a season) for our sake has been grossly ignored by Christians who think they are wise but are not. Men and Christians sadly, have been wiser in the own conceits and high-minded rather than attentive to God's voice and have done terrible atrocities against the apple of God's eye through their support and encouragement of wrong teaching, and their obstinate ignorance of this mystery of faith.

Read Romans 10:18 through 11:36 and learn a mystery that has been shown to those who want to know the truth about God's people. Then one can knowledgeably heed the warning of God to *"...Be not high-minded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee."* Rom.11:20-21 Christ's Bride will be made up of both Jew and Gentile. (This is evident by the disclosure of another mystery.) A day is coming when the blindness of the Jews will be lifted and many will be received into the arms of Jesus and will be given a place in the New Jerusalem, that heavenly city prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. The prophets have eluded to this truth and some like Zechariah have directly stated it as a prophetic truth. We know there will be no imperfect separation within the Bride but rather a perfectly completed blended and unified body, a commonwealth of Jew and Gentile, as evident in these words: *"And [The Bride] had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel...And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."* Rev. 21:12,14

#3 Mystery of the Gospel of Salvation *Rom.16:25-27*

"Now to him that is of power to establish you according to

my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,

But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:

To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen."

Here is the mention of a mystery, kept secret since the world began, but now has been made known according to God's command which was first revealed by the preaching of the Christ. For his own good pleasure God has had a plan to bring to himself mortal men who have been perfected through Christ in holiness and all purity, now able to abide with Him for all eternity. When God and Jesus created man Satan knew God's good intentions for mankind and has been hell-bent in his efforts to try and prevent this Godly relationship from ever happening to any soul. The mystery of the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ has been unknown even to Satan. Satan had no idea of how God would defeat him when He prophesied in the Garden of Eden, of the seed of the woman crushing the serpent's head. Even though the scriptures have been filled with prophecies, the Way of this mystery would be kept from being fully revealed according to God's will in his perfect timing. This mystery, now fully revealed, is the birthplace of the Church and Bride; for every saint is brought into the presence of God's Kingdom through the obedience of faith and belief of this mystery; that Jesus Christ is the Way.

This mystery of spiritual salvation and eternal life is shown in the parable type teaching that Jesus gave to the religious leader, Nicodemus, who came to Him stealthily and mysteriously by night and Jesus told Him that he must be born-again. Every person is born of water but you must be born of the spirit if you will see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus was befuddled at the declaration of this mystery, until He seemed to come to an understanding of

it upon Christ's death and resurrection. It often takes that sort of dramatic experience that leads to revelation and understanding of the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. 1Cor.2:7-9, Eph.3:1-11, Eph.6:19, Col.1:26, Col.4:3

#4 Stewards of the Mysteries of God 1 Cor.4:1-2

"Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." Peter exhorts

"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." 1 Peter 4:10

We are told here that it is by the abundance of undeserving favor from God that he has given gifts to us. Receiving the understanding of his mysteries can be looked at in this fashion. As good stewards we are expected to minister what we have received to one another. The Church should not be in competition with one another but rather should be in agreement with Christ who is working to present to himself a glorious church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; holy and without blemish. This picture of the Bride of Christ should cause us to want to offer in many ways the understanding of mysteries and all gifts we have received to our brothers and sisters for the sake of Christ building his Bride church. Of course, for the sake of doing this work in love, it is necessary that everything be distributed according to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Paul writes *"And though I have the gift of prophecy, and **understand all mysteries**, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."* 1 Cor.13:2 It is in the spirit of God's love and for the purposes of truly

loving one another that we should be found good **stewards of the mysteries**.

In Luke 12:42-43 Jesus said

“...Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?

Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.”

So as “stewards of the mysteries of God” we ought to embrace, as a duty to our Lord, being faithful and wise, loving and generous, the dispensing of knowledge and understanding of these mysteries within the Church. Always faithful, because God wants us to invest the gifts he has given to us and be ever wise, seeking discernment by the Spirit that we invest in hearts that are true, wanting to understand God’s word. We must be good stewards of sacred things and dispense them with reverence and care.

#5 Mystery of Tongues 1 Cor. 14:2

*“For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit **he speaks mysteries**.”*

Here is mention of a mystery that within the Church is commonly called speaking in tongues. Speaking in tongues is taught by scriptures as being evidence of the Baptism of the Holy Ghost. Acts 2:4, 10:46, 19:6 Paul has instructed in his writings that, unless God gives an interpretation, when one speaks in tongues he is speaking things unknown; they remain a mystery to us. Many in the Church today have had some sort of experience with witnessing tongues and much of it has been in the form of abuse and disorderly; because

of this a part of the Church has labeled tongues as evil and from Satan. This is not new.

In the infancy of the Church, Paul had to go to great lengths to teach the Corinthians about the proper use of this gift. The Bride, who like the five wise virgins has her lamp trimmed and filled with oil, has properly received the Baptism of the Holy Ghost and exercises the appropriate use and purpose of tongues in connection to prayer and prophesying.

#6 The Mystery of the Rapture 1 Cor. 15:49-58

“... know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

This is not merely about the resurrection of the dead, but it is a mystery that some who are actually alive shall also be made immortal. But it is for every man to die once, the mystery is that can and will reckon those who have died to self in this life as having died and therefore eligible to be ‘raptured’ alive. This a mystery indeed. But it is declared that we must labor to enter His rest; we must labor to die to self and if we do, our labor shall not be in vain.

Dying to self is a mysterious process and wins us the reward of the mystery of the rapture. In the “twinkling of an eye” we shall cast off this corruptible flesh and put on incorruptible, which is a new spiritual body. Death shall no longer possess any sting; it will have been swallowed up in the victory of Jesus Christ for those who have followed hard after him. A day is coming when this mortal being will become immortal. That day will soon come for the Bride at the time of the Rapture. This is a mystery about the Rapture that the world does not believe and the Church has greatly misunderstood through much presumption. To those who aspire to be a part of Christ’s Bride however, it is a mystery to be wisely understood and hoped for, a mystery that the Bride has set the eyes of her heart upon as she waits for the sudden appearance of her Bridegroom.

“Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” 1 Cor 15:51-58

#7 The Mystery of God’s Will Eph. 1:8-10

“Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;

Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:

That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:”

The mystery of God’s will is that whatever He decides or wants because of His own purposes is to be accepted as perfect, no matter what we may think or what we may regard. Those who have been

brought into the sheepfold of Jesus through faith in Him alone as the straight and narrow gate will be found by God to be in Christ according to the way He has ordained it. Beyond this initial embrace of our savior, if you who have heard the call by the Spirit to press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus and you aspire to have the same faith as the Philadelphia church spoken of in the book of Revelation, then you are likely to among those whom God has willed to be part of the call to Brideship in Jesus Christ. The Bible says many are called but few are chosen, this holds especially true to the ones who are of the Bride, for it is said of them on the day that they return to earth with Christ's army that these are they who are called, chosen and faithful. This gathering together in one, all things that are in Christ, both which are in heaven and on earth is going to be a wonderful event; how much more wondrous will it be for those who are chosen as Jesus' Bride and her bridal party?

#8 The Mystery of Christ *Eph. 3:3-12*

Mysteries must be learned and absorbed by revelation, none more than the mystery of Christ. The mysteries come only to those who seek them by the teaching of God which is the true meaning of revelation.

*"How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery;
(as I wrote afore in few words,
Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in
the mystery of Christ)
Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of
men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets
by the Spirit." Eph 3:3-5*

God once spoke to man by the fathers and the prophets but now He

has spoken to us by His dear Son. We are introduced to the teaching of the mystery of Christ here in Ephesians:

“That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel...

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.” Eph 3:6, 8-10

The purpose of God designed in the Christ was to make us fellow-heirs and of the same body and to have fellowship in the mystery of this ultimate purpose brought about by the Christ. The mystery of Christ also includes and begins with the understanding of who and what the Christ really is. Christ is Savior. Christ must be man. Jesus called Himself the Son of Man because only a man could save mankind, be the pardon for their sin. The word Christ both implies and demands a Man. The mystery of Christ is that He be Man the Redeemer of Man. Man should not be alone. Even Redeemer Man must have a spouse or be relegated to eternal loneliness. Thus he must have fellow heirs, we must be one in the same body with Christ. We need to see the mystery of the Son of Man, the Christ, that we may see what is the fellowship of this mystery of the Christ.

#9 Christ in you, the hope of Glory Col. 1:27

“To whom God would make known what is the riches of the

*glory of **this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.***

This is a mystery that can only be understood by pure experience. How can God live in us? This, however, is the real hope of glory. If that which is perfect can live in us and prevail in us, then we may be perfect if we live in His life. this is the essence of the Bride's perfection, that the Bride would be perfectly submitted to her husband. There is no excuse because He loves her perfectly. She can rely on Him totally without reservation. Christ in you means we are told that we are one together with Him. Purely one. This is why Paul can declare that he sees his duty as presenting every man perfect before God:

"To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." Col 1:27-28

He saw it as His duty to strive in behalf of each one of the sheep in his care to be presented perfect before God, as one with Christ. This ought to be the ultimate aim of every worthy pastor, especially in these last days when the pastor worth his salt will be trying to make each saint rapture ready and perfect in the sight of God as a candidate for the Bride of Christ.

#10 The Mystery of Iniquity 2 Thes. 2:7-8

It is a mystery that God would allow iniquity (the perversion of the truth that works unto sin) to find its way into the Church.

For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who

*now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.
And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall
consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with
the brightness of his coming.” (read 2 Thes. 2:1-12)*

For God’s purposes of fulfilling all prophecy and the trying of men’s hearts within the Church, He has not completely blocked the spirit of antichrist from entering in. A day of judgement is coming when God will separate within the Church the wheat from the chaff. Satan, the father of all lies, and the men who have followed after his subtleties against the anointed Messiah will one day suffer at God’s hands. Satan is always frantically at work trying to take as many of the souls of men with him into the pit that he knows awaits him. Yes, there are men within the Church that will perish. Men, that were deceived by their own unrighteousness because they did not receive the love of the truth, will perish.

At the birth of the Church Satan stood by ready to spin iniquitous works at his first opportunity. God has allowed the spirit of antichrist that prevails within the Church and the world to work toward His fulfillment of all things. It is wisdom for us to know that this is so and to not be shaken off balance or thrown off the course of our disciplined walk with Jesus when we encounter this mystery of iniquity at work within the kingdom of heaven. Paul warned the church many times, and history has proven that evil doctrines, false prophecies and many other things antichrist have come forth from the Church. It is for each one of us to walk wisely in this understanding and to stay on the path which the Holy Spirit will lead us along. We are told this mystery by God when it was written in Prov 30:18-19, “*things which are too wonderful for me*” and pointed out “*the way of a serpent upon a rock.*” This alludes to the wonder of how Satan is allowed by God to tread upon the holy things of Christ. But God who sees all and knows all things will use even Satan to bring about his will.

God did not invent or create evil, evil is simply the work of iniquity, the refusal to follow or concede to the Will of God. This is

the truth of the mystery of iniquity, the evil that reaches out and touches people through the force of sin. The day is coming when God will put an end to all sin, transgression and iniquity, but this will not come until the end of the Tribulation when Christ comes with a sword in His hand to impose righteousness on the earth. See dialogue on Imposed Righteousness.

#11 The Mystery of The Faith 1 Tim. 3:9

This mystery is closely connected with the aforementioned “Mystery of the Gospel of Salvation through Jesus Christ.” Paul wrote to Timothy that those appointed in the Church should be found **“Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.”** This “mystery of the faith” is the confident belief in the whole gospel of Jesus Christ. It is belief bolstered by the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen. True belief in this gospel does not come simply by the will of heart and mind but by the Spirit of God. Believing (Greek word *pisteuo*; trusting in, adhering to and relying on) the whole gospel is far beyond the capacity of any man to do on his own. This requires the support of faith from God himself.

The Word teaches faith is both a gift and a fruit of the Holy Spirit, *“without faith it is impossible to please God and faith comes to us by hearing and hearing comes by the word of God.”* Heb 11:6 All of this requires a deep operation of the Holy Spirit. So, for one to know all about the message of salvation, the mystery of the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ and yet not have *pisteuo* belief supported by God given faith, it will bear no good fruit in the kingdom of heaven. It is both empty and meaningless to God, vanity of vanities.

Like a trusting wife and one that has thrown aside all of her own selfish desires, the Bride of Christ will turn to Him for her every need. He is the author and finisher of her faith that she will hold in pureness, an unadulterated conscience, one that is not corrupted

with the ideas and moral standards set by the teachers of this world but by the loving and righteous voice of her husband, Jesus himself.

#12 The Mystery of Godliness *1 Tim. 3:16*

*“And without controversy great is the **mystery of godliness**: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”*

Paul writes that this is a great mystery. This mystery is also held without controversy. No debate, no argument or need for discussion is necessary as to whether this mystery is anything else than what follows in this verse. Six elements make this mystery of Godliness whole.

“God was manifest in the flesh.” God came to men of this world in the same flesh and blood that you and I behold. God became man in the person, Jesus.

“Justified in the Spirit.” Jesus was declared just or in another way, blameless and upright before God the Father, according to the Spirit of God, not by men or any other imperfect standard.

“Seen of angels.” All of heaven witnessed this incredible act of God. Jesus said and did everything in the open for all of creation to witness, including all the angels, those in heaven at God’s throne and those fallen with Lucifer too.

“Preached unto the Gentiles.” Not only did Jesus come to fulfill what the Jewish prophets of God had foretold but He also came that all men might be saved, including the pagan and heathen ones called Gentiles. In fact (**another mystery**) God has blinded the Jews for the sake of the Gentiles that they might inherit with the Jews the promises God has made.

“Believed on in the world.” This is an amazing miracle; that any mortal man in this life and in this ungodly world would trust in,

rely on and adhere to Jesus and his gospel of reconciliation to our Creator.

“Received up into Glory” After Jesus was crucified God raised him from the dead. He was taken up before the eyes of men in his glorified state into Heaven where he is now waiting at his Father’s right hand for the command to come and gather up the first fruits resurrected ones, The Bride. These also will be received up into glory.

All of these works of God through Jesus are the most magnificent show of His own Godliness. Godliness with fact in the flesh with honor. See: Godliness in Section of Divine Nature.

#13 Mystery of the Seven Stars and Seven Candlesticks *Rev.1:20*

*“The **mystery of the seven stars** which thou sawest in my right hand, **and the seven golden candlesticks**. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.”*

Jesus himself reveals the mystery here. The mystery of the **seven stars** that Jesus holds in his right-hand reveals there are angels of the seven churches. These angels are assigned by Jesus to stand over and be messengers. They existed two millennia ago and still, they stand waiting as watchful guardians to each church. They minister good news and encouragement and firm warnings and harsh rebukes; whatever Jesus tells them.

The mystery of the **candlesticks** is that they are the seven churches that Jesus still inhabits today. He stands in the midst of these candlesticks with the hope that any who hear his Spirit might overcome. These churches to which he wrote letters can be viewed in three ways.

First, actual churches that existed in the days when John wrote

down the vision as it was shown to him and the letters were sent to these churches of Asia-Minor.

Second, church history reveals a progression in the church that took on these faiths as it grew and developed over the last 2000 years and none of them have disappeared but still remain today.

Third, they can each be viewed at a personal level by all saints to see where each may stand today in their faith and let the admonishing words of Jesus speak to their hearts.

Amongst these candlesticks is the place where the Bride of Christ can be found in all her beauty before Jesus. She is one among the churches who is found listening to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. In contrast to her are churches who have no need of Jesus, who have forgot their first love, who have known the depths of Satan and who eat things sacrificed to idols and commit spiritual fornication.

* The Mystery of God Will Be Finished *Rev. 10:7*

*“But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, **the mystery of God should be finished**, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.”*

When the seventh angel begins to sound, then the mystery of God will be finished. What is the mystery of God that will finish at this time? A look ahead to Revelation 11:15 says *“And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever.”* From this verse, we see that the allowance by God of letting the kingdoms of this world be ruled and reigned over by foreign authorities other than his sovereign rule is what will come to an end.

That God would allow something like this to go on for so long is a mystery and one of the things that puts on trial the faith and

patience of the Bride of Christ. This is all part of God's providential plan of the ages. It is a plan for saving those who believe in His Son and are willing to follow after Him to the very end. It is a mystery that God would shadow His own glory but it is revealed to the prophet John that after the seventh trumpet sounds the glory of God, Jesus, will shine forth, all judgement will be pronounced; reward given to the prophets and saints, destruction to them which destroy the earth, opening of the Temple of God in Heaven and the revealing of the ark of his testimonies. Rev. 11:15-19 God, by his own incredible love that is long-suffering and patient, is holding back His wondrous glory. His holding back and waiting to let all things prove themselves as righteous and holy or unjust and filthy is mysterious but it testifies to his desire of having with himself those who love him freely.

⌘ Lastly: The Mysteries that Wreak Havoc on the Church ⌘

The Mysteries of The Woman and The Beast That Carries Her

In Revelation chapter 17 we see the revealing of the mystery of who the Beast and The Woman are.

*“And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT. **THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.***

And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I

will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.” Rev. 17:5-7

The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.

And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.

And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.

And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.

These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.

And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.

And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.

For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.

And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.” (vss. 17:8-18)

The final mention of mysteries in the Bible concern false mysteries

which wreak havoc in the Church. God's consternation and disgust are revealed, their ultimate judgment and dismissal are prophesied. Here are a few notes to help in understanding the revealing of these mysteries.

The scripture above shows us that the Beast is a vehicle upon which the Woman/Whore is carried throughout the entire earth. The two use each other to further their agendas, but ultimately they against their will, fulfill God's Will. The Beast is shown that it personifies the antichrist spirit. That he was, is not and yet is alludes to a very long spiritual existence. Satan and his spiritual cohorts have ascended from the very pits of Hell and will certainly return there one day to be imprisoned for all eternity. They have influenced the hearts of evil men in the world for thousands of years and one day soon the spirit of antichrist will be embodied in a the person that is 'the' actual Antichrist.

This antichrist spirit has built kingdoms and empires and in the last days the Antichrist person will sit among ten kingdoms of this world. During his short reign the Antichrist, Satan and the False Prophet will use all their power and influence to control men, kingdoms, as well as the 'Woman' as he reaches for his ultimate goal of being worshipped as God himself.

The Woman, ancient in time, has always been used by the antichrist spirit. Mystery Babylon is written upon her in this vision which points to her connection with the ancient gods, even the first humanism trinity born in Babylon and worshipped as gods: Nimrod, Semiramis and Tammuz. She is the epitome of false religion. She is the height of spiritual adultery and idolatry against God. She is shown as a great city, reigning over the kings of the earth among peoples, multitudes, nations and tongues and her position of sitting upon seven hills connects her to Rome and the religion that is seated there. From Babylon to Rome she has trafficked in the souls of men and made herself drunk on their blood. She is a stark contrast to that holy city we see later in Revelation who is the Bride of Christ. She is today – Rome.

Seek the Spirit to teach you more concerning the mysteries of the faith.

108. With The Bowels of Mercies

Brotherly Kindness: (Or True Friendship)

by T Myers Smith

The word “bowels” is an ancient word with its Hebrew root meaning *softness*. It has to do with feelings, even compassion. Here, in this symbolic inner place of our being, God has used the expression ‘bowels of mercies’ to tell us that this is where we may contact, discern our gut feeling, even in our womb (where we give birth to emotions and feelings) the attributes we carry for true friendship. If we have feelings and mercies of pity and compassion within us to befriend in truth this is the seat of those feelings of compassion and the deep place in which the capability of housing the true spirit of friendship exists by the grace of God in each person. *Brotherly kindness* such as is used in describing the character of the Divine Nature is an expression signifying this true spirit of friendship. *Brotherly kindness* and *friend* are synonymous. *Brotherly kindness* is the highest degree of valor and truth; subservient only to pure love itself. But it is a component part of high, pure love. If we are incapable of befriending, we certainly cannot love because friendship is an integral part of love itself, just as all other parts of the Divine nature are integral and component answering in the end to love’s active existence in us. This is why it is rare for a man to have a friend at all; true love is rare. It is fair to venture to say that pure love only exists in this life through Jesus Christ, including his mercy upon us that we actually might experience the benefit and peace of having true friends who love us in this life. It is, next to salvation and the relationship with the Triune God, the finest gift we can have in this life. “*But a man that hath friends must first show himself friendly.*” Prov. 18:24, which means he

must prove himself trustworthy and capable of friendship if he is to have them.

We are warned, no! counseled by Scriptural example and proverb, that friendship must be built, earned and proven, that it can never be accomplished by mere show of words or grandstanding deeds and flimsy promises untested. *A man void of understanding strikes hands, and becomes surety in the presence of his Friend.*” Prov 17:18 People shake hands often enough and make deals like they were rock solid friends, but they can’t keep their word about them, cannot be honest, forthright and true-blue. Time and truth prove they are not real friends at all, only great pretenders wearing the hip-hop garb of mutuality which should never be mistaken for an act of friendship consistent with the Divine Nature. For friendship, which is brotherly love, is not realized through mutual or common interests, though this is the card-board cutout of friendship that the world offers to us. Friendship will have mutuality but it must also have differences and diversity of opinion and taste if it is to be tested and cinched up. In 16th Century England, The Quakers, formed their sect around this high notion of loving friendship and its importance in the higher degree of personal Christian character, calling themselves ‘The Society of Friends’. It was a noble venture and, at least in its early decades, even in America in Pennsylvania was guarded and staunchly adhered to. Treatises and testimonies abound in Quaker books and lore witnessing to their devotion to ‘Brotherly Kindness’ toward one another and their fellow man. For this reason, Quakers were generally, pacifists and conscientious objectors. It was their connection with trade and commerce and banking, their success in the world, that did so much damage to their calling of faith and eventually corrupted their great ideals of the higher calling of love, but that is another story, not pertinent to our treatise. Brotherly kindness was expressed by that name with which the noble Quakers had christened their religion: ‘Friendship’. From the outset, their founder, George Fox, rather than believing in the cultivation of the soil of the earth as the fulfillment of the law of God’s love and peace, believed wholeheartedly in cultivation of

the inner man toward true friendship toward God and in the body of Christ among its believers. In this hope, Fox rejected religion per se' with its good works and hypocrisy, in preference to the religion of the individual priesthood and the sainthood of every humble believer. There was to be equality; no male or female, no rich or poor, no black or white. The 'Brotherly kindness' of true friendship among a clergy-less body of believers was the presumed devotion of every Quaker among its early generations in the formative years. And an admirable society it was, if for nothing else than its dedication to 'friendship', and resultant love in Christ Jesus. They choose the name 'friend' and attached to it, 'society', because friendship is the fundamental and first real act of true 'community' that can come from a person's heart. It is the first and most primitive and essential act of being 'one body' a member together in one accord. Friendship is that 'action of relationship' that makes the saint one with another in Christ. There can be no community or society in the spirit, members of the same body, without truly becoming one in brotherly kindness (friendship). By this definition, if there are no friends there is no working body of true believers, no communion of the saints. On this point of true friendship we are exhorted to examine ourselves because it is the basis upon we should eat of the body of Christ together; and drink his blood. Not as acquaintances sharing things in common because we have common interests like baseball, tea sets, workout programs, favorite movies, stand-up comics, or flower shows. But because we hold that one thing in common that binds us together and teaches us about the real dictates of true friendship: Christ, our brother – even Christ who called his disciples at the Last Supper, no longer servants, but friends.

Friendship is an act of Community, of communion of being one accord

I do not know if friendship among believers should be considered a sacred thing, other than it is sacred because God seems to hold it sacred, because it is part of His Divine character which he hopes, and expects, we should diligently seek after. The Bible says that there is a friend who is greater even than a brother. That, greater brother/friend, of course, is Jesus Christ, the one who came in the flesh so that he might stand by us and be the one who can come to us in 'brotherly kindness' no matter what our trial or problem, or offense to the Father, may be, obtain forgiveness for us and freedom. He can identify with our humanity because he is our human brother. He will never shrink away from us, or cease battling with us to deliver us from evil and the temptation of sin which causes us so much shame and steals our liberty. God is also interested in teaching us about true friendship and what it entails in the inner man and how "the bowels of mercies" are actualized in our life. The first declaration of friendship that God presents to us in Scripture is when he spoke face-to-face with Moses *as a friend*. Of other true friends, God says they spoke friendly, or as if they were of the same soul. Friends, I say true friends, i.e. really friends, must have this oneness of accord. They may not have all the same regards or interests, may not share the same avocation or be on the same social level or of the same education or degree of sophistication in matters of this life, but they will share the state of heart and love of God and Jesus Christ. This will be the wellspring of their ongoing life and the strength that binds their relationship firmly and tightly together as a threefold cord. All tendencies to condescend are dropped, dismissed as the sure road of mere acquaintance and roadblocks of friendship.

In this 'common place', this community of body, this 'society of friends' (and this complies with Christ's statement that wherever two or three are gathered together in his name there he will be

also) there is communion, or real ingestion of community and togetherness, that real benefit of friendship. Friend and actual community are one. Friendship begins to afford us the great opportunity to love, and without friends love is not proven to exist. We cannot love if we are alone; we can only theorize and conjecture and pontificate in our minds, but we can never love in all its tests and trials and challenging labors if we stay aloof and without friends. We may see why it is such a tragedy for the individual members of a body of believers not to be friends, why the Quakers esteemed friendship so highly. Friends speak face-to-face, they are privy to one another's most secret thoughts. They are just in that they never will deceive, but they are-what-they-are to one another and they resist the natural inclination to flash off images at their friend to flatter or deceive for personal gain. A friend is not on the defensive, because true friends are forthcoming. A true friend does not send a friend away in need by giving false hope or deceptive fibs just to stave off anguish or avoid the inconvenience of shouldering a problem. Friends will learn to strive to love at all times as the Bible urges people to do; if they don't they have ceased to be *really* communing in *brotherly kindness*.

The Scriptural example of friendship as brotherly kindness is accentuated best in the well documented love between David and his enemy's son, Jonathan. This relationship was not at all confined or imprisoned by the family ties of flesh or any worldly love. They lived out the truth that there is in this life friendship that bonds two together closer than brother or sisterhood, but only when it is molded by the Spirit of God into that 'brotherly kindness' called friendship. Of the hundreds of testimonies in the Scripture, this relationship is one of the most touching because it shows the high emotion of holy affection that can be in a relationship of the most profound friendship. There is no greater love that a person can have than to give his life for his *friends*, that's what Jesus declared to his friends, the disciples at the Last Supper. Jonathan was such a friend, dying as it were, a kind of martyrs' death, when he knew he was giving up his future to save his friend, David from being

murdered by his very own father, Saul. Jonathan could not resist the affection of love that he felt for his 'brother' David though he knew it meant being separated from him. Proverbs 17:17 says; *"Friends love at all times; and a brother is born for adversity."* Jonathan is a living example of this kind of undying friendship which God holds dear.

Because of this, a failure to have brotherly kindness and its bowels of mercies prevail causes a betrayal. Betrayal is the failure of a friend. There is no such thing as betrayal by any other than a friend. And it is the worst kind of injury because true friendship is the highest relationship, the most trusted relationship. Gossip, or as Proverbs puts it "whisperers" separate chief friends. But faithful are the words of a friend, never to hurt, generally to edify and help. There is a good reason why God despises the works of gossip and slander and why words in friendship should be faithful, because betrayal can devastate our womb of kindness and a cancer of bitterness can dry up our brotherly kindness. Only God can help us walk graciously away from a shipwrecked relationship in which friendship has ended. And we must allow him to comfort us, and send God-given friends to our aid, to comfort us, when necessary. It is so important that we must find comfort from Christ and hope in restoration, as long as there is any to be had. If not we must find the way to put it to rest and not let it affect our other relationships of living brotherly kindness.

Friends will give us good counsel not bad press. *"Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so does the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel."* Prov 27:9 Friends will be an agent of peace in our life through good counsel and gentle, calm resolve. Collusion is a worldly sign of friendship joined together by anger and not peacefulness. So friendship ought to increase our peace, be an addition to it. This does not mean there will not be some friction in a relationship, but it will be reciprocal friction that produces a sharpening of compassion, affection and an increase in love and general goodness in the character of each. The Bible makes the point this way: *"As Iron sharpens iron; so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend."* Prov. 27:17 Friends are forged in this

fashion in the furnace by desiring it and hoping for real friendship. This also means that friends are connected by judgment just as the sharpening friction can and is a form of judgment being called into action. They put one another to the test; require improvement and growth in the knowledge of relationship and understanding the requirement for friendship, without apology, without demanding an apology. Friends are honest and hopeful for the other. But they do not put undue demands on their friend, and certainly never anything they would not demand of themselves. But this, all friends must learn and become wise about. For it is the privilege of a friend to be a source of refreshment. Jesus offers this image of himself in the Song of Solomon 5:1; *"I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O Friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved."* Friends are not bound together by anger but by the refreshing power of peacefulness and kindness. This is why in the above passage Jesus can call his most beloved one, his sister his spouse, one among his friends. This is the significance of that great moment when God first revealed in his relationship with Abraham that man could be a friend to God. *"Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the friend of God."* Jas. 2:23

Jesus said at his last intimate moment with his disciples that if they did whatsoever he commanded of them, (proving they believed in him, as Abraham had believed God) they would be his friends. *"Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knows not what his lord does: but I have called you friends; for all things I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."* John 15:15 By calling them friends he has lifted his disciples to an equal level on par with him by making them privy to his most deepest knowledge. They are not below him in a relationship he has bestowed the equality of knowledge of his personal life. Friends trust one another with knowing things about one another in the most profound matters. How appropriate that the last remark in the Bible using the term "friend" would be by that apostle of love, John and apply

the same concept “speaking face-to-face” as God had used when describing his friendly relationship with Moses, ending his letter to the brethren in this friendly manner. *“But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace to thee. The friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.”* 3 John 1:14 Biblically, knowing ones name was a sign of significant personal knowledge. Often friends have affectionate names or personal nicknames by which they share their intimacy in gesture or as token of friendship, to greet by name is an act of brotherly kindness reaching to the soft spot of one’s friend, opening that inner place for the reception of further relationship. Jesus knew his friends by name. He latter promises to give them a new name in that glory land, which no man but he himself knows. This amounts to a promise of even greater intimacy of friendship in ages to come for every individual friend of Jesus, the living ideal of ‘brotherly kindness’. It gives even further weight to the premium that God holds on friendship in his eternal plan for man and his salvation.

How shall we act upon this hope and promise of friendship, but by believing and obeying Christ to the very best of our capability, even to perfection, so that we may first be accounted a ‘friend’ of God. This can only be accomplished by loving our fellows and especially *“those of the household of God”*, Eph 2:19 as we are told. We must prove that we love God by proving we love our neighbor. But to have friends we must first show ourselves friendly, in other words, compatible with friendship, capable of friendliness. For this the bowels of mercy are a sure way to institute and keep fresh in our inner man the desire and fires of a friendly nature, for this is the essence of Divine Friendly Nature or Brotherly Kindness. I have taken the liberty to make a suggestive list of attitudes and challenges of compassion, forgiveness and pity that might be offered as a salute or right hand of fellowship to one’s potential or actual friend – this kind of kindness, is a remedy for what ails a friendship and often help to cover even a multitude of sins, as the scripture puts it. Here are some useful things for friends to dispense

to one another as they walk together in true communion in the body of Christ as they are called, The Friends of God.

1. An understanding Glance
2. An arm when the ground is slippery
3. Encouraging & Enthusiastic “How do you do”
4. Solace when you’re confused
5. Companionship along THE WAY TO THE destination
6. Someone to cover their back when they’re in peril (they’ll take a hit for you)
7. Sincere petitions AND INTERCEDING for their good
8. Honest posture in everything (Standing before the other without malice or deceit)
9. Loyal friendship (Get out of Jail free card)
10. Always the benefit of the doubt

Do not our friends deserve all these and more? “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, BOWELS of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering.” Col 3:12 When friendship is gained, it can only be preserved by having it tested in the furnace of true brotherly kindness. “But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his BOWELS of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?”

1 John 3:17

Where to begin? I don’t know! Print out a bunch of get out of jail free cards for any friend you are lucky enough to have. Don’t think evil about your friend first, but give your friend the benefit of the doubt for love thinks no evil.

Act 1:18

Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his BOWELS gushed out.

2 Corinthians 6:12

Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own BOWELS.

Philippians 1:8

For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the BOWELS of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 2:1

If [there be] therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any BOWELS and mercies,

Colossians 3:12

Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

Philemon 1:7

For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the BOWELS of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.

Philemon 1:12

Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own BOWELS:

Philemon 1:20

Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my BOWELS in the Lord.

1 John 3:17

But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

109. Keep Two Commandments and The Law Can Be Fulfilled

Divine Love

by T Myers Smith

*“Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked Him a question,
tempting Him, and saying,*

Master, which is the greatest commandment in the law?

*“Jesus said unto Him, ‘thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all
thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*

This is the first and great commandment.

*“And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbor as
thyself.*

*On these two commandments hang all the law and the
prophets.” Matt 22: 35-40*

Again, the written word shows an attempt of Satan to trap Jesus. The Pharisaical lawyer was used by Satan to see if Jesus, who came to set men free from the law, could indeed pin-point the greatest commandment in the law. Jesus, undaunted by this irreverent question, took the opportunity to reveal what is the greatest commandment, and one more that is like it. If we keep them we will find that we are obeying all that is in the Law and told us by the prophets. These words were given by Christ for the Church, and we, being a part of that body, should examine ourselves to be sure we are upholding this greatest of the commandments.

How, then, can we be sure we are loving the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, and mind? The heart is the innermost part of our

being. It is known completely by God because He is the searcher of men's hearts. Sometimes there is something hidden deep within our heart that is hidden even from our conscience. This is made evident when the Lord works true deliverance in our lives and sets us free from things within us which we may have never dreamed had been rooted within our heart. Our heart should be a resting place, a dwelling place for God. When we have asked for and received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, we open our innermost selves to God, His Son, and His Holy Spirit and allow them to dwell within our heart. By allowing ourselves to be this open to God we are, for sure, on the right track to loving the Lord our God with all our heart.

And what about our soul? What part of us does our soul belong to and how can we love the Lord with all our soul. In a number of places in the Scriptures, the soul and spirit are mentioned separately from one another. I believe, in this passage from Matthew, the word "soul" has much more to do with our carnal side than our spiritual side which has been made alive to God through the cleansing blood of Christ. The soul, which Jesus instructs us to love the Lord so much with, is very much a part of our emotions. Our soul is the gathering place of so many of our feelings. The Lord our God wants us to love Him with deep affection, with a great desire to please and serve Him. He wants our souls to get excited about knowing Him. He wants joy to spring up inside us when our thoughts are about loving Him. He wants us to love Him without inhibitions. He wants us to rejoice in Him and be free to praise Him in an emotional way with passion. He wants us to love Him with all our soul.

I believe when Jesus said that he wanted us to love the Lord with all of our mind he was speaking about our thoughts, our intellect. He wants our minds to be full of the spiritual things of God. Paul wrote this to the Romans, *"that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally*

*mind*ed is death; but to be *spiritually minded* is life and peace.” Rom 8:4-6

The Lord does not want us to have our minds full of the things of this world, He would rather have us cast our cares before Him and seek his Spirit. We need to read the Word in order to have our minds cleansed, as the Bible puts it: “by the washing of the water of the Word”. Eph 5:26 We ought to have our minds filled with the Holy Ghost’s teachings that we might know the things which are freely given to us of God that we might have the mind of Christ which is spoken of by Paul in the second chapter of 1 Corinthians. If we seek and possess these things then we will begin to love the Lord our God with all of our mind.

Jesus came not to do away with the law and God’s commandments but to fulfill them, and only He was able to accomplish this. We know that the time is past when men had to strive to live up to the law, yet obeying God’s commandments are still very important. The great commandment that Christ gave for the Church, the commandment to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul and mind, and the other commandment to love our neighbor, give us a clear and simple way to know how to serve our God. In Hebrews 10:16 the Lord says, “this is the covenant I will make with them after those days, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.” Therefore, let us pray that the first step we take in making certain we uphold the laws that have been put into our hearts and written upon each of our minds, is seeking to keep God’s greatest commandment and the other which is like it; to love one another.

110. Perfect Love Casts Out Fear

The Worst Things We Fear Are Spiritual

by LeRoy J. Gardenier

Christian Spirit, Feb 1999

I once wrote an article entitled O Ye of Little Faith discussing the five separate occasions when our Lord reprimanded His closest followers. I mentioned the incident when, crossing the Sea of Galilee, He twice rebuked them for being fearful (see Matt 8:23-27/ Mk 4:37-41). At another time when Jesus is summing up the horrors of The Great Tribulation, He speaks of “Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after (expecting) those things which are coming on the earth” Luke 21:26. According to His inerrant Word, things are going to get that bad as a consequence of intensified, widespread evil in this world. Even now, humanistic plans and purposes are building toward that unbelievable, unbearable era. Contrasting the dreadful fate of the wicked with the glorious destiny of the righteous, the prophet Isaiah reveals: “*The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come*” Is 57:1. Either through the sleep of merciful death or by means of sudden, thrilling translation by rapture, watching, praying, obedient servants of the Savior will be accounted worthy to escape all those things that are coming upon the earth to swiftly stand before His heavenly presence (see Luke 21:36).

In the synoptic gospels of both Matthew and Luke as well as in the special gospel of John the awesome, incisive and reassuring command, “Fear ... not” is issued seven times. In view of current millennial madness - the destructive practices of many false cults, the epidemic increase of phobias and family disintegration, the fear

of sudden obliteration (by errant asteroids or through unmanageable nuclear stockpiles), plagues, ecological disasters, financial chaos, unreliable and corrupt government, moral decay – you name it, the list seems endless – let’s just say, any of the revolving threats, real and imagined which terrorize us from day to day, we thought it good and helpful to touch upon these seven gospel imperatives. Hopefully, our readers can glean from them some insights that will aid not only in blocking or alleviating the paralyzing effects of alarming fright, but might give them cause for happiness in Christ. Here goes. Enjoy and be edified –

Fear Not Rejection

In Matthew 10:26 the Lord Jesus admonishes His followers not to fear the sickening sadness of rejection nor even the continuing threat of persecution.

If we compare this verse with its counterpart in Luke 12:1-2 we see that our Lord was referring to the hatred and violence spawned by man-made religion. The latter citation shows that Jesus was alluding to the leaven (the corrupting teachings) of the Pharisees. In both Gospels, the bottom line reassurance is that “the truth will come out” and that we need not fear boldly witnessing to and for Him, regardless of adverse reactions!

Fear Not Man

“And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” Matthew 10:28.

At most, man can only cause the loss of life but he lacks the power to destroy life. God alone can do that. For those who walk in closeness to their Creator, this should be a most heartening command. And the solemn circumstances of facing death itself can be assuaged by the confirming, consoling words of God spoken through His ancient prophet:

“I, even I, am He that comforteth you, who art thou, that thou

shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass?" Isaiah 51:12.

Fear Not, You Are of Value to God

The third "Fear not" citation is more a reassuring assertion than an imperious command. Verse 31 of this same chapter in Matt states: "*Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows*". The Lord Jesus encourages us to believe that "*His eye is on the sparrow*" and that nothing, absolutely nothing happens in this life without the knowledge or will of our heavenly Father. In fact, we are reminded that the very hairs of our head are all numbered. Interestingly enough, the Aramaic word use here for "numbered" is the exact same one that appeared mysteriously on the wall of Belshazzar's palace when this word "mene" signified that God had numbered the Babylonian dynasty, found it wanting, and finished it (see Daniel 5:25). The same God who surveys and controls the movements in the mightiest worldly kingdoms also regards in detail the minutest aspects of our personal lives. As the Psalmist puts it: "*My times (i.e., all my affairs) are in Thy hands*" (31:15).

Verses 37-39 of Matthew's chapter 10 summarize the very real death experienced by all true Christians as they obediently serve and follow the One they love most. These words of the Lord Jesus speak of that genuine separation so beautifully symbolized by Christian baptism but profoundly actualized only by relinquishing all that we hold dear in this life - worldly relations, comforts, security; even oneself: our own personal purposes, plans and preferences, even up to and including the very separation of soul from spirit (see Hebrews 4:12).

Fear Not, You Will Find Work in The Kingdom Of God

The three references to the command, "Fear not" are more widely distributed in the Gospel of Luke. First to be indicated is: "*Fear not; from henceforth, thou shalt catch men*" Luke 5:10. The special context surrounding this command should be most encouraging to every Christian disciple. Sitting in Simon Peter's boat, Jesus had spoken to the crowd assembled along the lakeshore. When He had finished His

talk He ordered his men to launch out into the deep to lower their nets for an expected catch. Peter and his companions obeyed Jesus but did so with great reluctance, deep misgivings and, most likely, fear for their reputations.

These were experienced fishermen. They had worked all night without results. They well knew from years of trial and error that it was a complete waste of time to fish during the daylight hours. Against their better judgment, they did what the Lord commanded. The result of their obedience was an astonishingly abundant harvest. Setting aside their own ideas, plans and purposes, these disciples acted out the foundational spiritual truths we earlier referred to in Matthew 10:37-39. *“He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it.”* It was only a beginning but on that eventful day the newly-called disciples of Jesus began to die to themselves. They allowed the Word of God (Jesus’ command) to divide asunder the soul (their own good judgment) from the spirit (their intuitive sense of and trust in Divine authority). When our Lord assured Peter and the others that from then on they would become fishers of men *“... they forsook all and followed him.”* Luke 5:11.

Fear Not, But Believe

A man named Jairus was the leader of his synagogue. When his twelve-year-old daughter was dying Jairus came to Jesus begging Him to come and heal her. Before reaching his house the ruler received word that the little girl had died. Jesus’ unexpected reaction was, *“Fear not, believe only, and she shall be made whole.”* Luke 8:50. Jesus rebuked the professional mourners stating that the child was not dead but only sleeping. To unbelievers, death is final and, most likely, permanent. In this poignant account, we are given God’s viewpoint on death. Our Lord’s presence and power transcend despair and death. It is left to us to *“...believe only.”*

Fear Not, God Wants to Bless You

The reference in Luke 12:7 is identical to the situation already treated in Matthew 10:31. In Luke 12:32 our Savior assures us: “*Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*” Just as many are ignorant of the true nature of death, likewise mention of God’s Kingdom or the Kingdom of Heaven are frequently misunderstood. As one writer has accurately put it: As the word ‘kingdom’ has regard to sovereignty rather than territory, and to the sphere of its exercise rather than to its extent? At the Messiah’s baptism in the Jordan River the Father spoke, the Holy Ghost descended and the heavens were opened. In a very real sense that door to heaven remains ajar all during this glorious, merciful dispensation of grace. The Lord Jesus Christ was the first human to allow God’s Spirit to possess Him fully. The Holy Ghost descended upon Him to guide and assist Him in fulfilling perfectly the will of the Father. The living Lord Jesus was, and still is, God’s Person, in God’s place, doing God’s will to perfection. That total subjection to the sovereignty of God constitutes the kingdom of God. That is why the Lord Jesus alone is the Door (see John 10:7-10). Believers who obey His command to “*Follow Me*” (see Matt. 9:9 and Jn. 12:26) enter into the salvation security of His sheepfold (the true Church), stand before the presence and operate in the power of the Trinity. These spend their earthly lives preparing to enter the open door of full redemption, attuning themselves to respond to the final summons of the Rapture! (see Rev. 3:8; 4)

Fear Not, The King Is Coming!

The final “fear not” gospel citation is found in John 12:15. It refers to our Lord’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem. This scripture is the fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy found in Zechariah 9:9. The New Testament version says: “*Fear not, daughter of Zion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass colt.*” Just as we assuredly know that Jesus’ first coming to suffer and to die for us perfectly came to pass, so we can be equally certain of and take great comfort and encouragement in the certainty of this scene from Revelation 19:11-16.

“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.

And he was clothed in a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean,

And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”

III. Who Sets the conditions? Man or God

Is there such a thing as unconditional love?

by T Myers Smith

Jesus said, “But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat?

And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink?

Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not.

So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.” Luke 17:7-10

It should be patently obvious by this parable that there are not only conditions to be met in our on-going relationship with God and in ‘working out our salvation with fear and trembling’ but also who it is that sets all the conditions in our walk with the Lord. It is too bad, particularly among our fellow countrymen in America, that conceding to conditional requirements is often considered submission to bondage and runs counter-intuitive to the very ideal inherent in the exalted American character. So spiritually perverse is our idea of freedom and how to carry it out, that when it comes down to it, we are more a nation of spiritual insurgents saturated with a misconception of liberty and freedom, taught from our earliest beginnings, which says that to be free we must be rebellious, stubborn individualists. This, of course, runs counter to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the most fundamental of ways and is never what

God expects or wills for us, but he expects a life of submission; submission to the Godhead, submission to the Word, and submission to one another.

America's brand of Evangelicalism has settled into a false notion of spiritual freedom. While Christ came to set us free; he did not come to make us free to do whatever we want or to have us be free so that we may lead others into bondage; or that we should be 'freed' from doing the Father's Will, which is to say, 'freed' from meeting the conditions of His righteousness. These conditions include hearing and doing His will. And there are, of course, conditions established for hearing God's Word in our heart. We must listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd spoken by the Spirit to us. We must be born-again if we are to see the kingdom of God. That is born of the Spirit by the Spirit. The conditions of a righteous life which we must not resist, but must wholly submit to, are too numerous to list here. We would turn this writing into something other than what it is intended to teach. God sets parameters and conditions upon the existence and quality of our relationship with Him. The bible points out that spiritual rebellion and stubbornness is like the sin of witchcraft and idolatry. And we all know how God feels about those two diabolical iniquities.

There was a man once in our fellowship, with whom we thought we had fellowship; but he was with us for many years in a stolid spiritually rebellious state, but subtle about it. Finally, after many crises and personal problems, the man's rebellion and stubborn resistance toward the body and the true submissive fellowship of God came to a head. Many of us had had enough. I was required to set some conditions upon the spirit and mind of his fellowship with us. Among the conditions of further fellowship was that he put away his lone-wolf mentality and lay down his bogus spirit of ideas of personal freedom and his resistance toward submitting one to another in love. Upon these conditions and others, which included restrictions (which is consistent with some of the Lord's conditions whereby he restricts sin and idolatry among His people, for example), he walked out of my presence and, to my heartache,

never returned. The Lord had no option with this man for his spirit of stubborn resistance, his misguided determination at free-wheeling to do whatever he wanted or thought was best, for he thought himself a righteous man, was like the leavening that Jesus spoke of concerning the Sadducees and the Pharisees. A little leavening leavens the whole lump. I anguished over his departure for we had been friends – or so I thought.

Years later I found myself directly behind the man standing in line at a store. He did not wish to talk to me or even acknowledge me, but I buttonholed him anyway. I asked quite honestly if he thought it was possible that I had failed him in love. This is always an extreme possibility. I told him I wondered about that, but he said, quite frankly, “No, it’s not that simple”. I believe he was correct because I then reminded him that I never said to him he was cast out, or no longer welcome in the fellowship. He nodded, and said, “But you set conditions”. It was then that a light went on for me. After so many years I knew where the rub really was. He would have no longer be free to do whatever he wanted with total impunity. I had known this fact at the time, but now I knew that he knew it and that was the real problem that existed in his fellowship with me and the others, all along. He does not want to be issued ultimatums, or directives, or orders from anyone, not even God.

Today’s American Evangelical experience has fallen into one of the oldest traps of religion, thinking that God’s mercy allows for them to do whatsoever they please. It is the trap of Aaron’s two sons who burnt ‘strange’ incense on the altar and were consumed in an instant by fire from heaven, so severe was the crime of thinking they were free to offer anything they wished to God, that God forbid Aaron to even cry over his sons’ deaths. It is why God rejected Cain’s sacrifice, stopped the world at the Tower of Babel and confused their language, dethroned Saul, judged Israel, struck Ananias and Sapphira dead. Their names mean Protected and Beautiful respectively because there are conditions set even upon our protection and beauty in the eyes of God; one condition being that we must not ‘lie to the Holy Ghost’ which was their deadly mistake.

When the Lord had the children of Israel pass between the two mountains he proclaimed “if you will do this and this, you will be blessed; if you do not do these things I will curse you and drive you from your home and your families will suffer”. If this isn’t an ultimatum I don’t know what is. God was setting conditions upon all his blessings, some conditions were commands to do, some restrictions on behavior and self-will. We are to serve the Lord with gladness, not hide our God-given gifts in a napkin and bury them but invest them in the labors of the kingdom of God. There is a condition with God concerning receiving – we must not hoard His gifts, but return them to Him in the form of giving to others. We must love one another. This is not optional in the eyes of God but a condition. John said do not tell me you love God while you hate your neighbor. And I repeat, loving God is not optional, it is the first and greatest commandment, a condition of having a right relationship with God. John said, I will prove my love for God by loving my neighbor. *“If a man says, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar: for he that loves not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?”* 1 John 4:20 You see, there is a condition even attached to loving God; we must love one another as a proof that we love God according to His conditions set upon loving Him.

There are conditions to all of God’s Will. We must believe in our heart and confess with our mouth if we want to live a ‘saved’ life here on this earth. We are urged to flee youthful lusts and follow after righteousness. We are advised to pray so we can receive gifts – a condition; we are warned to be ready, not found partying and committing unrighteousness, if we are to be Raptured – a condition. Even love carries with it conditions. True, repentance does demand forgiveness; but forgiveness is conditional upon repentance of the offender Lk 17:3. I had argued many times with the man cited in the example above about the expression ‘God’s unconditional love’. He used it to mean God would never stop loving us and protecting us no matter what we did. That kind of loose theology gave him license to do ‘his thing’. I countered that there was no such license intended

in God's expression of love, but that love was highly conditional in that the Bible says we must love not only in word, but in deed also.

But I promised I would not make an itemized list of the 'conditional' imperatives duly registered and recorded in the Holy Bible. But consider this: if we are weighed and found wanting in the scales (of the biblical conditions) what kind of judgment awaits us? I leave you with the parable cited above, giving God the final word in our instruction.

“But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat?

And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink?

Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not.

So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do”. Lk 17:7-10

PART III

PERFECTED

112. It is More Than Proper It is Highly Advisable...

by Eloise Gardenier

... even in these last days urgent; that all persons introduced to Jesus Christ should intently study under the guidance and tutelage of the Holy Ghost, the ongoing scriptural theme of Christ and His Bride. The theme of the bride is at the very heart and desire of all scripture; it is the first hope of God from the very start that He would provide for His son an eternal wife so that He would not be alone. The bride must become one of those whom He saves through providing eternal life through paying the price by His own death and dying in their place. The theme saturates the books of the Bible from its very first pages of Genesis to the last quote of the Bible which is the invitation broadcast from heaven: “the Spirit and the bride say: “Come!” It is the ultimate invite to come and drink of the waters of eternal life freely.

For the most part, the churches of history have miserably neglected this most fundamental theme of all themes called the bride of Christ. The Bible’s wealth of parables and references about the Bridegroom and His bride (found throughout both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible) is little known and has been unwisely ignored by the churches of Christ. Nevertheless, the Scriptures are replete with marvelous love stories and dramas about the Bride all revealing what her heart has been like down through history. There is a full chronicle of prophecy recording what her love affair with God would entail and what she would have to endure. That it would cause her to be an outcast from the concerns and beliefs of the world, a refugee from her own flesh, and the foil and protagonist of her husband-to-be’s enemy, Satan.

The Bride’s story runs throughout scripture, finds expression in a sweet bevy of loving places, in the book of Genesis, in the saga

of the courageous Joshua, in various places within the historical accounts and dramas of the state of Israel and its prophets and its corrupt and valiant priests and kings. There she stands, humble behind the veil, often ignored, maybe abused and mocked by those who seek their own reward, those impressed with their own power and station in this passing life. She is forsaken by the world, but it is to drive her into the arms of God for she must learn to live only for Him, it is where her happiness and existence finds life everlasting. She is a contradiction to all that this life perceives and believes. She is obscure and unknown, lost from an heritage of this world, freed of the limitation of the gravitation of this earth. As her father, the father of faith Abraham, she is a stranger in a strange land though it be the home of her birth, this Israel, this earth, this rebellious people named after Abraham's grandson Israel. She walks solemn and alone with but little support except from her chosen God, she is the humble yet shining and glorious personage and spirit and the primary and most alluring presence of all the themes of the testimonial books of Esther and Ruth and is the single portrait of the greatest poem of all time, the Song of Songs, painted in the words of God Himself. The triad of Old Testament books of spiritual wisdom, Ecclesiastes, Psalms and Proverbs are perfumed with scents of lavender, cinnamon, cherry and apple blossom, she is clothed like the lilies of the valley. She is modest yet every bit of her body, soul and spirit is devoted to her Lord. Her character is revealed sometimes subtly, sometimes directly.

Yet, it is in the 16 books of the Prophets that her prophetic purpose and destiny is revealed. In them, not only does she live and breathe but her love and devotion, her faith and patience for her loving Lord is threaded, sometimes delicately, sometimes elaborately, like beautiful golden needlepoint in a tapestry of a montage of military, pastoral, stately and marital scenes, which can only be seen by the special 3D spiritual vision which is given to a believer by the Holy Spirit Himself.

It was not until New Testament times, when the gospel became available to the whole world, that the Holy Ghost was made

personally available through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. There is no relationship possible with the Holy Ghost in this epoch age without the personal approval of Jesus Christ.

The Father and the Jesus would not put the Holy Ghost through having a relationship with someone who has not more than acknowledged Jesus Christ, but has also, at the very least invited Jesus into their personal life by faith. At the moment of Christ's spiritual availability to the spirit of Man, so to the availability of the Holy Ghost residing within any believer was made possible. This meant the Holy Ghost could indwell the common Man in a personal way never before known among God's people anywhere. Brideship, with the advent of Christ, is now offered universally to those who meet the requirements of faith, as never before.

In our age, the 2000 year-old age of the New Testament, Mankind has been given the merciful advantage of having the Holy ghost for our guide to not only reveal the meaning of those hard to perceive truths of the Old Testament, but to understand the mysteries of salvation that were discussed and revealed by Jesus in the book of Matthew as well as the ones revealed in the Acts of the Apostles, the epistles, pastoral letters and the Book of Revelation. Especially, how these sheathes of knowledge and wisdom relate to and reveal the realities of brideship.

Following the first coming of Christ things dynamically changed in a spiritual way in that the Holy Ghost became personally available to those who would believe and receive Him as their guide and tutor. This personal relationship with the Holy Spirit would be invaluable to the relative few who would give up everything so that they would be accepted by Christ as one of his betrothed.

Those who trust wholly in the Holy Ghost are able to realize that the Spirit is the oil in the lamp that gives the betrothed sight through the dark mist of this world so they may see clearly in this last epic of salvation – in these dark and perilous last days the light of an eternity of being married to Christ as one. In the New Testament the Bride is told that the Holy Ghost would be her tutor, her guide, her eyes and ears, and the inspiration needed to love

the Master with her whole undivided heart. That he would take up residence in her, he could sweep her 'house' clean of all unclean things, fumigate and air out her house, if only she will allow it.

The Holy Ghost would show her that He is not only to be a landlord of her house, but its owner and operator. He would not only show her what is required by way of concession, that she must daily give a gentle and genuine bow, offer gracious allowance so that he can take up ownership of our temple without giving him a hard time, and allow him to be the keeper of her heart – but that He would also be the one to give us the grace, promote the generosity in her, to let Him hold sway over her. Devotion to The New Testament shows us that It took Jesus' coming and His series of revelations about the more than dozen mysteries that are denoted in the Book of Matthew to show us mysteries of the Spirit and the faith that could lead us there. In these mysteries and words of Christ, the real salt to be eaten with the Word of God is given to her. They bring out the true flavor and the real nourishment of the first and foremost desire of the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Ghost – that Christ was sent by the Father, Ministered to by the Holy Ghost, and endured the Cross – so that He might have for Himself a perfect and loving wife to be one with Him for all eternity.

We ask nothing of our readers, we hope with all our heart that the study on these pages of the bride and her betrothal will encourage a person to love and trust Christ and to consider coming to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, and maybe even, if someone's heart is touched, to become one of the betrothed.

113. The Journey to Brideship...

You Must Be Born-Again

by T Myers Smith

... begins with being born-again but it is only the first step. Our goal, our destination must be to become the eternal companion and confidant of Jesus Christ, privy to all of His adventures that are to come in eternity.

This is nothing less than being His Bride in the spiritual and quintessential sense of the meaning of the word – Bride – which is becoming one with our espoused Lord and Master.

Discipleship, which the very meaning presumes an exclusive following of someone or something, is essential. It means that Disciples of Christ will follow Jesus Christ wherever He leads them. There can be no one, or anything else that is remotely followed.

“Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.

And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.

Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.

And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? For the living to the dead?

To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.

And they shall pass through it, hardly bestead and hungry: and it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, they shall

fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, and look upward.

And they shall look unto the earth; and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness.” Isa. 8:16-22

To be a disciple simply means to be a disciplined follower of that one thing or person, only. For those after the coming of the Messiah it means becoming born again, being delivered from our personal sin, being immersed in the Holy Spirit, learning to walk in the humbling Word of God and partaking of the Divine Nature; these are part and parcel of the fully enlightened life that must be experienced by a disciple. Those who are devoted to following Christ at all cost and who become recognized by the Master as His true disciple will acquire the engagement of betrothal as a bride to Christ.

Today’s disciple must do as the apostles did without hesitating or blinking. A disciple must leave everything behind in order to follow their true and only love. One cannot follow unless they are willing to leave in a spiritual way, their place, their past and everything with it. One must trust Him to create an abundant spiritual life for them, trust that He is the Resurrection and The Life.

The disciples’ reward is summed up among those final declarations of the Bible when it declares in the Book of Revelation chapter 14 that there will be ‘virgins in which there is found no guile’ who will be among an exclusive group that will be allowed to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth for all eternity. This is the right and privilege of a Bride; to be with her husband.

Imparting this faith and encouraging would-be disciples to follow Christ wholeheartedly without fear is the primary intention of the pages on ‘Perfection’ of this website. Does it not make sense that Brideship privileges should be the disciples’ reward; to never be out of the Lord’s gracious presence, privy to all His innermost thoughts, plans and desires, and actions?

Therefore we contend and rightly declare this: Discipleship = Brideship

Discipleship is the only way to reach the ultimate goal of perfection, that proper union with Christ of which becoming born-again is only a start.

II4. Looking For the Bride

Son of Man To Be Married

by T Myers Smith

The first promise of God for fallen man was that He would send the Christ, the ‘anointed’ seed of the woman, to crush the head of the great perpetrator destroying the power of the wicked one who had tempted Eve and cajoled Adam into unbelief and rebellion against their Maker and Father, God. In due time, the ‘anointed’ one would destroy the ‘wicked one’ and his works.

The Bible clearly states that the great mystery of all mysteries of God and Christ is about Christ and the Church. This declaration is not directly announced, however, until the Age of grace instituted immediately after the first coming of the Messiah. Summed up in Ephesians chapter five it is simply stated as Christ faithfully loving the Church and his wife being absolutely one hundred percent submitted to Him as the head of all things. He loves her she is wholeheartedly submitted to Him. When this occurs Christ and that portion of the Church which is submissive are one flesh and are destined to be ONE living in eternal utopia secure and perfect, owning all things godly and having all peace. This is what Christ was getting at when He prayed at the Last Supper that the Father would make He and His disciples one even as He and the Father are One. Though this mystery of Christ and His Bride was not frankly stated in this manner until its mystery was fully uncovered in the New Testament epistles and finally revealed in Revelation 21, it had long been alluded to throughout the parables of Holy Scripture, both Old and New, in fact, it had been insinuated from the very beginning.

When God created heaven and earth and all the things in it He always remarked, “it is good” Gen 1:4,10,12,18,21,25,31. He also said, “Let us create man in our own image” Gen 1:26. This was the first reference to the Godhead of the Triune God. From there on out

even the Hebrews referred to God in the plural, as Elohim, not singular, Eloah. This is one of the most remarkable testimonies to God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. God in heaven is not alone, but three in perfect oneness. This is how God can say to His people Israel that He is ONE. When the Elohim created all things they noted that it was 'good'. The first, and only time, they cited something as not being 'good' was when Elohim looked upon Adam in his solitary state and said, "*It is not good that man should be alone.*" Gen 2:18 This turns out to be one of the most important statements ever directed at Man by God, with far-reaching prophetic implications extending to the very last episode and page of the Bible.

Even though the Church has wrongly exalted the idea of being alone, as the holiest and pure of lives, such stupidity and perverse thinking runs contrary to the fluidity of the will of God to raise up a Bride perfectly compatible and fit for the Son of Man, Jesus Christ. It has done so much damage in the Church that it can hardly be calculated. (Could the pedophile plague be a judgment of this mistaken idea?) As one of the epithets which Jesus dubbed Himself, the Son of Man not only identifies Him with the ministry of the prophet Ezekiel and Ezekiel in turn as a Christ-like representative, it also shows Jesus identifying Himself with being Christ, the anointed one, which implies not just the one who provides what is needed, but the only man who could give man what he needed. The name Christ is reserved for a man. Christ must be a man and not exclusively God. Christ is a man able to identify in every way with the struggle of man. What the Christ brought and only He could deliver is rectification, a propitiation, a payment in lieu of a debt owed, straightening out of things forever. A pure and holy God could not do this, being removed from the squalor, fear and hate. Only the Christ, the Son of Man, as Jesus so identified Himself, could face Men's demons and defeat them without giving in to their powers. The debt owed, the wages exacted by sin, of course, was death; death for sin, every transgression, any single iniquity. The Christ, the Messiah must not be only God, but Son of Man, born of the

seed of the woman, and if man, man who should not be alone. This is the point. If it is not good that man should be alone, then how could it ever be good if the Son of Man remains alone. Ergo, the Bride is sought for the Son of Man's sake. Does it not make sense that he should be joined eternally with a Bride, a wife. One who will remain a perfect spotless beautiful Bride forever, never aging, never doubting, never recanting, never wandering, never losing pure rapturous love for her champion lover – only growing with passionate infatuation like a flower in a state of endless bloom filling the air of God's home with new beautiful fragrances every moment throughout eternity to come. He must be one with a wife – and man is to be the wife of the Son of Man, the Christ, the Messiah, the Redeemer, the one who has given His life that we might gain life.

Now we discover the purpose, the ultimate purpose of God creating Man. Both are resurrected into one in the Spirit to life immortal and incorruptible for all eternity. This is the Bride. Man is to be Bride of the Son of Man/Son of God. The Bride must be found, must be formed, must be given life, so that the Christ (a man) would not live in state of loneliness for eternity. For it is first stated: *"It is not good that man should be alone"*. Therefore, God took a part of His life and formed the Bride for Adam (Man). But recall He first put the Man to sleep (in the grave) and then woke Him up (resurrected Him) so he and his wife could have life together, that he not be alone, for his loneliness was not a good result of creation, the only thing which God had to do something about, and for this, He had a plan all along which centered around Christ, the Son of Man who could redeem, rectify loneliness, by the giving of His life that another life could be restored.

All hinged on the power of God the Father to resurrect the sacrificed life that the life of the guilty could be resurrected in purity, so they could become one, the Son of Man and Man would never be alone. Pure genius is the mystery of the Bride, Christ and His Church. Even this drama of creation, the Son of Man to pay the debt owed for Man, was a living sort of parable pointing to the ultimate and 'great' mystery of Christ and the Church (Bride).

As Son of Man working the works of the Christ God was working His mystery of salvation, that it was to provide an eternal Bride for His Son. This plan was not declared outright from the beginning but 'leaked' in actions and parables as the story of man and His ultimate marriage with God unfolded through the ages. This is why it is the 'great' mystery. The story of the bride and Christ (the Son of Man who gave what was needed) has had its twists and turns and in the parables of the Old and New Testament the great love and romancing of Man by God are revealed, not just events but what has been in the hearts of God and Man.

In Psalms it says The heavenlies declare his glory:

One of the signs of the zodiac common to all societies and ancient peoples is the constellation Cassiopeia. She is depicted the same throughout all, whether Incan, Babylonian, Semitic, Egyptian or Hellenistic. She is the espoused one waiting for her champion, preparing herself perfectly to be His pure Bride.

115. God's Divorce From His Unfaithful Wife

A Parable

by T Myers Smith

The parables and courtship of the bride cannot be told without first establishing the heartbreak God has endured as the often rejected suitor of Man. He has endured rejection from those He loved, far more than He has enjoyed submission or love requited. No one could endure the slightest fraction of the heartache which the Son of Man has endured in His quest for a true Bride. We all know that He was despised and rejected, mocked, beaten and killed by those who claimed they loved God. Even in this age of Grace, the age of the Bride, the time for her to come to Him, that Christ has suffered rejection a thousand times more often than he has received whole-hearted love. But the espoused husband endures and believes and hopes and bears all things for love's sake that he might present unto Himself a perfect, spotless and holy Bride.

He has even endured the devastating heartache of divorce. It is clearly stated in a parable given to Ezekiel (the classic Son of Man representative among the prophets) how God divorced His Bride for infidelity and the most miserable form of adultery, idolatry. In spite of the modern-day Christian who says God would never do or allow such a thing, His divorce is neither debatable nor questionable. Yet He has never thought that celibacy and being alone was the ultimate aim or the ultimate in holiness for man. The great mystery of Christ and the Church declares that Christ will have a holy Bride, one without spot or wrinkle. He will divorce the unfaithful woman and marry only one which is holy. It is simply not good for man to be alone; thus, the Bride is the only good thing for the Christ, but she must be pure and holy, without blemish. God declared that he would

not stop at divorcing a wife who was committing fornication against Him.

“And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of DIVORCE; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also.” Jeremiah 3:8

When decrying divorce among God's people, Jesus Himself even recognized that fornication of any sort was one thing worthy of severing even sacred ties. “But I say unto you, *That whosoever shall put away his wife, **saving for the cause of fornication**, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.*” Matt 5:32 In His unrelenting quest for a worthy wife, God will not settle for anything but ‘perfection’. The perfection of the Bride of Christ will be brought about by His own means. It can only be consummated by a person's fidelity and loyalty to His Spirit. Only God has the power to change a person through and through, only He is able to convert the soul and perfect a soul by giving a person a *new* Spirit and a *new* heart that can have love's truth written upon it in indelible ink.

A perfect Bride can be raised up from sin's darkness and ignorance, from an idolatrous heritage and from spiritual prostitution with other gods. God would not and will not accept anything less than a virtuous woman who will be a devoted, faithful wife. He has opened His heart to us, greeted us with the full emotion, and wooed us with His love, especially concerning His desire for finding a Bride for His Son. In an extremely heart-wrenching parable, God poured out His heart to the prophet Ezekiel concerning the betrayal and disappointment toward His unfaithful, betrothed. This letter of divorce not only tells us that God is looking for a wife but also the pain He is willing to endure in order to find a faithful and true wife and that He will only accept a perfectly faithful and devoted wife, the only acceptable standards worthy of the Messiah who would give up His life for her.

In the parable of the divorced wife, God declares that He had

found her alone and abandoned in the gutter, covered in her own blood, unwashed, wallowing in filth. He picked her up, washed her and saved her from enslavement and a lonely death. He transformed her into the most beautiful of young ladies. He had lavished every beautiful gift upon her so she could become His beautiful Bride. He loved her with passion and purity. But she had turned on Him, despised Him for no reason other than to fuel her own lust, went looking for other lovers, and shamed Him with her open lewdness. She led a life of one continuous stream of adulteries, prostituting herself with every neighbor she could woo. In the parable of Ezekiel 16, God reveals His heartbreak to Ezekiel.

The prophet could understand the pain of losing the love of His life, for Ezekiel too had been required by God to suffer the loss of 'the desire of his eyes'. The pain which Ezekiel was required to suffer (as a prophet must identify with some part or parts of the sufferings of Christ) was to show God's willingness to cut off even the apple of His eye, the desire of His eyes, if she was discovered to be a harlot without true love for Him. His divorce of an unfaithful, inferior woman of infidelities proves in an antithetical way that God's true intentions have always been to create a Bride for His Son Jesus Christ. It must be a faithful and perfect Bride. (See the Parable of Ezekiel 16 on this page)

Esther: Representative of That Bride of a Divorced King

The testimony of Esther also speaks of God's determination to accept only a faithful wife. The king (obviously representing Christ) dismissed the outwardly beautiful Queen Vashti, banished her from his intimate presence, and sought for another bride that would be perfect. Esther, an orphan, stole his heart and was given the honor above all concubines and wives as being his special love.

God is willing, His quest for the perfect wife even demands that He suffer divorce from the fornicators of infidelity to marry a Bride of honor, a 'virgin' in spirit who is not an idolater of any sort, who refuses to 'sleep around' with other gods, who enthusiastically desires to be carefully prepared by the seven-fold ministers of the king (the seven-fold Holy Spirit of God) to enter His presence and

have Him desire her continual companionship. The testimony of Esther reveals all this.

Why would God put himself through a divorce if He were not intent on the prime importance of not being alone but having a beautiful, perfect Bride for the Son of Man.

GOD'S DIVORCE – Ezekiel Chapter 16

*Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,
Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations,
And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto Jerusalem; Thy birth
and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an
Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite.*

*And as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel
was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee;
thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all.*

*None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have
compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field,
to the loathing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born.
And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own
blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yes, I
said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live.*

*I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and
thou hast increased and waxen great, and thou art come to
excellent ornaments: thy breasts are fashioned, and thine hair
is grown, whereas thou wast naked and bare.*

*Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold,
thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over
thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I sware unto thee, and
entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and
thou becamest mine.*

*Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away
thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil.*

*I clothed thee also with brodered work, and shod thee with
badgers' skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I
covered thee with silk.*

I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck.

And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head.

Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and brodered work; thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil: and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom.

And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord GOD. Shameful Ingratitude.

But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and played the harlot because of thy renown, and poured out thy fornications on every one that passed by; his it was.

And of thy garments thou didst take, and decked thy high places with divers colours, and played the harlot thereupon: the like things shall not come, neither shall it be so.

Thou hast also taken thy fair jewels of my gold and of my silver, which I had given thee, and madest to thyself images of men, and didst commit whoredom with them,

And tookest thy brodered garments, and covered them: and thou hast set mine oil and mine incense before them.

My meat also which I gave thee, fine flour, and oil, and honey, wherewith I fed thee, thou hast even set it before them for a sweet savour: and thus it was, saith the Lord GOD.

Moreover thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto me, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them to be devoured. Is this of thy whoredoms a small matter, That thou hast slain my children, and delivered them to cause them to pass through the fire for them?

And in all thine abominations and thy whoredoms thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, when thou wast naked and bare, and wast polluted in thy blood.

And it came to pass after all thy wickedness, (woe, woe unto thee! saith the Lord GOD;)

That thou hast also built unto thee an eminent place, and hast made thee an high place in every street.

Thou hast built thy high place at every head of the way, and hast made thy beauty to be abhorred, and hast opened thy feet to everyone that passed by, and multiplied thy whoredoms.

Thou hast also committed fornication with the Egyptians thy neighbours, great of flesh; and hast increased thy whoredoms, to provoke me to anger.

Behold, therefore I have stretched out my hand over thee, and have diminished thine ordinary food, and delivered thee unto the will of them that hate thee, the daughters of the Philistines, which are ashamed of thy lewd way.

Thou hast played the whore also with the Assyrians, because thou wast unsatiable; yea, thou hast played the harlot with them, and yet couldest not be satisfied.

Thou hast moreover multiplied thy fornication in the land of Canaan unto Chaldea; and yet thou wast not satisfied herewith.

How weak is thine heart, saith the Lord GOD, seeing thou doest all these things, the work of an imperious whorish woman;

In that thou buildest thine eminent place in the head of every way, and makest thine high place in every street; and hast not been as an harlot, in that thou scornest hire;

But as a wife that committeth adultery, which taketh strangers instead of her husband!

They give gifts to all whores: but thou givest thy gifts to all thy lovers, and hirest them, that they may come unto thee on every side for thy whoredom.

And the contrary is in thee from other women in thy whoredoms, whereas none followeth thee to commit whoredoms: and in that thou givest a reward, and no reward is given unto thee, therefore thou art contrary.

Wherefore, O harlot, hear the word of the LORD:

Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thy filthiness was poured

out, and thy nakedness discovered through thy whoredoms with thy lovers, and with all the idols of thy abominations, and by the blood of thy children, which thou didst give unto them; Behold, therefore I will gather all thy lovers, with whom thou hast taken pleasure, and all them that thou hast loved, with all them that thou hast hated; I will even gather them round about against thee, and will discover thy nakedness unto them, that they may see all thy nakedness.

And **I will judge thee, as women that break wedlock** and shed blood are judged; and I will give thee blood in fury and jealousy.

And I will also give thee into their hand, and they shall throw down thine eminent place, and shall break down thy high places: they shall strip thee also of thy clothes, and shall take thy fair jewels, and leave thee naked and bare.

They shall also bring up a company against thee, and they shall stone thee with stones, and thrust thee through with their swords.

And they shall burn thine houses with fire, and execute judgments upon thee in the sight of many women: and I will cause thee to cease from playing the harlot, and thou also shalt give no hire any more.

So will I make my fury toward thee to rest, and my jealousy shall depart from thee, and I will be quiet, and will be no more angry.

Because thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, but hast fretted me in all these things; behold, therefore I also will recompense thy way upon thine head, saith the Lord GOD: and thou shalt not commit this lewdness above all thine abominations.

Behold, every one that useth proverbs shall use this proverb against thee, saying, As is the mother, so is her daughter.

Thou art thy mother's daughter, that lotheth her husband and her children; and thou art the sister of thy sisters, which lothed their husbands and their children: your mother was an Hittite,

and your father an Amorite.

And thine elder sister is Samaria, she and her daughters that dwell at thy left hand: and thy younger sister, that dwelleth at thy right hand, is Sodom and her daughters.

Yet hast thou not walked after their ways, nor done after their abominations: but, as if that were a very little thing, thou wast corrupted more than they in all thy ways.

As I live, saith the Lord GOD, Sodom thy sister hath not done, she nor her daughters, as thou hast done, thou and thy daughters.

Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.

And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good.

Neither hath Samaria committed half of thy sins; but thou hast multiplied thine abominations more than they, and hast justified thy sisters in all thine abominations which thou hast done.

Thou also, which hast judged thy sisters, bear thine own shame for thy sins that thou hast committed more abominable than they: they are more righteous than thou: yea, be thou confounded also, and bear thy shame, in that thou hast justified thy sisters.

When I shall bring again their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, and the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, then will I bring again the captivity of thy captives in the midst of them:

That thou mayest bear thine own shame, and mayest be confounded in all that thou hast done, in that thou art a comfort unto them.

When thy sisters, Sodom and her daughters, shall return to their former estate, and Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former estate, then thou and thy daughters

shall return to your former estate.

For thy sister Sodom was not mentioned by thy mouth in the day of thy pride,

Before thy wickedness was discovered, as at the time of thy reproach of the daughters of Syria, and all that are round about her, the daughters of the Philistines, which despise thee round about.

Thou hast borne thy lewdness and thine abominations, saith the LORD.

For thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even deal with thee as thou hast done, which hast despised the oath in breaking the covenant.

Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant.

Then thou shalt remember thy ways, and be ashamed, when thou shalt receive thy sisters, thine elder and thy younger: and I will give them unto thee for daughters, but not by thy covenant.

And I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD:

That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord GOD. Ezekiel 16:1-63

II6. God's Greatest and Number One Quest

Is For the Perfect Bride

by T Myers Smith

Most Christians believe that true religion is best defined as Man's search for God; that the primary goal of all faith and the substance of all religious activity is centered around Man's search to find god. Most Christians believe that the Bible charts the course of this great search for God by man. ... Actually, just the opposite is true. In reality, the story of Man and His redemption is the saga of God's quest for Man. It is a story of all that God has done to bring this creature called Man into lasting, eternal fellowship with Him.

Specifically, the plot of the story of Man is the chronicle of God's quest to adopt Man, make Man His heir, so that together they can share eternity as cohabiters of a blissful, utopic, perfectly secure paradise. Of optimum importance, as it turns out, is the Father's search for a fitting and perfect Bride for His Son. The Bible hints at this most fundamental of all religious truths this way: *"For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him."* 2 Chron 16:9

The greatest promise of God's love toward man rests, of course, in His promise to send the Christ, the chosen One who would have the power to save man from death itself. God fulfilled the promise at the First Coming, when Jesus died and rose from the dead, and ascended *'with healing in His wings'*, back to the Father from whence He came. The ultimate purpose is to redeem Man from his guilt riddled life and to pardon him for his disobedience and sin; to give new life with eternal power. The healing and redeeming power of the blood of Christ is one of the mysteries of the faith. Like

all mysteries of the Christian faith, it can be fully comprehended and experienced only by those who have ears to hear and eyes to see. They can come to see and hear God, because they have a willing heart, are willing to listen and look. The ultimate purpose of the cross was to secure Man for God, to bring Him into God's arms, to make an enduring and everlasting relationship truly possible, to make His religious quest a success. The ultimate in Man's relationship with God (and relationships with God have varying degrees of intimacy from one saved soul to another) is to be in perfect unity and divine oneness with God. How much of Christ abides in us, or we in Him? Christ in us, this is the hope glory we are told. How much hope do we have invested in Him as our Lord, not just our Savior, goes a long way to how much we love Him? That some have the abiding hope in them that when they see Him they will become like Him, more so than another Christian, is often evident even to an unbeliever or the skeptical eye. We are told that having this living hope in our heart and soul is a purifying agent. So we who are prospective brides hope and believe. Some live not by sight, but by faith for things yet unseen. To their spiritual detriment, not all of the saved share this hope. Still, Christ must have a wife.

The word, *Christ*, is the most meaningful, all-powerful word used in connection with Man because it is Christ who holds the destiny of all men in His power. The Name Christ packs an abundance of meaning, is the seed for all lasting hope and is the knowledge of all truth, the fountain of eternal abiding love and is bundled perfectly in the profoundly loving promises of His Father in heaven.

The word *Christ* literally means 'the anointed one'. Carried with the word is the automatic implication that Christ is the 'anointed one' that has walked the earth as a Man and conquered sin for us. God is not anointed. God needs no anointing, from Him all anointings flow. He is the originator of all 'anointing'. Angels are not anointed with one thing or another, but are ministers of salvation, messengers and servants of God. Christ is Man (the seed of the woman). Christ is the only one able to pay the price of Redemption because the Christ has become a man to save man, specifically all

those who come to Him and want to abide with Him. The 'anointed' Man must be, is, Redeemer of Man. The Christ is a man, *must be* man. From before the beginning of time, before the foundations of the worlds were laid, this was a reckoned part of God's plan of Creation and His strategy to defeat sin and death among anyone who would bow in submission to the Christ.

The first necessity for finding a suitable bride for the Christ was that the Son of God take on the life and reality of being a man himself. This meant He would have to take on the needs and essence of Man. As the great early doctrinaire of the Trinity, Athanasius, had so succinctly put it; "God became Man, so that Man might become God." Because of this necessity of reality, the way by which man must be brought, through to the portal of eternal life, Christ had to proceed from the ranks of mankind, it was written: "*God so loved the world that he gave (to us) His only begotten son so that whosoever should believe on Him would not perish but have everlasting life*" John 3:16. Christ left His throne of glory and became a man for our sakes, that we, his brothers and sisters, might live forever. To emphasis the manhood of the Christ and for this reason, Jesus Christ made it a point on several occasions to label Himself 'The Son Of Man'. The mission and purpose of Christ dictates, even demands under God's justice and truth, that The Christ be a man. God became Christ because it was an essential and indispensable part of His quest to bring Man into a new realm – a new heaven and new earth – wherein lies eternal salvation and righteousness.

It was essential that God become man so He could be able to identify with Man in every way, not only in knowledge theoretical, but in every experience and temptation of fleshly actuality. Nothing can tempt God. So it behooved God to become Man. The Christ had to endure and overcome all temptations known to flesh. He had to weather the storms, storms which he came to subdue in behalf of Man. It was also an indispensable requisite that the blood of an innocent man be shed in order to break the bondage of Man, to make payment and to nullify the powerful temptations of sin which had subdued and made slaves of Mankind, and to which

Man would always be prone until their hold was broken once and for all. The fact that Christ had to be Man is an essential element at play in the *mystery of Christ*, a mystery as all godly mysteries, which was held secret from the foundation of the world until the coming of Christ who began to unravel them and reveal them in secret parables to those whose hearts were able to be molded into perfection by His own powerful workings of love upon them.

This facet of the mystery of Christ, namely the aspect which dictated Christ be a man and that as man He not be alone, makes up the main dimension in God's quest for Man. Like a wheel within a wheel, there was a developing and more specific quest within the general overall mission of God to procure eternal life for willing souls. As man, the Christ would not only identify in every way (save sin) with Man, He would also share directly in Man's fate. He too would require having the innate needs of Man fulfilled in that part of His nature that is Man. Taking on a human form also meant taking on Man's nature and as any human He had general, deep rooted needs which needed to be visited by God, filled by God's grace alone, and taught exclusively by the Holy Spirit. The Son of Man as the Psalm says, is visited, needs to be visited by God, visited by God's wisdom, truth and mercy. When Christ identified Himself as Son of Man he was freely testifying that as man he needed to be visited by God just as all other human beings must be 'visited' by the living God. The prophet Isaiah reported this prophecy about the human nature of the Christ:

"The Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.

For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings." Isa 7:14-16

It is only reasonable then, that the Son of Man had to learn and be

visited as a man, being equipped with the spiritual equipment of God as men are equipped.

Christ often went away to pray. When He went away to pray He prayed as a man, because He needed to be ministered to by God as a man. The Christ must be a man to be the overcomer, subduer of evil for Man. He was baptized in water and by the Holy Ghost because He needed the continual visitation of God to sustain His vigor of life and spirit, to endure the bucket loads of temptation thrown at Him from every quarter of life each and every day. Here is the reason why He suffered to be baptized, why he said it was only right for Him to do it. Not because he needed to be washed from sin – He had no sin – but because He needed to testify that He was a man like you and I, and that He needed visitation from the Father and The Holy Spirit in all things. He could have thrown this up in the face of Man, saying, that relying on the will of the Father and trusting that He visits us in every trial makes it possible to overcome sin, even for a man, you ought to have done this too! But Jesus did not. Rather, he forgave us our sin and had the right to forgive because He took on our nature and thereby confronted sin and condemned it in the process. And He was not only Man, but God with us.

Part of the human nature is the need to tend things. Christ needs to have this part of His nature fulfilled. He has a flock to tend and care for. Part of human nature which must be fulfilled is to praise and worship the Creator. The man Jesus always delighted to do this. It fulfilled part of His deepest desire within his human nature. There are many such needs inherent in the nature of Man that must be fulfilled if we are to have a gratifying and happy life. So Christ the man needed, and needs, those things fulfilled as well. Among those necessities for happiness and fulfillment is companionship, for it had been established from the beginning that “*it is not good for Man to be alone*” Gen 2:18. This is one of the most important revelations of the whole Bible, this thing about not being alone. It is one of the first stated maxims of all Scripture, first declared in the opening description of creation. It is the first need of Man mentioned because it is the most vital and deep-seated in human

nature. This meant that The Christ, who is man, also would need a companion, need 'not to be alone'. The most proficient and perfect way to alleviate loneliness is marriage. It is an institution set up by God from the start. An institution meant to point toward eternal oneness, a more perfect eternal togetherness and unity of spirit between God and Man. It is a union in which two become one. How much closer, how much better off and 'not alone' can one be than in perfect marriage, where two become one? In other words, the Christ, being the Son of Man would not only save mankind from sin and its wages of death, but He also being man would carry the same needs of man into all eternity. The Father was committed to fulfilling His son's human needs even before the quest for Man commenced. The Savior would need a 'wife'. A wife from out of his own ranks, from out of mankind, with whom he could be ONE. The wife, the fulfillment that He not be alone, because 'it is not good that man should be alone', as it turns out, is called in the Bible *The Bride*, and is identified by an angel in the final vision in Holy Scripture at the close of the Book of Revelation, as THE BRIDE.

"And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the BRIDE, the Lamb's wife". Rev 21:9

In all reality this is only an expression of a greater truth, that is, God Himself does not wish to be alone, He too wants a companion that is not a mere servant as the angels are, but He wants a companion with whom He is One. For we see in this, the final revelation of Scripture, that God does not wish to be alone either. It is not good for Him to be alone. He shall not cast off every friend, child, servant, or otherwise saved soul, but this will not stop Him from having an intimate one, a wife.

117. The Song of Solomon

A.K.A. The Song of Songs

by T Myers Smith

It is good that one should intently study the Bible's running theme of the Bride and our relationship with the Bridegroom who is none other than Christ Himself her betrothed husband and eternal Savior. There is no greater book for the understanding of this marriage offer than the epic poem called The Song of Solomon, AKA The Song of Songs.

The Bible clearly states that the greatest mystery of all mysteries is about Christ and His Church. Summed up in Ephesians chapter five it is stated as Christ loved the Church and his wife being absolutely one hundred percent submitted to Him as the head of all things. When this occurs Christ and that portion of the Church which is submissive becomes one, just as God had declared the purpose of marriage to be.

Then and only then can an eternal utopia living as One be firmly established. This is what Christ was getting at when He prayed at the Last Supper that He and His disciples would be one, even as He and the Father are One. Though this mystery of Christ and His Bride was not frankly stated in this manner until its mystery was fully opened in the New Testament epistles and finally revealed in Revelation 21, it had been alluded to throughout the parables of Holy Scripture, both Old and New.

When He created the heaven and earth and all the things in it he always remarked, "it is good " Gen 1:4,10, 12, 18 etc.... The first time and only time He cited something as not being 'good' was when He looked upon Adam in his solitary state and said, "It is not good that man should be alone." Gen 2:18 This turns out to be one of the most important statements ever directed at Man by God, with far reaching prophetic implications that extend to the

very last page of the Bible. Even though the Church has wrongly exalted the idea of being alone, as the most holy and pure of lives, such stupidity and perverse thinking runs contrary to the fluidity of the will of God to raise up a Bride perfectly compatible and fit for the Son of Man, Jesus Christ. It has done so much damage in the Church that it can hardly be calculated. (Could the pedophile plague be a judgment of this mistaken idea?) As one of the epithets which Jesus dubbed Himself, the Son of Man not only identifies Him with the ministry of the prophet Ezekiel and Ezekiel in turn as a Christ-like representative, it also shows Jesus identifying Himself with being Christ, the anointed one, which implies not just the one who provides what is needed, but the only man who could give man what he needed. The name Christ is reserved for a man. Christ must be a man and not exclusively God. Christ is a man able to identify in every way with the struggle of man. What the Christ brought and only He could deliver is rectification, a propitiation, a payment in lieu of a debt owed, a straightening out of things forever. A pure and holy God could not do this, being removed from the squalor, fear and hate. Only the Christ, the Son of Man, as Jesus so identified Himself, could face man's demons and defeat them without giving in to their powers. The debt owed, the wages exacted by sin, of course was death; death for sin, every transgression, any single iniquity. The Christ, the Messiah must not be only God, but Son of Man, born of the seed of the woman, and if man, a man who should not be alone. This is the point. If it is not good that man should be alone, then how could it ever be good if the Son of Man remains alone. Ergo, the Bride is sought for the Son of Man's sake. Does it not make sense that he should be joined eternally with a Bride, a wife. One who will remain a perfect spotless beautiful Bride forever, never aging, never doubting, never recanting, never wandering, never losing pure rapturous love for her champion lover – only growing with passionate infatuation like a flower in a state of endless bloom filling the air of God's home with new beautiful fragrances every moment throughout eternity to come. He must be one with a wife – and man is to be the wife of the Son of Man, the

Christ, the Messiah, the Redeemer, the one who has given His life that we might gain life. Now we discover the purpose, the ultimate purpose of God creating Man. Both are resurrected into one in the Spirit to life immortal and incorruptible for all eternity. This is the Bride. Man is to be Bride of the Son of Man/Son of God. The Bride must be found, must be formed, must be given life, so that the Christ (a man) would not live in state of loneliness for eternity. For it is first stated: "It is not good that man should be alone". Therefore, God took a part of His life and formed the Bride for Adam (Man). But recall He first put the Man to sleep (in the grave) and then woke Him up (resurrected Him) so he and his wife could have life together, that he not be alone, for his loneliness was not a good result of creation, the only thing which God had to do something about, and for this He had a plan all along which centered around Christ, the Son of Man who could redeem, rectify loneliness, by the giving of His life that another life could be restored.

All hinged on the power of God the Father to resurrect the sacrificed life that the life of the guilty could resurrected in purity, so they could become one, the Son of Man and Man would never be alone. Pure genius is the mystery of the Bride, Christ and His Church. Even this drama of creation, the Son of Man to pay the debt owed for Man, was a living sort of parable pointing to the ultimate and 'great' mystery of Christ and the Church (Bride). As Son of Man working the works of the Christ God was working His mystery of salvation, that it was to provide an eternal Bride for His Son. This plan was not declared outright from the beginning but 'leaked' in actions and parables as the story of man and His ultimate marriage with God unfolded through the ages. This is why it is the 'great' mystery. The story of the bride and Christ (the Son of Man who gave what was needed) has had its twists and turns and in the parables of the Old and New Testament the great love and romancing of Man by God are revealed, not just events but what has been in the hearts of God and Man.

The parables of the bride cannot be told without first establishing the heartbreak God has endured as the often rejected suitor of Man.

He has endured rejection from those He loved, far more than He has enjoyed submission or love requited. No one could endure just heartache as the Son of Man has endured. We all know that He was despised and rejected, mocked, beaten and killed by those claimed to love God. Even in this age of Grace, the age of the Bride, the time for her to come to Him, He has suffered rejection more often than not. But the espoused husband endures and believes and hopes and bears all things for love's sake that he might present unto Himself a perfected Bride.

He has even endured divorce. It is clearly stated in a parable given to Ezekiel (the classic Son of Man representative among the prophets) how God divorced His Bride for infidelity. In spite of the modern day Christian who says God would never do or allow such a thing, this is not even debatable. Nor has he ever thought that celibacy and being alone was the ultimate aim or the ultimate in holiness for man. The mystery declares that Christ will have a holy Bride, one without spot or wrinkle. He will divorce the unfaithful woman. It is simply not good for man to be alone; thus, the Bride is the only good thing for the Christ, but she must be pure and holy, without blemish. God declared that he would not stop at divorcing a wife who was committing fornication against Him.

“And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of DIVORCE; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also.” Jeremiah 3:8

When decrying divorce among God's people, Jesus Himself even recognized that fornication of any sort was one thing worthy of divorce. *“But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.”* Matt 5:32 In His unrelenting quest for a worthy wife, God will not settle for anything but ‘perfection’. The perfection of the Bride of Christ will be brought by His own hand. Only God has the power to change a person through and through, only He is able

to convert the soul and perfect us by giving us a new Spirit and a new heart that can have love's truth written upon it in indelible ink. Because a perfect Bride could be raised up from sin's darkness and ignorance, from an idolatrous heritage and from prostitution, God would not, and will not, accept anything less than a virtuous woman who would be a devoted and faithful wife.

God opens His heart with emotion concerning His feelings for the Bride. In an extremely heart-wrenching parable, God pours out His heart to the prophet Ezekiel concerning the betrayal and disappointment of His unfaithful espoused wife. It not only tells the pain which God is willing to endure in order to find a faithful wife, it shows that He will only accept a faithful and devoted wife, the only acceptable standards of a worthy wife, which He considers the 'Perfect' wife.

In the parable of the divorced wife, He says He had found her alone and abandoned in the gutter, covered in her own blood, unwashed, wallowing in filth. He picked her up, washed her and saved her from enslavement and a lonely death. He turned her into the most beautiful of young ladies. He had lavished every beautiful gift upon her so she could become His beautiful Bride. He loved her with passion and purity. But she had turned on Him, despised Him for no reason other than to fuel her own lust, went looking for other lovers, and shamed Him with her open lewdness. She one continuous stream of adulteries, prostituting herself with every neighbor she could woo. In the parable, God reveals His heartbreak to Ezekiel.

The prophet could understand the pain of losing the love of His life, for Ezekiel too had been required by God to suffer the loss of 'the desire of his eyes'. The pain which Ezekiel was required to suffer (as a prophet must identify with some part or parts of the sufferings of Christ) was to show God's willingness to cut off even the apple of His eye, the desire of His eyes, if she was discovered to be a harlot without true love for Him. His divorce of an inferior Bride of infidelities proves in an antithetical way that God's true intentions

have always been to create a Bride for His Son Jesus Christ, but it must be a faithful and perfect Bride.

Why would God put himself through a divorce if He were not intent on the prime importance of not being alone but having a beautiful, perfect Bride for the Son of Man?

118. Christ and The Church

The Faithful Bride Hidden Within

by T Myers Smith

The following is the mystery of marvel which must be studied and investigated with the focus and determination applied by a master sleuth. It is the mystery of Christ and His Church; the mystery dearest to the Lord Almighty's heart, for it is about His Son and Christ's espoused helpmate and wife. Details about her character and destiny are found scattered throughout the pages of the Old and New Testaments of the Holy Bible. It is our favorite theme because it is our fondest hope that we may become Christ's bride and wife.

These pages are especially devoted to the 'Bride' section which traverses them so as to identify her with careful consideration, even lending a spiritual eye toward the detail of her life and the rarity of her character and disposition. Though the Apostle Paul's letters come late in the order of inspired scripture, the place best to begin is with Paul's teaching on marriage to the believers of the city of Ephesus in modern-day Turkey. Ephesus was that city where the wonder of the world, the temple to Diana, the Roman goddess of women, motherhood and fertility was located. Where better to dispel ignorance about the meaning of marriage and deliver the profound truth about marriage and the real Bride of God?

In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, the apostle begins a dialogue about husbands and wives and the necessity of love and reciprocal submission in the matrimonial relationship. He speaks of submitting one to another in the fear of God as he gives directives for wives and husbands and how the husband is particularly responsible to love the wife and the woman is obligated to submit to the man. This was news to those who were steeped in the worship of a goddess. And so Paul's teaching was received primarily in this light

and has continued down two thousand years in this fashion to be learned by the bulk of bible believers. When read superficially, this is marriage counseling 101. He has talked about being wise and staying away from fornication (that one thing Christ has said is a permissible reason to divorce). Avoid also those who commit such sinful acts without regard for God or Man. Then Paul tells directly, in the simplest terms what husbands and wives ought to do in the matrimonial relationship –

“Submit yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.” Eph 5:21-24

Simple and clear. Only the worshipper of Diana or Mary, or the modernist or the unbeliever without reverence for God could or can argue with this simple advice, this sound counsel of God. Do the right thing. The advancement of the idea of the full commitment of the man to so love his wife as Christ perfectly loves the church, serves as a hedge against the man abusing his position and lauding it over the ‘weaker vessel’. Both husband and wife are urged, expected, to be wise concerning the dynamics of this spiritual rule for a successful marriage. And so, it seems this is the high point made by God in this counsel to the Ephesians.

Then we find out that Paul is talking about a much higher matter, a marriage but one of God and Man, a mystery of Christ and the Church and using the earthly matrimonial relationship to set up His higher point and reveal what is identified as the ‘great’ mystery. Curiously, out of the blue, midway through the dialogue, Paul interjects some specific aims of Christ for His Church and promises that Christ will be the one to fulfill His personal ambitions for the church. He says,

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” Eph 5:25-27

Paul had already declared His mission among the believers of Corinth: *“For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”* 2 Cor. 11:2 Of course, it is understood, since he was talking to the city of believers of every age and gender, that the chaste virgin was a spiritual allusion, not literal. He considered Himself a match-maker in the traditional Jewish sense. He was urging the Corinthians (as he did with the Ephesians and all other saints he disciple) to become Christ’s fiancée and to purify themselves in that hope that they are Christ’s espoused, someday to be His beautifully adorned Bride and wife.

Paul explained to the Ephesians what being this espoused and chaste virgin entails, more specifically what Christ and The Father have in mind. Christ gave Himself for the Church to set it apart and make it clean. He will do the purifying work and present it to Himself. It is a church from among the churches which He will perfect and make glorious. Take note, it is not the church but a church. The letters to the churches in Revelation, the epistles addressed to separate churches and two thousand years of history tell us that the church is comprised of church-es, plural. The Bride will be a church from among the church-es. Christ will be able to perfect her by using his ministers, such as Paul and by the guidance and gifts of the Holy Spirit and by washing her in the water of the Word. Christ will do her laundry, iron out her wrinkles by washing her in water by the Word. Her garments are clean and white, the linen of righteousness. (The Washed Bride) It is Christ’s Bride about which Paul is now talking. Christ is her beautician removing all

blemishes. He is her high priest to teach her holiness. His shed blood has won her pardon, paid for her forgiveness. She can now stand before God relieved of her sin by grace. The blood gives her authority over spiritual enemies and has ordained her as a royal priest. The Word is what washes her clean, takes out the wrinkles in her garments as they may become wrinkled by daily business and use. He washes her with the Word to clean off the dirt of the world. The water of the Word is the spa that heals her of blemishes and chaffing from the elements of the world. The washing of the Word is the true holy water. When we dunk under it and are bathed in it we are cleaned and holy by its power, even in proportion to our obedience to the Word. Jesus does this work with patience and love so he may present unto himself a glorious and perfected wife because she is the apple of His eye and the love of His life. As the Son of Man, he does not wish to be alone, but wants a wife, and she must be perfect, as only befits the Bride of Christ.

Paul then relates this prophecy of Christ and the Church back to our current temporary living situation. Since ‘marriage’ in its ultimate form is between God and Man and will be perfect, Paul tells us to emulate the real form;

“So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourishes and cherishes it, even as the Lord the church:

For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.” Eph 5:28-30

In so relating this to earthly matrimony, Paul once again uses it to make a greater point about Christ and His wife. Christ and the church (that is His wife) through submission to His love are destined to be **ONE**. They are members of His body, His flesh and His bones. No one can do this for anyone else. No coercion can make bride-ship come to pass. They must desire to be with Christ and the two shall become one – this is done all by themselves. Their parents cannot help, no one can do it for them. Christ will do it for them. The

prospective Bride must allow Him to work. Paul quotes the Word to make the point;

“For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.” Eph 5:31

Then, near the end of his dialogue, Paul startles us by openly speaking of the mystery of which he had really been talking about all along. It was not so much the matrimonial obligations of husband and wives that he was teaching, but the relationship between Christ and his wife, a church living in this perfect order of love and the espoused wife reciprocating (by submission) that love to Christ. He directly and freely states this is a great mystery, this marriage between Christ and church. The word for church used here, as everywhere in the New Testament is Ekklesia: literally, called out ones.

Ekklesia was a gathering in the Greek world that represented a gathering of imports where decisions were made and handed down. It often implied a completion through decisive action. This well represents the church Paul identified as the church of the mystery of Christ and the espoused wife. In this ekklesia (church) of separated ones a matter of the utmost importance was to be brought to perfect completion. The Bride was to be made holy and without spot, wrinkle, blemish or any such thing. She will be completed – perfected and purified. Christ will be married to those truly separated unto Him and who are fully extricated from the world’s grip. It is about Christ’s love for his own Bride and the greater purpose and intent Christ would have for the Church. This great mystery is revealed not just as a benefit that is to be followed after marriage but even more important each believer in the Church ought to behave as the “submitted wife” to Jesus with full understanding of the elevated intent in his heart toward all those He would call into brideship with Himself. He delivers the point to which he has been heading; *“This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” Eph 5:32*

Here in review is what Paul said about Christ and the church;

*“Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.
Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the
Lord.*

*For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the
head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.*

*Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives
be to their own husbands in everything.*

*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the
church, and gave himself for it;*

*That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of
water by the word,*

*That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not
having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should
be holy and without blemish.*

*So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that
loveth his wife loveth himself.*

*For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourishes and
cherishes it, even as the Lord the church:*

For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

*For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and
shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.*

*This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the
church.*

*Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his
wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her
husband.” Eph 5:21-33*

*“For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have
espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a
chaste virgin to Christ.” 2 Cor 11:2*

*“[Christ] Whom we preach, warning every man, and
teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every
man perfect in Christ Jesus.” Col 1:2*

As the believer proceeds through this section dedicated to the Bride

we hope to present Scriptural evidence of the origin of God's plan to provide His Son with a Bride and how it evolved in His Word and dealings with His people. It has been devised so that as the Christ, Jesus the Man would not have to be 'alone' through eternity; but that he would have a perfect Bride, one without spot or wrinkle, that would be holy and without blemish, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. That through obedient submission she would be faithful, devoted, unquestioningly trusting and forever His loving helpmate. We hope those who have ears to hear will gain faith for it – regardless of the skill *we* give or do this great mystery of the ages the justice it deserves.

119. Christ, The Bride, and Her Entourage

Only One Bride

by T Myers Smith

It follows that the path of God's quest to find a perfect Bride for His Son is one carefully considered by the Father. His primary agent in the quest as we have noted before is none other than the Holy Spirit. The invitation to become married to Jesus has been issued from the Father's throne itself.

This being the case, we are told in Ephesians 5 that The Son will prepare His Bride Himself, his agent in this grooming process is the Spirit. This joint quest of the Elohim is hidden within the parables of the Old and New Testaments, as well as those things suggested in the similitudes and portraits of select female personages scattered throughout the old and new testaments.

As with any mystery, the story of the Bride must be searched out and investigated. Each mystery must be sifted from the broader things of Man's personal salvation. In the end the wise will discover the mystery of Christ and the Church and conclude that it makes perfect sense that God the Father's first priority in creating Man was to provide His Son with a pure and perfect companion with whom His son could be one with for all eternity. This requires, of course, that this 'Bride' be perfectly in love with His Son and that she be not only redeemable but have eternal life abiding in her.

It should not be supposed, however, that every lost soul is doomed because they are not the Bride per se. No doubt, the vast majority of saved souls will not be the Bride, though they shall find salvation and take their place among the eternal elements and souls of heaven, some as part of the "bridal party" and an entourage of believers, while others may be members of the greater household of

God, albeit, gloriously robed in the auspices of eternal life. There is a place in heaven for those who are not intimately married to Christ. They have a different relationship with the Father and the Son, it too is eternal and secure. They will not have the same authority as the Bride or the same relationship with Christ. Over the years the patrons and stewards of God's mysteries have argued, sometimes contentiously and vehemently over this idea of different degrees of relationship with God among the saved. Yet it this fact of different degrees of relationship with God and Christ and their appropriate applied rewards is undeniable once 1 Corinthians chapter 3 is honestly scrutinized by our heart within God's heart, rather than with the not so tricky rationalizations of Man's self-assumed, self-delusional sophistries. The directness of the passage can in no wise be interpreted in any way other than that there are different rewards and judgments fitting a person's personal action-faith that are not expunged simply by what some believer has professed by way of mouth or by excuses rendered without a faithful repentance shown by ongoing action.

Identifying The Bride

Psalm 45 illustrates both points that there are various parties that have their own place and station in the kingdom of God, and that the closest relationship of all belongs to the Bride. Psalm 45 indicates the different parties, those who bring gifts to the wedding, those who are in the bridal party (the virgins), those that are of the king's house, but essentially the Holy ghost introduces the Psalm in the first verse, the next eight verse are about the Christ, the second eight are about the Bride who is called the king's daughter (-in-law). The theme of this wonderful Psalm, therefore, is simply about the Bridegroom and His Perfect Bride.

Psalm 45 on the Bride

First verse is the voice of the narrator – The Holy Spirit

[1] My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.

First set of 8 verses are about The Christ

[2] Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.

***Christ the Greatest and most gracious of all**

[3] Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty.

[4] And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.

[5] Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee

***Strongest, perfect in every way and able to impose goodness and truth and righteousness when He returns**

[6] Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre.

[7] Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows

***The great and honorable ruler of all things**

[8] All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad.

***Majestic, clothed in beauty, of a truly magnificent character, who abides in heavenly dwellings.**

[9] Kings' daughters were among thy honourable women: upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.

***The virtuous and powerful husband and head of the bride-queens of heavenly character.**

Second set of 8 verses are of The Bride

[10] Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house;

***She is God's daughter now. She will listen and forsake everything, even her own heritage in favor of Him and joining His heritage forsaking this world and all she has in it.**

[11] So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.

***Jesus will greatly desire her and give all for her devotion to Him and nothing will rival Him in her heart – nothing.**

[12] And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall entreat thy favour.

***All the world will bow to her and will be at her feet when all things come to pass.**

[13] The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold.

[14] She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee.

***She is clothed in the same glory as Jesus and clothed with the same rejoicing heart and spirit into eternity. And those that follow her example shall also be brought into her kind of relationship with the king of Kings, and become one with Him.**

[15] With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace.

[16] Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.

[17] I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.

***And the Bride shall live with Him forever in His dwelling place and those who are their spiritual children shall be their glory for ever.**

As with any mystery, the mystery of the Bride must be searched out and investigated carefully. Each mystery must be sifted out and questioned from within the broader mystery of God's quest for Man and it should be understood in the context and light of that specific part of the Gospel of which it applies. In the end, we shall discover that the mystery that is Christ and the church is finally revealed as a perfect man cohabiting eternity with God. Perfect Man (those with perfect hearts towards Him) and God united in eternal matrimony as two fused into perfect ONENESS forever.

This presupposes that not every lost soul is doomed just because they are not the Bride per se. Many tens of millions shall find salvation and take their place among the saved in heaven, some as part of the Bridal party, others as members of the greater household of God. There is a place in heaven for those who are not intimately married to Christ. They have a different relationship with the Father and the Son, it too is eternal and secure. They too will be great and edifying additions to the utopia of the 'Greater Bride' called paradise.

Over the years patrons and stewards of God's mysteries have argued, sometimes contentiously and vehemently over this idea of different degrees of relationship with God among the saved. Some are threatened by the idea of degrees of intimacy and relationships with God. Even responsible, diligent stewards and benevolent preachers have argued over whether the Bride should be reckoned as the church or Israel. It is a controversy that need not be reared. They have overlooked, or in some way not discovered or been enlightened as to the unveiling of the Bride in the last pages of the Bible. There, at Bible's end, the Bride comes down out of heaven. An angel shows her to the apostle John. The Bride is clearly identified as the so-called Commonwealth of Israel – Jew and Gentile – her gates are the patriarchs of the tribes of Jacob, her foundations the twelve apostles of the church of Jesus Christ. The Bride is not one or the other, but both –*those who have been perfected by Christ because they had perfect hearts toward God.* They are plucked out of every age and epoch of God's quest for a Bride. They are Seth, Enoch,

Abraham, Melchizedek, Elijah, David, Nehemiah, Peter, Paul and the pure and righteous saints of the Age of Grace, the Apostolic Age, the age of persecution, Medieval Times, Modern Times, the End of Days, all the martyrs – those who God searched out with eyes running to and fro over the whole earth, intent in His quest looking for those suitable prospects for the Bride of the Son of Man. Any believer has the potential to be the Bride.

The path tracked is the one which we understand to have been taken by God in His quest for a Bride. It is, however, arbitrary in that we may have missed some stop-over points, some edifying details of the quest or even a whole segment, but we believe we have sufficiently traced the general story of God's quest for a Bride as presented in the Bible so that it will help the heart of anyone inclined to love the idea of Brideship and aid them to more fully enter into its eternal blessings and provide a key for greater richness of life in the here and now, and not only the life to come. The saga of this quest within the quest for a Bride ascends in the following order:

[1) Promise 2) Divorce 3) Vision 4) Faithful Fiancée 5) Qualities of a Perfect Wife 6) Pure Bride 7) Perfect Wife.]

120. Greatest Mystery of Creation

The Perfect Wife

by T Myers Smith

We have traveled the road of sanctification and purification and walked on the cobblestones of the path of perfection. We are not perfect in the sense of never being wrong or being provoked into sin by our own will or fears. We are merely capable of treading softly along the daily road of obedience of faith and bringing all of our thoughts into the obedience of the captivity of Christ. We seek first the kingdom of God and His will and trust that God will take care of all our needs according to His riches in glory, willing to forsake the passing vanity of riches of this temporal world. We hang on to this spiritual existence as trained soldiers and now we stand at the threshold of our destination, the fruit and reward of our journey of faith. We are pilgrims coming to that proverbial city on a hill. This city is situated next to the last mile-stone of the end-times destiny of Man. We have come upon THE BRIDE. It is further down the road even than the city which Bunyan's 'Christian' had discovered because it is the eternal abode of God Himself. We see a preview of the city, almost as if we were an interested buyer considering whether to make the purchase of the abode we have dreamed of all our life. This is that Utopian place, the one which God alludes to throughout all the ages. It is a place of marriage with Him, more than a place of real estate. It is a place made for the soul and spirit. It is His eternal residence, that city made without hands, the eternal city of the new heavens and the new earth, the new physics still unknown to us in actual detail and operation, the new timeless and spaceless place of perfect form, which we have only guessed at and wondered about and must believe for its shape and form and

substantial reality. At its end, the Bible tells us its name. It's THE BRIDE. It is not so much what, but who. It is made up of living souls redeemed from among men, nations, kindred's and tongues. It is us.

The BRIDE is the promised paradise. Dante envisioned it as a place of light and spiraling upward energy all come together into one, beautiful beyond the abilities of unglorified man to even begin to comprehend. Who knows if He was right on, but we know it's something incomprehensible in its beauty and perfection. God has only given us an analogy which merely salts our imagination. It is like a great gift wrapped within some exquisite golden paper tied in a fabulous box tied with jeweled ribbon and bow. We are dazzled by the wrapping. We only can imagine how wonderful the gift that lay inside out of our view, how amazed and delighted we will be the day that God opens it up for us. Our eyes begin only now to glimpse that it is a gift of life and a living Utopia, that it is given to us as our destiny and the biggest surprise of all is that we shall not only live in perfect utopia, we shall be utopia. We cannot yet understand how this can be. This Utopic place, perfect in order and everlasting peace, where there is neither night, nor day, rich or poor, all is peaceful and the bold adventures of timeless eternity lay sprawled before our imaginations. Prospects of the ongoing glory which the Bride shall experience under the guiding light of God the Father, Jesus the Son and the Holy Ghost, give us delight; fuel our hope for the brightness and glory of our future.

We shall first inspect the gates of this mysterious city called BRIDE, which the Bible describes as the 'great' mystery among all the mysteries of Christ. We must look at Ephesians chapter five because it is there that the mystery of Christ and the Church is identified and explained. We have found her pearly gates because we have followed the Spirit. The call to Brideship has drawn us. We have travelled the path open only to the initiated believer, traversed mysteries allowed only to the person born not just of flesh but of spirit. We are of the church of the first-born, born-again we have been made into truly new creations. We can recall our education in the mysteries of Christ. The journeyman has gone through imposed

rites of the mysteries of the Gospel, has undergone immersion in the things of Christ, have sufficiently bathed in the fundamental doctrines of the faith, repentance, baptisms, the spiritual gifts, judgment and resurrection power. The mysteries of godliness, iniquity and stewardship of the mysteries have been impressed upon the believer as maps, compasses, and clues are used by adventurers and explorers to find the way to their destination. These fundamentals enumerated in the sanctified section of our journey to Brideship should serve well in launching us forward and keeping us on course during our journey so that we can 'go on to perfection'. As with any adventure, or any endeavor worth the effort, we have been instructed to move on to higher more expert things, things far beyond the expertise of any novice or apprentice where we can set our affections on things above and not on things of the earth. This is not a given for every believer. Hurdles and obstacles must be overcome. Discouragement and perplexities must be dealt with and resolved. Persecution, tribulations and sufferings must be endured for the sake of the kingdom of God. The perfection we seek is high. It means climbing out of ourselves and riding upon the high places of the earth where the Divine Character of God dwells and is made accessible to the spirit of faithful men and women. Requirements are arduous, not without suffering. This perfection is attainable only through spiritual death that results in resurrection of Christ in one's life and spirit. If we delight ourselves in God's ways and not our own, then, He *"will cause [us] to ride upon the high places of the earth, and [be] fed with the heritage of Jacob thy father"* Isa 58:14. Daily we are required to act and make decisions consistent with this mysterious 'perfection' which includes at its base the mystery of the personal cross, which must be taken up day by day if one is to be an accomplished disciple of Christ. This the Bride will do and be. It demands a living contradiction where we routinely live death daily. We are fully equipped for the adventure by the fundamentals which were taught to us in our days as a novice. We have grown. We have gone from a diet of the milk of the Word to the meat of the mysteries of the Gospel of Jesus Christ partaking

of a proper adult diet, of profound nutritious spiritual things. We have been moved by imperatives which are directed toward adult-like believers. Be ye holy for I am holy; be perfect even as your father in heaven is perfect; come out from among them and be ye separate and touch not the unclean thing; seek peace and holiness without which no man shall see God; keep yourselves from idols – and other such calls to righteousness, have affected our faith, prodding us onward to perfection which must be realized and lived moment to moment. But now we begin to see that God has a specific goal beyond just perfection for perfection's sake. The goal is manifest in this life, here in this world, should be confirmed in our heart-felt personal relationship with God. Our journey's destination is coming into view. It is a journey that He intends will end with the individual being a part of the bridal party, hopefully even a full-fledged member of the Bride itself.

We say full-fledged bride-member because not all members of the greater bride shall be reckoned as the espoused wife per se. The parables told by Jesus revealing secrets and hidden things of the kingdom of God show that there are various groups and members of the bridal party from maids, family and guests to the Bride, the wife of Christ. The Bride might better be named the Bride and its bridal party. We use therefore Brideship as a term to describe the variegated or faceted beauty of the Bride along the lines of a faceted jewel refracting degrees of glimmering light and shades of its charming rays. There will be and are levels of immersion into the mysteries of Christ, understanding to be had of each of the parables that pertain to the glories of brideship. There are degrees of maturity, perfection and holy faith within the Bride-at-large. Some who are in the 'bride' at large will be given more authority and honor than others. Some will be 'closer' to Christ (as it were) than others. Just as there are degrees of closeness in natural relationships, the wife is closer than the child, relative, friend or acquaintance, so it is in the bridal party which makes up the matrimonial retinue of Christ.

This notion can be fully discovered in our look into the parables

and portraits presented in the Scriptures on the Bride. As depicted in one particular scene in Revelation chapter 14, a relative few will be given the privilege reserved for the wife herself to follow Him wherever he goes. It is suggested in the Song of Solomon, Psalm 48, and other Old Testament prophecies, as well as in the parables about the Bride and Bridegroom of the New Testament that the 'beloved' has a troop of maidens invited to the marriage, but who are not specifically members of the esprit des corps of the espoused wife.

In this regard, the marriage Supper of the Lamb and the Bride-at-large will be no different in appearance and attendance than any traditional marriage celebration. The parables of the Ten Virgins and the Five Talents in Matthew 25 impart this type of understanding to us of the overall calling and conditions that constitute Brideship as a whole. It would seem, as we get intermittent fleeting glimpses of who and what the New Jerusalem really is, what and who that city made without hands which Abraham and Sarah had looked and longed for with all their heart and we can get with full assurance of hope, that we are seeing God's Bride and her ensemble looming majestically on the horizon. We discover that the Bride is the residence of God where ultimately Jew and Gentile like will reside together and God will be the light and heat, the utility of it forever. There is no longer Jew and Gentile, but only the Bride and her bridal party *"dressed in white linen, which is the righteousness of the saints"* Rev 19:8. This city we see is not a thing or inanimate object, as we ought to emphasize and re-emphasize throughout the discourses of this final section of journey to Brideship. It is not a house or planet or galaxy, or any lifeless possession God might create. Would that not be ridiculous and disappointing if it were? God could have created inanimate perfection at any time without having to send His Son to die so it could be brought back from death. Christ came to earth under necessity because he needed to give up His life for something living, that was the only exchange that resurrects death into life, life for life, the only thing, from death springs life. The city we seek, the city we are shown in the final

words of the Bible is a metaphor for a living thing. It is a living creation and that creature is redeemed man. It is us. We shall not fully understand this until that day, how this picture of a city could be a living being and of what it shall actually consist and thrive. We have discovered that it is us, we of the faith, people redeemed from all peoples, nations, tongues and kindreds. More specifically it is redeemed men, it is us, the ones who are *“built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit”* Eph. 2:22. In the final revelation of the Bible we see it is The Bride which God has had in mind all along, had as His ultimate aim and goal and reason for creation. This should astound us when we first become cognizant of this mystery, and this is why it is called the Great Mystery. ...

The reason why so little is known among Christians about the mystery of the Bride is exactly because it is **THE** great mystery, the mystery of mysteries of Christ and His Gospel. Of the mysteries that are enumerated in the New Testament, only two are called 'great', one is the mystery of godliness the other is the mystery of the Bride (Christ and His Church). Realizing that the Bride is a mystery is of primary importance if she is to be understood. Understanding spiritual mysteries requires trust and faith in God's word. Without trust and faith we cannot see the veiled secrets of God, we cannot fathom God's true purpose and goals. We can never discover why He does things the way he does, why things turn out the way they do, unless we trust *“that all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to his purpose.”* Rom 8:28 We must trust God that He knows and that He knows what He is doing and never makes a mistake as we are inclined to do regularly. Believing this is much easier said than done, even for the mature Christian. We must never take it for granted that we trust God, either. We must always be suspicious of ourselves, certain that we can fool ourselves into thinking we are trusting God when we are really engaging in wishful thinking or trusting in our own strength or power. When we understand God's goals we have a much better chance of trusting Him because we can see the mark at which he has us aiming, obviously we have an excellent chance, with His help,

of hitting the mark when we have our eyes on the correct target. We must trust God to clear our vision and give us eyes to see His target, His goal. Seeing God's goals gives us a better understanding of why we should be trained and schooled on how to accomplish the goal set out before us. We are more likely to endure all things (which God endures), believe all things, bear all things, hope all things (which God does) when we understand the purpose behind exercising the conditions of love's truth. The Bride hopes for perfection in God's eyes, believes in the value and worth of beauty of spirit in His sight and will try to make herself ready and beautiful as possible, is willing to endure until the end because of the prize set before her, and will bear the cost required of daily taking up her cross (just as her husband took up His cross) for the glory set before her, which in her case is to win her suitor's love and to be identified with Him as one in spirit for all eternity. She is willing to strive for love's matchless joy and power, which is her only means to winning the full approval of her Lord and Master. As with all the 'mysteries' in Christ (of which the New Testament Scriptures show that Christ revealed no less than a dozen at His first coming), the mystery of the Bride (Christ and His Church) is a sacred truth, guarded with the highest jealousy by God Himself; reserved for the faithful only, kept from the vulgar and those inclined toward infidelity or any sort of idolatry, regardless of how religiously good it looks or how many good works surround its freakish religious cabana.

It is the Bride's province to understand and to handle with holy hands, as priests of the new and living way, all the mysteries and keep them as good stewards. The mysteries are enumerated in the New Testament and discussed. They are expounded upon in the nearly 40 parables which Christ taught, as well as in numerous living metaphors recorded in the Bible as examples and testimonies written for the benefit of the faithful. These teachings reveal and explain the mysteries of the kingdom of God and His plan for redemption. Their execution in the lives of the saints will form a chaste and worthy Bride fit for His habitation and fellowship for the ages to come. Their light should provide a spiritual mirror in which

one can peer into one's own heart and discover the condition of the spiritual life within as well as the position in regards the bridal party of Christ. That is one of the hopes we have in this final section of the Journey to Brideship for you. We hope it will provide you with not only a one-time study but something to which you can return to time and time again for solace and instruction in these last days just prior to the Return of Christ.

Proving That The Bride Is

We feel compelled by the fact that Christ and the church is called the great mystery to prove the Scriptural foundation and truth of the concept of the bride by compiling the evidence for her reality and existence from both New and Old Testament references. The references and prophecies are abundant, though they are parts of the 'great' mystery their understanding has always been shrouded in parables and hidden in symbolism. The believer must first believe that the Bride is, before one can wait and love the way an espoused bride should. The place to begin in introducing this evidence is in the place where its existence is directly stated without the veil of a parable or symbolic form. The starting point, therefore, is where it is the mystery that is called the Great Mystery is declared. This is Christ and His Church (The Bride) which is stated in the epistle to the Ephesians in chapter five. Here we find no subtlety or secret meaning for we are told frankly that marriage between a man and woman is a form which points to the ultimate marriage between Christ and His church. This espousal begins now in this Age between members willing to be married to Him and Himself. He loves us and we are to be submitted to Him completely. So *"he might sanctify and cleanse it [the church] with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."* Eph. 5:26, 27 In another passage we

are expressly told by Paul that he was working as the bridegroom's agent (in a sense) by the spreading of this Good News, "*For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present a chaste virgin to Christ.*" 2 Cor. 11:2

We have been directly told about the Bride's existence and that it has been God's plan to provide a Bride for His Son. We have been told, but now we are shown her so we can see what she looks like, what she has been doing and what her future shall be. Throughout Scripture God has equated Jerusalem and New Jerusalem with His most prized jewels has announced that it is His beloved, His Bride. The final Revelation of the Bible shows us the Bride. It is New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven. "*And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a BRIDE adorned for her husband.*" Rev. 21:2 Just a few chapters before, Rome, the world's eternal city is depicted. It represents the spirit of the world. It is made of mortar and concrete, granite stones and marble, all by the hand of man. It has all the riches and glory of the world and it has been built through the ages by man. Man calls it the eternal city, but it has already gone up in smoke, its gaseous fumes rising forever into the eternal realms. It is the eternal cinder. But New Jerusalem is the true eternal city, made without hands, comprised of living souls, eternal spirits built into a habitation for God. A moment later, after seeing the eternal New Jerusalem, an angel appears and informs the apostle John that he is looking upon the bride, the Lamb's wife, "*And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the Bride, the Lamb's wife.*" vs. 9 If any doubt lingered in our mind as to the reality and purpose of the symbolism and talk of the Bride throughout the Old and New Testaments they should be dispelled entirely.

Now, those who have knowledge of the Scriptures hearken back to Old Testament teachings and books which are recalled to them by the Spirit. Perhaps the great romantic poem, The Song of Solomon, first comes to mind. References and symbolism requiring meditation and consideration, with a fresh look at their meaning,

circulate in our spirit. Psalm 48 as the bridal party, the prophet's references to the bride and bridegroom, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Joel become relevant to the Bride in a new light. We can wonder about Psalms, Esther, and a myriad of potential living metaphors that may have the power to shed light upon the Bride and her living reality. A walk through these things, that we are espoused to one husband, that the Bride is revealed as such in the last vision of the Bible, and that a myriad of Bridal promises lay open even in the Old Testament, especially in one whole book of the Bible, The Song of Solomon, gives us irrefutable spiritual knowledge, with understanding, that the Bride is and that she must be of prime importance if Christ has vowed to make her spotless and without blemish and holy, by being washed in the water of the Word.

To think properly of the Bride we must never, never, never think of it in terms gender. This is why we will often speak of her as "it". In the Bride there is no male or female. This should be obvious. If we do not keep this misconception in abeyance we shall open up ourselves to the confusion of spiritual forces who wish to keep us from understanding and entering into the 'great mystery' of Christ and the Church, who shall present unto Himself 'a' glorious church (that is: a church from among the churches, but not all that is called church) that is perfect in the Spirit.

Who and What the Bride is?

God's thinking is not like our thinking, nor is His ways in any manner comparable to ours. His idea of perfection does not conform to ours and never will. That means, our idea of perfection must conform to His if we hope to have any understanding of the perfection expected in the Bride of Christ. We can never attain a mistake free existence in this life. We will surely even stumble and fall into some problem of which we need to repent. When we rely on our advocate with the Father to intercede for or trespasses against the Truth or its

righteousness, part of perfection in God's eyes is when we say we are sorry and truly repent. This is part of acquiring and reacquiring perfection. God expects His perfect Bride to let Jesus iron out the wrinkles, take out the spot, remove the blemish. It is not perfection to never have these defects; but it is perfection to let the water of the Word wash clean these things at the hand of Jesus. We must not only bath in the blood of the Savior if we wish to be clean, we must wash in the water of the Word, soak in its bath-oils and sweet smelling scents to be clean and perfectly ready for our husband. The Song of Solomon makes this analogous point of perfect directly for the Bride without equivocation or implication or symbolism. No doubt, one of the things which she is, is clean and spotless, having been washed regularly from the filth of the world and her own flesh. She is picture perfect in this sense.

The parables of Christ play a big role in inspiring the Bride to striving in the spirit to live those things which are most appropriate for the Bride. The parable of the Ten Virgins, etc., tells us what to do, how to do it, and what the rewards of obedience are. The mysteries and the understanding of their hidden truths complement the parables, the two in tandem are even necessary to understanding the will of the Lord and His call to us for Brideship. Then as a treasure trove of hidden jewels we are shown the lives and outstanding character of certain select women who have exhibited the heart of Christ's wife for us to use as mirrors or our own soul and makeup. Belief, submission, separation from the world, obedience, service, courage, waiting, watching, unrivaled love and oneness in marriage are the pictures drawn in ten of the women representing brideship and add profound meaning and help impart faith to those of us who take seriously the reality and worth of the journey to Brideship.

Perfection, purification and preparation for the Bridegroom's coming are things that must be discussed and examined by the espoused wife of Christ. Our journey has itemized and taught the call to readiness and perfection. Among those things which must be mastered is ourselves and our will. The Bride will be an overcomer.

This is evident in the seven letters to the churches which strongly demands that each believer be an overcomer in numerous things of critical import if they are to receive the reward of the good and faithful servant. This will certainly be one of the accolades given the bride by her husband. She will have been a good and faithful servant, just as the idealized woman of Proverbs 31 symbolizes. The Bride will be an overcomer in the Church, overcoming all perversion of the word and every idolatry that has crept into its walls. She will be the overcomer of the three great enemies of our eternal soul, Our Flesh, World and Satan. Because she has overcome all enemies by obedience and subjection to Him, Christ will give His beloved all things. This is who she is. Overcomer, good and faithful and perfect with the qualities of spirit, washed not only in the saving Blood, but by the water of the Word she has been sanctified and purified so that Christ could iron out the wrinkles, remove blemishes, dissolve the spots and make her holy.

What the Bride is Doing Today

The aforementioned pictures are spiritual cameos of woman carved out of the Bible to represent Brideship by real-life dramas. They should help the believer to recognize themselves in the mirror, to determine the extent to which they conform to the Bride. It should help to show any glaring deficiency so that one may better be prepared for the coming of the Bridegroom. Though this runs contrary to the love affair the churches often carry on with good works, the greatest work of the Bride today is in preparing for His instantaneous appearing. Heeding each one of the suggestions and warnings to be ready for His appearing is a fetish far better to have than counting simply on good works to win our way into the graces of God and our espoused husband, Christ. With excitement Paul summarized the reward for His life's toil in Christ this way: *"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which*

the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.” 2 Ti 4:8 Notice he included all them also that love His appearing. It is safe to say that this could be described as the appearing of the Bridegroom to the Bride. Unthinkable to most Christians of this day and age is that God would place a condition on the Rapture like loving His appearance. Remember, however, he said he would come as a thief in the night at a time when you think not. He said there would be two in a bed and one taken the other left. There will be two in the field on that day, one taken the other not, implying that the two are in the same faith, doing the same work, but not necessarily reckoned worthy. He said pray always that you be accounted worthy to escape all the things and tribulations that are coming on this earth. The Bride will be vindicated for her faith and undying love only on that day of her departure into the arms of her waiting husband.

But do not get me wrong. The Bride will not be without multitudinous works, not by any means. She will help to prepare the way for the Second Coming. In the Spirit of John the Baptist and Elijah, she will pave the way for her husband to be received. In the spirit, she will issue the invitation to others to come to the marriage supper of the Lamb. The Bride is the ultimate priest, a priest after the order of Melchizedek, in the New Testament mold. Daily she will minister the sacred things of the Gospel, the kingdom of God prayer and the sacrifices of praise and other New Testament offerings. She will even have the authority of the king's name. She will be laboring in the fields of the spirit with all the tools that have been given her of gifts and knowledge, with a fervency of the salt of love.

Where the Bride Will Be Found Today

Answering the question where will the Bride be found today is terribly illusive because of the way we think in the churches. We think in terms of walls and steeples and membership rosters. We

think of sacraments and joining together in good works and missionary pursuits. The first Christians did not think in these terms because the preponderance of fellowships and gatherings were in the households and homes of people like Priscilla and Aquila, or Stephanos, Philemon and the elect lady to which John had addressed his third epistle. We need to debunk ourselves of these traditional notions in the way we must not think of the Bride in terms of gender, intellect, wealth, success, ethnicity, or in any worldly sense of beauty or performance. The Bride is to found in the Philadelphia/Smyrna Spirit – wherever it abides. We know this sounds ominously ethereal, vaguely spiritual, mystically mystical, even somewhat evasive. Nonetheless, it is true. Philadelphia is an open door with the keys of David stuck directly into the lock where it may lock or unlock according to the blessing of promised love of Christ for those who are after His heart. Christ says he will keep that door open and no man can shut it. The same holds true for shutting doors behind us for our protection. Her Lord is recognized by her as the one who is Holy and True. How much more fitting a picture can one have than this one of the bridegroom's power to protect His wife? He is the trusted conductor of the faith of the people of the commendable church of Philadelphia. Wherever you find a person or two held under the sway of these things you may find the Bride in waiting. The Philadelphian is willing to stake their life on the word of God. His name is above all others and they hold no rival love in their heart or mind. They will overcome the pressure to lose their patience waiting for Him or in defending Him against all on-comers. They will believe, truly believe by action of faith, in the promise of the Rapture and the promises of the Utopia that is to come, and they will hold these promises as self-evident, higher than any earthly hope or promise. She is the one clad in the sun travelling for the birth of her man-child who will be caught up to heaven. The Bride will cast its crowns at the feet of His throne in the moment of their nuptials because they have given all glory to Him by word and deed in this life as they waited for His appearing and deliverance from this

present evil world. This is what she is doing and anyone doing these things in truth is where she can be found.

Where is she? Wherever there is one or two gathered around the sacrificial body of Christ like eagles licking up His atoning blood. Be mindful, it does not require ten, twenty or a hundred souls. Where two or three are gathered together in my name so there I will be also, he told those who are invited to Brideship. She may even be living a priestly life with its daily course of sacred duty. She partakes of prayer and of the manna daily and distributes the cleansing word with undefiled hands. Wherever there is true submission there you will find her working, trying to love as Christ has loved us. Taking heed to herself to see she be not deceived. Watching. Waiting patiently.

“For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”

Matt 24:27

Where shall we find the bride and those of her party, those delving into Brideship and its qualifications by faith? Not on any membership roll or because they were sprinkled in some particular baptismal fount by ‘holy’ water. No....

“For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.” Matt. 24:28

“But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

But as the days of Noah, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark,

And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.

Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?

Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.

But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming;

And shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken;

The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of,

And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Matt. 24:36-51

The Bride will issue the invitation to come to the Bridegroom and freely drink of the waters of salvation. Wherever that is being issued there she will be. Behold He comes quickly. Hold fast and see that no man takes your crown. Finally, we ask the same question that Jesus asked a small group of disciples following Him one day –

WHAT SEEK YE?

121. A Composite Portrait of: The Devoted Bride

by Joanne M. Smith

A word of severe caution must precede this writing. In Christ, there is no rich nor poor, no male or female, but only equality of spirit. Since he is the originator of equality we must not suppose that the Bride of Christ and all its symbolism is pertinent only to females or applies merely to Women. Every male, every female may seek this calling to be the bride of Christ for in heaven there is to be no marriage – only a marriage of his exclusive wife who has set herself apart from even the other saved souls by becoming one of the genuine brides described in the lives that are examined and explained in the following scriptural portraits painted in the vivid colors of scripture by the following composite portrait of those who are part of the written history of God's creation of a wife for His Son, Jesus Christ.

When the author wrote this series of vignettes on great women of the Bible in the late 1990s for *The Christian Spirit Magazine*, she selected a roster of women who most impressed her for their faith and love toward God. The selections included a cross-section of women from both the Old Testament and the New. Instinctively, she zeroed in on women with distinctive aspects of Brideship which stood out as being representative of the perfect wife. Not that any one of the women's acts and lives of faith depicted a comprehensive view of Brideship in itself. Generally, their tests of faith and show of virtues brought to life aspects of Brideship ultimately depicted in the final visions of the Bride recorded in the New Testament. It was not until we put the articles together for this website that we discerned that these lives could be presented together to further *The Outcast Eagle's* major theme of the journey to Brideship. It was realized how each individual woman owned its own set of

outstanding representative qualities that directly correlates to the mystery of Brideship. At the same time each of the women has her own individual identity, each a beautiful cameo in its own right, carved out in Scripture displaying a personal set of virtues, amounting to her very own beautiful testimonial, worthy of representing the Bride by its quality and spiritual holiness and beauty.

The array of 'Illustrious Women of the Bible' presented in this writing are not to be thought of as an all inclusive list of the women who demonstrate attributes of the Bride. Women like Rahab, the woman at the well, the woman healed of the issue, the widow who gave her last penny, Bathsheba, Leah and of course, Eve, all endured tests of faith indicative of bridal elements of faith, humility or oneness with Christ. Other primary portraits such as the five wise virgins, the beloved one of the Song of Solomon, and the Sun-Clad woman in Revelation are given full attention in their proper place. Regardless of the magnitude of the Bride's expression throughout Scripture, we think the following gallery of 'brides' paints a full portrait of Brideship qualities, if not complete in this hand-picked group, then nearly so.

Given the powerful testimonies of each of the women, it may seem strange that Joanne Smith decided to introduce her galaxy of brides, not with one outstanding individual woman, like Mary or Esther, but with the idealized portrait of all women of Scripture, that figurative wife who is graphically portrayed at the conclusion of the book of Proverbs. Proverbs ends with this 'perfect portrait of a wife which is graphically contrasted against the foolish woman of the early chapters of the same book with whom the believer is earnestly advised to avoid emulating like one would avoid the plague.

The reason why *The Virtuous Woman* seemed a natural for introducing the train of 'brides' is that she epitomizes the perfect spouse of Christ. Subsequently, the women of the bridal gallery can well be viewed as combining together to make up a single portrait of the Bride. Each woman a set of delicate strokes spiritually blended into by its own hue and features into a single Mona Lisa of spirit.

Each succeeding woman a set of brushstrokes of expression and texture until it is built layer by layer into the portrait on a perfect spiritual canvass, each fiancé complete, having been composed by the supreme artist's hand of genius, until the whole composition is finished rendering one perfect and 'virtuous woman'. Sarah, Esther, Ruth and so forth, ending with Priscilla the married one, the whole being added to stroke by stroke, revealing the sweet bride of Christ, who has won been formed as out of some Pygmalion by her suitor, Christ, into a woman and wife of grace with attributes of devoted belief, a queen of beauty, submission, obedience and unshakeable actions of purity and faith, complete as one exquisite and essential portrait of the Bride of Christ.

We hope the reader will attain a clear vision of her, will see the bride in the lives of these illustrious women and enjoy the beauty of the bride's portrait as much as the author did while writing about its composition. We hope the reader will also get a taste for the delight of the bridegroom who has carefully and lovingly brought the picture of her to life by recording her individual beauty and her composite love in the pages of the Bible, giving the end-times saints a mirror in which one may not merely compare oneself to the Bride, but use it to strive to hit *'the mark of the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus'* Phil 3:14 and by faith truly be conformed to her stunning beauty.

#1 Introduction: Proverbs 31 The Virtuous Woman

Women mentioned in the bible usually have a name, or at least are called by something like "the woman at the well" or a "certain woman who was..." The woman I tell you about in this installment of bride oriented women isn't an ordinary woman of the bible. She doesn't have a name or even a specific personality, but she is called virtuous. She is a woman of strength and honor. She is a courageous

woman who faces adversity head on. From her mouth come words of wisdom and kindness. She is frugal, yet generous. She is a friend to the needy and poor. She is industrious; tending to every need of her family from purchasing land to making fine linen to keeping her family warm in the winter. She is indeed blessed, for her husband and children praise her. Above all else this woman fears the Lord. Have you guessed who this woman is? She is the woman of Proverbs 31.

Many a woman, especially one with a family, has aspired to be like the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31. Who wouldn't pride themselves in showing the same care and concern that this woman shows to her family? What woman wouldn't be pleased to garner the adoring praises of husband and children? Certainly to be like her is a noble goal that women should all aspire to. In general, women, even those who haven't given their lives to the Lord and are walking in their own righteousness, don't find it all that difficult to truly care for their families. The natural instinct of a parent is to care and nurture their offspring, although in this day and age we see and hear of much to the contrary, but the vast majority of parents certainly fall into the nurturing category.

Recently the Lord presented a challenge to me for not only women but for all Christian men, women and children. The challenge is this: Can we take this one step further? Can we truly love and care for those that are not our natural flesh with the same passion we would for our own? Can we nurture the truly needy and not just our family members? It's easy to love our own family, everybody does that, but can we extend ourselves to others in the same way we do for our own flesh and blood? Jesus says in Matthew 5:46-47 *"For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?"* The true reward is in loving those who do not love you back, as Jesus tells us in the preceding two verses in Matthew 5:43 & 44 *"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that*

curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you”.

“Who can find a virtuous woman?” Prov 31:10. That is the challenge. The manner in which that question is posed in the Scriptures leads us to believe it is not an easy challenge to meet. The woman in Proverbs 31 obviously represents the bride of Christ. She fears the Lord and *“the heart of her husband doth safely trust in her.”* Prov 31:11. The fifth chapter of Ephesians gives us insight into the nature of the relationship between Christ and His church, the bride: *“For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”* Eph 5:31 The bride is also portrayed in Revelation 21 as being one and the same as the heavenly city Jerusalem, God’s dwelling place. (see Rev 21:2-9) So it is fitting that one of her main responsibilities is for the well-being of God’s family. She is faithful and diligent in caring for those the Lord has entrusted to her, who, in light of what we’ve learned in Matthew, could be vast. The family not only represents different aspects of the Church but those outside the Church, as well. Caring for one’s fleshly family comes natural for most people. Caring for strangers does not. But we are admonished to do just that if we are to be considered the “virtuous woman”. The “care” I am referring to is not the care of the outer man, but, more importantly, it is the care of the inner man, the spiritual man and his needs. Just as the woman undertakes the overall care for her family, the Lamb’s wife should be willing to undertake the care of the household of faith or anyone the Lord entrusts to her care.

Clothing

Let’s take a closer look at exactly how this virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 fulfills these needs. *“She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands.”* (Vs 13). *“She layeth her hands to the*

spindle, (Vs. 19). She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple.” (Vs 22). “She maketh fine linen, and selleth it.” (Vs 24). Wool and flax were materials used to make clothing, blankets etc. Wool was a major resource in Israel and also signified purity, while flax was used to make linen for clothing. Being clothed, in the Scriptures, takes on spiritual significance in our relationship with God as we see in the following verse from Isaiah 61:10 “for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments.” The epistles are rich with references instructing us to be clothed with the proper garments. The sixth chapter of Ephesians is perhaps the most noted where Paul exhorts us to put on the whole armor of God. Another, of equal importance, is Colossians 3:14 where Paul, again, tells us, “And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.” We see from the Scriptures that this is an important function in the family and our woman is pretty serious in the task at hand of clothing her family, just as we should be in equipping our “family” with the garments of righteousness and seeing to it that they “put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” Ephesians 4:24

Feeding

Our woman also undertakes the task of feeding her “family”, even rising in the middle of the night to do so, as we see in the following: “*She is like the merchants’ ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens.*” (Vs 14 & 15). We can follow her example by taking the advice of Paul, again: “*Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.*” Acts 20:28. We are even required to

go one step further, the real challenge, and feed our enemies as we see in Romans 12:20 *"Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head."* And how do we accomplish this? In the Husband's own words do we find the answer: *"And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God."* Luke 4:4 Jesus told Peter three times, after He asked him if he loved Him, to feed His sheep. The word of God is our sustenance, it nurtures our inner man. It is powerful, as we see in Hebrews: *"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."* Heb 4:12

Takes care of the estate

Feeding and clothing are the two main chores of our woman but that is not all that keeps her busy. Verse 16 presents her as both a real estate mogul and a keeper of the vineyard, *"She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard."* The vineyard is where seeds are sown and fruit is expected to be partaken of. *"...who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?"* 1 Cor 9:7. Jesus is the Vine and we are the branches: *"He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."* John 15:5. Bearing good fruit is of utmost importance to our woman and her Husband. (See John 15:8; Gal. 5:22-25).

Wise and Kind

Our woman is both wise and kind. *“She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.”* (Vs 26). *“Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.”* Prov 3:13-14. She is fully aware of the value of finding wisdom and sees to it that her family discovers this same truth. Something, no doubt, we should be ever mindful of doing with our “family”. As the Scriptures say, *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”* Ps 111:10.

Will not engage in foolishness

Finally, our woman *“looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.”* (Vs 27). By doing this she avoids the destruction of a house as described in Ecclesiastes 10:18 *“By much slothfulness the building decayeth; and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through.”* We can do well with our “family” by heeding the warning in 1 Timothy 5:13 *“And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not.”*

The rewards of our virtuous woman are rich, as we see in the conclusion of this chapter, and they can be ours, as well, if we follow in her footsteps.

“Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her.

Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.

Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.” Proverbs 31:28-30.

#2 Believing: Sarah

Mother of Nations – Mother of Faith

The background of the portrait is the bold shades of Sarah's belief. Sarah, "*Mother of Nations*" Gen 17:16 could also be known as Mrs. "Father of Faith" for between Abraham and Sarah the spiritual foundation of faith was laid. Sarah spent her years here on earth in total devotion to her husband, Abraham. She believed God's promise to Abraham that he would make him a father of many nations. When the Lord spoke to "Abram" to leave his father's house and sojourn to a new place, "*a land that I will shew thee*", Gen 12:1 Sarah was right there by his side.

The Scriptures tell us that Sarah was "*fair to look upon*" Gen 12:11. So beautiful was she that when they travelled to Egypt Abraham pressed upon her to convince Pharaoh that she was his sister, which was, of course, only half true as they shared the same father but had different mothers. (Marriage to one's half sibling was common in these times.) Abraham feared he would be killed if he were thought to be her husband because of her great beauty. The Lord visited plagues upon Egypt as a result of this little facade and soon Pharaoh discovered the truth, confronted Abraham with it and escorted them out of Egypt. A similar instance occurred in Gerar when Sarah was close to ninety years old!

God constantly reassured them that He would fulfill his promise, but there were times when Sarah's faith wavered. She was getting on in years and had probably lost all hope in giving to Abraham the promised son, when she offered him her maidservant, Hagar, to bear him a son. I am sure she experienced emotional and spiritual upheaval during this period of time in her life. Why didn't God fulfill His promise and give us a son? How can I stand in the way of Abraham having the promised son? – were probably some of the questions she asked the Lord. It's evident she believed the promise; she just couldn't believe the means by which the promise would come. It was most likely in desperation that she suggested Abraham

take Hagar as a wife and bare him a son (Ishmael) because she realized as soon as Hagar conceived and turned against her that what she had done was wrong. Years later after Isaac's birth, Sarah had to cast her out of their presence because Ishmael, we are told, mocked Isaac. Abraham was grieved but God told him to obey Sarah's command *"for in Isaac shall thy seed be called."* Gen 21:12

Alas, when "Abram" was ninety-nine and "Sarai" was ninety years old God appeared to Abram and proclaimed the covenant to him. *"I am the Almighty God; walk before me and be thou perfect."* Gen 17. It was in this visitation that God commanded "Abram" to change his name to Abraham and "Sarai" to Sarah. Something new was about to happen! *"And I will bless her, and give thee a son also offer: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her."* Gen 17:16. Both Abraham and Sarah laughed when they heard the news and the Lord's reply to Sarah was this: *"Is anything too hard for the LORD?"* Gen 18:14. She soon found out with the birth of Isaac a year later and they all had a good laugh! *"And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me. And she said, Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck? for I have born him a son in his old age."* Gen 21:6 & 7

The faith held by Sarah is the epitome of the faith true believers must possess in order to be partakers of "the promise". We must aspire to be a spiritual daughter/son of Sarah. It is really quite simple – believe God's Word and act on it, as Sarah did when she bore Isaac. God's covenant to His people was born of faith by the freewoman. Hagar, the bondwoman, represents the flesh that rears its ugly head now and then to try to keep us from partaking of the promises. As Sarah, apparently so ruthlessly banished Hagar to wander in the wilderness with Ishmael, we must also banish the works of the flesh and strive to live by the spirit.

Galatians, chapter four sums it all up rather nicely:

"For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman.

*But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh;
but he of the freewoman was by promise*

Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

*But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him
that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.*

*Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the
bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall
not be heir with the son of the freewoman.*

*So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but
of the free.” Gal 4:22-31*

#3 Submission: Widow of Zarephath & Syro-Phoenician No Fear – A Widow In Need

**Fears not – Believes the Word of the Lord – A widow in need – No
Queen like the Whore – She Made Room and provision for Elijah
the prophet**

She's not even mentioned by name, this obscure widow who was at her wit's end in trying to endure the famine and drought that had come upon the land of Israel after the prophet Elijah's decree to wicked King Ahab that there would be no rain except by his command. Imagine the thoughts that went through her head when, while she was out gathering sticks for herself and her young son, Elijah suddenly appeared begging for water and food. "And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand And she said, As the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die." 1 Kings 17:11&12. All hope was lost. How could she go on? How could she hope to sustain herself and her child with only a handful of meal and no relief in sight? "Fear not" said Elijah to her. "For thus saith the

LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth.” 1 Kings 17:14

Did she believe Elijah? How would there be enough food when only a few morsels of meal lay at the bottom of her barrel? How would she cook with only a few drops of oil? Where would the next meal come from? A fearful widow would have been asking these questions. Not this widow. She took the advice from Elijah, submitted to him and **feared not**. *”And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah.” 1 Kings 17:15-16* She went and did according to the saying of Elijah is just a way of saying that she believed and submitted, subjected herself to the word of the Lord.

It's that simple. She put her fear aside, trusted the word of the Lord and was willing to give all that she had, believing Elijah's promise of more. There were many around her who didn't. Jesus, in referring to himself and his own countrymen rejecting the word of the Lord from Him, tells us in Luke 4:25 & 26, *“But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.”* From there on the widow went on to make a place, room, for him in her house. She was a widow yet she let him in and was willing to support him with whatever she had to give him. For this generosity she was rewarded with all the provision she needed even in times when things were in short supply.

Tribulation was to come in another form as it so often does for Christians when they are trusting and believing in God's word. Any parent will tell you that they can endure just about anything, but when it comes to the welfare of their child all bets are off. The test of all tests happened when the widow's son fell sick until there was *“no breath left in him”*. *“And she said unto Elijah, What have I to*

do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?" So Elijah took her son to his loft and cried unto the Lord saying, "O Lord my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son?" Stretching himself upon the child three times, he cried unto the Lord to let the child's soul come into him again. "And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived." Although she wavered slightly, in a moment of terror, she emerged victorious in this battle of faith and proclaimed to Elijah, "Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth." 1 Kings 17:18-24

Friends, learn this lesson from the humble widow who demonstrated the type of faith all believers should aspire to by, first, casting out fear and then, simply, believing His word and providing living space for Him in her own dwelling place and this is the true act of submission providing place for our Lord to rule in our heart.

And this beleaguered woman too...

Syro-Phoenician: Woman in Submission

She searches Jesus out and falls at his feet for mercy – does not deserve attention by God – persisted – worshipped him – recognize position of unworthiness it may be done unto you as thy will if faith is applied – branches grafted in by faith – continue in that faith – will gladly take on the reward of her faith, God's name, the Bride's name and the new name of Christ, her husband's name.

The Syro-Phoenician woman (also known as the Canaanite woman) spoken of in Matthew 15:21-28 and Mark 7:24-30 doesn't even have a name. The only thing we know about her is that she had a daughter who was "*grievously vexed with a devil*" (vs 22), so described in Matthew and having "*an unclean spirit*", as stated in Mark. Her concern and care for her troubled daughter prompted her to search Jesus out and fall at His feet for mercy for her daughter. At her first plea, Jesus didn't even answer her. His disciples wanted to send her

away because she was a nuisance. But He answered them saying, *“I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel”*. Matt 15:24. But she persisted, and the scriptures tell us she came and worshipped Him and again begged for help. His answer to her was, *“It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and cast it to dogs”*. Matt 15:26. That’s a pretty harsh statement. What does it really mean? Edith Deen, in her work *All of the Women of the Bible*, reassures us that it was not meant to be offensive, but it was the evidence of the picturesque manner of speech for peoples of this particular time who understood that a metaphor should not be taken literally but received respectfully and submissively for its intended purpose. Jesus often spoke to His people in metaphors or parables and they understood them as such.

She then answered Jesus with, *“Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table”*. Matt. 15:27. Jesus responded, *“O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt.”* Matt 15:28. Her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

Who are the *“children”* Jesus is referring to? The woman initially referred to Jesus as *“thou Son of David”*. She knew she was an outsider, not worthy of the promises meant for the children of the God of Israel, yet she sought after them with diligence. Jesus had mercy upon her by healing her daughter, sight unseen. We know her faith played a major role in the process by Jesus’ response of, *“Great is thy faith.”* Though she was not one of the chosen *“children”* Jesus speaks of, she believed with all her heart that He could heal her tortured daughter. but she had to submit to His glory and power. This story of this unnamed woman reveals the essence of God’s ultimate mercy able to be bestowed upon the submissive will. It is the same mercy he bestowed upon Ruth, the Moabitess, who stuck by her widowed mother-in-law’s side and eventually became the grandmother to King David.

It is through the teaching of the olive tree, which symbolizes the Jews, in the eleventh chapter of Romans, that this same mercy is demonstrated to an unnamed people, the Gentiles. By being grafted into the *“good”* olive tree we become participants of the promises of

the God of Israel as we see in verse 17: *“And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree”*. Just like the Syro-Phoenician woman, we, who have that same faith in Christ, are a wild olive tree. God, in His infinite mercy, has allowed us to be grafted into the “good” olive tree and enjoy all the same fruits of that tree.

Although the Scriptures don’t tell us what becomes of the woman, they do reveal what becomes of the “branches” who don’t continue in faith as we read in Romans 11:22, *“Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off”*

This seemingly insignificant story of a woman with no name is, forever, a very significant example of what can be accomplished when we fall at Jesus’ feet and beg Him for mercy. The letter to the Philadelphia Church exemplifies this truth of us Gentiles, the ‘Goyim’, of no-name for among the promises to this little and disrespected, but beautiful fellowship of believers is given an enormous promise of inheriting the name of God and all rights reserved for those named by Him and given His personal ‘pet’ or favored nicknames. Revelation 3:12 gives this abundant promise, pregnant with metaphorical promises of names, for those who overcome by faith: *“Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my NEW NAME.”* Christ will give her the name of His Father, the name given to His Bride (for the New Jerusalem that comes down from heaven is none other than the bride as revealed among the last great passages of the Bible in Revelation 21) and also Christ’s new name with all its implications of adventure and expanding universe. She will take on the name of her husband in glory.

#4 Loyal & Separated

Ruth the Moabitess – Widow Given New Life

Chose God – cleaves to God’s people – a new life – leave everything behind; her family, her country, her gods, to start afresh – dead to traditions of parents – the stranger, the fatherless and the widow be allowed to “glean” the fields after the harvest – We have to be willing to lay ourselves at His feet and be at His mercy, to give up our own desires and be willing to be married to Him – inheritor of royalty.

The story of Ruth is a wonderful example of God’s mercy and grace for all people who believe in Him and are willing to submit to being separated from their own world and traditions and be brought into the kingdom of God’s very own Son, Jesus Christ. Ruth was a Moabitess who married the son of Elimelech and Naomi, Israelites who had traveled to the land of Moab from Judah to escape a terrible famine that had fallen on the land. While there, Naomi’s husband and two sons died, one of them Ruth’s husband. When Naomi heard that the famine had ended in Judah she decided to return and told her daughters-in-law to stay behind with their own families, and prayed that *“the Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me.”* Ruth 1:8 Both Ruth and her sister-in-law, Orpah, at first resisted, but eventually, Naomi was able to convince Orpah to return to her family, but Ruth *“clave unto her”* Ruth 1:14, as the scripture says.

After much persuasion from Naomi, Ruth answered with this heartfelt plea that has to be the cry of our hearts to the Lord, as well, *“Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.”* Ruth 1:16-17

Ruth gleaned in the field until nightfall and brought back an abundance of food. When Naomi learned of Boaz’s generosity to

Ruth, she asked Ruth if she did not want to seek rest (marriage) knowing that Boaz's responsibility as a relative, under the law, was to take Ruth as his wife. Ruth followed Naomi's command and agreed to go to the threshing floor at midnight where Boaz would be sifting the barley. After he had eaten and drunk, Ruth quietly went in, uncovered his feet and laid down at them. At midnight Boaz awoke in fear to find a woman at his feet and asked who was there. Ruth answered *"I am Ruth, thine handmaid; spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman."* Ruth 3:9 With that Boaz was blessed that Ruth had showed Naomi kindness in her willingness to marry an older man and had not gone after a younger man. There is a wonderful lesson in this of how we must come to Christ. We have to be willing to lay ourselves at His feet and be at His mercy, to give up our own desires and be willing to be married to Him. So, you see, Ruth was very determined to go with her mother-in-law and in doing so, she was choosing Naomi's God to be her God. She had to leave everything behind; her family, her country, her gods, and start afresh. She had to be separated from her former life if she was to acquire the new. The two settled in Bethlehem where a very wealthy relative of Naomi's husband, Boaz, also happened to live. Provision was made under the Law of Moses that the stranger, the fatherless and the widow be allowed to "glean" the fields after the harvest. The reapers were instructed to not reap the corners of the field and to leave whatever had fallen so that the poor could gather it up. Boaz was a very generous man and when he learned of Ruth, he not only granted her permission to glean in his fields, but insisted that she go nowhere else to glean and even arranged for her to glean alongside the reapers of the harvest and take whatever she wanted. At Boaz's generosity, Ruth asked *"Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?"* Ruth 2:10 Boaz's reply was this: *"It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. The Lord recompense thy work,*

and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.” Ruth 2:11-12 In that brief statement we find the mercy and simplicity of salvation. Like Ruth, we have to, spiritually and figuratively, leave the land of our birth and choose to follow and trust the Lord. Without being separated we cannot be sanctified and purified in the way the Lord wishes His Bride to be.

Boaz agreed to marry Ruth, but there was one obstacle in the way – a nearer kinsman than himself who, by Jewish law, was first in line to take Ruth as his wife. Boaz went to him with the offer to redeem Naomi’s land and to marry her daughter-in-law to raise up the name of the dead. The man was unable to redeem it because it would damage his own inheritance. When Boaz made public the fact that he could marry Ruth, those present rejoiced and asked the Lord to make his and Ruth’s house like that of Rachel and Leah, from whom the whole nation of Israel descended. So Boaz married Ruth and they had a son named Obed and the women of the city celebrated and blessed the Lord for giving Naomi an heir and for Ruth, who is *“better to thee than seven sons.”* Ruth 4:15 Under the law, it was the duty of a man to marry his relative’s widow and bring up the children as if they were the dead man’s; in so doing Boaz was giving up his own inheritance, as well, to fulfill the law and do what was right in the sight of the Lord.

This act of obedience would not go unnoticed by God, for Ruth and Boaz’s son, Obed, would then become the father of Jesse who was the father of David, the Great King of Israel whose line eventually bore the one and only, the Greatest King of all, Jesus Christ! What mercy! What symbolism for the Bride. The Lord granted Ruth as the reward of her characterization of faith of the Bride, who was not even of the house of Israel, a stranger, a Moabitess, the privilege of partaking in the lineage of Jesus Christ, and through the line of David as king and authoritative ruler. Why? Because she was willing to leave everything behind, to come out from among them and be separate, and give herself totally to the Lord under whose wings she had come to trust like any Bride ought to do for her husband.

#5 Elisabeth – Obedient Mother of John The Baptist –Walking Obedient to The Spirit

Elisabeth: Mother of John the Baptist – OBEDIENT

Preserved blameless, but not sinless – priesthood descendants – barren for the works of God to be manifest – her pregnancy a source of inspiration to Mary.

Scriptures tell us that Elisabeth, mother of John the Baptist, along with her husband, Zacharias were *“both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.”* Luke 1:6 Devoted to the service of the Lord, Zacharias was a diligent servant performing priestly duties, and Elisabeth, a descendent from the line of Aaron, the first high priest, was faithful in her support of her husband. Like Sarah, Abraham’s wife, Elisabeth was well on in years and childless. Barrenness was considered a curse in biblical times. Rachel, Jacob’s beloved wife, remained barren for years while her sister Leah bore Jacob six sons. Hannah wept before the Lord begging Him to give her a child. These are women who all found favor in God’s eyes. Why then, did he “shut up their wombs”? Why, in particular, did he shut up Elisabeth’s, who was found to be blameless before Him? The only explanation that seems likely is the same one given for the blind man, whom Jesus healed with the clay. When His disciples asked him what caused his blindness, his sin or his parents, Jesus answered, *“Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.”* John 9:3

Elisabeth was righteous in the Lord’s eyes, walking in His ways probably all her life, but I am sure she had her periods of disbelief when the years went by and she still had no children. Children were a heritage of the Lord and much hope was put in the children to continue the lineage and tradition of their forefathers. Being from the priestly line of the Levites, this was probably of particular concern to both Zacharias and Elisabeth. Why the Lord would allow

them to suffer the reproach of barrenness and not bless them with heirs to carry on the priestly duties was a question they both probably asked the Lord many times? The angel, when he appeared to Zacharias to announce the good news, told him to *"Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son."* Lk 1:13 indicating it was something Zacharias could have prayed for on a daily basis.

Elisabeth, unlike her husband who was consequently stricken with dumbness for a time for his unbelief, believed what the angel had told her, and prepared herself for this blessed occasion by hiding herself away for five months. Her prayer had been answered! *"Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men."* Lk 1:25 As we know, the Lord sent the angel Gabriel to the distant city of Nazareth to bring Elisabeth's much younger cousin, Mary, the glorious news that she, too, would bear a Son, a Son of the Highest. Edith Deen in her *All of the Women of the Bible* suggests that Elisabeth's pregnancy was a source of inspiration and faith to Mary when she wondered how this miracle could have taken place seeing she *"did not know a man"*. *"For with God nothing shall be impossible"*, Lk 1:34,37 was the angel's reply to Mary concerning both Elisabeth and herself.

Elisabeth is a fine example to not only women, but all believers, of how, when the Lord speaks to us, we should be ready and willing to do whatever it takes to stand firm and persevere. We must be obedient to His call and His desire and will. When the angel first appeared to Zacharias he also told him that he should call his son John. When, upon the occasion of his circumcision on the eighth day, it was assumed by all their family and friends that he would be called Zacharias. Elisabeth spoke out and said *"Not so; but he shall be called John"*. Lk 1:60 That took great courage for there was none in the family named John and she was breaking with years of tradition, but she was obedient to the Spirit. Zacharias, still without speech at this time, wrote: *"His name is John"* Lk 1:63 and he immediately regained his speech and praised God! Elisabeth spent her remaining days bringing up her son as she had prior to his birth righteously

walking in all the Lord's commandments and being obedient to God's every wish. But she seems to have lost him early as he went into the wilderness almost as soon as he was able to go and even in this she was submissive and exhibited a spirit of yielded obedience to God.

#6 Deborah: – Service Mighty Prophet – Judge

Deborah: Served him because no one else would – One and only woman leader among people of God, took it by default – only the Lord will get the glory – she will encourage the battle.

Now, as our portrait of the Bride begins to take shape we see a picture that includes redeemed souls with attributes in combination of belief, submission, separation from the world to God and obedient hearts. These four alone are qualities when put together in any combination are beautiful in the sight of God. When together, all or part, and coupled with service to God they are exemplary as exquisite things with utility in the kingdom of God. Deborah, the only woman leader in Jewish biblical history, served as judge and prophetess in pre-monarchic Israel, between the time of Joshua and Saul, ruling and judging a people who were constantly in and out of God's favor. She insisted on working for God, her true husband, and giving him the glory in all things. The book of Judges records seven periods of apostasy and resulting oppression by different nations and the subsequent deliverance by a judge. The judge served in a capacity as an administrator of the law, deliverer and sometimes prophet, as in Deborah's case.

The Scriptures tell us that the Lord, himself, raised up the judges as we see in Judges 2:16 *"Nevertheless the Lord raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them."*

Verses 17 – 20 tells us what transpired with the people after they were delivered.

“And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the Lord; but they did not so.

And when the Lord raised them up judges, then the Lord was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the Lord because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them.

And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way.

And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel; and he said, Because that this people hath transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice.”

Deborah certainly had her work cut out for her in her duties as spiritual leader. When the children of Israel cried unto the Lord after twenty years of oppression under Jabin, she was there ready and willing to go to battle against his mighty army of 900 chariots. When she called upon Barak, son of Abinoam from Kedesh, to take ten thousand men to confront Sisera, Jabin’s captain, he replied, “If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go.” What a woman of great faith, strength and fortitude Deborah must have been to instill such confidence in Barak. How could one person inspire such trust unless it was for the divine anointing of the Lord. Her wisdom and devotion to the Lord is seen in her reply to Barak: “And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the LORD shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh.” Judges

4:8-9 Deborah refused for anyone but her Lord to take any credit for the ultimate victory that would ensue at, as she had prophesied, the hands of the woman Jael when she drove a stake through Sisera's temples (see Jud 4:17-24).

Deborah, calling herself a mother in Israel (Judges 5:17), characterizes the forgiveness God has for his children. What mother, when her children come crying to her for help, turns them away? What mother, when her children are suffering at the hands of an oppressor isn't willing to lay her own life down to whisk them away from the terror? What mother, when her whimpering children come to her over and over again for mercy, isn't right there waiting with open arms? Deborah truly personifies the longsuffering and forgiveness that the Lord bestowed upon his children, Israel. Dedicated service means to not faint when the going gets tough. Deborah is a source of inspiration for us to not weary in the battle. Her mighty example should inspire us to put on the full armour of God and be ready to withstand the enemy when called upon. In Paul's letter to the Ephesians he exhorts us to ready ourselves spiritually, much like Deborah, no doubt, had to ready herself before the battle with the mighty and powerful Jabin.

"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Eph 6:13-17

It was not her own strength that she relied on but the mighty arm of the Lord. Deborah stood strong with her loins girt with truth, taking up the shield of faith, the shield that protected her people in the face of possible annihilation. The shield that was able to destroy the

unsuspecting enemy after he ran off with his tail between his legs, so to speak, at the hands of a woman. Deborah took advantage of the victory to proclaim to the world the following:

Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day, saying,

Praise ye the Lord for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves.

Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes; I, even I, will sing unto the Lord; I will sing praise to the Lord God of Israel. Judges 5:1-3

Let us take Deborah's words of encouragement to Barak as they were about to embark on the battle as a personal charge in our individual battles of faith: **"Up; for this is the day in which the Lord hath delivered Sisera into thine hand: is not the Lord gone out before thee?"** Jud 4:14

#7 Esther & Hannah – Heroes of Courage

Esther: Orphaned – to replace rejected queen – fair young virgins as in parable – approached the king – interceded for God's people – if I perish I perish – hero.

and...

Hannah – Gave her child over to God. Would not recant or backslide – felt pain and mocking of people and fellow wife who belittled her – hero.

Call me a cynic. Call me cold-hearted, but I just can't seem to get all choked up about the death of a "princess". I sit here formulating my thoughts for this article amidst the unbelievable commotion permeating the world over the untimely and tragic death of Diana, "Princess of the People", as she has suddenly been dubbed. Indeed, my heart goes out to her children and family for the loss they are suffering. It is always tragic when someone so young loses their life

so senselessly. But truly, what makes her so different than any other woman? I admit, I didn't really pay much attention to her when she was alive. I don't read the tabloids, so I'm not up on her vast exploits. I didn't even know she was a high school dropout until the day after she died.

A hero? Heroes, in my opinion, are ordinary people who do extraordinary things in difficult situations. They are the people you never, ever hear or read about. I am sure you know some. Look around you. True heroes are those who put their faith and trust in God in impossible situations. Queen Esther was a hero. Like Diana, she was robbed of a childhood pleasure – parents. Brought up by her uncle Mordecai in the Hebrew tradition, Esther was very devoted to her people.

Mordecai was an official of the palace of the Persian King Ahasuerus in the period around 404 – 358 B.C. After being refused by Queen Vashti of her presence during a palace feast, the king stripped her of her royal estate and later summoned to himself all the fair young virgins from the provinces to choose for himself another queen. Mordecai brought Esther while commanding her not to mention her heritage. The king set the royal crown upon her head and she became Queen of Persia. Meanwhile, a man named Haman, ruler of the king's princes conspired against Mordecai because he would not bow down to him. When Haman told the king that there was 'a people' in the land who did not keep his laws, the king agreed to have them destroyed and a decree was published in all the land to destroy and kill in one day, all Jews, both young and old. Esther got word of what was happening and agreed to go into the king's presence, uninvited – which is something that was not done, lest ye die. She instructed Mordecai gather together all the Jews and pray and fast and, likewise, so would she and her maidens, and she would go into the king *"which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish."* Est 4:16 She was willing to put her life on the line for the salvation of her people. Through an interesting series of events (read it for yourself in Esther 4-7) the Jewish people were

spared and Haman was hanged upon the very gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai.

& Hannah

Devoted mother? Hannah was certainly that. In contrast, I wonder how many sleepless nights Dianna spent waiting for her 15-year old to come home? I wonder how many sports practices, music lessons or jobs she drove them to, to keep them off the streets and off drugs? How many material possessions did she give up in order for her kids to have a pair of sneakers, or a winter jacket, or go to college? Did she ever wonder if her children would turn their back on the Lord?

Hannah was no princess though she was a devoted mother destined to give birth to a judge and a prophet of the people of God. Her longing for a child brought her many times to her knees begging the Lord to open up her womb. Hannah was the “favorite” wife of her husband, Elkanah. Each year Elkanah and his two wives and children journeyed to Shiloh to worship and sacrifice to the Lord. It was during one of these sojourns that Peninnah, the other wife who had children, provoked Hannah so much about her barrenness that she wept bitterly at the temple, and as the scriptures say; *“And she vowed a vow, and said, a LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head.”* 1 Sam 1:11 Hannah, as we know, gave birth to Samuel and cared for him diligently until it came time to fulfill her promise to the Lord. After sufficiently weaning him, she brought him up to the temple and presented him to Eli, the priest, where she said. *“Therefore also I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD. And she worshipped the LORD there.”* 1 Sam 1:28 Hannah’s prayer/song in chapter two is a testimony of her trust and faith in the God who is Lord of all. She was willing to give her child back to the Lord and in so doing gave back to her people one of the greatest judges in Jewish history. Take some time and

read about these courageous women of the bible and decide for yourself who the true heroes actually are.

#8 Anna – Waiting Looking for Redemption

“And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.” Luke 2:36-38

Anna had been in the temple serving God with prayer and fasting for eighty-four years. The Scripture does not say she had been waiting for the moment when the Christ would be revealed, but it says she responded “*in that instant*”. A widow in God’s house she was as a bride waiting for her beloved, the bridegroom. Instantly, like we who wait for the Lord’s return, she saw the Lord and gave God thanks. Her discernment of the Lord in an instant brings to mind the verses of 1 Corinthians 15 :51-52 which talk about the rapture saying, “*we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump*”. In a moment, in an instant we shall be delivered and look upon our redemption. For eighty-four years Anna served God with patience and when she saw the Lord she told everyone in Jerusalem that also looked for redemption about his coming.

Anna’s ministry from that instant on was to tell believers and encourage them about the coming of the Messiah. It is a good ministry, in these last days, for saints to tell one another of the second coming and the soon appearing of the Lord in the clouds.

Teaching one another to wait on the Lord is consistent with so many of the pleas that come forth from the Psalms. 1 Thessalonians 4 ends by telling us to comfort each other with the words of the rapture. This ministry of Anna is a good ministry.

Anna and Simeon truly loved Christ's first appearing. They are examples that we should remember Christmas with our mind's eye turned toward the second appearing of Jesus. Take some time not just to thank God for the first coming of Jesus, but thank Him for the promise that He will return. God has promised a crown for those who love Jesus' appearing. Paul, in his second epistle to Timothy, 4:8 put it like this: *"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."*

Keep looking up, *"...for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."* Rom 13:11

#9 Mary Mother of Jesus: Humble

Humble virgin – Surrendered whole being to his will – slandered – kept the promises of the Lord in her heart and pondered them – she did make mistakes, as when letting Jesus wander off and then being mad at him, and when she bothered him into doing miracles before the time he preferred because she wished to be vindicated – but submitted to being given to John for care.

Much has been written over the centuries about Mary, the humble virgin girl who became the mother of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. She made mistakes and was presumptuous but she never failed to keep watching for the fulfillments of Jesus her Savior. Edicts have been handed down over the centuries about her presumed perpetual state of virginity, her "immaculate conception" and, finally, her "assumption". Speculation has filled the pages of many a book on the subject of Mary. But let's now look to only one

book to uncover the story of Mary, the one book we need to look to, the Holy Bible.

The story begins with Mary's cousin, Elizabeth, and her husband, Zacharias, a priest in the days of King Herod. The two, as the scriptures tell us, *"were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless."* Luke 1:6 The childless couple were getting on in years when the angel Gabriel appeared to Zacharias to declare that their prayers had been answered and indeed Elizabeth would bear a son and call his name John.

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy the same angel Gabriel was sent from God to Mary, a virgin espoused to Joseph of the house of David, to proclaim to her the good news. As the scripture says:

"And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.

And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.

And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.

And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.

He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." Luke 1:28-33

Mary, perplexed, answered; "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" The angel replied; "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Lk 1:34-35 The angel then informed her of her cousin's pregnancy and reminded her that with God nothing is impossible.

With that Mary replied, *“Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.”* Lk 1:38 Mary was submissive and humble, courageous and at the request of the Lord, believing too. Mary then travelled to visit with Elizabeth where the miracle was confirmed by her as well as by the baby within her womb, who leaped upon Mary’s arrival. Mary’s cry of praise at Elizabeth’s proclamation confirms her humble and contrite spirit; *“My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.”* Luke 1:46-48 (see also Luke 1:49-55)

Are these the words of one who would want to be adored and worshipped above God? Are these the words of a woman who would not cringe at the highly embellished stories of her life immortalized over the years? Was Mary the kind of woman who desired legions of devoted followers for the simple fact that she believed God’s word and was willing to surrender her whole being to his will, no matter what the circumstances? Are these the words of a woman who realized that her child was sent to complete the redemptive plan of God and that she had no more to do with it than birth him and bring him up in the ways of the Lord?

Let’s take a look at some of the fallacies surrounding Mary and you can decide for yourself. The first and most blasphemous is the notion of her “immaculate conception” which asserts that Mary was, herself, conceived and born without sin which, in turn, perpetuates the idea that she was the mother of God, to be held in higher esteem than God, Himself. Let’s call this belief the “Madonna Syndrome”. The citron originated with Semiramis and Tammuz and has continued in various and sundry forms over the centuries in many cultures. The Greeks worshipped Irene and the boy Plutus. The Egyptians worshipped Isis and Osiris. The Roman Catholic Church officially decreed the worship of Mary and Jesus in the Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D. Rev. Alexander Hislop, in his celebrated work, *The Two Babylon’s*, points out that frequently in mother and child worship the powerful one or the first person in the Godhead was practically overlooked and that the majority of adoration and

worship was directed toward the mother and child. We see this same pattern in the adoration of Mary and her son, Jesus. It is nothing more than remnants of paganism incorporated by Papal decrees in the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches. The scriptures unequivocally disprove the notion that Mary is “sin-free” for “As it is written, *There is none righteous, no, not one.*” Rom 3:10 and “*Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For **all** have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*” Rom, 3:22-24 Even Mary had to accept God’s plan of salvation.

The second notion, though not blasphemous but serves to substantiate the first notion, is the “perpetual virginity” notion. That Mary remained a virgin throughout her life and marriage to Joseph is highly unlikely, especially since the Scriptures, themselves, mention the fact that Jesus had brothers and sisters. We see this relayed in Matthew 13:55-56 when Jesus returns to his own county to teach and he is rejected by the people he had known from childhood. “*Is not this the carpenter’s son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?*” Brethren is a term in the scriptures used often to describe spiritual ties, but this verse clearly demonstrates the earthly ties Jesus had with Mary and her other children. To believe that Mary, indeed, did bear more children is to believe that Mary was a mere human and not to be the object of devotion. (See also Matt 1:25 & Luke 2:7)

The third notion, “The Assumption”, serves to perpetuate the others in maintaining that Mary is of equal or more importance than God, Himself. The doctrine of the “Assumption” falsely declares that Mary was bodily assumed into heavenly glory upon her death and was declared a dogma by Pope Pius XII in 1950. I like to call it “The Great Assumption”, because that is what it actually is – an assumption – since the scriptures tell us nothing of Mary’s death. In

fact, after the initial account of the birth of Christ to the beginning of his ministry Mary is only mentioned four times. Though it is not prefigured or mentioned in our canvass in the overall portrait of the Bride here represented, a major part of the Bride's courage and demands of patience is to endure persecution and slander without cracking or giving in under the pressure. Mary was great in this, she even endured the horrific pain of watching the crucifixion and dealing with the surrounding blasphemes that took place.

Now that we've touched on these notions of Mary let's concentrate on what the bible says and on the woman she truly was. What's curious is that there isn't a great deal written about Mary in the Scriptures. Again, as previously mentioned Scriptures show us from her proclamation, "*For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden*" we know that she was a humble woman born into the royal line of David through Heli, her father. She was a virgin betrothed to Joseph when she became impregnated by the Holy Ghost. What faith she must have had to display during that period of her life when even Joseph desired to "*put her away privily*" Matt 1:19 so as not to make a public example of her, until the Lord spoke to him in a dream. What do you think was going through Mary's heart and mind when, after giving birth, the shepherds came to the stable to glorify God. Did she know what was in store for her newborn son? "*But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.*" Luke 2:19

How did Mary feel when, after traveling for three days in return from their yearly trip to Jerusalem, she realized her 12 year old son was not among their company. Even though Mary possessed great faith, do you think there was no sense of panic? And upon finding him in the temple amongst the elders, did she not wonder at his reply of "*How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?*" Luke 2:49. The Scriptures also tell us, "*And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.*" Luke 2:50 And, again, "*his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.*" Luke 2:51

The ultimate test of Mary's faith came in the aforementioned

moment when she had to stand by and watch her son die a humiliating death on the cross. Did all the things that she had kept in her heart give her any comfort in this great hour of anguish and suffering? She remained faithful to her son and her Lord for she was numbered among the loyal followers of Jesus in the upper room at Jerusalem where they all *“continued with one accord in prayer and supplication”* Acts 1:14

Mary’s faith had to be truly great, but no greater than the faith any believer must possess in order to gain eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Saviour! She never thought more of herself than she ought.

Arguably the greatest metaphorical event in the life of Mary was the amazing moment which took place at the foot of the cross on Calvary. In his dying throes, Jesus looked upon his mother who was there with His aunt and Mary Magdalene and performed His final hope and dictate, which centered around the ‘family’ of God.

“Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.

When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.” John 19:25-27

That this centers around Christ’s Will that the family of God in the household of faith take precedence over blood family should be apparent. His brothers, James, Joses, Simon and Jude, whom we are told did not believe in him (Until after the resurrection) though seeing many miracles and hearing his sermon on the mount (John 7:5), did not even show up at the crucifixion. Jesus emphasized time and time again that it was not a bloodline that made brothers and sisters and mothers but obedience to the voice of God, the Spirit. (Matt 12:50; Mk 3:32-34, 10:29-30; Lk 8:19 – 20, Lk 14:26, Lk 18:29-30) When Jesus told Mary Magdalene to go to His brethren

to tell them He was resurrected she went to the disciples, not His blood brethren. Jesus' encounter at the moment of death with Mary and John emphasizes this very point. His mother had a slew of children (Mk 6:3) but Jesus in a dying inspiration told first, Mary that her son was John and second that John was to take her into his house as his mother. She had all sorts of children to take her in but John was her son in the real and greater family, the family of God. How outstanding a truth is this that Jesus wanted to establish in his mother as one of His final acts of His first coming. After all the slander against Mary, with all the phony faith and blasphemous lies about her being the mother of God he established her as the poster-child for the spiritual family of the body of Christ.

"After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst." John 19:28

It may not be a stretch to believe that he said this right after his exchange with John and his mother, to say he thirsted after the bonds of love in the family of God more than anything else. He had told the Pharisees and Sadducees that there would be no marriage in heaven, only perfect relationships without gender or separation by differences in nature. This he thirsted after.

"Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put [it] upon hyssop, and put [it] to his mouth.

When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost." John 19:29-30

After the vinegar, the taste that it would not happen until the day of His kingdom come, He said it is finished. A remark that gives us courage to believe that in that day we will all be family and bloodlines will be no factor in its reality of truth. Only love will be the bond. Let us take the time in these last days to ponder the same

thing in our hearts that Mary had to ponder... *“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”* Luke 2:11

#10 Mary of Magdalene: Swooning over Jesus Unrivaled Love

Devoted follower – not a great deal is known – witnesses crucifixion and resurrection – 14 times 2×7 associated with the generations of Jesus –delivered from her complete array of devils – she ministered unto Jesus of her substance in His most difficult hour – bore the good news of Christ to the Church of his resurrection.

Our continued study of Women in the Bible we will take a closer look at Mary Magdalene, the devoted follower of our Lord. Not a great deal is known about Mary.

She is mentioned 14 times in the scriptures and mostly as witnessing Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. In Luke 8:2 and Mark 16:9 we learn that Mary was delivered of seven devils. *“Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.”* Mark 16:9 *“And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils”* Luke 8:2. There are no other details of what exactly these seven devils were. It is inferred, in the Greek, from Luke 8 that infirmities connoted mental disorders. Perhaps Mary not only suffered from evil spirits, but was also feeble-minded. It is interesting to note that her name, being derived from the word Magdala, means tower. Imagine, then, what a pitiful person Mary must have been prior to her deliverance from the seven devils and ponder the miracle of the person she became – a tower of faith.

Mary stood by Jesus during His most difficult hour and the scriptures tell us she *“ministered unto him”* Luke 8:3 of her very

substance. Apparently, she left everything behind to follow her Lord and Master. She was there at the crucifixion when the Roman soldiers removed His limp body from the cross and again at his burial in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. She brought spices to anoint the Lord, only to find that the heavy stone door of the tomb was rolled away and there was no Jesus to be found inside. It was Mary who Jesus first appeared to after he had risen and it was Mary who had the auspicious privilege of bearing the “good news” to the others.

As a representative of the Bride Mary Magdalene is one of the greatest of all time, encompassing in such a short time so many of the enduring qualities of the end-times Bride of Christ. Mary embodies what every believer should possess undying devotion to the Master. Mary gave everything she had and devoted her full attention to ministering to the Lord. She did not want to leave his side for a moment and only cared about His needs. What total unselfishness she portrayed. Her life is an example to us of what every Christian should attain to on a spiritual level, daily, all the time.

#11 Priscilla: Pillar in the Church Married

Priscilla – Teach and spread his word – displaced from her old life – church in home and great hospitality – worked together with Paul (others) in the same craft – they taught the eloquent Apollos, who knew only John’s baptism, the way of God more perfectly – Priscilla and her husband always mentioned together, one flesh example – The generosity, perseverance, diligence and courage of Priscilla and Aquila is certainly an inspiration to all those who wish to serve the Lord, especially those couples who aspire to serve Him together and to those who have a church in their home.

A woman of great influence in the early church, Priscilla, along

with her husband, Aquila, was used mightily by God to teach and spread His Word. After being expelled from Italy by the emperor Claudius, when he ordered all Jews out of Rome, Priscilla and Aquila settled in Corinth. It was here that they met up with Paul and took him into their home for a time. Priscilla was, no doubt, a woman of great hospitality for it is mentioned several times in the scriptures of the church in her home. Priscilla and Aquila also happened to be tentmakers as Paul was and probably even shared their work with him when he stayed with them. Acts 18:3 tells us, *“And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers.”*

When Paul left Corinth sometime after an insurrection by the Jews to the Roman deputy, Gallio, who wanted no part of their dispute, (see Acts 18:12-17) Priscilla and Aquila travelled with him to Ephesus where they remained for a while. Perhaps their greatest “claim to fame”, if you will, was their encounter with the great Apollos. It was during their stay in Ephesus that Apollos, *“an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures”* Acts 18:24 sat under their Godly tutelage. Although well versed and diligent in the things of the Lord, he was lacking in the full knowledge of Jesus Christ, knowing only the baptism of John as the Scriptures tell us. When Priscilla and Aquila heard about his preaching in the synagogue, they took him and expounded unto him *“the way of God more perfectly”*. Acts 18:26 Apollos, thereafter, became a mighty force for the gospel of Jesus Christ in the early church, converting many Jews by publicly showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

It was their diligence, faithfulness and willingness to risk their very lives for Paul that endeared them to his heart. The Scriptures don’t go into any detail at all on the circumstance of how they risked their lives but it could be speculated that it occurred during the riot at Ephesus incited by Demetrius the silversmith whose source of income was making silver shrines for the goddess, Diana. Demetrius stirred up his fellow silversmiths to rise up against Paul for preaching the gospel. Not only was their business in jeopardy with Paul preaching against idolatry and *“saying that they be no gods,*

which are made with hands." Acts 19:26 but the image of the great Diana, whom the whole world worshipped, would be tarnished with these piercing words of truth. The uproar took on such enormity that the partakers soon became confused and some actually could not even remember why they had come together.

In his letter to the Romans, indicating that they eventually moved back to Rome, Paul calls Priscilla and Aquila his *"helpers in Christ Jesus"* Rom 16:3 and greets them and the church that is in their house. This loving, devout couple, who labored together in the Lord, are mentioned five times in the New Testament, neither without the other, which attests to the true nature of a marriage in the Lord where the two become one flesh. Three of those times Priscilla's name appears first, signifying the true equality attained through Christ, Jesus. *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."* Gal 3:28 These two epitomized this verse in that they inseparably labored with Jew and Gentile alike in their work at hand which was to spread the gospel to all who would hear and to establish a church in their home. These most generous servants opened their home and made it possible for believers to come and be refreshed with the Word of God. The generosity, perseverance, diligence and courage of Priscilla and Aquila is certainly an inspiration to all those who wish to serve the Lord, especially those couples who aspire to serve Him together and to those who have a church in their home.

122. Visit Fatherless and Widows; Keep Yourself Unspotted From the World

Try Pure religion on for Size

by T Myers Smith

The generic definition of religion is “Man’s search for God”. The religious person is normally identified by where they worship, how much dough they give, how sincere and vocal they are in following their religion’s rules and regulations, and how much they know about their religion’s doctrine. All too often Man’s quest to find God ends in a quagmire of ritual and a box of conformity lodged hopelessly under the shadow of some dead religious system. But once we have found the one true God, Jesus Christ, we come to find out that God’s idea of religion is quite different. Like a jewel, hidden away from the passing world and revealed only by the Son’s reflecting rays, the quintessential definition of religion sits in the Epistle of James where it is nestled under the noses of God’s sanctified children. Declaring in simple and direct fashion, the passage lays out what God requires from those children who wish to live a religious life – “*Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep himself unspotted from the world.* verse 1:27

That simple and clear definition of religion, which comes straight from the mouth of the Holy Ghost, is a far cry from the entangled idea one naturally acquires while traveling the circuit of religion, Christian or otherwise. In the world of religion there is very little example of this kind of pure religion. For an example of this “pure”

and “undefiled” religion it is again best that we travel to the Scriptures and the Book of Luke where Jesus performs one of his most dramatic miracles and in the process exhibits God’s pure religion in action.

“Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her.

And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.

And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.

And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother.

And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, that a great prophet is risen among us; and, That God hath visited his people.” Luke 7:12-16

Here, in this brief encounter, Jesus showcases the Father’s concept of pure religion. Christ first came upon a widow and in her grief had compassion on her. In spirit, he was primed and ready to allow the Spirit of God to “visit” her. Next, he had mercy on her and her only son, a fatherless person in need of the Father’s mercy, when, by faith in the power of the Holy Ghost, he brought the son to life. When the Holy Spirit brings Jesus to a place there is the power to bring the “dead” to “life”, the power to make people born-again. Jesus in his compassion and yieldedness had allowed the visitation of the Holy Ghost with power. A widow and the fatherless were “visited”, and the crowning moment of the episode came when the people “feared” (or experienced the reverential fear of the Lord) because they knew God had visited them.

God wants to use “religion” to visit people in this way, through individual disciples of Christ, coming in the power of God. God wants to “visit” the lonely and forsaken, and as Christians, we can be a part of it by letting the Holy Ghost minister by us and through us. Visiting is not merely going to see people or performing carnal

works, no matter how good those acts may seem on the surface. But to visit in the sense of God's religion, of being with them, standing with them, carrying their burdens, bringing with them God's Spirit and letting the Spirit have his way. We wait, listen, and act at the Spirit's prompting. By faith, we believe that the presence of the Spirit in us will bring about a work of true power, vibrant love, and of the refreshing of life's true hopes in the Messiah. When the Holy Ghost visits a heart, even if there is no dramatic outward sign, that heart will more than feel God, it will know God and know he has visited. This power of visitation has nothing to do with our intellect or ability to discern people's needs. The Spirit, because we yield, is at work to do that thing and when the Spirit of God visits, things spiritual, lasting, and eternal happen.

If we worked as hard at learning to discern the Spirit's ways and ministry of visitation, and how we yield to it within our own spirit, as we work at the practices and requirements of our religion then the believer would have no trouble comprehending the "visiting" power of the Holy Ghost and what it means when the Bible says we should walk in the Spirit. But visiting is only half the equation, the "passive" part of true religion. Our active part is to *"keep ourselves unspotted from the world"*. This part of religion is important if we are to have the visiting part be anything but hypocrisy. If we try to live a life of duplicity; one foot in the world and one foot in Christ, then we will be continually spotted by the world. *"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you."* says God. (2 Cor 6:17) Let those who name the name of Christ depart from iniquity, just as the Bible urges us to do. We must further beware the religion of man. John concludes his first Epistle with this heartfelt advice; *"Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen."* 1 John 5:21

If one wants to be busy in religious things try pure religion on for size. Pure religion with its aspects of visiting and keeping oneself unspotted from the world is a full-time business for the born-again believer. It is a full-time business which one needs to approach with religious fervor and zeal. Pure religion has very little to do with

where one fellowships or what church one attends. It has a world to do with bringing the Spirit's ministry into people's lives so they know that God has "visited" them. And our religion has to do with not being a bad witness, not being a hypocrite, but being separate, so God, Jesus, and the Spirit within us cannot be accused.

Sounds like a full-time job to me.

123. Arise O' Bride! – Put On Thy Strength

by Joanne Smith

“AWAKE, AWAKE; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean.

Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion.” Isa 52:1 & 2

These two verses from Isaiah are the beginning of six chapters (52-58) the Lord gave to Terry (my husband) and I as we started our life of faith together. Over the years these Scriptures have served as a great source of promise, hope, comfort and strength to us. I was an infant in Christ at the time, with no Scriptural background, so you can imagine my excitement when I first read these chapters and thought they were written just for me. The Word of God is truly alive. The Word of God is Jesus!

During the week prior to The Open Door Fellowship's first meeting at a place called Grotonwood in Groton MA., I was praying and asking the Lord what He would have me do; what my part should be! I kept hearing Isaiah 52-58 in that still small voice in my heart. “Oh that? – I always go to that, aren't there other Scriptures, Lord?” “No, this is who you are and what you are all about” is what he spoke to my heart. But it soon became evident He just didn't mean me alone, He meant the whole body of Christ today.

I thought I knew these chapters by heart but, as usual, my eyes were once again opened to the wonder of His prophetic word. Isaiah is speaking to the Church just as sure as he was speaking to his people, Israel. The similarities between the Church and Israel are

many in the Scriptures. They are brought to culmination, however, in Revelation 21:9-11 when an angel appeared to John saying *“Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife.”* The angel carried him in the spirit to a great mountain and showed him *“that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto stone most precious even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.”* This city has a great wall with twelve gates with the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. The wall of the city also had twelve foundations with the names of the apostles of the Lamb. We, the Bride, can take Isaiah’s words personally because as we see in this great and marvelous passage from Revelation that the Bride and (New) Jerusalem are one.

More than an exhortation, I believe Isaiah’s words are a command for the Bride to heed in these last days. These are not passive words, these are very active words – WAKE-UP, BE STRONG, PUT YOUR CLOTHES ON AND SWEEP YOUR HOUSE CLEAN!

Paul tells us in Rom 13:11 *“that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.”* and again in 1 Cor. 15:34 *“Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.”* This is the same exhortation Isaiah 52:1 is giving to his people when he says *“no more shall come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean”!*

Strength is something we are to put on, and not sit around and wait for someone else to put it on for us. It is at our fingertips, all we have to do is do them. Paul tells us in 1 Cor 16:13 to *“Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.”* and then again in Eph 6:10 *“... be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”* The Lord commanded Joshua to be strong and courageous three times before going in to possess the Promised Land. Put on thy strength my friends! The Lord, through His word, has equipped us with ‘beautiful garments’ to wear and help us be strong – but like strength, take them, put them on, cloth your spirit in them, wear them daily. In several places Scripture instructs us to ‘put on’ various things. Paul exhorts us in Rom 13:12 & 14 *“that the night is*

far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light” and to “put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ; and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.” He also tells us “to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” Eph 4:24 In Col 3:9 & 10 he persuades us “to put off the old man with his deeds; and put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.” Paul goes on to say in vs 12-14 “put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.”

Perhaps the most prominent of these “putting on” Scriptures is Eph 6:11-17 where we are instructed to “put on the whole armour of God, having our loins girt about with truth, having on the breastplate of righteousness, our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, taking the shield of faith, to quench the fiery darts of the wicked, to take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God so that we may be able to withstand in the evil day”.

Lastly, Isaiah says there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised or the unclean.

Who are the uncircumcised? Paul tells us in Eph 2:11-12 “Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called Circumcision in the flesh made by hands. That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.” So, the uncircumcised are those who are lost from the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Who then are the circumcised? Paul continues in Eph 2:13 “But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.” He goes on to say that Christ has broken down the wall of partition between us (Jew & Gentile, Circumcised

& Uncircumcised) and that *“through him we both now have access by one Spirit unto the Father”* vs18. Where in times past we were strangers and foreigners to God’s promises, we are now *“fitly framed together growing unto an holy temple in the Lord.”* vs 21 (Remember the scene from Revelation described earlier?)

“For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.” Phil 3:3

The Scriptures also tell us that we:

“are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:

Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.” Col 2:11-12

Let the Bride put on the garments of strength and live the life of one circumcised in heart. Shake thyself *from the dust; arise, and sit down* O Jerusalem: loose the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion. Isa 52:2

Sounds like a full time job to me!

124. Sacrifices of The New Testament Priests

Actual New Testament Priesthood

by Leroy Gardenier

It is my sincere hope that every reader of this article on PRAISE will thoughtfully consider what is written. More importantly, I know that every true seeker can experience the realities written about in this article, and I have great faith that many, many who read this will receive a witness from the Holy Spirit about the truth of these exciting spiritual matters, and will joyously enter into them thereby being greatly blessed and making themselves a blessing both to God and to their fellow man.

Me, you – a blessing to God? Like Mary in the presence of the heavenly messenger, we might rightly ask: “How shall this be ...? The very same Scriptures that pose pertinent and honest questions, these same writings from God provide us with accurate, reliable answers. Many Scriptures could be brought forth to show clearly that we humans have the ability within us to bless the Almighty and Everlasting God; to please and even delight Him; to provide Him with gifts that we can offer up to Him, knowing with full assurance that they will be graciously received and fully appreciated. Consider Psalm 103:1 “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name.”

The Christmas season is again upon us. I don't need to describe the differing implications that the Christmas traditions have for each one of us. No need to go into the deep and often conflicting emotions so many of us experience at this time of year. Enough will be written and spoken about those aspects of Christmastide in other places. I simply say, let's be daring and make the season different for ourselves this year. We always wanted to do that, didn't

we? We might not all have dreamed about enjoying a “White Christmas”, but you know down deep we’ve sometimes wished for a “perfect Christmas;” one free of commercialism, family strife and childish bickerings. I tell you boldly, this is the year for it! Believe for real “peace on earth, goodwill toward men” and it will come to pass. Don’t take my word for it; rather, rely on the Word of God. Put some of the old ways of celebrating Christmas on hold and risk a whole new approach. Resist the anxieties and apprehensions of giving and receiving gifts from relatives and friends and begin to experiment with the intriguing idea of Blessing God this year of giving acceptable gifts to Him!

Are you with me so far? Are you willing to read on even though I’m beginning to get into “gifts to God?” You know what that usually means: a pitch for money ... pressure about making sure you attend Christmas services. They say: “It’s the least you can do. After all Christmas is supposed to be about Him” – that sort of approach. You know what I mean, I’m sure you’ve heard it many times from many different sources. **NO**; let me assure you, this is not where I’m leading. Financial contributions and church attendance have their rightful place in our relationship with God, but unfortunately, these elements can be so easily perverted or distorted and, all too frequently are associated with “the least we can do for God.” I’m certainly not encouraging our readers to aspire to that! I’m trying to encourage you in celebrating a perfect Christmas. I want to inspire you to give, not the least, but to give the most and the very best of “all that is within you” to God! Nor am I getting to the modern seed faith scam telling you to give so you can get it back a hundredfold, you know shake and pressed down and overflowing and all that jazz that the Laodicean Church keeps telling its adherents is the way God wants people to get rich, to gain a fortune and live in the lap of luxury.

“When you care enough to give the very best”. We all recognize that old Hallmark challenge. The Scriptural counterpart is found in Jeremiah 29:13 *“And ye shall seek Me and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart.”* This was a promise to the Jews

of old when their seventy years of bondage in Babylon would be finished. It is both a promise and an assurance to us that once we are translated into the Kingdom of His dear Son by the New Birth into light and immortality, our spiritually vitalized human spirits, even now, have access by Jesus (“His shed blood, His righteousness covering us”) to the very throne room of the Father, through the ministry of the Holy Ghost. Eph 2:18

The way to God is firmly established – it is Jesus; there is no other way. If we have accepted His atoning work for us and received Jesus into our hearts, God is greatly pleased with us. We have become His children, His offspring. He will never leave us nor forsake us. Never again will we ever have to be alone!

Sacrifices have always been the way to God’s heart. We could not even dare nor start to approach Him but for the blood sacrifice of His dearly beloved and only begotten Son. Even as He sent “the Very Best” for us, so He asks the best that we can offer and clearly states these New Testament sacrifices (gifts and offerings to Him) in Romans 12:1-3 and in Hebrews 13:15-16. You should read these important passages for yourself, but for convenience, let me list them for you here:

- **1. The sacrifice of our bodies**, our reasonable service. A modern martyr for the faith knowing that he most likely would be killed, wrote: “It is not unreasonable for me to give up that which I cannot keep, for that which I cannot lose.”
- **2. The sacrifice of our minds**. We allow the Holy Ghost to renew them for us, since God’s ways are not our ways and His thoughts are not our thoughts. (See Isaiah 55).
- **3. The sacrifice of our reputation**; not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought.
- **4. The sacrifice of praise**; this is fundamental and central to worshipping God “in spirit and in truth.”
- **5. The sacrifice of good works**: Hebrews 13:16 says “to do good”.
- **6. The sacrifice of generosity**: “to communicate” is the way the Scriptures express it.

Other sacrifices are not so directly stated in the New Testament, but can be seen as the Holy Ghost declares them to the heart of the individual priest. Examples are: the sacrifice of praying for those who despitefully use you, rejoicing in all things even when we are falsely accused for God's sake, accepting affliction as an instructing tool of our perfection, not returning evil for evil – these and many other things like them are things that require the sacrifice of a priest ministering in behalf of God. In the first four verses of John 14, the Lord Jesus prepares His distraught disciples for ongoing, deep, familiar communion with Himself. The One who is “*the same, yesterday, today and forever*.” Heb 13:8 forcefully reassured them (and us) that He would be with us intimately then, now and forever. To us, as He said to them: “*Whither I go ye know and the way ye know*”. John 14:4 So it has been plainly established that we know the way to God. And the gifts and sacrifices that please Him are also made clear to sincere seekers. Hebrews 13:16 makes that quite evident: “... *for with such sacrifices God is well pleased*.” We know the way. We know what to bring. It only remains for us to choose whether we shall ignore God's Word, flirt with the “way of Cain” by stubbornly offering dead works; rebel against God's evident commands as did the wilderness dwellers; or, as I earnestly exhort you to do: celebrate this special season of Christmas by entering God's presence laden with spiritual gifts for Him offered in a spiritual manner, in the spiritual place that He has clearly designated.

On Christmas, you may well be led to attend some church services. You certainly will make some kind of contributions, financial or otherwise, in the form of gifts and presents to loved ones. But before all this and the other Christmas traditions, I urge you to come to Jesus; to give Him your all. Having done that, let the Holy Spirit lead you to the throne of grace with the peace that Jesus paid for in your heart and worship Him this year with praises and thanksgiving in that spiritual church which the Scriptures describe as “*the general assembly and church of the firstborn ... so that you may*

serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear” Hebrews 12:23 & 28

125. An Addict Of God

Will You Dare To Become

by T Myers Smith

Are you reckless enough to become an addict?

There was a popular song many years ago by the late Robert Palmer titled 'Addicted to Love'. It of course was more a carnal sensual matter as related in his song than that which the love of God encompasses. Nonetheless, the addiction to God of which we now speak is being fully addicted to the love of God. Being addicted to God is nothing other than becoming addicted to love, which is to say, that force of reality that has the power to change the soul, allow it to take flight, to reach to the quintessence of all things, to drink of that elixir, that thing which not only allows for, but establishes the fertile garden in which life can be nourished and sustained. It is that power of what soil, food and water is to a plant. Love is what life is compelled to be addicted to, for without it must dry up and blow away. If you want to live and not just dry up and blow away – it is highly advisable to become addicted to this higher love. To invoke another old tune, this one by Al Green – “Your love is liftin’ me high and higher.

Living in Christ is a life of spiritual luxury. I do not say that it will be material luxury. We are expected to be content with food and raiment if happiness and peace are to be our heritage. Spiritual wealth, “according to God’s riches in **glory**” Phil 4:19, is what God promises the faithful, not riches in this temporal life. He does not want us to reckon Him as our financial advisor or an investment broker managing our affairs from heaven. The whole seed-faith phenomenon of the modern evangelical faith is bunk; just so much snake oil being sold to us sheep in order to line the pockets of crooked pastors who live up top of the hill. Rather spiritual riches

are in order. I heard a Scottish preacher once say, “You can live in spiritual clover fat up to your hips when you know the Lord.”

Many of us, if we are honest about reflecting on our lives since coming to know Jesus, have enjoyed an abundance of luxury in spiritual clover. We have enjoyed the beautiful “simplicity that is in Christ”, which enables us to understand God’s basic will: doing right, treating others the way we want to be treated, hearing His voice and following it up with the faith to do it. What stability, peace, luxury and spiritual riches we garner when we become accustomed to living rich lives in the spirit through our Lord Jesus. Shame on anyone who is rich in Christ and has the audacity to complain.

But to *live by faith and not by sight, to judge not by appearance but judge righteous judgment*, John 7:24 – Ah! – this requires more than stability and spiritual riches. In fact, faith and wisdom are the acquirers of riches for they allow the instructors of trial, experience, patience and understanding to do their work in us, so we can become skilled and victorious warriors, aware of the subtleties of Christian warfare.

So what are we waiting for?

It is high time that the older Christians among us – you and I, brothers and sisters – put away the excuses of immaturity, “*wherefore lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet*” Heb 12:12-13, and grow up. It is time to set our maturity free, grow up, stand like able-bodied soldiers who have grown into the “*fullness of the stature of Christ*”. Eph 4:12 Take, for example, the Biblical man named Stephanas. Among the impressive heroes and magnificent episodes in Scripture this man is small potatoes to be sure. And yet, his mention and its context can greatly encourage and instigate all those “*who love God and are called according to His purpose*.” Rom 8:28 Pleading with the believers of Corinth, Paul asks them to submit themselves to Stephanas and his household as people who are the firstfruits of Achaia. They

were the elders of the Church and by their experience and hard won victories of faith had become proven servants of Christ.

And then, in 1 Cor 16:15 Paul says something almost shocking about Stephanas and his entire household. He calls them addicts. That's right, addicts. Dependents, users, co-dependents, hooked on something. In the case of Stephanas' household they were not compulsive about food and drink; they were not hooked on drugs, or obsessed with celebrities or slaves of sex – they were “*addicted to the ministry of the saints.*”

Nowhere else in Scripture does God call one of His people an addict, but I can tell you folks that it can be the goal of every servant of Christ who is called according to God's purpose to become addicted to the ministry of the saints. It is time to “*quit ye like men*” 1 Cor 16:13 as the sturdy Apostle Paul put it.

In other words, it is time to start acting like men and stop being cry-baby millstones around the neck of the Church and Christ. Let the world be caught in the deadly tentacles of obsession, oppression, depression and addiction of the flesh. Let them be obsessed with golf, immersed in sports, overcome by lust and sexual desire, addicted to alcohol, tobacco and drugs of all sorts. Steeped in the world; cooked on the skewer of temporal ambition. But let us be addicted to the Lord's work and the ministry of the saints. You could not have a better vocation or avocation.

If you are able and even so inclined, if there is an opportunity you may even be in a place where you can do everything “*unto edification.*” 1 Cor. 14:3 Let us seek the gifts of the Spirit, let us seek the offices of the Church which are “*for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ*” Eph 4:12, let us seek to carry one another's burdens. “*But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.*” Mark 23:11 remember these are the words of Christ Himself. The name Stephanas

whispers a connotation of glory in our hearing ear, for it means: **CROWN**.

Be Addicted, Be Crowned with Glory

Now we veterans in Christ know God's Word talks much about crowns. Someday we will see Jesus as He really is and He will be crowned with many crowns. We ourselves seek a crown of righteousness. Our crown of glory is the saints we nourish and teach. And we know we will be awarded our crowns on "that day" with the other saints. And we will happily take them off before the throne of the Lamb and cast them at His feet in praise and adoration singing, *"glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created"*. Rev 4:11 He warned the Philadelphians to jealously guard their crown: *"hold fast that which we have, that no man take thy crown"*. Rev 3:11 A crown is a symbol of fine royalty, it means they who have it have apprehended that promise that Christ has made us Kings and priests, as it says in Revelation. A Christian's crown is special and unique only to him or her. I don't know about you, but I know one of the things I want inscribed on my crown is: ADDICT. Inscribed by the finger of God, somewhere in full view, let it read: ADDICT.

Fact is, in today's society people everywhere are becoming obsessed with some single thing, it might be a child or spouse, a game, a job, or the usual culprits, drugs, money or power. Obsessive-compulsive behavior allows people a reason to carry on in spite of the hopelessness, frustration, pain and frenzy of modern life. We live in a compulsive, addicted world, frightened of the withdrawal that follows loss, terrified by the prospect of being slaves to anyone or anything, yet ready to make a deal with the devil if we will get some hedonistic pleasure from it. If we are not obsessed with God, addicted to His labor, we will inevitably get

addicted to something else. Become a frightened slave, imprisoned by our own lust.

Fellow believers, believe it, do yourself a favor, believe it. There is no way out of being addicted to something. Why not get addicted to the ministry of the saints. Stop worrying about your needs constantly, and pray about them; stop sucking energy and life out of others to fulfill your needs. “Quit ye like men”, as the Bible put it. Stop belly-aching about everything and “*look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*” Phil 2:4 Get out of your minuscule infantile world and step into Christ’s ever expanding universe. If you and I cannot be the fulfillment of the promises of the gospel, then who shall be? Get up and follow after Christ without reservation and doubt. Now is the time.

The call is being made. The Bride is being groomed. Stop all the selfishness get addicted to love. Try living, try loving the bridegroom. Get out of yourself; get out of the bondage of constantly worrying about the cares of this world. Like Stephanas, have your testimony say, “I was dependent, and my house was full of co-dependents who needed their fix just like me.” Be an addict to loving one another. I don’t know about anyone else but I hope I will be present on that day when the saints throw their crowns at the feet of Jesus, and I hope my crown has ADDICT clearly carved in it. Come out of the night, step into the light. You’ll see clearly when you do. Be addicted to the Lord and His love! Try it, once you do so you’ll never get enough.

126. Our Ego Ought Not Eclipse the Son

by T M Smith

Jesus is the light of the world. Every true Christian knows this and is quick to testify to it. It is written that Jesus is “*the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.*” (John 1:9) Though the sun, that glorious celestial ball, was placed in the sky by God to rule the day, it is not the light of the world. Jesus truly is.

But, if the sun is not the light of the world, then what is it? The sun is merely a temporary expression, used by God (the architect of Creation) as a tool in His plan to redeem man out of the far-reaching ganglia of sin. The sun, the moon and the stars are really only physical specters of greater, truer, unseen, heavenly realities. Of course, Jesus knew and understood this and that is why He made this astounding statement, “*Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.*” Luke 21:31 & Mark 13:33 At first Jesus’ statement is a very disconcerting one until we begin to understand, by faith, that everything (not just the sun, moon and stars) which can be seen, felt, or touched are temporary tools in God’s hands. 2 Cor 4:18

EVERYTHING WE CAN SEE, FEEL, OR TOUCH IS TEMPORARY

We may find it hard to believe the statement above, but it’s true – it’s in God’s Word. Even for Christians, this is very difficult to get hold of and to understand. That’s right, most Christians miss the spiritual lessons that science and nature can teach them because they fail to understand that all the things in this physical realm are merely tools of redemption; and that only Christ and His life, and those things

that are in Him will endure forever. All physical and material things are tools. Just tools. Jesus has promised that His Father will make all things new and every old thing will pass away. The heavens will be rolled up like a scroll, the earth will be changed, and the sun, moon and stars will no longer be needed. In that day they will be irrelevant because God will be all in all. (1 Cor 15:28) Think on it, saints. Give this a little thought. The sun is not the source of light any more than a light bulb, a burning coal, a bolt of lightning, or a cigarette lighter is. God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. (1 John 1:5). The annular eclipse of the sun which we all experienced May 10th is a perfect example of how God put the sun and moon in the sky in such a way as to teach us about Himself. But before taking a look at the symbolism of the sun and its relationship with the moon, let's see what God's Word says about His intended purpose in creating the sun and the moon.

The first thing God did after passing over the earth, as everyone who has read the first few verses of the Bible knows, was to say, "Let there be light." That was not the moment when He created the sun, no, God did not create the sun, the moon and the stars until the fourth day. Therefore light is something else. Light is the other sun, the real sun, the eternal sun, THE SON, JESUS CHRIST. It is interesting to note that the Bible begins by saying, "*Let there be light*" and ends in the final chapter of Revelation saying, "*And there shall be no more night there; and they need no candle; neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign forever and ever.*" John 1:4 says, "*In Him was life; and the life was the light of men.*"

LIGHT COMES FROM THE SON; SUN, MOON AND STARS ARE FOR SIGNS

So what is God's purpose in creating the sun if he could have provided the light and means to sustain life? Genesis clearly states

that God's purpose in creating the sun, moon and stars was to *"divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and for years; and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth; and it was so."* I suppose God could have chosen another method of making the earth a pleasant place for man to inhabit, but He did not. The sun and moon serve as constant reminders of the true light and the connection we are supposed to have with Him.

ECLIPSE IS GOD'S CLASSROOM

That brings us back to the recent eclipse which is one of those "signs" for us; this event was a unique and special classroom for the spiritually-minded believer; one to make note of and to marvel at and to see God's great majesty at work. If we are spiritually minded, and not carnally minded and confined to the horizons of this world, it is amazing what we can see. God has put the sun in the sky as a visible image of His Son, Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. He is the life-giver and the source of all light. The moon, on the other hand, is representative of those who reflect the Son's light onto a dark world. The Church is like the moon. We, the Church, are to reflect the light of Jesus. How pitch-black it is when there is no moon out! But how bright it is, even at midnight, when a full moon is out. The sun and moon are for signs, are they not?

Any dedicated follower of Jesus Christ ought to have one of his primary concerns be that he never block the light of the Son. It stands to reason that if we are following behind we will not be in position to block the light. But, like the moon moving in front of the sun during an eclipse, Christians all too often get in the way of the Son's light.

Many of us have viewed eclipses as heavenly pageants through welders glasses or by means of some special contraption we fashioned by our own hand. We watched as the moon seemed to

make an egotistical crossing in front of the sun obstructing its glory. Though it was the height of the afternoon the sunlight diminished and an eerie grayish glow engulfed us for a brief few moments. Being out of the direct rays of the sun made our body feel a little like a chilled wine glass. Those of us who have witnessed solar eclipses before expected to experience both of these phenomena. A solar eclipse, of the regular sort, causes darkness and coolness. The darkness and coolness are symbolic of what happens when the light of Christ is diminished in our lives. When we block the Son's light, love and truth are lost; darkness and coolness ensues. This spiritual correlation I easily made because I had previously witnessed and understood the spiritual implications of other eclipses during my born-again life.

The annular eclipse produced yet another phenomenon that took me by total surprise. Just as an annular eclipse is special for astronomers, so it can be a very special sign for the Church. At the height of the eclipse an onlooker called for me to look down at my shadow. It was blurred, like a double exposure. Two images, one lighter shadow surrounding a darker one, gave my shadow a surreal quality. Though my eyes are going fast, it was the first time I had seen a double image of my shadow.

I knew a total eclipse of the sun, a solar eclipse, causes the earth to be shrouded in darkness, but I suddenly realized that an annular (meaning ring) eclipse allows light to sneak around the edge of the moon thereby making an unearthly twin shadow and I realized that we can be like an annular eclipse to Jesus.

If we get in the way of Jesus, even just enough to partly snuff out the light so that it only has a little space to shine around us, we will not only get a cooling and a peculiar grayness, but we will also cast a weird, perverse image of things onto the earth wherever we go. We are presenting two images side by side. One is us and one is Him. It's like mixing vinegar and water, they don't mix. It could even be a mingling of good and evil, as light with dark. How can it be, but something irregular and distorted.

DON'T ALLOW YOUR EGO TO ECLIPSE JESUS

It is not that hard to allow our ego to eclipse Jesus. In the world ego is a pathway to success. In politics, ego is a matter of survival. Psychiatry teaches us to cherish ego. In the Church, however, ego is an impediment to our spiritual health and welfare.

We must be alert, as Christians, to not get in the way of the light of the Son. We must be sure our course, our interests, our selfish desires and ambitions do not get in the way. If we are followers of Christ we will, as the moon does, reflect His light. Like the moon, we have no light of our own. Like the moon, we have no glory of our own. We are created to reflect the glory of another, The Son. This is the intended spiritual sign of the moon. Again, the moon has no light of its own; it merely reflects the light of the world. There is no light in us, only the light of Christ which shines in us, thanks to the cross and its power. Our own will must never supersede or get in the way of the true glory of the Son otherwise we will cause darkness, coolness and cast weird images.

When a church, a believer, a preacher or a teacher eclipses (hides or overshadows or distorts its image) the Son, then the spiritual environment will be perverted, just as the earthly environment is distorted during an annular eclipse. Stay out of the way of Jesus. Let His light shine and not your own ego.

If we mortify the deeds of the body, if we learn not to lean to our own understanding, if we are willing to die to ourselves, then Christ will live in us and His light will shine through us and we *will not produce a double-image*, “*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.*” Galatians 2:20

We must let Christ's light shine through us by dying to ourselves and letting Him live in us. Pick up your cross daily and do what Jesus suggests that the perfect will do – deny yourself. Hear God's word

and do it. You, who have Jesus living inside you, do not eclipse Jesus. Die, that He may live and shine in you. Die, so you can reflect the pure unmixed light of His truth with clarity and distinction. Get rid of any idea you may harbor that you have light worthy of bringing forth, so you will not be casting a blurry or double image. Make no mistake, the Light of the world, the Light of every man is Jesus Christ, THE SON. We should be as the moon reflecting only His light.

He is Light

It is interesting to note that the Bible begins by saying, *“Let there be light”* and ends in the final chapter of Revelation saying, *“And there shall be no more night there; and they need no candle; neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign forever and ever.”* John 1:4 says, *“In Him was life; and the life was the light of men.”*

The annular eclipse produced yet another phenomenon that took me by total surprise. Just as an annular eclipse is special for astronomers, so it can be a very special sign for the Church. At the height of the eclipse an onlooker called for me to look down at my shadow. It was blurred, like a double exposure. Two images, one lighter shadow surrounding a darker one, gave my shadow a surreal quality. Though my eyes are going fast, it was the first time I had seen a double image of my shadow.

I knew a total eclipse of the sun, a solar eclipse, causes the earth to be shrouded in darkness, but I suddenly realized that an annular (meaning ring) eclipse allows light to sneak around the edge of the moon thereby making an unearthly twin shadow and I realized that we can be like an annular eclipse to Jesus.

If we get in the way of Jesus, even just enough to partly

snuff out the light so that it only has a little space to shine around us, we will not only get a cooling and a peculiar grayness, but we will also cast a weird, perverse image of things onto the earth wherever we go. We are presenting two images side by side. One is us and one is Him. It's like mixing vinegar and water, they don't mix. It could even be a mingling of good and evil, as light with dark. How can it be, but something irregular and distorted.

127. The Priestly Life: Exclusive To Holy Spirit's Call of Duty

Available To Those Who Are Alive To Christ

by Joelle Gagnon

July 24, 2016

Introduction by T M Smith

As New Testament Priests there are many things the Lord expects us to be, many things that are fitting requirements and characteristics of that duty. They were foreshadowed in the Old Testament Priesthood by the duties performed by that office. But as Satan's infiltration of the Churches would have it; God's mandate that each individual be a priest of Christ was rendered obscure and obsolete, giving way to a total religious aspect of the priesthood in the churches everywhere. At the start the writings of the apostles and in particularly Paul, John and Peter made it vitally clear that priesthood was to be the province of every believer, Male and female, rich or poor, without regard to race or former religious creed. The requirements were issued in the writings of the apostles, all being inspired by the one and only baptizer and commissioner of priests, the glorious everlasting, Holy Spirit Himself.

The system of Christian religion and its bogus idea of priesthood has been in place nearly from the beginning of the Christian revelation given by Christ himself and reiterated by His personal friends after His ascension to heaven. Since the second century of the Christian Era, when the last apostle went home the church began making it an exclusive club, one which quickly became subject to the theology and discretion of men who were not adherents and students of the Holy Ghost but of the schools of

the limited, but arrogant intelligence of human beings. It took a few centuries before the priesthood of Christianity fell entirely into the hands of Man, the churches finally, a generation before of Augustine, around 350 AD jettisoning whatever was left of the vestiges of true priesthood.

In these last days, however, with the revival of the personal acceptance of the Holy Spirit among some churches, starting roughly with revivals of pilgrims in Europe and England of the 16th and 17th centuries AD, the priesthood of the believer began to resurface. Little by little its truth was revived, until its explosion in Twentieth Century United States blew the lid off of the old vagrancy of the church concerning its worship and honor of the third person of the Trinity. Though it was only widely embraced for a short time after WW II to the end of the century, until its complete disappearance in the '90's it was revived for the end times purposes of revival. For all intents and purposes the revival of the Spirit of God has been kicked aside by the new millennial churches in favor of reviving the theology of the day; which now is 'the rights of man', the natural goodness of man and the hope of goodness inherent to human liberty and the freedom of thought of the American and French Revolutions.

But the truth of the priesthood of any believer being possible is not to be mourned as if it has totally died. Not only is its memory alive but its reality is available today to any reader of this article. For what the apostle Peter wrote two thousand years ago burns brightly with more than hope; it is vitally available to the simple believer in Jesus Christ. As Peter put:

"Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." 1 Pet 2:5

Article Written by Joelle Gagnon

Sacrifices – Priesthood begins with being able to offer up sacrifices that are acceptable to God.

1. We offer up ourselves; our will, minds and our way of doing things unto God in order that we might do His Will.
2. We offer sacrifices for others by allowing the Lord to use us. We can't put restrictions on God about how he uses us. Many times it can look like we are being taken advantage of by others and it can actually be true. The Lord arranges situations for the truth to come out about people and what they are really all about. If we put restrictions on what you are willing to do or not do, then you can't be used by God. He can't operate under men's conditions, he is God and with him all things are possible. Even having others take advantage of you for his purposes.
3. We are to offer up our bodies. It is the temple of God and the Holy Ghost dwells there. Rom 12:1 *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."*The Lord can also use our bodies for his purposes. I knew a godly man that God allowed to suffer cancer so he could minister salvation to his surgeon and his surgeon was saved. I happen to have an affliction that the Lord has used numerous ways for the sake of other people. One way was so I could be home and available to help young Christians get through some very troubling times. Another was so I could help some people save some money by babysitting for them. Those are just a few examples of ways the Lord can use our bodies for his purposes.
4. Let us offer the sacrifice of praise Heb 13:15 We should do this..."to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name." We ought to always be praising God for all he has done for us and others. Sometimes when things are really difficult it may be hard to Praise God but we still ought to offer the sacrifice of praise knowing that all things work together for the good for those who are called according to

God's purpose. I know it blesses God when we Praise him. It's another way of saying I love and trust you. I will remember the things you have done for me. 1 Pet 2:9 says further: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:" The fact that God has chosen me and made me a royal priest makes me praise him. That he could take such a worm as I and make me into something that can be fit for the master's use is one of the most unbelievable miracles of all times. He really has taken me out of my dark and lonely world into His marvellous light. What a very kind Father God is. When I was deep in sin he said I love you. He also promised to make me a better person and he has. What great freedom there is not to be a slave to sin and my selfish desires.

5. "To do good and to communicate Heb 13:16 "...forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." Doing good to others, helping others, sharing the gospel, tithing are all examples of sacrifices that are pleasing to God and helpful in furthering the gospel, and bearing fruit in our lives that we share with others.

Handling Holy Things We handle holy things and are expected to handle them properly.

This demands we put under holy scrutiny what things are holy. The churches have concluded that items, cups, certain people approved by a system, and a wide array of sundry things and ideas are holy, but this is not the true New Testament theology of the Spirit for it amounts to holding on to the Old Testament law which the Church has been told from the beginning was to pass away God under the spirit of the New Testament.

1. First off God is Holy Jesus told us that we should be holy even as God is holy. We should care for his will and understanding that we can act in a holiness that is not known by us unless we seek His holy character as a witness to being like Him.

We need to approach him with gravity, humility, and above all a desire to be like Him and not according to some textbook learning but according to a personal knowledge of Him gained by a genuine relationship as a perfect disciple, believer and friend should exhibit. Everything he does is Holy, therefore we need to strive to be as He is. To do this we must sacrifice on the altar of holiness our own perception of what is needed, what is good, what is true, always listening to his voice and deferring to his guidance on personal and general matters of the present and future alike. God's testimonies are suffice, they need not be embellished by us or helped by exaggeration or undue explanations as if God did not know what He is doing. A testimony in a new testament priest's life needs only the telling and doing, it needs no help from the priest. A priest handling it properly must report on it with pure honesty, never helping God out. This is the general spirit of what 'handling holy things ' means in all simplicity.

2. The Word of God is Holy and we ought not to be using it for our own gain. We are to teach others the truth and only teach that which we have learned from God. The Bible also tells us not to cast pearls before swine's. We need to use discernment in dispensing the Word to others. We need to wait on the Holy Ghost to let us know what to say, to whom and when. People will be accountable for what they heard and what they did about it.

3. The Sabbath is holy. We need to keep it holy. God does give us rest from our earthly toils and if we are wise we will take these Sabbath's seriously. There is also a spiritual rest for us to enter into and that is to cease from your own works and enter into God's works. Do his will only in every situation. It's that simple but it's hard to do at times. You need to trust him.

We Can Intercede in Behalf others

1. We pray for the salvation of others.
2. We also pray on behalf of people. Sometimes the Lord will show us what that person may be lacking and we can pray for that.

Suffering is also a form of intercession. Paul says in Col 1:24 “Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body’s sake, which is the church.” There are times when we **will** suffer for the sake of others. Some of these are persecutions, physical afflictions, putting up with other people’s sins, and immaturity of young Christians. It helps to know that we are partaking of the same affliction that Jesus himself partook of therefore he can comfort you in all these things.

We are to be in God’s Service

A help to God. A good servant does what they are told. They are also trustworthy. In Isaiah 42 Jesus is referred to as a servant. God in Matt 12:18 says of Jesus “Behold my **servant**, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles.” Jesus is our example of a perfect servant, he came for one purpose, to do the Father’s will. We should have that same purpose driving our lives always.

We are to Promote Salvation to everyone the Lord leads us to help out in every situation. Salvation means being saved or protected from harm or being saved or delivered from some dire situation. People’s souls are in jeopardy and they need saving. As people that have freely received salvation from God we ought also to minister that same salvation freely to others as the Lord leads.

We Extend Mercy to others just as we have received mercy from God. Along with mercy is also forgiveness. We have all fallen short of the glory of God. Remember how merciful God treats you and treat others the same way according to the leading of the Holy Ghost.

We Offer Forgiveness to others when they ask for it. If indeed they are sincere. God will show you this also. Luke 17:3 “Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and **if he repent**, forgive him.” If he doesn’t repent, stop committing the trespass, we can’t forgive them.

We Are Able to See the Light It’s a very dark and treacherous world, but God will light the way for us. God will reveal himself, his will, the truth, and his word to us. We will be able to see him, speak with him, pray for answers. The Word will also be a lamp unto our

feet. We will be able to walk where he is walking. He will show us all that we need to know to live as true priests in service to him. This is especially true when dealing with people. God will show us what is truly going on in every given situation so we can act according to the truth.

Judgments –

We are judged by God not men. I need to do God's will and be pleasing to Him. He is watching me. Sometimes he wants me to do things that might not seem nice but it's for his purposes for someone else's need. One time the Lord had me be a real stern with someone and later when I doubted myself and asked him if I did correctly he told me yes. That person needed that so they could cry out to God. When it comes to things of God they are serious matters. Nothing to be trifled with. As much as I wanted to be pleasing to that person at the time I had to do what God wanted me to do. It's not about pleasing others and what they think of me. It's what God thinks of me that counts.

John 7:24 *"Judge not according to the appearance, but **judge righteous judgment.**"* We are to judge righteous judgments and that can only happen by knowing God and his will and receiving his word on every situations. We don't do things according to what we see with our own eyeballs or what someone says. It's what people actually do that matters. People say lots of things and then don't do them or make up excuses why they can't. This is especially true with sinful habits. Jesus came to set the captives free from sin. If they aren't being freed from sin then they just aren't seeking to become a disciple of Christ. If God says, to be patient and give them some more time then do that. But if they don't change you will not convert that person it's best to leave that person and move along.

We are also told that in Matt 7:16 *"Ye shall know them by their fruits"*. What are they truly living by. Do they say one things but do another? Do they walk according to the word of God. Review the history of that person or situation. Start from the beginning about what you know is true. Then trace the whole situation and examine the fruits of what actually has taken place. What people actually

have done throughout the course of time. The Holy Ghost will bring out the truth. He will let you know what to do about the situation. We ought not to be foolish by neglecting to examine the fruits. We should be judging things by God's standards. It doesn't mean I judge that person and say whether or not they are going to heaven, that is Jesus' job at the White Throne Judgement. I judge according to the truth.

God's judgments fall on people first and foremost to bring about salvation for them.

“exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” 1 Tim 2:1-4

It is a serious matter when judgements fall on people, it is another way that we handle Holy Things, we ought wait on God and find out what he wants us to do if we find ourselves involved in the judgement that has fallen.

We Are to Wait on God: not do something on our own. Many times when bad situations come up I want to do something about it. But I have learned not to do anything and to wait on God. He is doing something and I don't want to get in his way or ruin what he is trying to do. Things are so complex that only God has all the answers. He is usually dealing with many people and many situations to give people what they need, or try to get someone's attention to work out his salvation. He is not sitting there with a magic wand and saying abracadabra, presto it's done. He is dealing with people and their free will. It takes time for things to develop. So wait on God.

Psalm 62:5-8 “My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defence; I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation

and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God. Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us. Selah."

Paul, being the prototype new testament priest, gives us a concise picture of what one's life consists of as a Priest. It is equally true in this last era before the return of Christ. Paul gave up everything and counted it all as dung to apprehend the high calling in Christ Jesus. Below are some of the conditions upon which priesthood must be built.

6 *For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

7 *But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*

8 *We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;*

9 *persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;*

10 *always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.*

11 *For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.*

12 *So then death worketh in us, but life in you.*

13 *We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak;*

14 *knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.*

15 *For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.*

16 *For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man*

perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

17 *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;*

18 *while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. 2 Cor 4:6-18*

God's priests have been perfected by the working power of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost now guides us into the works of God. Shine his light (by the example of our lives and the preaching of The Word) to others to extend the invitation to become the bride of Christ.

As we live these holy, consecrated lives, we need to take courage and be strengthened by God because we are troubled on every side by the world, Satan and our own flesh, and sins surrounded us and others, yet we are not distressed because we wait on the Holy Ghost to help. We are often perplexed by the situations we are in, but not in despair because we know in seeking God, in his time, he will show us what we need to know and do. We may be persecuted by the world, satan, and people, but we are not forsaken. He will never leave or forsake those that are his. We may be cast down at times by circumstances and situations but never destroyed by them.

To be assured we are his we must strive to die to our wills and perceptions of good and right and lean entirely on God's vision as told in the prophetic scriptures. We speak of the things which God has taught and shown, things which we have actually lived and experienced ourselves. We know the power of God, the power that has worked in us, and that it will do the same for others when they allow His spirit to lead them without double-mindedness.

Though our outward man perishes and is afflicted our inward man can then continue to grow in the knowledge of God. God's mercies are new every morning. I am blessed to see the works of God in my life and others.

The goal of every New Testament priest is indicated by Colossians

1:28: *“Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:”*

128. Great Cloud of Witnesses

In Hebrews 11

by E. W Bullinger

Kregel Publications; Grand Rapids, MI 49501

copyright 1979 (reprint of 1911 edition); 462 pages

Icons of Faith Book Review by Leroy Gardenier

According to the reference books, the term “Easter” is somewhat obscure. I’ve read widely differing explanations of its origin. Some claim it is derived from a word for cycle, referring to the cycle of seasons. Others think that Easter comes from the name of some goddess of springtime. But all the dictionaries and encyclopedias that I’ve consulted agree that Easter is the popular name for the principle Christian event – the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. However, the world chooses to acknowledge or celebrate Easter is their concern. For us Christians belief in God’s resurrection power as the overwhelming evidence of triumph over sin, suffering and death; and as the pledge of the resurrection and glorification of the true followers of Christ, this is cause not only for a yearly celebration but the source of our daily rejoicing in Christ Jesus!

The popular modern catch-phrase exhorts us “to live as if Jesus died yesterday, arose today, and is coming back tomorrow!” But resurrection -whether the historical event commemorated at Easter or the future spiritual reality prophesied by the Lord Jesus and ordained for us all (John 5:29) – requires faith. And this brings us to our current subject: the elders who obtained a good report by faith; the great cloud of witnesses who, by their faith-filled lives, testified to the reality of the resurrection and pointed us to Jesus, who is the Resurrection and the Life. (John 11:25)

Fifteen separate individuals and groups are presented in the order they appear in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the

Hebrews. *Great Cloud* is a lengthy, comprehensive but a most enlightening and edifying study. Warren W. Wiersbe, in his brief foreword, states: "I know of no other book on Hebrews in the English language that contains more solid spiritual teaching and practical truth than this one. Far from being an 'ivory tower' commentary, this book touches life and makes living by faith an exciting and practical experience. "Bullinger divides his study of the elders' faith into five distinctive, but somewhat interrelated, groups. On page 130 the author provides an outline of the entire book. The reader might find it helpful in understanding, not so much the personalities, but the order and structure of the scriptural truths and topics that relate to this exciting list. The outline also gives us a graphic representation of the connections (or correspondences) between such widely differing individuals as Sarah and Rahab. Both testify to what the author refers to as "faith's conclusion". Abraham, who was quick to obey God's commands, is linked to the nascent nation of Israel, eager to move forward through the forbidding Red Sea rather than return to the slavery and oppression of Egypt.

"Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written [in the Bible] for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." 1 Cor. 10: 11

But, first of all, Bullinger makes a study of Abel who represents faith's worship. "Abel's faith", he says, "shows the first step in the way back to God. The blood of Abel's lamb effected what the sweat of Cain's brow could never have accomplished. It gave peace with God and restored communion with God. It enabled man once more to walk with God, but on redemption ground and no longer on creation ground. "Enoch, who was divinely instructed, is an example of faith's walk. And what glorious results are obtained by an intimate walk with God! Resurrection? Indeed, even translation "that he should not see death"! What an inspiring sight, Enoch and his God talking together and walking right into eternity. A similar event occurred when Elijah walked along with Elisha; then, all at once, the former was suddenly raptured. How close to resurrection did the two

disciples on the road to Emmaus come, when they were walking and talking that first Easter day? Without their knowing it, their risen Lord quietly drew alongside! The final study in the first group of elders pertains to Noah who demonstrates faith's witness. "Enoch walked with God in the midst of the growing corruption; and Noah witnessed for God when that corruption was reaching its height. This shows us that it is possible for those who believe God to walk with Him and witness for Him in the darkest days."

From faith's worship, walk and witness we go on to the second group of faith's obedience and faith's conclusion. Abraham and Sarah are the ones considered here, as we noted earlier. The third group comprises Isaac-faith overcoming the will of flesh. Jacob-faith overcoming the will of man. Joseph-faith waiting for God's time. Moses' parents-faith overcoming the fear of man. Moses-faith overcoming the praise of man. Joseph is to be singled out among this prestigious group. He is the one who corresponds to the Lord Jesus Christ and His believing disciples who faithfully await the resurrection from the dead (Phil. 3:11). "Joseph believed what he heard. He believed that he would possess that 'one portion' which Israel said 'I have given to thee' (Gen. 48:22). He believed he would possess and enjoy it 'above' his brethren. We, too, who believe God, have a blessed promise of 'a portion above our brethren': of going up to our inheritance over the hill country of the Amorites: of being 'called on high' (Phil. 3:14): of experiencing that wondrous 'change' (Phil. 3:20-21) and that 'fashioning like unto the glorious body of the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour'."

Israel and Rahab make up the fourth group of faithful elders. In Sarah and Rahab we have faith's conclusion. "This is common to both women. Sarah Judged Him faithful who had promised'. Rahab said of the spies' credentials and the mission of Israel: 'I know...for we have heard' (Josh. 2:9-10). Moreover, both women stand in connection with the two examples of faith's obedience, forming two corresponding pairs, with Abraham and Israel." As for Israel, they were reassured time and again that God would intervene and bring them out of Egypt. They believed God's Word and, when the time

was right, acted on it. But there are two aspects of full deliverance from all bondage and oppression: deliverance FROM, but also deliverance TO. The revelation made at the burning bush that God would not only bring them out of Egypt but that He also would bring them into a land flowing with milk and honey (Ex. 3:17) – full faith in this was tested when Israel stood on the edge of the Red Sea with the command ‘Go forward’ ringing in their ears (Ex.14:15).

The fifth and final group in the *Great Cloud of Witnesses* is again divided into two very distinct and separate groups: faith conquering through God; and, faith suffering for God. Of the former, six are specifically named – Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephtha, David and Samuel. The seventh is a generic group, “the prophets”. Bullinger comments: “Of the first four, the first and fourth stand out as being more important in the character and strength of their independent faith; while the second and third are associated with women; the former in his rise (Barak), and the latter in his fall (Samson). As for David, Samuel and the prophets, David stands out as being a prophet indeed; while Samuel connects the judges with the prophets since he partook of the character of both.” The final division includes all those unnamed saints who stand for faith suffering for God. The author makes it clear that these “others” of Hebrews 11:36 were not any who merited punishment for faithlessness to their fellow man. Rather, these suffered for their faithfulness to God. “It was steadfastness in their belief of what they heard from God which brought all their sufferings from man. Men had no quarrel with them. Men had not been injured by them. The tortures and sufferings which they endured were all and wholly on account of man’s rooted enmity against God and His Word.” It is the realization and appreciation of this real reason behind these cruelties that concludes Hebrews 11. But the complete ending of this best of all “good reports” regarding faith is actually found in Hebrews 12:1-2. These verses make the definition of faith, which begins Hebrews 11, very personal indeed. God’s Word and witness here urge us to look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, our resurrection and

our life – the One who also gives real meaning to the celebration of Easter!

129. “Godliness with Contentment is Great Gain”

“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” 1 Tim 3:16

Paul here in 1st Timothy teaches the young man whom he was mentoring what the secret (or mystery) of “godliness” is. Simply put it is comprised of six graduating things. Paul starts by telling Timothy that the path of godliness is an expansion of elements which are integral parts that are necessary and comprise godliness as a whole. In reaching to this ultimate spiritual height, it establishes the validity and truth of godliness, that it can reside and live actively in the soul of a human being, and that when it is established it transcends all controversy, spiritual or rational, or otherwise – and that the person in which it now lives in all practical and spiritual reality can not be overturned or confused by any debate, it is invincible before the sophistries of religion or humanism or science. It becomes salt within the soul, it is a fruitful tree within the spirit, it is now universally true with the body, soul and spirit of the individual in which it is able to find expression from act to act. This does not mean that this victory of godliness won by the soul takes over the ‘will of conduct’ which still lives and has the power to make the call within individual. It can only rule when it is given the authority of concession within the ‘will of conduct’.

This is precisely why the Holy Spirit within Paul noted to Timothy that when the pursuit of godliness is settled within the individual then a contented resolution to defer to each element of godliness in a succession of continual choices can occur naturally. When this

is not only done as a dutiful concession, but lived as an opportunity of delight, eagerly inviting the greatest one of all to lead, even command our soul into the just and hallowed ground by His gentle spirit; then that enthusiastic soul has gained a spiritual crown Which cannot be bought or won. It is not a glory of a crown to wear but one that becomes part of the makeup of the person. But it is also glory to wear, which has not been earned as a reward, or purchased by one paying a price, but because a person has given overall will in this greatest of matters of God's godliness; the soul has bowed, yet has done nothing, the greatest thing to do before God – nothing – nothing but stand in awe for no one can look upon Him in this time and live. Yes the person who has godliness ruling over them has truly done, has worked, has conceded, to do nothing, that thing which we humans cannot abide. But the contented can walk in godliness because they have stumbled upon the Word, they have learned that we do nothing, but let live in us, to be our friend and direct us to all 'will of action'. Can a person truly do nothing and do godliness in all actuality? Allow oneself to be led, to acquiesce, defer, sit down, quit putting in their own two-cents worth, walk within the Holy Ghost, listened to Him, be led, relish His thought like a younger brother might do, eat of His advice, trust that He will take care, cover his back and confidently allow godliness to save the day, be acted out in its own time and place, unfolding in action and faith in the ethereal – and – the material world simultaneously, and let the Spirit of God conduct the business of godliness without interference from our clumsy way and miserably inferior vision.

Elements of the Composition of Godliness:

Manifest

1. God was manifest in the flesh

Jesus came in the flesh. So we too must in this flesh become godly. It must be proven and lived out.

It is Justified:

2. Justified in and by The Holy Spirit.

Not by what men say to do but by what the Holy Ghost declares and teaches without regard for the knowledge of approval of Man. It is the Holy Ghost that justifies all that we do. So if we are to walk in a godly manner we need to be following and relying on him, the one and only HOLY Spirit.

It will be: actual and evident

3. Seen of Angels.

My life has to be lived out in the open, in the light for all to see. There is nothing hidden. It is not done in our heart or secretly or privately, but openly. No man lights a candle or turns on a light only to have it put under a can or to have it shaded so that it does not enlighten its purpose. There is no deception. No one is left in the dark, wondering about what is really meant or being recommended.

It is stated intelligibly and imparted with understanding:

4. Preached unto the Gentiles.

Godliness will be delivered to all men. It has to be preached through a vessel that conforms to godliness. It's not our own message but God's message that is preached. It is delivered by who and what we are as well as what we teach and proclaim. It is done by the Spirit within us who justifies what we say and who we say it to and when and where. It is given, communicated in word and deed.

It will be undeniable because it lives in a person:

THEN THE TRUTH CAN BE BELIEVED

5. Believed on in the world.

The first 4 parts of godliness is so that when it is preached it can be accepted and believed. The only way for it to be accepted is when someone can see someone that is godly and believe that they too can become godly.

It is then acceptable:

GOD WILL THEN BE ABLE TO RECEIVE THE WORK IN ETERNITY

6. Received up into glory.

That God can give his approval when the true gospel has been received by the people. This is the kind of work that is acceptable to God in the Kingdom of Heaven.

If your outlook and hope of life's work finds this worthy of consideration and you are inclined to trust Christ that he can build this character of heart and spirit in you then it is possible that godliness can find a home in you, and its works will be able to be accomplished within another human being around you. God, then can and will be reassuring you that you are walking in a godly path according to the Will of God in heaven..

“For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” 1 Tim 4:8

“Godliness with contentment is great gain.” 1 Tim. 6:6

130. Overcoming Satan, The World, and Our Own Flesh

By The Atoning Blood of Christ

by Terry M. Smith

“He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.” Rev 21:7

An incredible statement, the above scripture. Even when one falls into line with the Son of God life is not a simple ride, a nice journey filled with prosperity and endless joy. We are fairly warned that all who name the name of Christ must depart from iniquity if they are to win the approval of God's Only Son, Jesus. The one who was crucified so we might have a chance to find life. But trouble and pain are not the only things which we must overcome. Sin and unrighteousness of soul and spirit, ignorance and defiance of God these are the prime enemies of the soul and heart that fester and then breed worms of unbelief that separate us from our Maker.

If we are to be among those who shall inherit all things good and beautiful, which includes eternal life then we must overcome the things that would separate us from the promised inheritance, not least of all life itself. Most exciting is that we are promised that overcomers shall become as Jesus, for the scripture tells us that when we see him we shall be like Him. God Himself shall count us as if we were a son of His, and we know how He loves His Son and that Jesus is given all things by His Father for His loyalty and love to do nothing but only what His Father desires at all times. This is the stature that all Christians that overcome will have in eternity with the true God of all things. Incredibly magnificent, the promise

to those who overcome all the adversities of life in and outside of Christ – wouldn't you agree?

The Battle is on

Christians easily lose sight of the true nature of the Christian fight; the Bible declares our real enemy to be “*powers and principalities and spiritual wickedness in high places*”, Eph 6:12 rather than people of mere flesh and blood. In this light, the Book of Revelation further reveals that the faithful disciple is able to overcome Satan because of three powerful weapons: the Blood of the Lamb, the Word of their Testimony, and they loved not their lives unto the Death. It is this combination of forces, working continually in the believer which enables the Christian to become a true disciple of Christ, able to combat and overcome the great unseen enemy of “*spiritual wickedness in high places*”.

To begin with, there are three primary battlefields in which we must fight and overcome if one is to come out of darkness of soul and stand victorious in the light. Only in the light can we become a vessel, morph by His power into a human being that is useful to the God of love, purified from my innate unrighteousness so I will allow myself to be led, as King David has put it, into “*the land of uprightness*”. Ps 143:10 But this requires coming away from the way the world does things and allowing God to lead us into another land, another life, another way, another truth. We do not delude ourselves. This process is a warfare and battle against the attrition of faithlessness of the Devil and his lying and tricky minions. “*Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that wars entangles himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.*” 2 Tim. 2:3-4

Among the bevy of actions and wars which we must be overcomers are three specific battlefields where Satan himself must be met and defeated. They are succinctly revealed in the last book of the Bible:

“And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the

power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame Satan [1] by the blood of the Lamb [2] by the word of their testimony, and [3] they loved not their lives unto the death.” Rev. 12:10-11

To be successful in the Christian life one must be an overcomer. In Revelation’s seven letters to the churches (chapters 2 and 3) rewards are offered to those who overcome. In some instances, we must overcome our natural inclinations and become faithful, patient and steadfast in the faith. In other cases, believers are asked to resist idolatry, Satan’s seductions, or desire for riches and power. In still other cases Christ admonishes His believers because they have forgotten their first love (Him), become lukewarm, arrogant, complacent, or carnal. He tells the church to repent and to please Him they must overcome all of these obstacles that stand in the way of full discipleship. Those who tread the streets of Philadelphian faith will be concerned and convicted by the many warnings sounded in the seven letters and will take seriously the call to be an overcomer in each area. Satan is the enemy of our souls. We are to overcome this enemy of our soul by having faith in the ongoing stream of the blood of Jesus which supplies us on the battlefield of the spirit with mercy, love, support in the battle as it rages during our life here on earth. Because of His power that gives victory we give glory to God and tell of all His wonders for us and toward us. By giving testimony to the things which God has manifested in us in all reality and actuality of action we defeat the ambushes of the lies of Satan and his ministers of his anti-gospel. We must be willing to give ourselves over to the Holy Ghost and His Will entirely. To die to self, as the expression goes, is “*to have the sentence of death working in us.*” 2 Cor 1:9

But Satan and his minions are not the only mortal enemy the Christian faces. The Scriptures identify three formidable enemies to discipleship along the Philadelphian pathway. Along with Satan, we battle as Christian soldiers against the world and our flesh. These

two domineering antagonists of the spirit must be conquered and overcome by the power of Christ in us. These three foes, then, Satan, World and Our Flesh, rage against us all during our Christian walk, but we can be “*more than conquerors through Him that loves us*” Rom 8:37 if we will have courage and applied faith in His power and give way to let His grace grow within us.

The following section **Overcoming in Christ** deals with three areas of embattlement necessary for overcoming and walking in a pleasing way before God. The three mortal enemies of our soul: Satan (spiritual wickedness), the World (humanism) and the Flesh (ourselves) seek to block us from the freedom possible in the kingdom of God. We begin in the most appropriate starting place of all, an article (preceded by a brief introduction) by LeRoy J. Gardenier dealing with the theme: “And they overcame him (Satan) by the Blood of the Lamb. The article is entitled: **The Atoning Blood: A River of Redemption.**

THE ATONING BLOOD: RIVER OF REDEMPTION

by LeRoy J. Gardenier

1. FREED BY THE BLOOD

...Redemption's bloody river issues from the dim mists of eternity past as God the Father looks upon “*the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*” Rev 13:8. Here on earth the steady stream, prefiguring the shedding of Christ's precious blood to cover the sins of mankind, starts in Eden's perfect park. God Himself sacrifices and pours out the blood of an innocent animal (surely it was a lamb) to atone for our first parents' rebellious disobedience. Even the victim's skin was used to hide their self-conscious shame. Mankind began to realize the horrendous personal wickedness of sin when

Father Adam recognized the sacrificial lamb as one of the dear and cherished fellow creatures he himself had named! God made it completely clear to both Adam and Eve what later was written in His Holy Word. The blood alone makes an atonement for sin. And, the life is in the blood. Lev 17:11 The Creator forcefully, dramatically and unequivocally decreed His unique dominance over all life by allowing bloodshed only for sin's atonement and spiritual cleansing, all other acts involving blood spilling of the innocent brought condemnation and death. In the story of salvation redemption's scarlet stream sometimes appears to be momentarily hidden or go underground, but its flow continues down through the ages and its purpose remains unmistakable.

All the more shocking is Cain's open defiance against and deliberate perversion of God's perfect procedure. To offer, instead of the atoning blood, the fruits of an accursed earth copied the humanistic attempt of his parents to hide their nakedness and cover their deliberate sin by weaving garments from fig leaves. The cleverest, even the most sincere humanly devised efforts could never cloak an infinite offense against an all-holy God. Cain compounded the felony by shedding in fierce anger the innocent blood of his righteous brother, Abel. With this murder, he brought down on himself a personal curse and the punishment of perpetual banishment.

The River of Redemption continued on its course through the less fertile areas once inhabited by the ancient patriarchs. While the world around them grows increasingly wicked, these righteous descendants of Seth, Adam's later son, offer the required, mandated sacrifices. Those from the family of Adam who ***"called upon the name of the Lord"*** Genesis 4:26, most likely all those named in chapter five of the Bible's first book, performed their part in appeasing their offended God and in keeping a righteous relationship with Him by offering blood sacrifices. The last of these antediluvians, as they came to be called, was Noah. With him and his family, a new era in the history of salvation began. After the Flood, the River of Redemption flowed down the slopes of Mount Ararat covering

the plains of the Fertile Crescent where the offspring of Shem, Noah's special son, chose to dwell. God's faithful followers and true worshippers from Shem to Abraham carried on the tradition of authentic atonement, following the example of righteous Abel and the other pre-Flood believers. All this, in spite of the attempts of ungodly men to follow the way of Cain by seeking God through their own efforts and foolishly attempting to overthrow Him. These were the builders of the Tower of Babel and their wicked offspring!

God called Abraham out from the midst of these God-mockers to father a nation of Semites who would become an example to the whole world. Redemption's crimson stream sprang from the heights of Mount Moriah when the father of Isaac made a bloody offering of the God-provided ram in the place of his cherished, chosen son. Over the centuries, the stream rose to a torrent as the successors of this "father of believers" shed the blood of thousands of innocent lambs on the night of the first Passover. Combined with the rite of circumcision and the example of the family sacrifices performed by righteous Job, the Mosaic sin offerings involving sheep and goats, oxen and lambs; the daily blood sacrifices required by The Law, would continually demonstrate to an unbelieving world God's requirements for righteousness. From the peak of Mount Sinai, the River of Redemption circled the desert sands until the new nation of Israel, born in the blood-washed Egyptian delta, later entered the Promised Land. There a scarlet cord, hung from the walls of Jericho, signaled the broader acceptance of believing, obedient Gentiles under God's covering blood. The River raced on through the period of the Judges and eventually spread out from the lesser known altars erected at Gilgal, Shiloh and Gibeon to the world renowned city of Jerusalem. There, on Abraham's Mount Moriah, for almost countless centuries, the atoning stream of blood covered God's people and even influenced all the nations of the then known world. The Temple and its steady flow presaged the perfect atonement for sin and full reconciliation to God that would one day become available to all mankind!

The Levitical priests were the principle sacrificers. Israel's

anointed kings sometimes entered into these acts of true worship. But it took God's prophets to warn His people away from their vain sacrifices to false gods. Only by heeding the reminder from these anointed and empowered messengers could the chosen nation come close to reverencing the one true God in spirit and in truth. It was the prophets who recalled the true spirit of blood sacrifice and applied its powerful symbolism to God's "Suffering Servant" – the Messiah promised immediately after the Fall. Only in light of God's original intent in instituting animal sacrifices as covering for sin and as a condition for atonement could the multiplied millions of slaughtered innocents be seen as an ocean of mercy, staying God's hand of righteous judgment from falling on sinful mankind. Year after year, for innumerable centuries, the River of Redemption streamed from the Temple mount. The sacrifices were offered daily and the crimson tide seemed to swell beyond earth's borders on the annual feasts of Passover and the Day of Atonement. Even as the relentless river of atoning blood continued from a rebuilt Temple in a capital repopulated after the Babylonian exile, expectancy for a liberating "King of the Jews" mounted. Relatively few sincere seekers were on hand when John the Baptist publicly pointed out "*The Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world*" John 1:36. But this earth-shaking statement was the turning point in the history of the world. The appearance of Jesus Christ as the Savior was the beginning of the consummation of salvation's thrilling story. All the sacred blood-letting from Adam on was in anticipation of God's perfect and complete sacrifice for sin. "The final atonement has begun", says the song. The one anointed, consecrated Victim purposely comes to die, to shed His sacred blood for mankind's sin, for reconciliation to God, and for ultimate and everlasting Redemption! From Calvary's blood-stained cross there flows, not a river, but rather an ocean of divine mercy and forgiveness. Three times in His word God declares: "*For I have desired mercy and not sacrifice*". Hosea 6:6/ Matt 9:13/12:7

2. BY THE WORD OF OUR TESTIMONY ...

GIVING GOD THE CREDIT DEFEATS SATAN's LIES

In Revelation 12:10-11 we are offered this insight:

“And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.”

It would be hard to overestimate the importance of a Christian's personal testimony of conversion and salvation. Besides being the nail upon which the reality of his faith and salvation rest, it puts to flight Satan and his minions and makes him out to be the blasphemous liar that he is. Job exposed Satan as a liar when he refused to curse God for his misfortune and continued to recognize God's lordship. With every saint's testimony, the whole of creation resounds with the truth that God's love is more powerful than Satan's hate and “*he that is in us is greater than he who is in the world*”. 1 John 4:4

“*Resist the devil and he will flee from you*” Jas 4:7, is advice well heeded. One proven way to resist the enemy of our soul is to testify to God's love and salvation in our own lives. Satan hates to hear of the stories of repentant man saved from the dregs of sin and brought into the marvelous light of Christ. The power of God's testimony in us, the words of what he has done for us defeat the enemy. “*He uttered His voice and the earth melted*” Psalm 46:6, is only a small expression of the power of the testimony of truth that swells inside each believer. This is why the apostle Paul echoes the words of David: “*I believed, and therefore have I spoken.*” 2 Cor.4:13. Through the centuries stories of repentance, salvation and deliverance have spurred the believer onto heights of discipleship and powerful faith. We are surrounded, it says in Hebrews 11, by a great cloud of witnesses who have gone before us and testified of great works of

faith and words of praise to God. The personal testimony of the apostle Paul, recounted in the book of Acts, having been struck blind on the road to Damascus, served to catapult the Gospel into all corners of the Roman world. Paul, the much feared man who had been the persecutor of Christ, had become by the grace of God, Christ's greatest evangelist. It was by the personal testimony of Paul, more than any other factor that the power of Rome succumbed to the power of the Gospel. Not by the might of armies or the power of political authority did the pagan world recede behind the march of Christ's love, but it was by the Spirit propelling the great personal testimonies of Paul and Peter into provinces of the empire, creating testimony upon testimony of the other apostles and faithful martyrs and the simple, faithful believers from Antioch, Lystra, Corinth, Thessalonica, Colosse, Ephesus, Athens, Sardis, Philadelphia and Rome.

God had used a dream to show the Jews that the Gentiles were now being drawn into the plan of salvation under Christ. The dream was given to Peter and he was sent to Cornelius, the Roman centurion, to explain that God had declared the Gentiles clean and worthy of salvation. It was not Peter who declared the Gentiles acceptable for salvation before God, this was the exclusive work of the Creator, but it was the job of Peter to testify to what God had declared in that monumental gift of the Holy Spirit. By this testimony, Paul's work with the Gentiles was not only legitimized it was made indisputable. Peter and Paul's testimonies about this were critical for the early success of the Gospel and in defeating the repeated attempts of Satan to Judaize the early Church and exclude the Gentiles from salvation in Christ.

Every Christian has a personal testimony of how they found Christ and were converted in heart. It is their own personal testimony and prime artillery against the demonic world and subtle lies of Satan. Faith is increased in others, doubt diminished and overcome by such personal testimony. Personal accounts of victory over Satan can have an effect on bystanders as well, who may suffer from demonic oppression or even possession. One such case was

witnessed by Christian Spirit Magazine staff member, Eloise Gardenier, in a church in Boston.

“As the word and testimonies were coming forth, a woman directly behind me began to growl like an animal and in that same grotesque tone went on to yell profanities. I turned my head to look back and saw a lady who seemed to be in charge of what was obviously a possessed person. We reached for one another’s hand. As we held hands we also prayed together in the Spirit (tongues). After a very short time, the “demoniac” fell fast asleep. She dozed for some time, then awoke and was startled to hear “Beelzebub” come pursing from her lips with the most terrible guttural sound I had ever heard. The demon had been driven from her by the testimonies and word that had been preached and she began to praise the Lord.”

“Even when we were dead in sins, hath he quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:

That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”

Eph. 2:5-7

Our testimonies are varied, different, personal and always miraculous. They are fashioned by God for the “ages to come” and not just for this lifetime. They are meant to be for the eternal praise and glory of God, to denounce and destroy the works of the Devil. Each testimony is a note, a cord, a chime ringing out in the death knell of Satan. We should take the word of our testimony very seriously and with the utmost reverence, for it is God’s work. Jesus said that He had come into the world to testify to the truth. As followers of Christ, it is not only our great privilege to testify to Christ and His mercy, but it is one of the greatest and most powerful tools we have in our arsenal of weapons which are used in spiritual battle to fend off the accusations of Satan. The testimonies of love, deliverance and power over evil and sin which Christ compiles in us bring to light the lies of the Devil and prove him to be the

evil blasphemer that he is. If the believer expects to overcome the enemy in this life he will not forsake the testimonies which God has brought about in him through Christ's love. As an explorer, a pioneer, or a great adventurer we advance into the kingdom of God with much tribulation. It is our stories of true faith and Christ's love that undo Satan and his persecutions and will be, in the final analysis, our most prized possessions throughout the coming eternity.

3. AND BECAUSE THEY LOVED NOT THEIR LIVES

...Those who resist Satan best and overcome his power and influence in their lives will be those who no longer consider their personal lives or specific ambitions of the primary importance. Christ will be given preeminence in all things. They will have found their lives by the very reality of 'losing' their lives but in favor of living in Christ. It may not be that they will have to actually demonstrate this by martyrdom it could be by spiritually dying to self. The two churches of 'losing their lives but finding it' are represented in the letters to the churches in Revelation: 1) Smyrna by persecution and martyrdom, and 2) Philadelphia through self-denial and meek submission. In the spirit both types will have lost their lives by living as Elijah and other faithful prophets and disciples of Christ have, dying to themselves, living in obedience to the voice of the Spirit of God.

More than once Jesus spoke of an astounding contradiction that can only be understood by those who are walking by faith. *"He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."* Matt 10:39 It was in this vein that Jesus lauded the widow at the temple because she threw in *"all of her living"* Mark 12:44 telling His disciples that in her two pennies she had given more than all those who had given out of their abundant riches. Christ's point was far and above a suggestion that one should give money. For he immediately begins to talk about how the temple would be totally destroyed. Jesus makes it evident that He does not

care about houses and buildings, but about his followers giving Him all of themselves without restriction or selfishness. She had given all of herself, all of her living, to God. She had withheld nothing and had not done it for a reward, but in honor and appreciation of God. In her giving of all herself, she had also defeated the grip of Satan upon her. For once we have surrendered ourselves Satan has no power over us for we have nothing to lose. In losing herself she had found Christ and His boundless love. She had found life.

This is Christ's meaning when he says in a few places.

"And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me." and,

"And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple" and also,

"And he said to them all, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." Matt. 10:38, Luke 14:27, Luke 9:23

Once we have undergone spiritual death we are freed from the grip of the enemy. Satan and sin no longer have power; no longer hold sway over us. The book of Romans states it thus: *"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin."* Rom 6:6-7 When we are crucified with Christ, dead to self, we are freed from the burden of sin and the accusations and condemnation of Satan. We overcome Him by losing our ambitions, recanting against our natural willfulness and stepping back from our spiritual and universal human pride. Universal, because all people have a pride in life, a spiritual fact repulsive of the truth and one which competes with what only God is able to accomplish or do. The most poignant Scriptural evidence of this reality is on display in the famous exchange between Christ and Peter as Jesus was on His way to be crucified in Jerusalem. Peter had tried to dissuade Jesus from His mission of obedience and His sacrifice at Calvary. Finally, Jesus *"turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of*

God, but those that be of men. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.” Matt 16:23-24 The moment stands framed in eternity, a moment in which the two opposing forces of good and evil faced off in a mortal combat, even though it was among two friends. God’s belief in selfless love versus Man’s pride and belief in selfish love squared off in the arena of truth. The incident shows Satan’s contempt for God’s selfless love. It shows God’s disregard for persons when truth is at stake. If Satan could get Jesus to think of himself, fear for himself and preserve His own life above the will of the Father, flatter Peter or compromise with his misguided idea of loyalty and love, then Satan would have been the winner, would have proven that selfish desire is greater than godly selfless love. But Satan was defeated in that landmark moment because Jesus chose the cross; he chose to lose His life so that many could gain life. He loved not his life unto death...

When we forsake this world and the things of it and live a resurrected life in Christ, finding a new life in Him, we are beyond the bounds of Satan’s grip. He may be able to touch our bodies, he may even be able to trifle and twist our souls; he may be able to get into our minds, but he cannot overcome our spirits, nor separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:33-39). In Revelation 12 we are made aware of the fact that Satan is cast down from heaven and that the saints had had a part in overcoming this master of deceit and lies by receiving the blood of the lamb, by the word of their testimony and by loving not their lives unto the death. We are told that Satan is very angry over this and will pour out his wrath on the earth during the Tribulation. This crucified life is for saints today. It foils Satan and his evil powers and principalities which we war against on a daily basis. Those who heed the call to discipleship in a Philadelphian fashion will do so by walking a crucified life in the shadow and power of the cross. They will be able to say as Paul testified: “*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in*

the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” Gal. 2:20.

Our First Great Enemy

SATAN

All Satan's accusations are dismissed when we bath in the river of the atoning blood of God. It is paramount that we be free from the guiltiness of sin which will eat at our souls like a rat devouring the spring crop, until all the fruits are ruined, if it is allowed to go unabated. But because of the power of the atoning blood of God, the Devil can no longer claim that God is unjust to give the gift of eternal life to sinful man, even though he has always perpetrated what he himself has been condemned to Hellacious fires for. Christ's blood was shed first and foremost to save sinners and alleviate the guiltiness and just sentence of being alienated from life and God forever. Because the atoning blood does not wash Satan's offenses and sins away, and never will, Satan is furious and filled with hate toward Mankind. Though Satan does not like it, he cannot deny that the innocent blood of the Lamb of God soothes the afflictions and bruises of sin, dissolves guilt, heals the broken heart, permits the human creature to look upon the Creator shamelessly, without irreversible regret, and provides this unrighteous creature called Man, a cloak that clads the sinner with a woven and seamless gown of righteousness that warms and protects them from the cold, harsh elements of the their past dark offenses and crimes against God and humanity. The cloak? The atoning blood of the Lamb of God which has the power to wash away, like the freshening torrent of a pure clean river, the sins of those lost in the darkness of the world, drowning in their misdeeds against Creator and Creation. The case for the prosecution is dismantled, Satan and his accusations silenced, the price is paid and pardon is granted because of the

blood of the innocent one, the Lamb of God, who paid the price for all transgression with the most valuable thing in the world of man – the very blood of God. With His priceless blood of God Jesus paid our debt in full and has won a pardon and freedom from prosecution for all our misdeeds and erroneous ways, if we receive it by believing and acknowledging its power and unmerited favor upon us. It is the...

The above teachings have described three Scriptural ways in which we overcome the enemy of our souls, Satan. We are to overcome him by faith in the blood of Jesus and its life giving, forgiving powers. We give glory to God and tell of all His wonders for and to us by giving testimony. And, we must be willing to give ourselves over to the Holy Ghost and His will entirely. But Satan is but one of the three enemies we must overcome in our walk. The second is the world...

Our Second Great Enemy

The World

Jesus said to His disciples at the last supper; *“In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”* John 16:33 It is easy to understand what Jesus meant by *“in the world you will have tribulation”*; we have only to look at our lives to know that. But what did he mean when he said: *“I have overcome the world.”*?

Obviously, he was identifying the “world” as an enemy that had to be beaten, rendered helpless, conquered. The World becomes our compadre, the one with who we walk in admiration, the one to whom we look up and say, what can I do for you, what can I do to please you. Help me and show me the way to get along. Let your people become my peers and I will try to learn their will and

do what they say are the right ways, and right things to do. Show me the way of men and let me conform so I will belong to the league of humankind. I want to be your friend because I certainly do not want to experience your excommunication. What does Christ mean by the term “world”? Those things which are esteemed by men but an abomination to God can give us an initial helpful clue that the answer to that question involves knowing the meaning and accepting the unequivocal truth “*God’s ways are not Man’s ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts*”. Isa 55:8-9

The word ‘World’ is used in a very derogatory way in the Scriptures. The World, and all it stands for is opposed to God. His thoughts are not our thoughts, nor His ways our ways. John, in his first epistle, said; “*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*” 1 John 2:15-16 In this statement God has identified three ways in which we are influenced and even conspire with the world against all true righteousness: **1)** the lust of the flesh, **2)** the lust of the eyes, **3)** the pride of life. We get the sense from each one of these aspects of the world that they are seductive enemies drawing us into a thirst for power, pleasure and pride, turning our faith away from trust in God and to ourselves. Eventually friendship with the world will turn a person into an atheist at heart, if not in word and deed. This is why the Lord’s brother, James, wrote: “*Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.*” Jas 4:4 Notice he calls the friends of the world “adulterers and adulteresses”. To be a friend of the world (as defined by the Scriptures) is spiritual harlotry and even the sin of idolatry.

Jesus was frank about His relationship with the world and what the world thinks about His disciples when He said; “*the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world,*

even as I am not of the world.” John 17:14-16 The world will hate the true disciple of Christ. It hates Jesus and it will hate His followers. Therefore we need to be on the defensive when it comes to the world. We are in it, but we are not to be part of it.

1.) Lust of the flesh is one of those things which the Bible tells us to flee. All of those youthful lusts and pleasures so often listed and enumerated in the epistles; riotous, promiscuous living, drinking and partying, and uncontrolled passions are things we must be delivered from by the grace of God.

2.) Lust of the eyes is the passion for the beauty of temporary things, the worship and idolatry of man's creative talents and esteeming the creature and its beauty above the Creator Himself. All the world encourages us to worship it. With our eyes we covet many things; it is idolatry no one sees, but God. The current popular but vulgar term, eye-candy, is very true. We drink in many worldly things with our eyes that draw us away from God.

3.) Pride of life is perhaps the most severe form of world worship. It is the humanism of man. The worship of himself above the Creator. *“[they] changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man... Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator.”* Rom. 1:23-25. Jesus condemned this kind of humanistic worship with this astonishing statement: *“Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.”* After a statement like this how can the soldier of Christ seek anything but humility, how can he be anything but embarrassed by the praise of the world? But we are driven to seek the applause and approval of men. It is a lure that we must shake ourselves free from.

Surely we must overcome all connection with the world that the Holy Ghost reveals to us, if we are to be true and faithful Disciples of Christ. The pride of life and the lust of the eyes and the flesh are mortal enemies of the true saint. But how do we best conquer this enemy, the world, that tries to seek any inroad it can to overwhelm us and woo us into its deadly friendship? We can only do it by

yielding to the Holy Ghost in such a way that we die to oneself, by picking up the cross, by defeating our own flesh... which leads us to the third great enemy and obstacle to walking in purity and righteousness with Christ who is our righteousness.

Our Third Great Enemy

Our Own Flesh

Overcoming the flesh was also the business of Jesus during His ministry on earth. As with the world, Jesus also conquered the flesh for us defeating sin and condemning it by His work on the cross. The goal of picking up our cross and being crucified with Christ is so we no longer walk in the flesh but are able to walk in the spirit. Only the 'dead' can walk in the Spirit. The Overcomer must be walking in the Spirit and not the flesh if he is to be pleasing to God. *"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. ... For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."* Rom. 8:1-3 Just prior to telling the disciples that He has overcome the world He informs us: *"In the world you will have tribulation"* John 16:33. By this Christ obviously means we will have pain, sorrow, distress, mistakes, failures, misjudgments, persecution and betrayals to deal with during our trials to overcome. Paul told his fellow workers that we with much tribulation must enter into the kingdom of God. *"And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that **we must through much tribulation enter into***

the kingdom of God. *And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.” Acts 14:21-23*

The disciples had commended and then ordained ‘elders’ to the Lord. It is significant to note in passing that these were men that Paul and the rest had come to believe were going to be able to stand the tribulation of entering the kingdom of God and be steadfast to the purity of their calling. So serious was the matter and so important that they stayed with each ordained elder as they toured for the gospel’s sake and prayed and fasted to confirm their calling. This praying and fasting leading to belief in the ordination of these elders was important because Paul had the wisdom to know that tribulation of the Satan, the world and our fleshly selves will always be brought to bear upon the servant of God; how much more upon elders, keepers and stewards of the Gospel. We should be ‘on to’ the enemies of our soul, which are also the true enemies of the Cross. We shall all suffer fiery trials of personal disappointment and seducing temptations of the flesh. The flesh will linger on in us as long as we are in the flesh. It will be with us warring against the spirit and as Paul we will cry out: *“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.”* Rom 7:24-25 When we walk in the flesh we are walking in sins terms, fighting on sins terms, playing according to sins terms, playing by sins rules and there is no way to beat sin when we play it according to its terms for sin is greater than us and it will defeat us and kill us if we walk according to its terms, even if we are trying to beat it with our best efforts on sins own grounds. We therefore must walk in the Spirit, walk according to the terms of the Spirit if we hope to cast off the leaden shoes of sin with which our feet are lassoed and we are thereby dragged into the pit of unhappiness and the dark destruction of despair. Who can deliver us from so great a way called ‘flesh’? Only by walking in the Spirit can we be saved from the indictment of the guiltiness of sin. An analogy may best show how we shall have a lifelong struggle

against this mortal enemy of our sinful flesh and how we must rely on the Holy Ghost and the power of Jesus Christ to live according to the benefits of the grace of Christ through the Spirit. If we live in the Spirit let us also walk in the Spirit.

“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are [these]; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” Gal. 5:16-25

AN ANALOGY of An Oil Burner:

I once had an oil-burning furnace that I was having a great deal of trouble with. It spewed soot, leaked oil and water, and produced far more noise than heat. When the electrode failed to fire, the oil would accumulate in the burner and the fumes would stink up the entire house. It always seemed to fail when it was needed most during cold spells. It tried to do its job, but fell far short of getting it done. Being a Scottish skinflint by nature, I tried to fix it myself.

Finally, and wisely, I broke down and decided to have a professional repairman in to take a look at it.

After examining the furnace the repairman gingerly approached me and said he had bad news, good news scenario for me. As a natural realist and admitted pessimist, I asked for the bad news first hoping the good news would deliver me from the despair. He told me frankly that the furnace was hopelessly gone, absolutely beyond repair. I needed a completely new burner and furnace. Not totally surprised, I wondered out loud what the heck the good news possibly could be? The good news, he told me was that he could put in a completely new system and that I would not have to pay for it, or the installation, right away. In fact, he would not make me put anything down on it for six months and after that I would start making some regular monthly payments. Short on the ability to pay, I was thankful for the installment plan and instantly agreed to the terms. All I needed to know was what the final price would be and how much it would cost me per month once the payments began so I could fit them into my budget. What started out pessimistically ended in utter optimism. I did not have to struggle through the winter. Thankfully, I could be sure that my family and I would have a warm house to live in, in which we could receive friends and guests in the name of God.

So what does this have to do with becoming free from our sinful flesh? The oil burning furnace represents man's spirit, his true inner being. The oil burner itself is symbolic of the Spirit of God and the heat that is supposed to be thrown off by the oil furnace stands for love, or, in other words, the opposite of sin. Before being born again, man is like that old oil-burning furnace. We are unable to produce any warmth (love) because of our broken, useless condition. We cannot be overhauled. We must be entirely replaced, turned into a new creature and be given a new spirit (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15; Eph 4:24; Col 3:10, and so on). We are always on the verge of self destruction ready to explode, throwing off dark clouds of soot and making a lot of threatening rumblings while producing very little good, if any at all. The repairman represents Jesus. He talks us into replacing the

entire unit (spirit) and gives us a new heart, one that can receive a brand new oil burner that will work perfectly if we let it. The oil burner, of course, is the Holy Ghost and it is His oil that burns in us to produce the warmth, or love, of Christ which radiates from us into the world.

But remember the good news, bad news part. Christ gives us a new spirit free just for the asking. There is no down payment or set-up fee just as in our analogy, but Christ told his disciples they must count the cost (Luke 14:28) of the installation and what it will require to have the burner always operating in perfect fashion. It would have been ridiculous for me to keep the old dilapidated furnace out back of my house and try to reinstall it to correct any problems or to avoid paying any installments when the payments came due. How absurd would that be? There are installment payments to be made after our initial born-again honeymoon experience. There are adjustments and maintenance costs to be paid on the new furnace and burner. There are such things to be done in the Spirit in our new life as well. Among the installments and regular maintenance is carrying our cross daily as discussed in a previous part of this teaching on overcoming. It means *“enduring hardships as good soldiers”* in Christ 2 Tim 2:3-4 by letting God use our bodies as He did with Peter and Paul (Rom 12). They are in the fiery trials that must try every disciple (1 Pet. 4:12). They come in the form of persecution. We are told that every Christian *“that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”* 2 Tim 3:12. Killing the flesh within us hurts. It is a surgery of the spirit that requires endurance, steadfastness, patience and suffering – these are all things that are contrary to the way of the flesh. These may be euphemistically termed – the bad news. To defeat the flesh, we must count the cost and pay the price. I am sure the reflective reader will be able to come up with even further instances of the price exacted of us in killing the flesh. We must say goodbye to the old pals and ‘friends’ of beloved sins. We must face-down and do battle with ugly monsters in the dark corners of our life. The true disciple knows that our hope is built on the solid Rock of truth, Jesus Christ. It is the Rock and the

grace of Jesus Christ that will see us through so difficult a journey as triumphing over our flesh.

True Christian optimists will shed off the hopeless ways of the world, not lean to their own understanding, let the Spirit lead them to love and righteousness and be freed from the depravity of the fallen human heart while being led into the righteous, holy realm of the Divine Nature which resides in Jesus Christ, *“in whom is all the fulness of the Godhead bodily”*. Col 2:9 Peter tells us (2 Pet 1:4) that the Gospel, in fact, promises man that he can be free from the flesh and become a partaker of God’s nature in this life when he says;

“Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust of the flesh.”

131. The Armor of God

How it Directly Affects the Last-days Christian

Preface: 7/25/17 – The following was transcribed from verbal teachings given in a small home fellowship setting in April-May 2016 by our pastor Terry Smith, who finished his course and went home to be with the Lord on April 25, 2017.

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,

For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.” Eph. 6:10-20

INTRODUCTION: Introducing the need for the armor is preceded by being told about the enemy and the reality of that and the persistence of Satan and his army. “*Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*” That’s the very reason he’s saying to put on the armor of God, because Satan doesn’t sleep and innocent people get hurt. That’s what the battle is all about. That’s preceded by: like it or not, you’re in it and you’re going to get hurt- that’s the enemy and he doesn’t give up. If the fight isn’t to the death then you aren’t in it, you’re not walking with the Lord. We’re real good at walking in our own world. Jesus is telling us that we should be in the thick of it. This is forever living. He’s saying you have to put on the whole armor of God.

The whole Church has dumbed this all down, by the gospels of the world, the false gospels, the accuser of the brethren (Satan himself), and our own flesh. Our own worldly flesh, the desires of man, and the humanistic gospel has dumbed it all down to make it like this isn’t a battle. If you’re walking with Satan, he isn’t going to get you. If it hasn’t been dumbed down then the bombs should be falling all around you. So you better get your helmet and your armor on. Satan will only bomb you if you’re his enemy. Satan is always there and you can’t forget this for one millisecond or you will be doing his bidding, and there’s no way of knowing him except if you are being led by the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Satan knows you better than you know yourself, and if you don’t have your armor on he’ll be able to use you. That’s why God himself is saying put on his armor. Brotherly kindness is one of the things we must have with Jesus. Ephesians 6:11 “*Put on the whole armor that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*” It isn’t you – put Him (Jesus) on. Jesus Christ is our helmet of salvation. You have to do what God is saying, and that is to put Jesus on. You can’t believe in yourself, you have to put on Jesus Christ. That means I’m going to listen to Jesus in everything.

To put on armor is life forever! You can’t believe it unless you

put on the armor of God. It's all about eternal life!! Which you know nothing about except through Jesus Christ. It's a matter of life and death. We can stand in what is really real, but it has to be through Jesus, and he can bring truth and reality to it, but he can't get through to everybody because they won't listen.

We must walk in the Spirit, deny ourselves! If you're not walking with Jesus you're an easy mark for Satan.

The world is trying to tell us we should all just be able to get along and that everybody's got a good heart. When the Bible says "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*" Jer. 17:9

One of Jesus' plans is to deliver us of all our fears and we need to let him do this. Whenever anything comes along that you're afraid of and you want to do something about it. What if you're afraid that you're a no good person that could never do anything about anything? Ask the Lord to deliver you of all your fears even about yourself.

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" Prov 9:10 *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning knowledge."* Prov.1:7 So if the Lord tells you that a preacher is no good you better believe Him. You have to be afraid of being on the other side of God's will. Not afraid of anyone else. Be delivered from that to Him.

When it comes to the "mark," that's when people will be found out. People in the Church are flirting with the worse eternity they could ever get. Jesus' Father did send Him to give us all fair warning. We will all be without excuse and Jesus does say to them go to where you belong. You didn't care about anybody but yourself.

Awake and Christ will give you light and life! *"Awake O Zion and Christ will give you light"*. Christ can show you what is really going on, every minute of every day. We do have liberty in Christ, and it has nothing to do with you. You better listen to Jesus and let him do the talking and lead you around. So put on the armor of God. It's the only way to be defended from Satan and to fend him off. It's a battle, we have to know what's going on and what to do about it when we're under assault, and you won't know where things are coming from.

Satan can't overcome you if you keep the armor on. Jesus can help us and tell us what to do and when to do it when we have His armor on. And there's no overcoming temptations without Jesus and the armor.

It's really advisable to listen to what Jesus says because the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowing what's going on. You should fear not hearing from the Lord! It comes down to "Do what you're told." Jesus kills the whole army of the world with the sword of his mouth!

Everybody's will has to be flopped over; otherwise, we're stubborn asses, which is Witchcraft. It's working against God's reality and trying to make their own reality instead of believing what God says reality is. A deceiver- that's what your heart is, and it's worse than that- who can know it?

LOINS GIRT ABOUT WITH TRUTH

"Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth" Eph. 6:14

What is the reality of what this should be in us now? What does it mean spiritually with me? Things seen and unseen, what does it mean? We better consider it deeply, it better be a reality in our life!!

We get pushed away from things that are not reality. In terms of reality, this earth is not going to be my final destination. We must act on this and believe. So climate change and all that is not what it's about. The whole earth and heaven are going to be rolled up like a scroll. This is why we have to know what reality really is. That's what prophecy is for!

The world says we can all love one another. That's not reality. Mother Teresa didn't even know if God existed when she was dying. The world doesn't even know about reality, so why am I going to believe what the world says about reality? If we don't ask God about things we won't know what reality is, that's why we follow the Spirit.

We must STAND and put on these 6 pieces of Armor. The first thing is to stand having our loins girt about with Truth! Our loins are what comes forth from us. It's where life comes from and where

we relieve ourselves from, where ideas, manipulations, and intimidations come from.

Gird your loins about with Truth. Truth is whatever Jesus Christ says because Jesus is the way the light and the Truth. Jesus says “*I am the Truth*”. Whatever Jesus has been or ever will be or has above him or below him and whatever exists- He is The Truth. Anything that isn’t what He says and does and believes isn’t truth, it’s something else. He is the sole proprietor, owner and doer and active light of Truth. And all the big implications of that is; you mean I haven’t been taking everything that I ever thought, that I ever hoped for, that I ever dreamed, that I was ever told, that I actually used and it worked, and every single thing and take it to him and empty out my pockets and say is that truth? Is it right? Truth also means correct, proper, real, pertinent, stable, everlasting, can’t be destroyed; it’s indestructible. If Jesus says this is not going to last, then it’s not going to last. The Truth will live and everything that isn’t the Truth won’t live. He’s told us the truth about hell. You really don’t want to go there. To gird something is to cinch it up. Make sure it’s tight. So make sure the Truth is around you tightly.

We’re talking about what you actually effect pertaining to life. Jesus is talking to people who are the Bride of Christ! Put on the armor because you have just become the #1 target of Satan. That’s where we are. Awake and let Christ give you life.

Should we not be edified that this is the first thing where everything starts? He’s made man so that we can bring forth life, and we do and it’s not just flesh and carnal – it has to be the Truth.

Girding your loins with Truth, this is one of the places Satan will continue to attack you. He would love to turn you into some kind of a pervert. It’s a crucial place for him to attack. So it’s important to understand it and protect the Truth. Satan will be after this vulnerable spot all the time. He’ll use our ignorance and try to get us to lose our balance. We must stay with the drill sergeant, Jesus. We must get up and stand because this is a fight. You can’t be a coward. You have to keep going to him because you’re going to be needing him all the time. We need everything that is right to issue forth from

us. We are in his army. He saved us and he's brought us to this. But we have to be 100% about Jesus. We must drop ourselves because we are our worse enemy. At the end of the day, Jesus has proven that He loves me.

People should even sleep in their armor, because Satan never sleeps. So put on the armor and keep it on. Be humbled to know that if it's not for the protection of God and Jesus Christ being with us, the only other option we have is to perish or go over to the other side. Don't ever give yourself any credit for standing against Satan, Jesus has to do it. Don't chicken out. Jesus has to save us every second. The times we are living in are so tricky.

THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

"and having on the breastplate of righteousness;" Eph 6:14

The breastplate protects our vitals and life, seen and unseen. Not just life here. Life is the whole ballgame and righteousness is as unto a breastplate which protects my vitals from being attacked. The breastplate is righteousness. It protects our heart, of which we need a new one, and our lungs which God breathed life into.

Adam and Eve were with God, and it is incomprehensible how they could believe Satan and eat the apple. That's why it's so critical to just believe God's Word! When we become born again we need a new heart.

Fundamentalism is synonymous with self-righteousness, which is the opposite of righteousness. We must understand what the full armor is so that we can put it on as God is commanding us! These things are so vital. We have to grow in this and not be ignorant, know how it works absolutely and live it. We are not righteous, it's God's righteousness and it's believing God and knowing that He will do what He says.

The Lord gave us Proverbs 13 because it's essential for these end days and what's going on now. In Proverbs 13, righteousness is always contingent on The Word. I don't like memorizing scriptures because I don't want to get in the Lord's way. It's about what's pertinent in that moment- it's the living word and it's a universe.

The place to begin is at Proverbs 13:5 “A righteous man hateth lying.” A righteous man hates anything that isn’t truth. Jesus is the truth so anything contrary to him is a lie. Jesus will tell us what the Truth is. So we are in the world where lies are, but we must be seated in heavenly places.

Proverbs 13:6 “Righteousness keepeth him that is upright in the way.” We must stay upright in Jesus for Jesus is the way. Wickedness is anything that is not “straight and narrow.”

There is great irony in verses 7 & 8. We have to put in a real effort to listen to God because we don’t know this. Walk in it. You have to do this before you understand it. Proverbs 13:7 “... there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches.” He “maketh” is important here, the world is eating people alive. Verse 8: “The ransom of a man’s life are his riches.” The “mark”- you can’t buy or sell without it. This is the breastplate of righteousness, wear it. We are walking in realms that are unknowable but God can reveal it to us. “Riches” equals ransom for your life. “...but the poor heareth not rebuke.” “Poor” is the ransom that will give you life. It’s about not having investments in this world. We must make ourselves poor, to buy into any of these lies in these end days ends with the mark. We will perish if we do not get these things about the armor.

Read about Samuel and Saul. Everything that Samuel did, He trusted God.

FEET SHOD WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE

“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.” 1 John 2:16

Lust of the flesh: an example of that is “Am I going to have a really good sub for lunch?” There is no escaping this. This is lust of my flesh. Scriptures has taught us what the “flesh” is and it’s bigger than I can reach. It covers the whole deal. Even if I get into a plane and fly to another country it still wouldn’t cover the extent of the lust of the flesh.

Lust of the eyes: This is how stuff gets into us, through our eyes. That's what the scriptures tell us and know. There's no escaping that unless you poke out your spiritual eyeballs. Which if you're actually walking with Christ you can do that. There's not one second in which I'm not confronted with the lust of the eyeballs, the spiritual eyes.

Pride of life: This is where your tiny brain explodes. This is anything about life here that I have pride in and I seek to have pride in. It's acted out all the time. "I just want to be proud of my son". What's wrong with that? In fact, all the pressure is that you should be working for that and hoping for that. Why? Because this helps you fit in here, right? I'm getting along fine here now. That's just one of the big chicken scratches of the pride of life that people want. This is big and even big is too little a word to use here because this is the whole vast deal.

These three things are all-consuming, all the time, because of all that is in the world. These are not of the Father, but it is of the world. So God is telling us He's not in on the world, but He is with me. God does state "I will be with you," but not there. Go figure huh? I'm just thinking this thing through right? So what should I conclude? That if I am with God, I'm actually somewhere else, not here. Doing what is here. What again is here? God says what the world is doing to you. He's saying what's squeezing you in. This is being pressured on me. And the apostle John is just informing us that this is what the world is doing to you, there's no escaping it. It's a huge effective problem on us all. They are again; the lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh and the pride of life. There's a big thing affecting your life. So if God asked you what this is all about, you can sum it up in one word...life. Jesus says, *"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."* John 10:10. God came to give us life first because we were dead, we didn't have life in us. The world doesn't have life, Jesus Christ does. The Father gave him life and said you are life itself. You give life and if it's not from you it's death, it's nothing. So that's what we're dealing with every second this body is alive. So the Lord

is identifying the real problem we have and we better put on the armor against this.

The third thing is “You must have your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.” The first image there is your feet. That’s an image of being in the world, which is all over you trying to get you to live in a dead place. You have to fight against this every minute of every day and people don’t fight against it, they’re into it. You have to have mobility; you cannot be paralyzed with fear. Your feet need to be shod with the gospel of peace. It’s about peace with God, not peace with this world. Get your feet shod with this so they can have peace with God, that’s all this is. This armor is to get us to protect us and be mobile.

“Stand therefore having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;” Eph. 6:14-15

It is not the world because the world has the lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, and pride of life and those are death and they attack us every single moment of every day. Attack isn’t even the right word, they demand things of my spirit, heart, mind, emotions, plans, they demand everything of me and there’s one remedy- Jesus Christ- who can save us and does and teaches us how to walk in this by faith so that we are not overcome by it. He actually knows how to do this miraculous thing where I walk in this world, yet I live in peace with him. And there’s no peace with the world and we can’t be down with it ever. Otherwise we’re going to be condemned except we walk with him, because he’s the only one who can minister to us so we’re not condemned.

People can’t be saved by good works. They can only be saved by faith in truth which is Jesus Christ himself, it’s no other God, it’s no other thing. It’s Jesus Christ since he knows what he’s doing. We must humble ourselves before God.

I like the way it’s said, “be shod with the preparation of the gospel”. He didn’t say you put down the plan because you don’t know, but be

shod with the preparation because he's the one that can do it. It's all faith. What you have to do is believe and do. The only way to survive is to get out of the world and Jesus Christ says you can be out of it, if you will take on the armor and follow me, I will be there. Jesus has no place else to go, He will be with you every second. This is a war and it doesn't let up. Satan doesn't sleep, he doesn't have to sleep and he's not going to let up.

Just like we have to walk outside the world, that's where the pride of life is. We're here and it's all hammering away at us all the time and it means business and it's effective, it's hard. This is the hardest thing for somebody who's putting on the armor, because you've got to walk in this world and somehow be defended against it because it's way bigger than you'll ever be here and it's inescapable. You cannot escape it. It just pushes everybody in the world around and they don't have any clue of it, no knowledge of it.

Integrity is also essential to having your feet shod with the preparation of peace, it's having a love of the truth. It's desiring to hear from the Lord and doing what he tells you to do. Like in chapter one of Jeremiah when God asks him what he sees, and Jeremiah tells God exactly what he sees, then God's asks him a second time to make sure Jeremiah had integrity. And the Lord is well pleased with him and knew he could use him, and that's what God desires of us.

“Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what seest thou? And I said, I see a rod of an almond tree.

Then said the LORD unto me, Thou hast well seen: for I will hasten my word to perform it.

And the word of the LORD came unto me the second time, saying, What seest thou? And I said, I see a seething pot; and the face thereof [is] toward the north.

Then the LORD said unto me, Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land.” Jer 1:11-13

To sum up the third one, to have your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Which I know that is a very complicated

sentence, but I know God explained it directly. And He's told us that we're in the world so ruminate over those, have some integrity. The lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh and pride of life it's what we want. It's what the flesh needs, wants and cannot escape and there's only one remedy for it. Walk with your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. That means to believe that Jesus Christ is the only solution and he's the one with the way out of lusting after this world. You can't possibly escape, that's what this world is. Drinking in everything that you can see, every influence, every spirit and thirsting after these things, that's what comes here. There's only one remedy, you better walk with Jesus Christ, you better get your feet shod. And you better walk too! You have to do the whole thing. For the preparation of the gospel of peace which is Jesus Christ himself. That's His Truth about what peace really is, and it ain't here! So you have to walk in the Spirit here and go to that. You have the gospel of peace. Peace for your goal is to escape the lust you're going to be drinking in. It surrounds you and it's got you all in. The only way to possibly escape it is to put on the armor and to breath in Christ.

The Lord is using Jeremiah to show us, just do what he tells you, and when He tells you something and shows you something, then you know it. Don't fudge on that, don't back pedal on it, don't do anything, but put that on as your traveling shoes and that's what you're standing in and walking in that's what you're going with. That's what your expectations are. It's the Truth, and integrity is walking in the Truth. Being that, doing it, expecting that, hoping in it knowing that it's not here. And that God is honest, he understands the truth that I'm living here. He hasn't said he wants me to live on a cloud. Only he can orchestrate things, and make things so that I can understand that I'm living in two realms. One is material and one is the expectancy of God's perfection. And that we can walk in that by faith even now. If we simply do what he says and it will be pointing us to our salvation. Therefore we need to be armed, we have to put the armor on because this is a fight. Behind us we're getting attacked and we're just engulfed in this and that's a reality but ahead of us we have to have the armor so we can be living in a

realm by faith that we haven't experienced yet except in the spirit, except by God's protection by his allowing us to walk and remain alive and be healthy in Christ, in the Truth. We have to put on the armor it's an active thing and anything short of doing it properly by seeking the Lord and having him do these things is a lack of integrity and therefore it's no integrity. God wants to be able to count on us, because God isn't making robots. God even tested Jeremiah. He told him I don't want you to show up crying about this and that and the other thing and having second thoughts and being scared of telling people stuff. If you do, I'll make it so you just don't know what's going on, you'll be completely out of it and you will regret that. And Jeremiah showed up more than once and said I don't want to do this anymore. God said fine but next time you see me coming you better run because you won't know anything, and Jeremiah said, "well on second thought..." And a lot of it was a bummer for Jeremiah.

SHIELD OF FAITH

"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." Eph. 6:16

God chooses the weakest vessels (you can't do it, you don't have the courage or strength, you've got to go to Jesus, he's got to do it) to prove that Jesus Christ is the only real strength that can do it. You've got to fight, you can't be a gutless worm because our enemies are not going to stop. It's not bravado on your part, it's trusting in the Lord by faith. You can't say let's just all get along and not make waves with others. You have to stand up for the truth and take measures to protect yourself against all the fiery darts of the your enemies and know that God is on our side. He will take care of you. He will protect you if you do what he says.

When David was a young lad his father told him to bring water to his brothers who were on the front lines battling the Philistines. When David got there he couldn't believe that people wouldn't do anything about Goliath blaspheming God. David was mad. So he (by faith) told King Saul that he would go and kill Goliath. Mockingly Saul said to David, ok boy, put on my armor and it was too big for

David so he took it off. Then he choose 7 stones (7 being the number of perfection) knocked him out, took out Goliath's sword and cut his head off. Courage is someone who has no chance to win but trusts the Lord and fights his battles. After his brothers were pissed off at him they hated him for it. It's all messed up. To exonerate themselves they had to accuse him of bravado but David did it by Faith.

Goliath (standing for The World) says to us what are you going to do about it? It bullies us into conceding to it and we cave in. What can we do? We can rely on God to stop this. Take a stand to no longer accept the bullying of the world. The world is powerful and will mess you up. It doesn't care one bit about you. When you go against it, then it cares and wants to stop you. You need Jesus to save you from the world, your flesh and Satan.

"FAITH comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God." Rom 10:17

Our Pastor had a dream when he was young in the Lord. He saw two David's, and they looked exactly the same but he knew that one was a fake called "Sucker Tanner". He knew who the real David was, by the spirit revealing him, and began to fight the Lord's battles with David. Then the Lord said to him "Judge, judge, judge." Judge righteous judgements and don't go by appearances. God and the world are at enmity against each other and we have to deal with that, it's always a conundrum. Jesus (who is the truth) will let us know what is going on, we can rely on him.

When Satan was tempting Jesus, he could have asked the angels to come and rescue him but he had to rely on God and he had the courage for that. He knew God wins.

"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" 1 John 5:4-5

Anyone who is born of God (born again) has to overcome the world, and if one has overcome the world then they are born of God. If you haven't been born of God you won't ever overcome the world. The person that walks it can overcome because he believes in Jesus. I have to be in him. He is everything to me and for me. He is every part of the armor of God that has to be put on. Jesus is the only one that can defeat sin and death.

What can't overcome the world? Do gooders, politicians, those trying to bring peace to the world, trying to straighten out the world, and self-righteous religious people to name a few. We are told in the scriptures to live in the world but not be of it. The basest of men are the ones in power in this world.

"Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith." Habakkuk 2:4 Satan is against this and is an enemy of it. We shall suffer persecution in this life just like Jesus and all the great men and women of faith. We have to have courage and faith in God.

An example of a person that was afraid and lived by faith was Moses. He was afraid to talk to Pharaoh, so God sent his brother Aaron to help. Moses still had to go before Pharaoh and perform the judgements that God told him to do at the peril of his life. He trusted God to deliver him from the hand of Pharaoh because God told him he would. He didn't presume it, God spoke it to him and therefore he could have faith to do what he had to.

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

For by it the elders obtained a good report." Hebrews 11:1-2

When God was outraged at the Jews for their idolatry, he asked to separate the idolaters from amongst them and commanded that they be killed. The Levites stood up and had to kill their idolatrous brethren because it had to be done. As a reward for their obedience the Levites got to serve the tabernacle and be provided for by God. *"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that*

believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” John 3:36

“For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” Romans 1:17 Live faith to faith in every situation. I have to seek it all the time. Faith comes by hearing from God what he speaks to me. The world needs to be fended off and my flesh. We can’t get faith from psychology, philosophy, political people, etc.

“But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.” Gal 3:11-12 You have to love God above all else. You can’t live by the law, it’s not faith. The Holy Ghost has to apply to word to us, it’s not my ideas about what the word says or me applying the word to a given situation, it has to be given to me by the Holy Ghost.

A few final words about faith. The word says *“...for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” Heb 14:23* That is worthy of pondering. If we take matters into our own hands that is sin or do anything other than what the Holy Ghost tells us. You wonder “How do I get faith?” Through God’s word. You have to go to him to make sure you hear from him and do what he says. God mostly uses his word to speak to us but he also gives us dreams and has things happen in our life to speak to us. As you mature in him you will be able to detect his way of speaking to you and what he uses that’s personal to you. If you’re a sports fan God can use sport things, if you garden he will use that. Whatever he uses must conform to his word. For example, I was sowing seeds in my garden when I was young in the Lord, and I was planting one seed in each hole exactly spaced out according to the directions, and the Lord said to me “Joelle you have to sow more seeds, not all the seeds will grow.” Then he brought to my mind the parable of the sower of the seeds, and I understood the parable more perfectly because the Lord was explaining it to me in a way I

would receive it in the moment that I needed to understand it. That's just one example of how God speaks to us. He can use anything- we have to be looking to him all the time and ready to receive.

Here is a warning from God. "Now the just shall live by faith: But if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Heb 10:38 I have seen people draw back from God after walking with him and you don't want to do that. 2 Peter 2:20 says "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning." People actually do walk away from God and perish, I've seen it amongst people I have known. Many preachers have done it: James Baker, Jimmy Swaggart, and Benny Hinn to name a few. Salvation is something that has to be walked in till the day you die. It's not "Once saved, always saved" as is preached in the church today. You can lose your salvation if you're not wise.

So put on the SHIELD OF FAITH "Wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." Like Abraham, Isaac, David and other great saints live your life from faith to faith, clinging to Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith.

HELMET OF SALVATION

"And take the helmet of salvation," Eph 6:17

"For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ." 1 Cor 2:16

To cover your mind we are instructed to get the mind of Christ about everything. It really is possible to have the mind of Christ and utilize it and walk in it. God does try to get through to us. We need to want to know what Jesus has to say so that we don't get our brains

blown out by the world, Satan or by walking in the vanity of our own minds. You can only do destructive things if you don't go to Jesus.

*“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;
Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;” 2 Cor 10:4-5*

The Holy Ghost needs to teach us, but if you think you know, it's all over and you can't see. If you say “I don't know,” now you can learn. The Holy Ghost can and does teach us. Everything has to be worked in us. We don't have any knowledge, love, patience, etc. until it is built in us by the power of the Holy Ghost.

The fruits of the spirit will grow in us by listening to and doing what Jesus says. There are levels that need to be built on faith. God wants to build things in us quickly it doesn't take years. Drop your ideas and go to him and he will tell you what is going on and what to do. A wise person will do it so they don't get cut down by Satan. You must wear the armor all the time, if you don't, God will not protect you. You need to give things you think to God; if not, Satan will use that against you. If you don't do this you will be denying the power of Jesus Christ saying he couldn't do it for me. You will succumb to Satan, the world, and your flesh.

Jesus died on the cross for us. Your salvation has been bought with his very own blood so that we can walk a perfect life here (which is just doing the Father's will). Keep that part of the helmet of salvation on your mind as you walk through the trials of this life. Think about the examples of the saints that have gone on before us that have achieved victory from all their enemies, proving God is true. He will cover you if you do his will. But don't think that it's going to be a piece of cake here; consider the biblical testimonies of what other saints have gone through as examples of what to expect in this world and what Satan will do to you, but know that Jesus promises that we too can overcome just like he did. He also had

to overcome the wiles of Satan. He fought against the false religion of Israel (his very own people and also family members) and all the pressures of the world. That is why he is our Savior. He had to overcome so that we, through his guidance and the power of the Holy Ghost, can walk in truth and overcome all our enemies. So keep that helmet on and get your Savior's mind on everything, and you will be walking in salvation all the time.

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Phil 4:13

SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

The only offensive weapon that we do have in this deadly fight.

"and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:" Eph. 6:17

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Heb 4:12 It says this about everyone; the word of God gets to everyone, it covers every aspect of the human creature. Jesus is suppose to be living and abiding in me. He is the Word of God. The Word of God has life in it and it's Jesus and He has overcome death.

The Word of God can have a powerful effect on our lives if we let the Holy Ghost apply it to our hearts and mind. It can divide my soulish, earthly, fleshly life and give me true spiritual life that has real eternal power. I can be changed from being a slave to sin and lusts to having great freedom to live a perfect life in Christ. The Truth (which only comes from Jesus Christ) does set me free in every situation that I am dealing with on any given day. It doesn't come from me, it has to come from Jesus revealing the truth to me. That is the sword of the spirit, which is the Word of God, which is the only weapon in the armor of God that we have as Christians.

God's word is a universe. The only way to know it is to live it. God says heaven and earth will pass away but His Word will never pass away. What He says is that it will never become useless; forever it's eternal. Jesus is the Word and he lives forever, He is life, He is everything. The Word will never become obsolete. It's never going to pass away.

We are a tri-part person. The soul and spirit- there is a difference between the two, and God's word is designed to separate them. We need the Lord to show us the truth about this fact. We need to respect this and acknowledge it and the forces of Satan attacking all of it. Living soulish robs you of the spirit and life. You end up doing good works, which God hates. If it's about good works why did Jesus come? A lot of false religion is born out of man not knowing anything about being a tri-part person. Men thinking we can do something or being self-righteous on our own.

My soul wants to keep my spirit dead. It's a conflict within me. Without life in me, I am one royally messed up dude. I can't even know this without life coming in to show me. Jesus Christ needs to be living in me and I must allow him to kill things in me. I have to be all in. Jesus gives me the tools to do this, which is the Holy Ghost, so we have no excuse not to succeed.

The scriptures say *"For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ."* 1 Cor 2:16 Prayerfully reading and considering the scriptures with the Holy Ghost, we can get Christ's thoughts on what he thinks and wants us to do.

It's very helpful for us to keep this particular scripture in our back pocket all the time. It tells us what Jesus Christ will do for me as my saviour:

"For he put on righteousness (rightness, truth, no bull, the truth contingent on The Word- Jesus) as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke.

According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompence to his enemies; to the islands he will repay recompence.

So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him.” Isaiah 59:17-19

Jesus is our Messiah and He will recompense our adversaries and take vengeance, it's not up to us to do this. We need to stand up and fight for the truth but God says vengeance is his.

Satan and his demons are our greatest enemy “*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*” Eph 6:12 It is so important to be delivered from your heritage and the traditions of your fathers.

In Mark 5:1-20 Jesus gives us a very serious demonstration about the battle that we will always be in. There was a man that was so demonically possessed that he lived in the tombs. In truth, the man was dead of any true life and unable to be with anyone else. He was a tortured and tormented soul by very real and powerful demons and Jesus had compassion on him. Without Jesus, that man was going to hell. There was no way he was going to be freed from the demons that had possessed him. Jesus was doing what his father commissioned him to do and part of his ministry is the “*opening of the prison to them that are bound*” Isa 61:1. I just want to take a moment to say He is still alive today doing the same works.

When questioned by Jesus the demons identify themselves by saying they are a legion that are possessing the man. In fear that Jesus would torment them (the demons) before their times they ask to be sent into the swine. They entered the swine and the swine ran into to sea and drowned. Jesus lets the spirits go into swine because it's very symbolic of what they really are, filthy pigs. The possessed man use to beat people up that went that way. No one could do anything about it. Jesus saved the man by delivering him of all those

spirits. The people in the town were pissed off because they lost all their pigs- which was, they were more concerned about losing their money that the pigs would have brought them than for a man to be delivered and set free from demons. They proceed to violently tell Jesus to get out of town. Jesus not caving to the pressures of the whole town delivered the man because it was God's will. He wasn't going to do anything else. He saved the man that didn't deserve to be saved because Jesus had pity for him and for that reason alone the people ran him out of town. The townspeople no doubt went around spreading bad gossip about Jesus.

There are a lot of other points that can be discovered in this account but it reveals the spiritual battle that rages on and how spirits use people. Most importantly the need for us when we begin a new life in Christ needs to be delivered from inherited spirits from our family line and renouncing our part with demonic activity.

Whether that is ouija board, fortune-telling, astrology, walking in the vanity of our own minds, or good works just to name a few. The demons have legal claims on us that we need to be delivered from and only Jesus can deliver us from those active forces in our own being. We need to renounce those hidden things of our hearts and be delivered to Jesus Christ our saviour to protect ourselves against the wiles of the devil.

When you walk by faith you will always be battling the world, your family, friends, your own flesh, Satan and his minions. Make sure you are using your sword which is the Word of God (Jesus).

"Dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow," Joints and marrow, your body, these have a lot to do with life. You have movement, life, communication, relationship, touching, getting feelings, being able to communicate back and forth, like love- that's life; death doesn't have that. That's why some human beings are living but have no life in them, which is most people, they aren't communicating back and forth with Jesus who is life.

We are created in God's image. The word of God is life. It shows me things, I can't know them without Jesus Christ showing me this. A man who dies without understanding is like an animal. If you don't

understand you will be dead. Hell is to be put in a coffin and have it nailed shut, never being able to react to stimuli or life forever.

We all hold onto our own precious ideas or things that we give birth to and won't let go of them. We need to give those up and let the Lord sort them out. In all reality, we look like the hobbit's naked, scared and greedy little guy (Gollum) holding onto things that aren't good for us. God was so blown away when Solomon said I don't know how to come in and go out. I don't know anything, can you give me wisdom and everything I need to know. Because of that God said I am going to give you everything. Money, prestige, power etc., God said he hadn't seen anything like that in all his days.

The word is more powerful than anything, more powerful than a two-edged sword. It's everything, it will separate you from the things that are separating you from life. It will get you connected with life all the time. So cast all your cares upon him, for he careth for you, and pray without ceasing (which is just you asking Jesus to show you the truth and help you with everything).

"For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled." Luke 21:22 That in those days all things will be fulfilled. How much of the book of Zephaniah is about the end? God says in Zephaniah that he has had enough and says the laundry list of things that he's fed up with. For these be the days of vengeance when all these things will be fulfilled. Vengeance is killing and hurting never to rise again.

God took Josiah out, who demanded of the people to bow down to God's word. For that, God took him out of the day of vengeance that fell at that time. There is a day coming when everyone is getting what they have coming to them. That day is coming soon. It's all coming to ultimate vengeance when all things will be settled. Revelation states that. Josiah got killed by an arrow, he got killed and it wasn't his fault. He died in a lot of pain fighting the Lord's battle. You shouldn't belong and be getting along in this world. You need to stand and fight the Lord's battles like Josiah and David did so you too can escape the judgement that is about to fall on the whole earth.

Some people will be put to death – but Jesus says not a hair on their head will perish; they won't be able to hurt you. It's not about this life, our bodies, etc.

*“in your patience possess ye your souls,
And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.
But there shall not an hair of your head perish.
In your patience possess ye your souls.
And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then
know that the desolation thereof is nigh.
Then let them which are in Judæa flee to the mountains; and
let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not
them that are in the countries enter thereinto.
For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are
written may be fulfilled.” Lk 21:17-22*

The word of God is a great sword for us, we must rely on it. He will use his Word and relate His words to us.

*“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than
any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder
of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a
discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Heb 4:12*

Soul is a counterfeit- if you don't let God separate this you will be very sorry. Even our body, our wants, and the thoughts and the intents of the heart. I need to go to God to tell me the intents of my heart. God's word is meant to expose the thoughts and intents of my heart. My body, soul, and spirit can be separated by God and His word.

You have to pick up your cross daily, we can't just say we want to die and then it's a done deal. It boils down to saying “I don't know.” Waiting to hear from God. Love God's word; He had people write it down for us so we can learn and know what to do. He will confirm it to us. We can't have our intentions and what we think is good. In death we are precious in the sight of God, every time we die in

things. The only things Jesus cares about is God and what he wants. We should fall in love with it and know it's the only thing that can bring life. It takes faith, you have to be a disciplined follower of Jesus, they have complete faith that He is the one. It's a set of heart. You can't determine what to die to, we have to be shown. Satan will accuse us. You have to stay clear of your own will. It's a battle all the time. Daily pick up your cross and be clad in the armor. God knows this is really difficult. The Holy Ghost is our guide and tutor. He truly loves to do this for us that is why he is here.

“And that, knowing the time, that now [it is] high time to awake out of sleep: for now [is] our salvation nearer than when we believed.

The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to [fulfil] the lusts [thereof].” Rom 13:11-14

132. The Fruits of The Spirit

A Little Summary

by Terry M Smith

LOVE Love is the root and foundation of all the fruits of the spirit. Love must be in a state of growth before any of the other fruits can take root in our spirit. Love is selflessness; it is the restriction of all selfishness; the lack of all fear of not having personal glory or gain. Love is summarized and defined completely in this single phrase: “*God is Love.*” 1 John 4:8 It is well itemized in 1 Corinthians 13. Love restricts the flesh, which is often rightly defined as the ego. Love is not puffed up, does not vaunt itself, does not behave unseemly, seeks not its own, thinks no evil, is not easily provoked, hates iniquity, never envies and cannot fail. But love is like the Divine Nature; it rejoices in the truth, is kind, is long-suffering. It believes all things that God wishes to be, it endures all that God desires it should endure, bears all God’s burdens, and hopes for the fulfillment of all of God’s future plans. The death of the flesh and the forsaking of the self-conscious ego allows love in the door of our heart. Love is God’s character, His way and the very essence of His being. It is the foundation of all the glorious fruits of the Spirit which are cultivated by faith in dying to self so that the resurrected Christ may find room and become welcome to abide in us.

JOY “*The joy of the Lord is my strength.*” Neh 8:10 So the Scripture entreats. Joy, as a spiritual fruit, is not earthly or carnal joy, but joy that derives from the bosom of God. We are anointed with the oil of gladness by our protracted desires and effort of will to praise God for all of His manifold mercies toward us, “*who daily loadeth us with benefits.*” Ps 68:19 Our joy is not confined or conditioned on factors of worldly joy or the style and luxury we may enjoy, or the approval of man we might win to our side. Applause, esteem and awards of men, recognition, or success in the world do not give rise to our

joy, in fact, they often end up diminishing our joy. In Christ, we are cultivated in and by the Spirit to rejoice in God's love and grace bestowed upon us on a daily basis. In the end, this is what makes God joyous; this is what makes our spirit beam with joy. Our joy, our true, abiding and lasting joy subsists in union with God's desires and His joy. This is the meaning of *"the joy of the Lord is my strength"*, and the essence of the spiritual fruit of joy. My joy will be derived from what God takes pleasure in and when He is happy and glad. God's joy being realized is what strengthens my soul and blesses my spirit. The joy of the Lord, therefore, will be and is, my strength.

PEACE The fruit of Peace is the peace that passeth all understanding. What peace could this be? It is the ability to stand in the presence of God feeling no condemnation or apprehension. It certainly must be a heavenly fruit because no man can alone stand before God. It is a peace won by the blood of Jesus Christ that has purchased all forgiveness of unrighteousness in God's eyes. If I am obedient to Christ I am reassured of God's love for me. *"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."* Phil 4:7 The peace of the Spirit is the growing assurance that we are in God's loving care that *"all things work together for good to those who love God, to them who are called according to His purpose."* Rom 8:28 This peace allows us to be used by Him because when we are at peace with Him we can trust Him. We have been reconciled to God by Christ and we are now partakers of the ministry of reconciliation of Christ. The peace of the Spirit is not peace with the world, for Christ came not to bring peace but a sword to the world, but we are at peace with our creator. When we are obedient peace abides in our heart we can stand in the presence of Almighty God with assurance of faith.

LONGSUFFERING The fruit of longsuffering is often thought to be just another word for patience, but patience is much more than longsuffering since it is a requirement for the growth of all the fruits. Longsuffering is the maintenance of hope and the forbearance of faults in other. When we are longsuffering toward a person or their deeds we are as Jesus who was able to put up with

the ignorance of the disciples and the “little faith” of His closest friends without condemning them. His longsuffering spirit was able to teach them in spite of these frustrations which at times vexed His soul. Longsuffering is the willingness to aid the feeble-minded and to help those who are weak in the faith. It is able to pardon faults in others and forgive even those who have committed wrongs against us. *“And be at peace among yourselves. Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.”* 1 Thess 5:13-15 Jesus exhibited His longsuffering character when Peter tried to talk Him out of going to Jerusalem to be crucified and when John and James wanted to call fire down on the Samaritans. Both times the disciples did not know what spirit was urging them on, but Jesus did not reject them, He merely corrected them. Perhaps the greatest instance of longsuffering was on the cross when he said, *“Forgive them Father for they know not what they do.”* Luke 23:34

GENTLENESS The early Christian writer Irenaeus associated the fruit of gentleness with what he called “childliness.” Jesus said, *“Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.”* Mark 10:15 We must come to God with a child’s faith and trust. This is being gentle towards the Spirit of God. The fruits are an expression of Christ’s character and He too was and is a son. He always goes to the Father in a humble and gentle manner. He always paid honor and respect to the Father as a dutiful child. As a child is unassuming and trusting, so gentleness of spirit exhibits the same qualities. *“speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men.”* Titus 3:2

GOODNESS Goodness is simply godliness. Being a partaker of the Divine Nature means partaking of God’s character and godliness is fundamental to being like God. *“Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”* 2 Tim 2:22. Godliness is the forsaking of self. All selfishness, self-consciousness and self-pity. Godliness is the

propensity to look to the things of others and come in the spirit of a true servant. Resisting all temptations of the flesh makes room for attitudes and actions of godliness. Godliness is the true positive outlook on life, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”* Phil 4:8 The spiritual fruit of goodness expresses the wholesome and clean spirit of God.

FAITH Faith is unique among the fruits because it is the only characteristic that is common to the Scriptural list of both the gifts and the fruits of the Spirit. Faith is given by the Spirit and is grown in us. It is a two way street: the gift of God and a fruit that is cultivated through prayer and by asking God Himself to increase it in us. The Word itself is the food that supplies the energy that causes faith to grow in us; *“faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”* Rom 10:17 Since faith is either given to us by God or grown in us by the Spirit it is obtained in purely spiritual ways through our relationship with God and, therefore, has spiritual substance and reality. *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.”* Heb 11:1-3 God sees to it that our faith is confirmed by evidence and that it takes on substance. Through faith we are told that we gain understanding of things which cannot be discerned with our physical senses.

MEEKNESS *“The meek also shall increase their joy in the LORD, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel,”* so the prophet Isaiah reports. Isa 29:19 Meekness is the forsaking of our own way and rejoicing in God’s will. This attitude will strengthen us in the inner man though we appear weak on the outside. The Bible tells us that Moses, the mighty man of God was *“very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.”* Num 12:3 In his lack of self-reliance and his recognition of God’s power Moses found true

strength. The Psalmist sang, *“the meek shall inherit the earth: and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.”* Ps 37:11 It was this Psalm Jesus referred to when He said, *“blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.”* Matt 5:5 Humble meekness allows us to enter into the treasury of God’s wealth. When we are weak, or meek and humble, then He can be strong in us. This is the meaning of: *“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”* Phil 4:13 The prophet summed up the fruit of meekness in this command: *“He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”* Mic 6:8

TEMPERANCE As the fruit of Love is needed as a nutrient for all the other fruits, temperance is an aggregate of all the fruits combined. Temperance is more than just abstaining from lusts and carnal appetites, though it is certainly that. Temperance is the balance of all the fruits together so that nothing but love dominates. Temperance blends and molds joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness and meekness with the right proportion of faith. Temperance sees to it that the fruits are put at God’s disposal according to His timing and His need. *“Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost. And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.”* Rom15:13-14 Our joy, peace, goodness and faith, along with the other fruits will be made evident in our natural operation of a daily life in Christ through our temperate and modest life.

133. A Prayer in the Garden

Desiring Spiritual Fruit

by LeRoy Gardenier

We should all be familiar with the account recorded in the gospels of how Jesus took the disciples into the Garden of Gethsemane and prayed. It was here, shortly before the betrayal that would lead him from his friends into the hands of his death sentencers, where He agonized over the death he would soon suffer. Sweat-like drops of blood fell from him as he sought the Father in earnest prayer, *"Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."* Luke 22:42 Jesus knew the business of his Father and had come to do his will and expressed this to his disciples before they left to go to the garden as we see in John 14:31, *"...as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence."* Jesus was always in communion with the Father showing us the necessity of prayer for accomplishing God's will.

It was here in the garden where Jesus brought three privileged disciples, Peter, James and John. They left the other disciples behind and followed Jesus further on into the garden. These are the same three who Jesus took to witness his transfiguration on the mountain and who also accompanied him at his side when he raised the daughter Jairus from the dead. Now Jesus left them to pray at only a stone's throw away and told them to remain and "pray that they would not enter into temptation".

After this we see in Matt 26:40-41, *"And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."*

This passage has gotten my attention and has raised some questions in my heart. Who is Jesus addressing? I'm inclined to take this personally as though Jesus were speaking directly to me, but what about it? Could this have any significance for them who seek to serve our Lord, to do His bidding? We are told in the books of Matthew and Mark that Jesus was speaking to Peter and in Luke, it says that he spoke "unto them". Peter does seem to be the one whom the Lord pointed out but certainly, the others were involved and needed to take heed to what Jesus said and I believe those who want to serve the Lord should also.

It may be helpful to look at Peter and ask what sort of man he was and can we relate to him at all? Jesus spoke to Peter, I believe, because his character symbolizes the general character of man in many ways. Peter was a great apostle because he was determined to serve and follow Jesus. Peter once said to Jesus while expressing his devotion to him *"I will lay down my life for thy sake"*. John 13:37

Peter wanted it all from the Lord as we see in John 13:6-9, *"Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, what I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head."*

But Peter's flesh was weak and susceptible to the influences of Satan, and in his own zeal, offended the Lord. We see in Matthew 16:21-23,

"From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get

thee behind me, Satan: Thou art an offense unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." Peter certainly had a need for the fruit of meekness and a humbleness of heart. Peter had much confidence in himself and hesitated little when *"he said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee."* Matt 26:35

Yet we know that, just as Jesus had prophesied, Peter denied knowing Jesus three times. Peter walked on water at the Lord's bidding, yet he began to sink as his faith was shaken. He recognized and declared to Jesus, *"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."* Matt 16:16

It was apparent in the heart of Peter that he had a great desire to serve the Lord, Jesus. But he could not yet serve him in meekness and humbleness of spirit. The apostles were greatly privileged to have been instructed in God's business. When James, John and Peter were told by the Lord to remain where they were and to watch and pray, He was speaking to his friends and followers who He had informed about God's business (read John 14-16). Jesus told them that He was leaving and what would soon happen to them. Jesus told them all what would have to happen concerning his death and resurrection. He explained that He would be leaving them but soon return before going to the Father, and that He would one day come back for them and bring them to the heavenly place He was preparing for them. They were told that after He was gone He would send to them the Holy Spirit to comfort and teach them. He said and explained to them *"whither I go ye know, and the way ye know."* John 14:4. He called them His friends in John 15:14-15, *"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have made known unto you."* They were informed and knew what was God's business, yet they slept and did not "watch and pray" as Jesus had told them to do for the sake of avoiding temptation. *"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation..."* Matt 26:41. Hard times were soon coming upon his

friends and he wanted them to be prepared. Jesus knew the likes of Peter and the others, including us, when he said “...*the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*”

When Jesus was taken by the soldiers Peter cut off the right ear of the high priest's servant, with which Jesus responded, “*Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?*” John 18:11 Peter's spirit was willing but his flesh was weak. Peter was impetuous and in need of temperance.

The following is recorded of Peter's third denial of association with Jesus, “*Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.*” Matt 26:74-75 Here was another act of intemperance to be sure, which had been set up by his impetuous self-confidence.

All this was redeemed by the Lord after his resurrection when Peter, the Lord's friend, was given the opportunity to publicly tell Jesus three times that he loved him. Jesus responded each time with “*Then feed my sheep.*” John 21:16 At a time before Jesus' death Peter's faith had already pleased the Lord, for he was the disciple who spoke out when Jesus asked them who they say He is. Peter's pleasing response was, “*Thou are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*” Matt 16:16.

At the last supper Jesus spoke much about the Holy Ghost, calling Him the Spirit of Truth and the Comforter. He knew the lives of the Apostles would be greatly changed when the Father sent the Spirit to dwell in them. “*Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.*” John 14:17 Everything changed for Peter and the apostles after they received the baptism of the Holy Ghost. His impetuosity could be changed into temperance. Peter's pride could be blanked by the Spirit who could grow meekness in him. Peter, especially, became a bold preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but it did not have

to be with pride or bravado. Now the fruit of faith could make it a fruitful and truthful matter. Thousands of lost souls were won to Christ's kingdom and baptized in the name of Jesus and of the Holy Ghost. Under the authority of Jesus, by the lively power of the Holy Ghost, Peter healed the lame and raised the dead. He preached with boldness and refused to cease, even when under great persecution. But Peter did not always hold firm in his deliverance and in the garden of his fruits. He bowed to the sect of Judaizers and was ashamed to eat with the Gentile Christians, for which God had to rebuke him. It is not that we never slip it is only important that we truly repent and retain our living status of deliverance and our place among the garden of fruit which God has grown in us. By the power of the Holy Ghost Peter was instructed in a vision to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles and began a great expanse in the Kingdom of all Christians are able to eat of if they are wise. With the indwelling presence of God's Spirit now alive in the hearts of the apostles, Peter and Paul and the rest and all the obedient and informed friends of Christ, they were now able to remain alert, watching and praying, and to avoid falling into delusion and temptation.

For the believer today, those of us who are born of the flesh and the spirit (born-again) and have received the full baptism of the Holy Ghost, just as the apostles had, our lives need not be any less than the apostles who were preaching the Gospel two thousand years ago. If God's written word has informed us of his business, whether through prophecy, or instruction by exhortation, or recorded examples, and if the Spirit speaks his word in our hearts, then we have heard His voice and know what our Lord is doing. Let us do whatever He commands us so we, too, might be called the friends of Jesus. *"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."* John 15:14-15 Like Peter, we may have a desire to serve the Lord and the Lord may even call upon us to intimately partake with Him, as he did with the apostles in the Garden. It might be to labor in

prayer, to preach the Word of salvation to the lost, to exhort the saints to a greater faith, to instruct in the Word, to stay at home and minister to our households, to go to work or school and wait for openings made by the Spirit, or write a letter to a friend and offer our only Hope. Whatever our calling is we also need to heed the instruction given to Peter and the others to “*watch and pray*”, lest we fall into temptation. Our spirit is willing, but certainly our flesh is weak. Jesus doesn’t want his friends “sleeping on the job” or to put it more clearly, complacent.

By watching and praying, what sort of temptations might we possibly avoid falling prey to? How about the ones where we say in our hearts, “Not today Lord, I’m tired”, or “I’m too busy with important things in my life”, or “I’m scared!”, or “How about something else Lord, this just doesn’t seem important enough”. The list could go on forever. Jesus knows this and that is why He gives us directives like watching and praying. It is why he said “*the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*” It’s the battle so often presented to us in the scriptures of the Spirit against the flesh. Paul instructs us “*This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.*” Gal 5:16-17 Remember how everything changed for Peter and the apostles after the Spirit came to dwell, not just with them, but in them. They, who are examples to us, were walking in the Spirit. Look around today, aren’t there some living examples for us to see in our churches and fellowships? Ask the Lord to show us. We want to be His servants and long to call ourselves His friends, and we can be by remembering that our spirit is willing but our flesh is weak. The fruits of faith, meekness and temperance teach us and help us to not trust in the flesh. The flesh wars against these sweet fruits of the Spirit. Let our willing spirit be possessed by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is our only surety of being able friends of Jesus and make us the bearers of abundant fruit. Let the Spirit tell us what to watch for and what to pray about while we learn to heed the words of

Jesus. *“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation...”* Friends of Jesus, remember this. Jesus said, *“If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.”* John 14:23

And, the thing that glorifies our Father in heaven is fruit born by His children. Nothing short of fruit, LOVE, JOY, PEACE, LONGSUFFERING, GOODNESS, GENTLENESS, FAITH, MEEKNESS AND TEMPERANCE, et. al. – shall do.

134. Glorifying the Great Gardener with a Cornucopia of the Fruits of the Spirit

Cultivating the Fruits of the Spirit

by T Myers Smith

The book of James puts it in these terms: “Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only” James 1:33. John’s first epistle says our love of God and man is proven by our obedience to His Word, “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments.” 1 John 5:2

In essence, the critical thing about our life in Christ is not how results are obtained and fruits are produced by how good the results and how good the fruits are. How useful are they to the purposes of God in enriching His kingdom. In other words, the tools God uses to grow the fruits are secondary in importance to the fruits. Just as a rototiller, shovel, rake and hoe are important instruments in the hands of the gardener yet incidental compared to the purpose for which they are employed for the tool is only to see to it that fruits grow to maturity for the enjoyment and consumption of the ‘gardener’ and his purposes.

The fruits, therefore, are the bottom line of the spiritual life. Without them coming to being and growing to maturity our lives are extensively failures, fruitless and barren. If the peach tree does not have sweet peaches for our eating its reason for being, even if it gives shade, for other trees are better suited for this purpose, is not realized. It is nothing more than an ornamental tree and no glory is given to the gardener who expects sweet fruit to nourish his

household and garnish the table of his friends. There are too many “ornamental” Christians who make a good show of being fruitful, but in truth bear no fruit for the Master’s use. Like a peach tree, we were not created for show. We were not given new birth for the sake of the gifts of the spirit, neither for knowledge, great preaching, beautiful writing, or fine evangelizing; but to bring forth the fruits of the spirit. This is most true of the call to brideship. It is the ultimate reason why we have been chosen to live a life in Christ.

As the apostle Paul notes in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 *“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of the angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.”*

Without love (the primary fruit, under which all others bow in submission) then all the most wonderful prophecies and sweet sounding spiritual utterances are just so much racket and clatter. Without the fruits, all knowledge of the Word and every deep revelation of God ends up as just a Brooks Brothers suit by which we dress up our pride. Even faith to heal or to do miracles which have the power to transform vulgar reality into true new reality will result in nothing in the end, unless it is done by the majesty of God’s loving works. Every charitable act and good work, if done apart from love, will profit the laborer nothing at all. Only the fruit of the spirit can make things count, make things eternally real. Without love, Paul contends, we are just a bag of hot air amounting to nothing and being of no profit to God or, ultimately even to ourselves.

The Gifts Are Tools In The Hand Of The Great Gardener

The Gifts of the Spirit, as enumerated in 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12 (along with other scriptures) are tools in the hands of the Great Gardener (The Husbandman) and they should not be despised or discarded any more than a gardener would refuse the use of tilling, watering, pruning and weeding implements. The gifts and

knowledge are vital but they are not the end all. They may look impressive, as they duly are, but they are not what glorifies The Father. Christ when plainly spoke at the Last Supper. The Father He equates to a Gardener and He said He is the vine. *“Here in is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.”* John 15:8 So then, it is not a spectacular show of faith, not the wisdom of Solomon, not compelling preaching in the Church, or even outstanding knowledge of the Word that glorifies God the Father, but the fruits of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance – and the like. We could add righteousness, patience, brotherly kindness and mercy as other godly fruit. These fruits give glory to God the Father for they prove His love is true, His mercy strong and enduring, His care for Man beyond doubt or reproach. The way to glorify God is to see to it that the fruits have room to grow in our lives and hearts. We must allow the Great Gardener to do His work in us. We must permit the use of His tools such as the gifts of the Spirit, the Word of truth and fellowshiping with the body of faithful believers as tools for His use in us and for us. Quench not the spirit, we are told. Despise not prophesyings we are warned. Receive with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save our souls. The word is given to us to make our souls healthy, to reform, transform and conform our souls into the image of Christ. Forsake not the assembling of yourselves and be sure to share fruit among the body, for the eating and mutual consumption of the works God has wrought in the believer are critical for their continued fertilization, flowering and fruition.

But, sadly, if we have no godly fruit, which is the only fruit fit for consumption in the household of faith, then we have nothing to contribute to the banquet of the body of Christ. If we do not have the true fruits all we will have are the plastic fruits of hypocrisy or the rotten fruit of disobedience, which is of no use to God’s table. Just as the Father is the true Gardener so Christ is the single Vine from which all other good and fruitful branches must stem.

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." John 15:1-8

Apart from Christ we can do nothing. In Him we can glorify God by showing forth the power of Christ's love in the fruits that are truly exhibited in our lives. Anything else is sheer talk and vanity. If a branch does not bring forth fruit for the Master's use then it will be thrown on the rubbish pile, even the hard woody, gnarled, dead branches from the vine are of no use on the compost pile. They are burned along with the rest of the burdensome debris left over from the death of a fruitless winter.

135. By Prayer, By Separation From World

A New Testament Spiritual Priest

by Terry Smith

If the Gifts of the Spirit, the Word of Truth and the Body of Christ are the tools used in the employ of the Master Gardener to bring forth fruit in the Vine, what shall we say about the techniques which He employs in bringing about the growth of fruit in His 'branches'?

Two primary rules of cultivation employed in the spirit by God are first, prayer and then separation. Prayer is the means in which we can become sanctified, or separated. Being separated from the world and sin is the only path to true holiness and the only setting in which good fruit can flourish and become pleasant nutrients in God's Holy Kingdom. That which is separated unto God, or sanctified, is that thing which is first separated from sin and returned back to God, its creator and rightful owner. This separation from sin and a subsequent attachment to God is the pure definition of holiness. That which has been separated out so that it can be separated exclusively to God. Just as the plant must be put in the right place to flourish, so prayer puts the Christian in the right place to have the fruits come forth. And, just as the plant must be isolated from other contending elements like weeds, pestilence and bugs that would take desperately needed nutrients away, so the believer who desires to bring fruits to maturity must be isolated from the injurious things of the world.

It is in these two states, prayer and separation from the world, that the methods of spiritual cultivation and gardening are able to have effect. We are the plants, God is the gardener. As every gardener has a method and applies knowledge and skill in utilizing his specialized tools; the Spirit knows how and when to use each

instrument and for what end it is designed. He knows where to place the plants, whether in the shade, the direct sunlight, or along a fence. He knows what kind of soil is needed, sandy or rich. He understands how much room a plant requires between rows, what kind of pestilence it may be subject to, when and how heavily to water it, how to prune and fertilize it, and when the fruit is ready for harvest, and when it is in a dormant state. The farmer applies his tools to a method of cultivation, and so it is with God, our Father in the Spirit, who is the Great Gardener.

Jesus told a parable about God The Gardener and the cultivation process that takes place in the kingdom of God. *“He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.”* Luke 13:6-9

The “certain man” at the opening of the parable is God who has planted, by the power of His Word, a soul in His vineyard. He has prepared the soil and laid the groundwork for a person to be reborn and thrive in the spirit. And after a while, He comes to see His plant has realized its reason for existence: namely, that it has brought forth fruit for the Master’s use. When He finds no fruit he tells the vinedresser, which can be understood to be Christ and His body, to cut it down and get rid of it. *“Why does it cumber the ground”*, he says with a certain tone of disgust and frustration. All it is doing is taking up space, sucking up water, and requiring precious resources spent on it in vain. The fig tree in this parable is any individual person of the commonwealth of God. As we are warned in the words of the Last Supper, if we do not bear fruit we shall be cast away and burnt like any other useless flotsam and jetsam. The reborn-soul is being spoken to by God and has been planted in the kingdom by God Himself, but He will not put up with a fruitless, disobedient, and evil servant forever. God will not strive with man forever.

Cultivation Begins With Prayer

In His mercy, the Father allows for repeated attempts at cultivating the fruits in one of His precious “branches” to be made. The cultivation process begins with prayer. The vinedressers (the body of Christ) have asked God to give the fruitless tree some more time. God is asked for some favor. This represents prayer in this parable. It is a prayer request of hope and patience. Christ and His body beseech the Father to let some more cultivation take place on this soul before it is uprooted and cast away. An unfruitful and impossible situation can be turned around by spiritual cultivation. First, a plea of hope, a petition of mercy is granted by The Great Gardener, at the request of the body. Prayer, making the request for the chance that fruits may grow, by and for ourselves, or for others in the body of Christ, is the first and most important step in the cultivation of the fruits. Cultivation of the fruits, then, is mounted on faith and established by prayer. Without prayer and faith in God the fruits cannot even begin to grow. We have to trust God that the fruits will grow.

*“And he said, so is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground;
and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.
For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.
But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.” Mark 4:26-29*

Key to our understanding here is the phrase, we knoweth not how. For the growth of the spiritual fruits are so foreign to our natural impulses and the instincts of our carnal nature that we cannot naturally believe that they will grow in us. We cannot, by our own will power, talent, righteousness or discipline make spiritual fruits grow in us. But it is by faith, through prayer and belief in the power of Christ and His shed blood that the Divine attributes of the fruits of the Spirit can actually take root in us and come to full fruition.

Prayer is the first evidence with God of our faith in Him for the growth of the fruits. It sets all further cultivation in motion. We must ask God for the fruits to grow in us and expect that He will see to it, by His loving care, that they will grow in us and expect that He will see to it, by His loving care that they will grow in us. As a plant reaching out of the shade desperately climbing to life-giving sunlight, we must desire through prayer that the sunlight of Christ will shine so brightly on us and nourish us that the fruits will begin to bud, blossom and ripen within us and crown our whole being to the glory of God.

Prayer is the first method and requisite for growth of the fruits in a believer. That is the beginning of cultivation of fruit. As placement of a plant in the right spot and soil condition is key to its health and fruitfulness, so prayer is key to the growth of spiritual fruit. Prayer opens the heavens and the skies and lets the light of growth shine directly on us. As the vinedresser did, we must ask in faith, counting on the Master's mercy, so we can be tended to and our fruits can grow to maturity.

SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD IS A NECESSITY

Second to prayer in the cultivation of the fruits is the separation, or isolation, of the plant. The vinedresser, often in the person of members of the body of Christ, praying in the name of Jesus for the fruitless person, have asked for opportunity to apply spiritual methods of cultivation. Just as the vinedresser in the parable, we must beseech the Father to keep the plant rooted so that efforts in the spirit can be made to coax the plant into bringing forth fruit.

The notion of separation is signified in the action of the dresser to "dig around" the tree. A person must have the soil of his heart turned over by the Spirit of God and through the preaching and receiving of the Word in his soul. Faith to believe God's Word so that action upon it can result is a process that requires digging and turning. As with any plant, the weeds must be removed so precious nutrients are not competed for and depleted by idolatry or any other form of spiritual competition. Water (the Word) that life-giving fluid must reach to the tap-root so life can be sustained in every single cell of

our being. We do not want any good part of us to wither and die. The plant must get the necessary sunlight so it can convert elements of the water and nutrients of the soil into food and energy. For these things to take place the plant must stand alone in a proper setting so it can be free to get what it needs. Spiritual Man is no different. If the fruits are to grow we must be segregated. Come out and be ye separate and touch not the unclean thing, is the Bible's direct plea. We must drink up the water of God's Word and bask in the life-giving light of Jesus Christ and none other. But our segregation is not only to God, it is also away from the World which is poison to the spirit. A Christian must let the Holy Ghost till the soil of their heart in order to receive His judgment and deliverance from sin – the deadly scourge that shrivels the fruits in us. The Christian must allow God to cut them off from the wisdom of the World and become isolated from the sin and weight that “so easily besets us”. This means the Bride will not believe in or believe the doctrines of the World. She will forsake her worldly judgment, not lean to her own understanding, but trust the Holy Ghost to be her guide and to be her voice. Those who hear the Word of God and do it are the true family of Christ.

The dresser also promised to “dung” the tree. He said, in essence, that he would feed it. We too must realize that a primary process in the cultivation of separation is fertilization. Manure is required. To us, it may not be the most pleasant of processes. It may even be odious. This is the trusting of the Holy Ghost to judge us of our sin, to give us the foul smell of ourselves and our sinful fruits and to feed us with the Truth. How repugnant is the dunging process compared to the sweet smell of the fruits of the Spirit which are afterward produced. We must accept this offensive procedure if the fruits are to take hold and overpower the smell of our sin. We are not favored or understood in the World when this process of “dunging” in us, or in others we are ministering to, is underway. It naturally separates us from the World. We must accept this separation and the persecution which follows.

The cultivation of the fruits exacts a price sometimes hard to bear.

It demands a faith and a willingness to allow the Great Gardener to divorce us from the world, to dig around us and make us unpleasant to those about us. But when the fruits begin to grow it makes our painful separation from old familiar worlds all worth it. First, the blossoms come forth with an aroma of beauty and then the much-awaited fruits are ready to be harvested by God for use and consumption at His table for His household.

136. The Rechabites: A Separated People

Cultivation of the Fruits of the Spirit

by LeRoy Gardenier

There has been renewed interest lately in the ancient tribes of Israel. In certain quarters, focus has been placed once again on the legendary “Lost Tribes of Israel”. These vulnerable families were, in fact, the historical and very real ten clans of the Northern Kingdom. Many centuries ago, at the time of the Assyrian invasion, they were deported from their Palestinian homeland and scattered abroad. According to a lengthy television documentary aired by a prominent cable network, there are vestiges at this present time of descendants of all these tribes still following rituals and displaying reminders of their remote Israelite origin. According to some experts, living relics of the dispersed tribes can be found on a Mediterranean island; in both prominent places and remote recesses of northern Africa; among many of the diverse cultures of the Near East; and, even as far removed from their Sinai and Canaanite origins as the far reaches of the Orient!

In numerous sections of the Bible God’s Word clearly and emphatically states that His separated people will one day be reunited. The southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin will once again be joined with the northern ten tribes of Israel. Excitement about “discovering” the Ten Lost Tribes and speculation by modern researchers of how and when the full and complete reunification of God’s ancient people will take place could quickly peter out and end up on the dust heap of religious sensationalism. But the reality of God’s promises will not pass away. And what He has said and what He has pledged will eventually be fulfilled. All this, in spite of the fact that we may not be able to foresee the details of the

fulfillment nor even conceive of the intricate logistics involved. The current surmising about “The Lost Tribes of Israel” have renewed my interest in and appreciation of another biblical group distinct from the Chosen People but intimately associated with the earliest origins of the divinely appointed nation of Israel. The Kenites and, later, a branch of that tribe called the Rechabites, could accurately be styled as a peculiar people. I use that term, “peculiar”, not in the sense of odd or strange; but rather as denoting a singularly distinctive clan. This is the true biblical meaning of this word, as in 1 Peter 2:9 where the Holy Ghost refers to Christians as “...a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people...” The larger tribe was not Jews but Arabs who were originally connected with the Amalekites, the earliest and fiercest of Israel’s enemies. It seems, though, that God separated a portion of the Kenites to be used as an edifying example of utter consecration and complete obedience. In His mercy, this spared segment came under His blood covenant and embraced the practice of circumcision through Zipporah, their kinswoman and Moses’ wife. Jethro, Zipporah’s father and an Arabian priest, was the prominent patriarch in their native area. God used this godly father-in-law of His great deliverer to assist Moses in organizing the twelve tribes of Israel. Some, perhaps a majority, of the Kenites remained behind when Israel moved out of the Sinai and headed for Canaan. Yet, a sizable contingent of these descendants of Abraham through his third wife, Keturah, escaped the Amalekite curse. These pious Arabs chose to accept Moses’ invitation to migrate to the Promised Land. Hobab, Moses’ brother-in-law, was given the privilege of being the scout and guide for God’s people through the treacherous desert wastes. In this honored post Hobab became the human complement to the Divine guidance of the supernatural pillars of cloud and fire.

Even before the pilgrims arrived in Canaan, God’s prophetic Word assured them that their enemies would be divinely dealt with. In general, the Kenite clan were destined to be destroyed by a future world kingdom called Assyria. In the meantime, a remnant was spared and God used a Kenite woman named Jael to deliver His

people from the oppression of a relentless foe named Sisera. Little is said of the Kenites from the time of the Judges until the reign of the anointed Kings. By piecing together brief references to this people, we learn from the Bible that they left the region of Jericho, the entry point into the Promised possession. These select Arabs, all Hebrew proselytes, settled in the Wilderness of Judea. Their chosen habitation included the city of Jabez. At this place, named after a godly Judean prince, there arose a colony of scribes and teachers. We know that these particular Kenites continued in God's favor. When God commanded Saul to fully extirpate the remaining Amalekites, he first warned and protected this spiritually sensitive group. Again when David, still in hiding on the borders of Judah, divided his spoils among the Judean cities, the Kenites were singled out as worthy of his benefits. These faithful friends were given a fair share of the captured booty.

The spiritual affinity between these distinctive Arabs and God's unique nation is highlighted by the final two scriptural references to members of the Kenite tribe. In the sweeping aftermath of the great revival under the prophet Elijah, Jehu is commissioned by God to destroy totally the house of Ahab. He was to eliminate from the land every remnant of the perverted Sidonian idolatry introduced by Jezebel, Ahab's scheming consort. On the road to godly vengeance, Jehu urges Jonadab, son of Rechab, to accompany him in the mopping-up operations. As with one hand and one heart, Arab and Jew- Jonadab and Jehu - join forces to thoroughly cleanse their common land from the hideous worshippers of Baal.

In the closing days of the Kingdom of Judah, a select branch of the Kenites came up to Jerusalem to avoid entanglement with Nebuchadnezzar's invading army. This devout, somewhat ascetic, group was called the Rechabites in honor of the father of that valiant hero, Jonadab. Like his ancestor, Jethro, Rechab must have been an outstanding spiritual leader and a highly revered patriarch. He set high standards of holiness for his followers. They were forbidden to drink wine. The Rechabites could not really settle down in the way some of their kinsmen did, but were permitted to live only in

tents. Whether these religious practices were mandated by God or merely distinctive requirements, the Rechabites were applauded by God Himself for their dedication to the wishes of their earthly father and for their unwavering obedience. Through the ministry of the prophet Jeremiah, God commended the Rechabites. He contrasted their sincere submission with the rebellious disobedience which characterized the more privileged tribes out of which He had formed His special nation.

Although the Rechabites portray a seemingly insignificant role in the story of salvation, I feel they loom quite large on God's scale of spiritual values. The final biblical promise given by Jeremiah speaks for itself:

"And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts and done according unto all that he hath commanded you: Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me forever." Jeremiah 35:18

Such a powerful pledge as this is comparable to the regal Messianic promises called "the sure mercies of David!" However inconsequential others may regard them, for me, the Rechabites represent the forerunners of truly Spirit-submitted believers. Led only by the One who leads into all truth and brings to remembrance all that the Lord Jesus has taught and modeled, modern Rechabites strive for the spirit of wholeheartedness and utter consecration shown by their "separated brethren" of earlier times. Those of us who are fully Pentecostal in the broadest and deepest Full-Gospel sense of that term, will often appear to be, like these ancient people, merely on the fringes of Christendom. Yet, in all spiritual reality, Holy Ghost surrendered worshippers; those aspiring to practice the kind of faith represented by the Church in Philadelphia are intimately involved in Christ's Kingdom. This class of believers is like their Old Testament spiritual forebears and constitutes a remnant-

like minority which displays “*little strength*.” Rev 3:8 Pentecostals of Philadelphian faith are often raised up in times of crisis and through their continuing yieldedness and submission to the Third Person of the Trinity afford sure guidance and real support to the true Church – that “blessed company of faithful people.”

FAITH

Faith is unique among the fruits because it is the only characteristic that is common to the Scriptural list of both the gifts and the fruits of the Spirit. Faith is given by the Spirit and is grown in us. It is a two way street: the give of God and a fruit that is cultivated through prayer and by asking God Himself to increase it in us. The Word itself is the food that supplies the energy that causes faith to grow in us; “*faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*” Since faith is either given to us by God or grown in us by the spirit it is obtained in purely spiritual ways through our relationship with God and, therefore, has spiritual substance and reality. “*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*” God sees to it that our faith is confirmed by evidence and that it takes on substance. Through faith we are told that we gain understanding of things which cannot be discerned with our physical senses or by the science of geometry and physics. By faith we gain victory over the world. (1 John 5:4)

GOODNESS

Goodness is simply godliness. Being a partaker of the Divine Nature means partaking of God’s character and godliness is fundamental to being like God. “*Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*” (II Tim.2:22). Godliness is the forsaking of self. All selfishness, self-consciousness and

self-pity. Godliness is the propensity to look to the things of others and come in the spirit of a true servant. Resisting all temptations of the flesh makes room for attitudes and actions of godliness. Godliness is the true positive outlook on life, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”* (Phil 4:8). The spiritual fruit of goodness expresses the wholesome and clean spirit of God.

137. The Mysteries of the Gospel

Aids to Perfection of the Bride

enumerated with brief discussion

by Terry Smith

INTRODUCTION

Some of the mysteries come forth in parables, symbolically or as metaphors. Others are more directly referred to and require an understanding of spiritual things revealed only to the primary initiate (born-again) Christian. The *Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven* are mysteries veiled, only the pure of heart can have them uncovered for it takes the understanding of the Holy Spirit. The symbolic ones require knowledge of God's Word revealed also by none other than the Holy Spirit and His interpretive powers. Some of the mysteries need only be received by faith, their knowledge acquired by believing that they are not natural things of Man's wisdom, but truths never before revealed to the heart of Man until the advent of the all-wise Savior, Jesus Christ.

Two of the Gospel's mysteries are designated as 'great, therefore they have to be given a special place, an even higher significance in the mind and heart of the disciples of Christ. Both of these mysteries appear in the New Testament: the first appears in the Book of Ephesians chapter five where *Christ and His Church* is revealed as husband and wife (which is the subject of the extensive chapter of mystery under #9 below); the second "great" mystery of God is in association with the *Mystery of Godliness* which was written of by Paul in one of his letters to his young helper, Timothy. This great mystery is complex having in six dynamic components. Each of the components are analyzed in an article/ chapter in this pamphlet under the section entitled: *Godliness*.

The other mysteries, amounting to twelve plus some general remarks about mysteries of the Gospel, are discussed below in this chapter and should be helpful for those who want to more than whet their appetite on this engrossing subject of Scripture. Those intrigued by the notion that the mysteries are important to anyone interested in being closer to God and having their nature miraculously transformed into one like the Divine will find this article more than helpful for understanding the Will of God.

In the New Testament there are many mysteries for the Christian to discover. They cover Christ Himself, the Bride of Christ, Satanic things, the spirits of false religion, the mysteries of heaven, paradise and godliness, what paradise will be like, the gift of speaking tongues, and so much more. They are free for the taking of every believer to help build faith and make them wise according to godly wisdom. God recommends that every disciple of Jesus dig them out of the Word and investigate them wholeheartedly. Even though it is to the great advantage of every saint to do so, very few believers actually do dig to uncover the mysteries of the faith.

If one does however search them out, that person's walk will be enriched beyond a king's ransom. Their knowledge will help to guide them on their way past pitfalls that often become a snare to health, and even a place of abiding faith. Any snare can enslave a believer in the chains of ignorance. It can blind faith, bruise hope and imprison the soul. God would like to build in each maturing believer a knowledge and faith for the secret things of truth, the mysteries of God and Christ.

Through the understanding of these mysteries one may understand and believe in the calling of the Bride of Christ. Through the power of the Holy Ghost, Christ holds out to his Church great wisdom by disclosing the mysteries. Any believer is freely offered the understanding of these just for the asking. Seek and you shall find as the scripture advises. Understanding the mysteries, hoping to have them incorporated into one's faith will strengthen the relationship with the Trinity and make more certain our ability to serve and please God with our whole body, mind and heart.

The mysteries are first broached in the teachings of Jesus Himself. Jesus teaches that the mysteries were 'hidden from the foundation of the world' only to be revealed by Him at His first coming. Jesus taught in parables so that those of pure hearts who hungered for deeper understanding could learn about the riches of the Gospel and so that those of dubious contriving type faith would not understand. This was to exclude the unrepentant heart from the knowledge and understanding of sacred things. The mysteries are sacred. They are the true 'sacraments' of the Church (not the ones devised by orthodox Christianity) and should be seen and received as such. As the apostle Paul clearly stated the case for true reverence of the sacred, it is not touch not, handle not, taste not, the sacraments are not a date on a calendar, a wafer, the cup, the marriage ring or the baptismal fount, or repetitive cardboard prayers. Christ handled the mysteries as the high priest of the gospel truth. We ought to receive them as such. The believer must handle sacred things with reverence and discretion according to the will of the Father. He distributed the sacred mysteries with devout reverence. Christ declared that heaven and earth shall pass away, but God's Word shall last forever. What could be more sacred than His Word? He, therefore, with reverence for the Truth and the mysteries of the Gospel, imparted them carefully and did not cast them as pearls before swine, but moved by wisdom, wanted to keep them from men of the wrong selfish spirit who could not help but ultimately use them for their own ill purposes.

This therefore is the reason why Jesus taught in parables:

"And Jesus said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them." AND "All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will

utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.” Mk 4:11-12; Matt 13:34-35

Further on in the New Testament we discover that the apostle Paul mentions mysteries many times and tells about the importance of their careful stewardship. In the book of Revelation there are mysteries that Jesus himself speaks of and some are shown to the apostle John, which are expounded upon by angels. They all amount to great wisdom when considered with the heart. In these last days their consideration is imperative. We hope you will consider them with your whole heart and mind and incorporate their faith into your own.

The following report is compiled by us citing the mysteries of Christ in the order in which they appear in scripture. Each, is worthy of further study by the individual believer in Christ.

#1 – Twelve Parables that are The Mystery of the Kingdom of Heaven

Jesus taught in parables to his disciples and after one such teaching “...the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.” Matt.13:10-11 So it is shown to us in the Gospels that Jesus taught almost exclusively in parables, each one revealing some aspect of God’s kingdom. The Bride will inherit all things with Christ and here within the mysteries lie the treasures of Godly wisdom to enhance the beauty of Christ’s loving Bride who wants to know everything she can about her husband’s kingdom and the life He lives.

The following 12 scriptures, all from the Book of Matthew are where the curious believer can find the parables related to Jesus’ teaching about the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. Each mystery is identified by Christ so the faithful might know, understand and gain wisdom about the realities of the mysteries (or secrets) concerning the Kingdom of Heaven.

1. Mat.13:(3-9) (18-23) Parable of Sower of the Seeds
2. Mat.13:(24-30) (36-43) Tares Among the Wheat
3. Mat.13:31-32 Parable of a Grain of Mustard Seed
4. Mat.13:33 The Hidden Leaven
5. Mat.13:44 Parable of Treasure Hid in a Field
6. Mat.13:45-46 Parable of The Pearl of Great Price
7. Mat.13:47-50 Parable of a Net Cast into the Sea
8. Mat.18:23-35 Parable of the Unforgiving Servant
9. Mat.20:1-16 Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard
10. Mat.22:2-14 Parable of the Wedding Feast
11. Mat.25:1-13 Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins
12. Mat.25:14-30 Parable of the Five Talents

#2 – Mystery of Jews Blinded by God Romans 11:25

*“For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this **mystery**, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.” Rom. 11:25*

Seven times in the New Testament there is a plea that we not be ignorant of certain knowledge the Spirit would like to furnish to the saint. On this occasion in Romans we are shown a mystery that God wishes all Christians to understand and not be ignorant. The fact that the Jews are not cast off by God but rather have been made blind (for a season) for our sake has been grossly ignored by Christians who think they are wise, but are not. Men and Christians sadly, have been more wise in the own conceits and high-minded rather than attentive to God's voice and have done terrible atrocities against the apple of God's eye through their support and encouragement of wrong teaching, and their obstinate ignorance of this mystery of faith.

Read Romans 10:18 through 11:36 and learn a mystery that has been shown to those who want to know the truth about God's people. Then one can knowledgeably heed the warning of God to *“...Be not high-minded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural*

branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.” Rom.11:20-21 Christ’s Bride will be made up of both Jew and Gentile. (This is evident by the disclosure of another mystery.) A day is coming when the blindness of the Jews will be lifted and many will be received into the arms of Jesus and will be given a place in the New Jerusalem, that heavenly city prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. The prophets have alluded to this truth and some like Zechariah have directly stated it as a prophetic truth. We know there will be no imperfect separation within the Bride but rather a perfectly completed blended and unified body, a commonwealth of Jew and Gentile, as evident in these words: “And [The Bride] had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel...And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.” Rev. 21:12,14

#3 Mystery of the Gospel of Salvation

“Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began.

But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:

To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.” Rom.16:25-27

Here is the mention of a mystery, kept secret since the world began, but now has been made known according to God’s command which was first revealed by the preaching of the Christ. For his own good pleasure God has had a plan to bring to himself mortal men who have been perfected through Christ in holiness and all purity, now able to abide with Him for all eternity. When God and Jesus created man Satan knew God’s good intentions for mankind and has been hell-bent in his efforts to try and prevent this Godly relationship from ever happening to any soul. The mystery of the gospel of

salvation through Jesus Christ has been unknown even to Satan. Satan had no idea of how God would defeat him when He prophesied in the Garden of Eden, of the seed of the woman crushing the serpent's head. Even though the scriptures have been filled with prophecies, the Way of this mystery would be kept from being fully revealed according to God's will in his perfect timing. This mystery, now fully revealed, is the birthplace of the Church and Bride; for every saint is brought into the presence of God's Kingdom through the obedience of faith and belief of this mystery; that Jesus Christ is the Way.

This mystery of spiritual salvation and eternal life is shown in the parable type teaching that Jesus gave to the religious leader, Nicodemus, who came to Him stealthily and mysteriously by night and Jesus told Him that he must be born-again. Every person is born of water but you must be born of the spirit if you will see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus was befuddled at the declaration of this mystery, until He seemed to come to an understanding of it upon Christ's death and resurrection. It often takes that sort of dramatic experience that leads to revelation and understanding of the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. 1 Cor.2:7-9, Eph.3:1-11, Eph.6:19, Col.1:26, Col.4:3

#4 Stewards of the Mysteries of God 1 Cor.4:1-2

*“Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and **stewards of the mysteries of God**. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.” Peter exhorts “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” 1 Peter 4:10*

We are told here that it is by the abundance of undeserving favor from God that he has given gifts to us. Receiving the understanding of his mysteries can be looked at in this fashion. As good stewards, we are expected to minister what we have received to one another. The Church should not be in competition with one another but rather should be in agreement with Christ who is working to present

to himself a glorious church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; holy and without blemish. This picture of the Bride of Christ should cause us to want to offer in many ways the understanding of mysteries and all gifts we have received to our brothers and sisters for the sake of Christ building his Bride church. Of course, for the sake of doing this work in love, it is necessary that everything be distributed according to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Paul writes *“And though I have the gift of prophecy, and **understand all mysteries**, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.”* 1 Cor.13:2 It is in the spirit of God’s love and for the purposes of truly loving one another that we should be found good **stewards of the mysteries**.

In Luke 12:42-43 Jesus said *“...Who then is that **faithful and wise steward**, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.”*

So as “stewards of the mysteries of God” we ought to embrace, as a duty to our Lord, being faithful and wise, loving and generous, the dispensing of knowledge and understanding of these mysteries within the Church. Always faithful, because God wants us to invest the gifts he has given to us and be ever wise, seeking discernment by the Spirit that we invest in hearts that are true, wanting to understand God’s word. We must be good stewards of sacred things and dispense them with reverence and care.

#5 Mystery of Tongues 1 Cor. 14:2

*“For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit **he speaks mysteries**.”*

Here is mention of a mystery that within the Church is commonly called speaking in tongues. Speaking in tongues is taught by scriptures as being evidence of the Baptism of the Holy Ghost. Acts 2:4, 10:46, 19:6 Paul has instructed in his writings that, unless God

gives interpretation, when one speaks in tongues he is speaking things unknown; they remain a mystery to us. Many in the Church today have had some sort of experience with witnessing tongues and much of it has been in the form of abuse and disorderly; because of this a part of the Church has labeled tongues as evil and from Satan. This is not new.

In the infancy of the Church, Paul had to go to great lengths to teach the Corinthians about the proper use of this gift. The Bride, who like the five wise virgins has her lamp trimmed and filled with oil, has properly received the Baptism of the Holy Ghost and exercises the appropriate use and purpose of tongues in connection to prayer and prophesying.

#6 The Mystery of the Rapture 1 Cor. 15:49-58

“... know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

This is not merely about the resurrection of the dead, but it is a mystery that some who are actually alive shall also be made immortal. But it is for every man to die once, the mystery is that can and will reckon those who have died to self in this life as having died and therefore eligible to be ‘raptured’ alive. This is a mystery indeed. But it is declared that we must labor to enter His rest; we must labor to die to self and if we do, our labor shall not be in vain.

Dying to self is a mysterious process and wins us the reward of the mystery of the rapture. In the “twinkling of an eye” we shall cast off this corruptible flesh and put on incorruptible, which is a new spiritual body. Death shall no longer possess any sting; it will have been swallowed up in the victory of Jesus Christ for those who have followed hard after him. A day is coming when this mortal being will become immortal. That day will soon come for the Bride at the time of the Rapture. This is a mystery about the Rapture that the world does not believe and the Church has greatly misunderstood through much presumption. To those who aspire to be a part of Christ’s’ Bride however, it is a mystery to be wisely understood and hoped for, a mystery that the Bride has set the eyes of her heart upon as she waits for the sudden appearance of her Bridegroom.

“Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” 1 Cor 15:51-58

#7 The Mystery of God’s Will Eph. 1:8-10

*“Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the **mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure** which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:”*

The mystery of God’s will is that whatever He decides or wants because of His own purposes is to be accepted as perfect, no matter what we may think or what we may regard. Those who have been brought into the sheepfold of Jesus through faith in Him alone as the straight and narrow gate, will be found by God to be in Christ according to the way He has ordained it. Beyond this initial embrace of our savior, if you who have heard the call by the Spirit to press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus and you aspire to have the same faith as the Philadelphia church spoken of in the book of Revelation, then you are likely to be among those whom God has willed to be part of the call to Brideship

in Jesus Christ. The Bible says many are called but few are chosen, this holds especially true to the ones who are of the Bride, for it is said of them on the day that they return to earth with Christ's army that these are they who are called, chosen and faithful. This gathering together in one, all things that are in Christ, both which are in heaven and on earth is going to be a wonderful event; how much more wondrous will it be for those who are chosen as Jesus' Bride and her bridal party?

#8 The Mystery of Christ Eph. 3:3-12

*Mysteries must be learned and absorbed by revelation, none more than the mystery of Christ. The mysteries come only to those who seek them by the teaching of God which is the true meaning of revelation. "How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my **knowledge in the mystery of Christ**) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets **by the Spirit.**"*

God once spoke to man by the fathers and the prophets but now He has spoken to us by His dear Son. We are introduced to the teaching of the mystery of Christ here in Ephesians:

"That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel... Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him."

The purpose of God designed in the Christ was to make us fellow-

heirs and of the same body and to have fellowship in the mystery of this ultimate purpose brought about by the Christ. The mystery of Christ also includes and begins with the understanding of who and what the Christ really is. Christ is Savior. Christ must be man. Jesus called Himself the Son of Man because only a man could save mankind, be the pardon for their sin. The word Christ both implies and demands a Man. The mystery of Christ is that He be Man the Redeemer of Man. Man should not be alone. Even Redeemer Man must have a spouse or be relegated to eternal loneliness. Thus he must have fellow heirs, we must be one in the same body with Christ. We need to see the mystery of the Son of Man, the Christ, that we may see what is the fellowship of this mystery of the Christ.

#9 THE MYSTERY CALLED 'GREAT': CHRIST AND THE CHURCH Eph 5:25-27

In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, the apostle begins a dialogue about husbands and wives and the necessity of love and reciprocal submission in the matrimonial relationship. He speaks of submitting one to another in the fear of God as he gives directives for wives and husbands and how the husband is particularly responsible to love the wife and the woman is obligated to submit to the man. This was news to those who were steeped in the worship of a goddess. And so Paul's teaching was received primarily in this light, and has continued down two thousand years in this fashion to be learned by the bulk of bible believers. When read superficially, this is marriage counseling 101. He has talked about being wise and staying away from fornication (that one thing Christ has said is a permissible reason to divorce). Avoid also those who commit such sinful acts without regard for God or Man. Then Paul tells directly, in the simplest terms what husbands and wives ought to do in the matrimonial relationship –

“Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the

head of the church: and he is the savior of the body.

Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.” Eph 5:21-24

Simple and clear. Only the worshipper of Diana or Mary, or the modernist or the unbeliever without reverence for God could or can argue with this simple advice, this sound counsel of God. Do the right thing. The advancement of the idea of the full commitment of the man to so love his wife as Christ perfectly loves the church, serves as a hedge against the man abusing his position and lauding it over the ‘weaker vessel’. Both husband and wife are urged, expected, to be wise concerning the dynamics of this spiritual rule for a successful marriage. And so, it seems this is the high point made by God in this counsel to the Ephesians.

Then we find out that Paul is talking about a much higher matter, a marriage but one of God and Man, a mystery of Christ and the Church and using the earthly matrimonial relationship to set up His higher point and reveal what is identified as the ‘great’ mystery. Curiously, out of the blue, midway through the dialogue, Paul interjects some specific aims of Christ for His Church and promises that Christ will be the one to fulfill His personal ambitions for the church. He says,

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” Eph 5:25-27

Paul had already declared His mission among the believers of Corinth: *“For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”* 2 Cor 11:2 Of course, it is understood, since he was talking to the city of believers of every age and gender, that the chaste

virgin was a spiritual allusion, not literal. He considered Himself a match-maker in the traditional Jewish sense. He was urging the Corinthians (as he did with the Ephesians and all other saints he disciple) to become Christ's fiancée and to purify themselves in that hope that they are Christ's espoused, someday to be His beautifully adorned Bride and wife.

#10 Christ in you, the hope of Glory Col. 1:27

*"To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of **this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.**"*

This is a mystery that can only be understood by pure experience. How can God live in us? This, however, is the real hope of glory. If that which is perfect can live in us and prevail in us, then we may be perfect if we live in His life. this is the essence of the Bride's perfection, that the Bride would be perfectly submitted to her husband. There is no excuse because He loves her perfectly. She can rely on Him totally without reservation. Christ in you means we are told that we are one together with Him. Purely one. This is why Paul can declare that he sees his duty as presenting every man perfect before God:

"To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. Col 1:27-28

He saw it as His duty to strive in behalf of each one of the sheep in his care to be presented perfect before God, as one with Christ. This ought to be the ultimate aim of every worthy pastor, especially in these last days when the pastor worth his salt will be trying to make each saint rapture ready and perfect in the sight of God as a candidate for the Bride of Christ.

#11 The Mystery of Iniquity 2 Thes. 2:7-8

It is a mystery that God would allow iniquity (the perversion of the truth that works unto sin) to find its way into the Church. *“For the **mystery of iniquity** doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:”* read 2 Thes. 2:1-12

For God’s purposes of fulfilling all prophecy and the trying of men’s hearts within the Church, He has not completely blocked the spirit of antichrist from entering in. A day of judgement is coming when God will separate within the Church the wheat from the chaff. Satan, the father of all lies, and the men who have followed after his subtleties against the anointed Messiah will one day suffer at God’s hands. Satan is always frantically at work trying to take as many of the souls of men with him into the pit that he knows awaits him. Yes, there are men within the Church that will perish. Men, that were deceived by their own unrighteousness because they did not receive the love of the truth, will perish.

At the birth of the Church Satan stood by ready to spin iniquitous works at his first opportunity. God has allowed the spirit of antichrist that prevails within the Church and the world to work toward His fulfillment of all things. It is wisdom for us to know that this is so and to not be shaken off balance or thrown off the course of our disciplined walk with Jesus when we encounter this mystery of iniquity at work within the kingdom of heaven. Paul warned the church many times, and history has proven that evil doctrines, false prophecies and many other things antichrist have come forth from the Church. It is for each one of us to walk wisely in this understanding and to stay on the path which the Holy Spirit will lead us along. We are told this mystery by God when it was written in Prov 30:18-19, *“things which are too wonderful for me”* and pointed out *“the way of a serpent upon a rock.”* This alludes to the wonder of how Satan is allowed by God to tread upon the holy things of Christ. But God who sees all and knows all things will use even Satan to bring about his will.

God did not invent or create evil, evil is simply the work of iniquity, the refusal to follow or concede to the Will of God. This is the truth of the mystery of iniquity, the evil that reaches out and touches people through the force of sin. The day is coming when God will put an end to all sin, transgression and iniquity, but this will not come until the end of the Tribulation when Christ comes with a sword in His hand to impose righteousness on the earth. See dialogue on Imposed Righteousness.

#12 The Mystery of The Faith 1 Tim. 3:9

*This mystery is closely connected with the before mentioned "Mystery of the Gospel of Salvation through Jesus Christ." Paul wrote to Timothy that those appointed in the Church should be found **"Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience."** This "mystery of the faith" is the confident belief in the whole gospel of Jesus Christ. It is belief bolstered by the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen. See: Living by Faith & Section on: FAITH TOWARDS GOD True belief in this gospel does not come simply by the will of heart and mind but by the Spirit of God. Believing (Greek word *pisteuo*; trusting in, adhering to and relying on) the whole gospel is far beyond the capacity of any man to do on his own. This requires the support of faith from God himself.*

The Word teaches faith is both a gift and a fruit of the Holy Spirit, "without faith it is impossible to please God and faith comes to us by hearing and hearing comes by the word of God." Heb 11:6 All of this requires a deep operation of the Holy Spirit. So, for one to know all about the message of salvation, the mystery of the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ and yet not have *pisteuo* belief supported by God given faith, it will bear no good fruit in the kingdom of heaven. It is both empty and meaningless to God, a vanity of vanities.

Like a trusting wife and one that has thrown aside all of her own selfish desires, the Bride of Christ will turn to Him for her every need. He is the author and finisher of her faith that she will hold in pureness, an unadulterated conscience, one that is not corrupted

with the ideas and moral standards set by the teachers of this world but by the loving and righteous voice of her husband, Jesus himself.

#13 The Mystery of Godliness 1 Tim. 3:16

*“And without controversy great is the **mystery of godliness**: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”*

Paul writes that this is a great mystery. This mystery is also held without controversy. No debate, no argument or need for discussion is necessary as to whether this mystery is anything else than what follows in this verse. Six elements make this mystery of Godliness whole.

“God was manifest in the flesh.” God came to men of this world in the same flesh and blood that you and I behold. God became man in the person, Jesus.

“Justified in the Spirit.” Jesus was declared just or in another way, blameless and upright before God the Father, according to the Spirit of God, not by men or any other imperfect standard.

“Seen of angels.” All of heaven witnessed this incredible act of God. Jesus said and did everything in the open for all of creation to witness, including all the angels, those in heaven at God’s throne and those fallen with Lucifer too.

“Preached unto the Gentiles.” Not only did Jesus come to fulfill what the Jewish prophets of God had foretold but He also came that all men might be saved, including the pagan and heathen ones called Gentiles. In fact (**another mystery**) God has blinded the Jews for the sake of the Gentiles that they might inherit with the Jews the promises God has made.

“Believed on in the world.” This is an amazing miracle; that any mortal man in this life and in this ungodly world would trust in, rely on and adhere to Jesus and his gospel of reconciliation to our Creator.

“Received up into Glory” After Jesus was crucified God raised him from the dead. He was taken up before the eyes of men in his

glorified state into Heaven where he is now waiting at his Father's right hand for the command to come and gather up the first fruits resurrected ones, The Bride. These also will be received up into glory.

All of these works of God through Jesus are the most magnificent show of His own Godliness. Godliness with fact in the flesh with honor. See: Godliness in Section of Divine Nature.

#14 Mystery of the Seven Stars and Seven Candlesticks Rev.1:20

*"The **mystery of the seven stars** which thou sawest in my right hand, **and the seven golden candlesticks**. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches; and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches."*

Jesus himself reveals the mystery here. The mystery of the **seven stars** that Jesus holds in his right hand reveals there are angels of the seven churches. These angels are assigned by Jesus to stand over and be messengers. They existed two millennia ago and still they stand waiting as watchful guardians to each church. They minister good news and encouragement and firm warnings and harsh rebukes; whatever Jesus tells them.

The mystery of the **candlesticks** is that they are the seven churches that Jesus still inhabits today. He stands in the midst of these candlesticks with the hope that any who hear his Spirit might overcome. These churches to which he wrote letters can be viewed in three ways. First, actual churches that existed in the days when John wrote down the vision as it was shown to him and the letters were sent to these churches of Asia-Minor.

Second, church history reveals a progression in the church that took on these faiths as it grew and developed over the last 2000 years and none of them have disappeared but still remain today.

Third, they can each be view at a personal level by all saints to see where each may stand today in their faith and let the admonishing words of Jesus speak to their hearts.

Amongst these candlesticks is the place where the Bride of Christ can be found in all her beauty before Jesus. She is one among the

churches who is found listening to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. In contrast to her are churches who have no need of Jesus, who have forgot their first love, who have known the depths of Satan and who eat things sacrificed to idols and commit spiritual fornication.

*** The Mystery of God Will Be Finished** Rev. 10:7

*“But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, **the mystery of God should be finished**, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.”*

When the seventh angel begins to sound, then the mystery of God will be finished. What is the mystery of God that will finish at this time? A look ahead to Revelation 11:15 says “*And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.*” From this verse, we see that the allowance by God of letting the kingdoms of this world be ruled and reigned over by foreign authorities other than his sovereign rule is what will come to an end.

That God would allow something like this to go on for so long is a mystery and one of the things that puts on trial the faith and patience of the Bride of Christ. This is all part of God’s providential plan of the ages. It is a plan for saving those who believe in His Son and are willing to follow after Him to the very end. It is a mystery that God would shadow His own glory but it is revealed to the prophet John that after the seventh trumpet sounds the glory of God, Jesus, will shine forth, all judgement will be pronounced; reward given to the prophets and saints, destruction to them which destroy the earth, opening of the Temple of God in Heaven and the revealing of the ark of his testimonies. Rev. 11:15-19 God, by his own incredible love that is long-suffering and patient, is holding back His wondrous glory. His holding back and waiting to let all things prove themselves as righteous and holy or unjust and filthy is mysterious but it testifies to his desire of having with himself those who love him freely.

▣ **Lastly: The Mysteries that Wreak Havoc on the Church** ▣

The Mysteries of The Woman and The Beast That Carries Her

In Revelation chapter 17 we see the revealing of the mystery of who the Beast and The Woman are. “And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT.

THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

“And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration. And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.” Rev. 17:5-7

“The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is. And here is the mind which hath wisdom.

The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.

And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.

And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.

And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.

These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.

And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.

And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.

For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.

And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.” (vss. 17:8-18)

The final mention of mysteries in the Bible concern false mysteries which wreak havoc in the Church. God’s consternation and disgust are revealed, their ultimate judgment and dismissal are prophesied. Here are a few notes to help in understanding the revealing of these mysteries.

The scripture above shows us that the Beast is a vehicle upon which the Woman/Whore is carried throughout the entire earth. The two use each other to further their agendas, but ultimately they against their will, fulfill God’s Will. The Beast is shown that it personifies the antichrist spirit.

That he was, is not and yet is alludes to a very long spiritual existence. Satan and his spiritual cohorts have ascended from the very pits of Hell and will certainly return there one day to be imprisoned for all eternity. They have influenced the hearts of evil men in the world for thousands of years and one day soon the spirit of antichrist will be embodied in a the person that is ‘the’ actual Antichrist.

This antichrist spirit has built kingdoms and empires and in the last days the Antichrist person will sit among ten kingdoms of this world. During his short reign the Antichrist, Satan and the False Prophet will use all their power and influence to control men, kingdoms, as well as the ‘Woman’ as he reaches for his ultimate goal of being worshipped as God himself.

The Woman, ancient in time, has always been used by the antichrist spirit. Mystery Babylon is written upon her in this vision which points to her connection with the ancient gods, even the first humanism trinity born in Babylon and worshipped as gods: Nimrod, Semiramis and Tammuz. She is the epitome of false religion. She is the height of spiritual adultery and idolatry against God. She is shown as a great city, reigning over the kings of the earth among peoples, multitudes, nations and tongues and her position of sitting upon seven hills connects her to Rome and the religion that is seated there. From Babylon to Rome she has trafficked in the souls of men and made herself drunk on their blood. She is a stark contrast to that holy city we see later in Revelation who is the Bride of Christ. She is today – Rome.

Seek the Spirit to teach you more concerning the mysteries of the faith.

138. Intro to Church History

A brief history of the Church renders us Signs of Christ's Return and the rise of the ministry of the Bride and her hour of waiting.

by Terry M Smith

It is clear from the message which the Father gave to Jesus and which Jesus penned in His letters to the seven churches some fifty or sixty years after his first coming, which in turn were delivered to the Church at large by the apostle John in the Book of Revelation, that the Christian life and the Age of the Church would be exemplified by the spirit of 'overcoming' and repentance from corruption and spiritual vice, such as idolatry, rebellion, worldly lusts and alliances and stubborn pride with arrogance and disrespect for the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ. There would be trappings and pitfalls, times of trouble and doubt and times in which Satan would undermine the faith of the Church to the extent that true faith in the Full Gospel would almost become extinct. Whether it was temptations, evil, sin, idolatry or onslaughts of the Devil intended to rob, destroy and kill, overcoming would be one of the keynotes of the Church Age and its battle to 'win Christ' Phil 3, esp. vs. 8 and walk in the health and happiness that is salvation. There would be times of birth and glory, shame and infamy, revival and counter-reformation; but all could be graded and judged according to the ability and reality of the Church as overcomers of Satan, the World, and the carnality of their own 'flesh'. In these final hours of Church history just before the return of Christ, it would be wise for every Christian to take a close and objective view under Truth's single eye of the progression of Church doctrine and faith. Where it conforms to Biblical truth one should emulate those who held fast as true forerunners of right faith. Where it diverted one should pray for deliverance from the infestation of crooked ways, no matter how

long and widely they have been accepted by Christendom even if by the hands and works of well-meaning but imperfect shepherds. The Bible has told us things would be different, that there would be a Church among the churches which would be pure before the Lord, even one which would be so adorned with faith, hope and love that Christ would make her His eternal Bride. The other churches which attain the promises of repentance and submission will reign with Him, live in His 'Holy Mount', eat from His eternal garden, and more; but only one church-at-large will be His Bride due to her perfection and purity of Spirit. She will have the so-called 'keys of David', for she will have been 'after God's own heart'. Church history is the story of fulfilled prophecy and its relationship with the World and Antichrist Spirit during the time of the Age of Grace (The time between the First and Second Comings of Christ). Church history as indicated by prophecies and blessings of Jacob, Balaam, Moses, Joel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, Zechariah ... and the rest of the Bible's Old Testament prophets and by Jesus' Olivet Discourse, Peter and Paul, Jude and Gospel parables all buttress the *prophistory* of the Church given in The Book of Revelation and dramatically in the letters to the Churches addressed to His people by Jesus Himself. Therefore the Bible records the history of the Church so that we may learn and be wise in these last days before His return; we may rightly coin the term *prophistory* and apply it to the most important matter of the Church and its relationship with Christ and His Gospel (or, God's Truth). God has given us the history of the Church written before the fact. Perhaps the greatest single *prophistorical* passage of all is the letters to the churches.

The church was warned, that all those who live godly lives in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. To offer comfort to the beleaguered and weary, and for impetus to continue on in the faith and promote the spirit of overcoming, Jesus presented the Church with its history before the fact. This is what may be termed 'prophistorical' form. Using individual churches and their characteristics, and exposing their problematical sin to them in order to typify predominant conditions which would characterize

seven major successive church epochs (Seven is the number God typically uses to depict a completeness, or fullness, thus seven letters to depict the full history of the church in prophetic form).

God made good on his promise that he would keep His people informed via the prophets, before He does anything at all. Amos 3:6 In the case of exposing Church difficulties and sin, God preferred to do it directly through the ministry of the greatest prophet, Jesus – Son of Man/Son of God. The purpose of this prerecorded history is to alert us to the nature of the spiritual battle so *“we can draw near to Him in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water [water of the Word] And let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.”* Heb. 10:22, 23

It was Paul in his second letter to the Thessalonians who clearly declared that there was a complete history, including a ‘falling away’ of faith in the Church (from the purity of the Gospel that would overtake the Church during its middle epochs before Christ’s return).

*“Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and [by] our gathering together unto him,
That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.*

Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.

For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who

*now letteth [will let], until he be taken out of the way.
 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall
 consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with
 the brightness of his coming:
 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with
 all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all
 deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish;
 because they received not the love of the truth, that they might
 be saved.
 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that
 they should believe a lie:
 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but
 had pleasure in unrighteousness.
 But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you,
 brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the
 beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of
 the Spirit and belief of the truth:
 Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the
 glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which
 ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.
 Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father,
 which hath loved us, and hath given [us] everlasting
 consolation and good hope through grace,
 Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and
 work.” 2 Thess 2*

Paul's words in 2 Thessalonians would seem to include the surfacing of the *actual* Antichrist person which must precede the actual Return of Christ to earth on the day of Armageddon. In hindsight, we can readily detect that the subsequent history and course of the Church Age proves the prophecy of a great falling away, and gives credence to the suggestion that the Antichrist person must appear upon a world stage within a handful of years before the Second Coming. This, of course, does not include the Rapture for we know

not the day, nor the hour of Christ's appearing in the clouds which will precede the Second Coming by an unknown, but relatively short interval of time, probably a decade or less. The course of this age is, however, directly charted by the meaning attached the character of the individual churches and shows the course of Church history to be consistent with the way in which the Church at large grew over the centuries. History confirms the character of the churches in the seven letters to be a mapping of Church history.

The Church was established in enthusiasm for good works, persecuted by the Roman Empire and once it had become the accepted religion of the state she descended into ignorance and faithlessness and lusted after a kingdom on earth, something which God never promised the Church in this Age of Grace. Then after many years a general revival took hold and marched gradually on until this very day, the days prior to and contemporaneous with the appearance of the Antichrist on the world stage. This course is also charted in the three chapter prophecies of the book of Joel where the corruption of the Church and its revival in the last days is perfectly depicted in historical context by spiritual terms. The course, from initial enthusiastic zealous birth through descent into the abyss of faithless ignorance and finally to a clash in the Church between the spirit of faith and the spirit of worldliness at the end, runs its course and is symbolized in the successive letters. Understanding the basic specifics and areas to overcome for each individual *church archetype*, can best be primed by the following simple one-word list for each church which can also be seen as representing successive epochs in church history. Each church is listed as follows:

1. Enthusiasm – (*Ephesus*)
2. Persecution – (*Smyrna*)
3. Compromise – (*Pergamos*)
4. Apostasy – (*Thyatira*)
5. Reform – (*Sardis*)
6. Revival – (*Philadelphia*)

7. Clash – (Laodicea)

The most slender of historical knowledge about the Church Age unearths the sorry truth that the Church has not always been the ‘overcomer’ it should be. Sometimes it has. Either way, each phase of Church history could have stood as a sign of the veracity and infallibility of God’s word for those who had eyes to see it in their day, even in the darkest days of Church apostasy. As with all the ‘Signs of Christ’s Return’, each epoch of Church history was constructed in such a way as to shed light on the singular promise to the world that Jesus Christ will indeed return. That Jesus will first appear to ‘rapture’ the faithful, and then later at His Second Coming at Armageddon, is the hardest thing to have an active living faith for. Jesus’ appearance and return stands alone, bolstered by many great and unrelenting signs of its certainty to show all lover’s of Scripture that they are in the waning moments of this Age of Grace. Everything the world offers, everything the unbelieving Church will spout off about tries to obscure the signs of Christ’s Return so that the faithful or the would-be faithful would be subverted from their faith. Peter says in his second letter chapter 3.

*“I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance:
That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken
before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the
apostles of the Lord and Saviour:
Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days
scoffers, walking after their own lusts,
And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the
fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the
beginning of the creation.
For this they willingly are ignorant of...”*

Every true believer must overcome the forces that would deter them from their faith in Christ’s promise to return. ...

THE CHURCH AS SIGN OF THE END

1. **FORMATION, CORRUPTION AND THEN REVIVAL:**

The Church when it has run its *prophistorical* course, stands as a herald of the soon return of Christ. The Church is declared to be so primarily in *The Book of Joel* where it definitely declares that she would be corrupted then revived by the pouring out of the Spirit. This being one of the great signs of Jesus' return just before the tribulation of the last days of the Age of Grace.

2. **FALLING AWAY AND ANTICHRIST REVEALED:**

In 2 Thessalonians 2 by Paul who wrote of the Great Falling Away and that the Antichrist must be revealed before either the Rapture or the Second Coming, or perhaps both.

3. **THE SEVEN LETTERS AS OUTLINE SKETCH OF CHURCH'S HISTORY:**

The Seven letters by declaring things which **are**, **were** and **are to come**: the history of the Church outlined in the letters of Revelation 2&3 – present, past and future.

4. **DANIEL'S UNDERSTANDING OF GOD'S KINGDOM AT THE END:**

The Book of Daniel says that there would be no understanding about the end until the end. The stone that comes out of heaven, to crush the Antichrist Kingdom and blow it away was for end-times believers to comprehend. Some will be righteous and shine and the rest will not. The great *Clash* of the end involves Satan and those of the world with God, His people the Jews and the Church, in particular what the Old and New Testament term the Bridegroom (Messiah/Christ) and His spotless Bride.

139. Just Who Is The Philadelphia Church?

The Philadelphia Church – Holy and True

by T Myers Smith

Christ gave us an encompassing overview of the entire household of God in the second and third chapters of Revelation when he addressed seven separate letters to seven churches in ancient Turkey. This was the land where Paul and others first preached the Gospel to the Gentiles. It was a place where the Christian faith was first established and took on the forms that it would have during the entire church age. Jesus wrote to each church commending and criticizing their behavior according to their works and faith. To each He sent words of commendation, especially for good works, but to all except two of the communities, He sent harsh words of warning and rebuke, commanding their immediate repentance lest they suffer great punishment, including exclusion from the church and even loss of salvation.

As for the churches of Smyrna and Philadelphia, however, the Lord had nothing but words of encouragement and praise. The church in Smyrna would suffer persecution but, their mission, Christ told them, was to be patient and wait until that day past. The church of Philadelphia would also be persecuted but in a different way. Their persecution would come from those who claimed to be true believers but were not. They also were required to wait, but this too would be different from Smyrna. They were to trust in the Lord and wait on His return. Christ promised to deliver them from the Great Tribulation that was to come on all the earth. Philadelphia is synonymous with trusting, waiting and being faithful. Though their strength and numbers were small they were given the greatest promise of all – God’s mercy and love, and escape from the dreadful

judgments of God. The Philadelphian faith is a great faith to have and one which holds the greatest of promises from Christ to His Church. I would rather be “living in Philadelphia” than in any other place on earth, waiting for the Lord’s return and hoping to be taken out of the judgments that are shortly to come on the whole earth. The following is The Elisha’s Outcast Eagles second essay on: The Philadelphia Church: Who is she? What is her faith?

Church history can best be plotted by an upside down bell-shaped curve. During the apostolic era the church was closest to Christ’s intent for His church. Gradually, however, it drifted into apostasy falling farther and farther away from the application of the pure gospel as presented and taught by the apostles Matthew, Luke, Paul, Peter, John, James, Mark, Jude and others. It hit rock bottom during medieval times and began to rise out of the “pit” when the reformation hit Europe in the middle of the second millennium of the church era. The final upsurge of the graph is represented by the last two letters of Revelation chapter three written to Philadelphia and the people of Laodicea.

These two eras of church history flourish simultaneously at the end, though Laodicea will dominate Philadelphia by size and influence and is far overshadowing her at the present day. While they “live” side-by-side, they also represent the greatest contrast of all. Philadelphia has no spiritual fault to cause Jesus to rebuke her. Laodicea has nothing that pleases the Lord. The former, Christ loves dearly; the latter, Christ threatens to spew out of his mouth with disdain. Philadelphia is promised rewards and protection in the hour of judgment; Laodicea is threatened with the fullness of God’s wrath. Only those Laodiceans who respond when Christ knocks on the door of their heart will be spared terrible judgment.

In terms of worldly success, however, Philadelphia is weak and must hold fast to the little strength that it has, while Laodicea thinks itself “*rich, and increased with goods, and (in) need of nothing*” Rev.3:17 and does not know itself to be wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked”. One church can be found along the wide and well traveled roadways, the other is down a narrow

one way path, found only by those heartily seeking its entrance by faith. Take a prayerful look at the wonderful promises and blessings in the letter to Philadelphia. Ask God for understanding of their application, and then come, and be encouraged to be part of this 'nowhere', 'anonymous' fellowship. I hope your faith will swell so you, too, can become, if you are not already, a living stone in this fellowship of Philadelphia, the name that literally means: brotherly love.

PHILADELPHIA: STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS

Paul's words to the Corinthians will be understood by those of the Philadelphia faith. *"Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."* 2 Cor.12:9-10

This church will not be found on any street corner, or at a bible college, it will not have a membership roll – at least not one written on this earth. This church is invisible and weak in worldly terms, a church persecuted from within the church itself and a church with no social influence. She is a church in constant peril of temptation, but in a wonderful and complete way, she is the strongest and greatest, because she is immersed in God's Word and ways. This church has had "membership" down through the church age (as the other six), but particularly now, with revival of all things for the end time, this church is coming into its fullness.

STRANGERS IN A STRANGE LAND

To hear the calling of this church demands a love for the life of faith. To respond to the call one must be delivered from fear of the unknown. The kind of faith required in this pew less church is so foreign to the faith of man, and so much God's kind of faith, that it passes all knowledge of this world. The life of the Philadelphian is not only unattainable for man by means of the flesh, but entirely incomprehensible and can only be experienced by complete trust in God's power and love. The aspiring Philadelphian learns that he must let God lead him blindfolded along never before trodden paths.

As pioneers without knowledge of where to go or what to do, they must trust the Holy Ghost as their unfailing scout and protector. So is the nature of the faith God requires here. It is Abraham going to a strange land, Moses confronting the Pharaoh, David meeting Goliath on the battlefield and John the Baptist preaching repentance in the wilderness. Here by the light of the candlestick of Philadelphia a simple believer living a nondescript life can be producing the pearls of faith that please God wholly. Abiding in this place of brotherly love a person of “unimportance”, doing no traditionally accepted churchy good works can be exalting God in the highest and preparing for Christ a testimony of love that will live into eternity forever. The person in this assembly of faith will have a single eye fixed on Jesus, the hope of a new world to come, and the promises of eternity with God. Here is what the letter to Philadelphia reveals.

CHURCH OF THE OPEN DOOR

The church of Philadelphia is a special church because she has the promise of the open door. The door of faith is continually open here and literally the sky is the limit. Here faith gives one the boldness to enter the heavenly throne room of God to make requests in the name of Jesus.

The door of prophecy is open; and the pathway home is clearly marked. At the end of the path is that “Big” open door, that door that will open at a twinkling of an eye to gather the faithful sojourners into the mansions Jesus has prepared for them. The open door has endless applications to the Philadelphian; it’s all around significance is mercy with a capital ‘M’: the ultimate expression of open door mercy will be the Rapture.

HER PASTOR IS HOLY AND TRUE

Jesus pastors this church with the title “*he that is holy, he that is true*” Rev.3:7. Accordingly, Christ will feed his flock here with truth and holiness. To have fellowship in the spirit of Philadelphia one must accept Christ as the Way, the Truth and the Life – not just the Way and the Life. The one whom Christ has sent must be listened to daily. One will not be permitted to say outwardly, “Yes, God’s ways are not man’s ways”, and then callously live as if God should fit into

the prefab mold man has built for Him. The pursuit of money, power and worldly glory will give off a spiritual stench, as rotting flesh. In this church the walls are not of wood, or stucco, or brick; its light is not filtered by stained glass windows. The walls here are of the truth of God's Word, the windows are the clarity of the guidance of the Holy Ghost. Words from a forked tongue or a self-righteous hypocrite make a deafening noise when they echo off these walls. Workers of such things, we can have faith; will be driven out by the Spirit.

A THIRSTY LIFE

Intimately knowing Jesus as the Holy and True One will produce holiness and righteousness in the disciple. To follow after Christ in this realm means one must not only be separated from the world, but one must be set apart to God as well. It is a thirsty life. Thirsting after his every word, on every subject, in every situation, will be a delight. Former presumptions about truth, holiness and righteousness, once thought to be solid as rock, will blow away like sand in a windstorm. The past will be dead and gone, buried with the old life. The traditions of our fathers, along with our ambitions and self-images, will be shed like dead skin to be replaced by the healthy covering of salvation's wisdom. By the standards of the world (and the Laodicean Church) this spiritual clothing will look like a burden. In truth it is freedom.

SHE HAS THE KEYS TO THE MERCIES OF DAVID

The books of Isaiah and Acts call God's blessings on the house of David "*the sure mercies of David*". In the letter to Philadelphia Jesus says he holds the key of David, which is the key to the blessed mercies of God. God promised that he would never forsake David and that he and his family would rule Israel forever. That is why Jesus is of the bloodline of David. Likewise, the church of Philadelphia will rule with Christ forever. Those who receive Jesus as the Truth will unlock the fullness of God's mercy, just as David did, and will be able to flourish in God's unrestricted, unrequited love. They walk in the mercies of David under the mantle of truth. Truth and mercy blended together in only the way God can do it,

adds up to God's love. Thus Jesus tells the Philadelphians that he loves them and that those who have persecuted and harassed them will someday be made to bow down before them and be forced to admit that it is the Philadelphians whom Jesus loves. Often in Psalms "truth" and "mercy" appear together. In God's economy, they are as inseparable as life and breath. The two appear in unison in twenty separate places in the Psalms. Psalm 117 is a simple psalm, but one of the most reassuring and profound. It praises God for his mercy and truth and therefore his love. It speaks of nothing more, and thereby makes the understated point that God is love.

*"O Praise the Lord, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people.
For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of
the Lord endureth forever. Praise ye the Lord." Psalm 117:1-2*

The oft quoted passage of 1 Corinthians 13, in describing love, tells us those things which are opposed to love and summarizes love by noting that it suffers long, is kind and rejoices in the truth. Truth and mercy is promised to Philadelphia. And so, the Philadelphia church has accepted Christ the Truth and wants his mercy, and is therefore immersed in the love of Christ. In contrast, the Laodicean Church has fallen for the carnally gratifying and deadly way of embracing the law. By following the law with its scriptural and not so scriptural rules and sacraments it tends to exclude itself from mercy. What seems so wonderfully pious and righteous is fatal self-righteousness. If they live by the law they shall die by the law, because no person is righteous.

Philadelphia is different. The people in this church will know the width, depth and height of God's because they will have the faith to count on God's mercy, and not their own righteousness. "Have mercy on me, help me, deliver me, work this out for me", will be the cry in her heart.

OPEN AND SHUT DOORS

This love of truth and mercy will make way for a quiet but bountiful faith in the believer. It will not always manifest itself flamboyantly; it may never in some people. In fact, their acts of faith may be

almost undetectable. The effects of their faith and prayers may be on the heart and mind and invisible to all but God. Unlike the gifts of healings and miracles this gift of faith will often be a matter of Christ opening doors and shutting them according to an individual's personal need. Jesus testifies to Philadelphia of his power to *"openeth and no man shutteth and shutteth and no man openeth"* Rev.3:7. What a wonderful, wonderful promise this is and, Oh, how the Church has missed the opportunities it offers. Jesus will open impossible doors while closing doors that could easily be open but could lead to dead-ends for the believer. The believer's part is to respond in faith and walk through those supernatural doors no matter what the appearances, while restraining themselves from forcing open those doors the Master has shut for their benefit. And do not think these shut doors pertain to only heresies or sins; they may just be a means Christ uses to direct us into the Father's perfect will. Like a shepherd guiding a flock through a mountain pass Jesus wants to use these open and shut doors to bring us home safely and to make our life in Him productive, satisfying and victorious.

To have this merciful guidance in our lives we must be willing to do what Jesus calls the "works of God". We must believe on the one whom God has sent, namely, Jesus. *"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto all good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them"* Eph.2:10. Through these supernaturally opened doors the works of God and the faith of the believer merge into one. The believer's purpose and identity take their predestined shape and finally come into sync with God's perfect plan for their life. Then our life in Christ can truly bear fruit. But There Will Be Battles. Those called to this invisible and unimposing church will need fatherly protection and direction. This simple faith in God's guidance, and their hope in the Rapture, along with their love of the truth, will make this church a radical assemblage of faith, hated by Satan and those who love this world.

PERSECUTION

Because of its weak station in the world and strong relationship with Christ this church will suffer persecution. Alone without religious

props to hold it up, the Philadelphia church will rely on the strength of its fellowship with the Father and the Son as her sole support. For their radical faith Philadelphians will often be outcasts among the brethren. Even worse, they will have to struggle against persecution from within the Church, from those, as Jesus puts it in His letter, *“who are of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews (elect), and are not, but do lie”* Rev.3:9. Because they do not rely on sacraments or the law to save them or make them righteous, their salvation will be questioned. Her insistence on the truth and sound doctrine may cause her to be branded as a divider of the brethren; even accused of being hated of God. Reliance on God’s mercy and faith in the Holy Spirit’s ministry will make them, in the eyes of most churches, out of order and unruly. They will be slandered as rebels without true ties to the Church. Already today those who do not lean on religious crutches are considered renegades by many people in the established, orthodox Christian world.

The Philadelphia church’s hatred for the teachings of Jezebel (idolatry and seduction injected into the very marrow and fiber of the Church during the Age of Thyatira); the doctrine of Balaam (using God’s Word for personal and worldly gain); and their revulsion of the Nicolaitan system (system of priesthood and dominating clergy) may drive them to the outer fringes of Christianity and into their own homes where they will worship in spirit and truth. They will be mocked; and by all appearances they will seem the farthest from Christ. Yet the day is coming when Christ will vindicate them by making those who say they are ‘Jews’ and are not come before them and admit that they are the ones whom Jesus has loved.

The church of the open door enjoys many freedoms. The price she pays is temptation to cave into the world and the Laodicean way of faith and persecution from within and without. Attacks from Satan and his demon powers are subtle and clever; but sometimes not so subtle. Christ, therefore, exhorts this people to, *“hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown”* Rev.3:11. This is the trial of the Philadelphians. They must remain steadfast in the face of ridicule and persecution. The other churches’ trials are in their need

to repent of deadly spirits, heresies, or sins, but the Philadelphia church must hold on to the little strength it has, while not denying the name of Christ. Even as the hour comes when this church must stand without the camp she must stand fast in the faith God has given her.

Dying to self may be a simple concept, easy to understand. The incredibly hard part is having a sentence of death worked in us.

But the Holy Ghost is faithful to work this “operation of God” for us, if, and only if, we will allow Him to perform it. If we have faith that God’s power of love is great enough to perform a death in us, as the sign of water baptism shows, then we can be free. Not until this happens, however, can we be free to move on in our journey to perfection, for spiritual perfection requires we be ‘dead’. The Bible tells us in Romans that only the dead are free from sin. Without faith it is impossible to please God; because anything that is not of faith is sin and faith is demanded if spiritual perfection in Christ is to be achieved. Therefore if we want to go on unto perfection (as Hebrews 6:1-3 tells us) in our journey to bride-ship of Christ we must die in order to be free from sin, free to live in the Spirit, free to live by faith. Then we can be raised up in the likeness of Christ, to the resurrected life, having our worldly and carnal desires and aspirations converted into His spiritual will by believing and trusting in the Spirit of Christ to manufacture this in us. We can be perfect in that we are freed up to “*hear the Word of God and do it*” Luke 8:21.

PHILADELPHIANS WILL BE WILLING TO PICK UP THEIR CROSS

Of the seven letters which Jesus dictated to the apostle John in Revelation 2 & 3 the letter to those who fellowshiped together in the Asia Minor city of Philadelphia shines above all the rest. For those early Christians Christ has nothing but

love, admiration and approval because among other things they *“loved the truth and did not deny his name.”*

Because of Jesus’ unqualified love for the Philadelphians and the brand of faith they held, it is good and reasonable for today’s believer to use their faith, just as Paul urged believers to follow his example, as a mirror of their own hopes and faith. To be invited to this great kind of faith is the greatest calling and a wonderful privilege, but it costs everything, including trust and hope in our own “life”. Those who seek the same approval given by the Lord and Savior to the Philadelphians will surely have *“the sentence of death working in them”*, the same sentence Paul declared to the Galatians which was at work constantly in him.

“But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead:

who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he yet will deliver us.” 2 Cor. 1:9-10

At first we are confused by Paul’s claim – what sentence of death? But if we consider the full gospel as spoken by Jesus and recorded by the Epistles we can begin to understand about this “sentence of death” through the eyes of faith. Jesus said, *“And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.”* Matt. 10:38-39. Anyone who gives another interpretation to Jesus’ words, other than dying to self and the fleshly concerns that are held in common by all people, need look no further than the dozens of proclamations in the Epistles to understand that Jesus was talking about dying to “self. Perhaps the clearest wording about the reality of believers dying to self comes from Paul again when he said, *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of*

the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” Gal. 2:20.

If the born-again Christian is to be free, that is, **really free**, in this life, then he must be delivered from sins, from worldly concerns, from fears, and from false hopes; he must be dead to lust, selfishness, and pride. It cannot be done through our own determination or by following a system of rules or laws, the only way to be free is to give up, to “die” to self. We must give up our ambitions and carnal aspirations, and anything else one can think of that is associated with selfishness, so we can walk in the Spirit, a realm, the only realm, in which a person can live a truly pleasing life to God. What greater example can there be than the Lord himself who literally gave up his life for us. His call to the Philadelphia Faith asks that the prospective Philadelphian “spiritually” give up his “will”, and by this sentence of death, give over his life to him completely.

DEATH AND RESURRECTION SYMBOLIC OF WATER BAPTISM

Is this not the real purpose and meaning of the ceremony of water baptism? Jesus himself had it done to him to show he was willing to die to his own will and we now show our obedience to this call by sinking in the watery grave with Jesus so that we can be raised up in his faith and life. This is an action, no – better called a declaration of faith, whereby we wish to die to self. Colossians 2:12&13 says we are, **“Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are *risen* with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, *being dead in your sins* and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.”** Water baptism is a statement of an obvious fact. Death must precede a resurrection. If we are to live in the resurrected life of Christ we must first die. If we wish to do someone else’s will other than our own, we must die to

our will? This cannot be a mere theoretical or theological consent; it must be done in all reality, in all actuality. Jesus said time and time again that he did not come to do his own will but his Father's which is in heaven. Dying to self is about that simple. One particular time Jesus was told that his kin were outside and wanted to see him. His direct reply to the request was, *"My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God and do it."* Luke 8:21. This is a pronouncement of absolute obedience. This is doing, not merely pronouncing a decree of some theoretical, untested faith.

Dying to self should be simple to understand. But we try to sidestep it by the rationale of fine religious distinction. But it cannot be done within the confines of the Full and True Gospel of Jesus Christ as revealed in the infallible pages of the Bible. By faith we hear the Good Shepherd, and in obedience we do his will and not our own, simple as that. And that, Philadelphians and prospective Philadelphians, is the reason and way to dying-to-self.

It is simple to understand. The incredibly hard part is having a sentence of death worked in us. But the Holy Ghost is faithful to do this "operation of God" for us, if, and only if, we will allow Him to perform it. If we have faith that God's power of love is great enough to perform a death in us, as the sign of water baptism shows, then we can be free. Not until this happens, however, can we be free to move on in our journey to perfection, for spiritual perfection requires we be 'dead'. The Bible tells us in Romans that only the dead are free from sin. Without faith it is impossible to please God; because anything that is not of faith is sin and faith is demanded if spiritual perfection in Christ is to be achieved. Therefore if we want to go on unto perfection (as Hebrews six suggests) in our journey to bride-ship of Christ we must die in order to be free from sin, free to live in the Spirit, free to live by faith. Then we can be raised up in the likeness of

Christ, to the resurrected life, having our worldly and carnal desires and aspirations converted into His spiritual will by believing and trusting in the Spirit of Christ to manufacture this in us. We can be perfect in that we are freed up to “hear the word of God and do it”.

140. False Religion Lurks Within the Walls of the Church

by T Myers Smith

It is not hard for the Christian soldier, if one is pure and simple in faith as one ought to be, to peer out into the world from behind the “walls” of the Church and see a world full with faithless persons and demonic spirits who are dedicated to the annihilation of personal faith, as well as the destruction of everything that belongs to the hope that is in Christ. The ugly face of these enemies, i.e. hatred for God, blasphemes and other lies and general unbelief, are not difficult to detect. Nor is it that difficult to understand the adversaries of the world and the flesh, so defined and identified are they throughout the New Testament. Much harder for the believer to understand, however, is the subtle opponents of idolatry and false religion that lurk within the walls of the Church herself and seek to smother and choke the faith out of would-be disciples.

This skulking enemy will often assume a Christian face, but underneath the religious facade lies a corrupt and rebellious spirit defiled by carnal desires and their own reasoning, a faithlessness that belies their stubborn pride and betrays the pure Truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. If the disciple of Christ is to be an Overcomer in all areas he must realize that such enemies from within actually exist, and that they wish to do serious harm to the true servant’s walk. During one of Paul and Barnabas’s world-wide evangelistic tours Paul was faithful to remind the disciples at every stop that we must enter into the kingdom of God by much tribulation. Acts 14 This means, among other things, that the true disciple will have to shed certain popular ecumenical beliefs and images for which he may be ridiculed and persecuted by Christian brothers and sisters. Rev. 3:9

False doctrines and unholy beliefs are sometimes gross distortions and at other times subtle perversions of the Gospel; and having infiltrated the Church, they actively try to corrupt the faith of every believer. As Jesus noted, once they turn into Christian religious traditions, they “*make the word of God of none effect*”. Mark 7:13

Perversions and corruptions began to seep into the Church from the very beginning. Christ’s call to overcome them are among the major themes of His letters to the churches in Revelation. In many ways, the threat from within constitutes a greater enemy to the believer because of its subtleties, than does the great outer enemies of Satan, World and The Self. These distortions of the Gospel are viruses when unimpeded cause a total crash and breakdown. Lies undermining the Truth are a cancer trying to inject death into Life. As enemies of discipleship and even salvation, these distortions should not be underestimated. Some of the most egregious errors are noted in the letters to the churches, the sober and serious minded believer is vigorously exhorted by Christ to defend himself against these distortions and to repent wherever necessary. When one turns and heeds the advice of the Spirit, great promises of salvation and unimaginable reward are offered by Christ. We are offered kingship, crowns of glory, life itself and utopic blessings extending into eternity. But we must shun the maleficent hope in this world and our flesh. The areas of repentance and overcoming are enumerated one by one as we read through the letters.

Of course, this is a mere cursory outline of the areas of overcoming spoken of in the seven letters and explicated for our knowledge by the spiritual weaving of the embroidered fabric of Holy Scripture. In each letter Jesus says: “*To him that overcometh will I (give or do)...*”, and we are then told some of the rewards promised to any disciple that overcomes. For example, in the first letter, the believers of Ephesus were sharply rebuked by the Lord for having lost sight of their first love. Caught up in the power of faith and doing good works they had completely forgotten about glorifying Jesus and proceeding only by a knowledge of His communication of the Will of the Father to them. Their primary

need of nurturing and relying on a relationship with Him so as to be able to act in faith had been forgotten. They relied on their own rational powers to follow the Will of the Father, even though they had known at one time that this was wholly and truly an impossibility. This was Christ's warning, that if they did not rectify this sin He would discount them as a part of the Church, part of His body. This was no empty threat. Each believer's response to the call of Christ to repent of this grave transgression was vital to their continued "membership" in the Church and, one may reasonably assume, even their salvation. Overcoming in this battle to keep Christ as our one and only love, the shepherd we heed, is therefore of primary importance to any determined disciple. Each letter concludes with *"those who have ears to hear let them hear what the Spirit is saying to the Churches"*. Therefore, this dictum, excludes listening to our reasoning minds, the forces of physical law, religious pretensions or any voice other than the Spirit of Truth who speaks only what He has heard the Father say. *"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall HEAR, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come."* John 16:13 But to those who overcome Christ promises that they will not only remain part of the Church and body, but they will be given the right to eat of the tree of life in the midst of paradise. This is the promise of Utopia. Each letter in this manner makes a point of urging Christians to overcome some potentially fatal distortion of faith so they may enter into the rewards reserved for the obedience of faith. For the beautifully woven tapestry of the fabric of Scripture teaches us that faith is essential to eternal life and the rewards of the hope of glory with statements like: without faith it is impossible to please God and anything not of faith is sin. Thereby, we learn that faith is not only essential for pleasing the Godhead; it is also the crucial element in overcoming sin, sin being the summary term for the crime which we creatures of God tend to naturally perpetrate against our Creator, unless we proactively repent. *"Whosoever commits sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the TRANSGRESSION OF THE LAW."* 1 John 3:4

The term “determined disciple” may seem redundant, for by definition how can a disciple (disciplined-follower) be anything but determined. But in Christ, there are many who wish to follow, yet do not overcome sufficiently to keep pace with the voice and step of Christ. Any Christian with even limited experience knows that the roster of the body of Christ is full of those who start out with joy but then stumble, backslide or mangle instead of cleaving to God whithersoever He goeth. All truly born-again Christians want to follow but many fail because they are not willing to pay the price of discipleship. The cost, in the example of the Ephesians, is that they be willing to cast off all desire for power and recognition; that they forsake even their “love” of doing good and the heady rush enjoyed from the power of faith. Instead, they must seek the grace of God so they may have the sentence of death working in them at all times, letting God have the glory and being delivered from the myriad troubles that beleaguer even the purest soul of faith, and certainly beset every disciple who walks closely in the wake of Christ. They will know that every disciple who lives godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. 2 Tim. 3:12, Gal. 5:12

As they had once been aware, the true disciples at Ephesus were being engaged in letter to do all things for the glory of Jesus and to let Him be the head and be given preeminence in all things. As Paul had advised every disciple he taught and everywhere he went “that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.”

In all cases of repentance and thus, overcoming, we are required to judge ourselves and those we are formed together with, Church or Separated Ones, to make up a body suitable for the habitation of the Spirit of Truth. Christ must be the head, we the body. In this age of Ecumenical hopes it is regarded as an un-brotherly thing when we judge our coming together as the Separated Ones, but as the Scriptures make obvious, it is not only right to judge within the Church it is our duty and to our peril if we do not. We owe it to ourselves, our brothers and sisters, and to Jesus Christ. The wisdom of the letters of Revelation hang on this fact. We must make judgment about who we hang around with, who we join ourselves to.

If Christ is not the head of the body of which we are part, we must sever our connection, make judgment, and move to more obedient pastures where Christ is permitted to be the Good Shepherd. We must be willing to turn when judgment has been made to us by the Spirit of Truth. But we must listen intently to hear His voice, for it is only the voice of the Spirit which speaks exclusively and purely only what He hears from the Father. We are told also that if we judge ourselves we shall not be judged later with unbelievers and those of flimsy faith. *“For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.”* 1 Cor. 11:31-32

Second, we are told to judge wrongs within the Church. *“Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way.”* Rom. 14:13 Finally, we are told this about the necessity of being judges within the Church. *“Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?”* 1 Cor. 6:3 Paul also says we have no business judging the world, but we do have need to judge what goes on in the Church. He tells us to separate from unholy brothers and sisters. *“But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?”* 1 Cor. 5:11-12 In short, it is our obligation to judge, not the world, but to carefully and righteously judge according to God’s word about the proper doctrine and conduct of faith in the Church. We must overcome all unrighteousness, even as it is in the Church.

Jesus is judge in Revelation and nowhere is He more direct and forceful with the Church than as His appearance in Revelation chapters 1-3 exhibits. In chapter one He stands as the great wise judge of eternity, His legs bright and burnished and His eyes afire with judgment and truth. It is the real and eternal Jesus symbolically displayed before our eyes to give us spiritual understanding about a part of His Divine eternal presence. In chapters two and three

He imparts His judgments and discernment with crystal clarity to the Church. His judgment is pure and undefiled. In each letter He truly and faithfully cites the Church's sin of omission or commission, urges them to repent and act, then pronounces judgment on those who fail to heed His warning and holds out the promise of reward for those who do heed and hear what the Spirit is saying the Churches.

It behooves the sincere, determined, disciple of Christ to take serious any place in Scripture where Christ exhorts His follower to overcome. To overcome means: to conquer, render helpless or overwhelm. Any one of those three meanings can apply to Christ's warnings and exhortations throughout the fabric of Scripture. This means the disciple should seek with care the meaning of each and every admonition. What are the spirits of Balaam and of Jezebel? How can the church of Sardis have a name of being alive and yet really be spiritually dead? How should one keep the word of God's patience? Who are the Nicolaitanes? Why does Jesus hate them? What do all these, and more, things mean and how do I overcome them?

We must sincerely ask the question. Sincerely we must wait for the Spirit's pure answer.

The disciple of Christ, who is he, what will she be like? The disciple is an overcomer in Christ. The disciple must be an overcomer in all ways, must search for these answers and stand fast against them while fostering and teaching the sound doctrines of truth. Then, and only then, will his election, as Peter says, be made sure.

Some Facts About The Letters to the Churches

FORM OF LETTER TO EACH CHURCH

1. Letter addressed to the **ANGEL** (strictly speaking means: messenger or servant, in this case archetypical human ministers) of the Church.
2. Christ addresses each letter with specific attributes of

His Divine omnipotence – specially pertinent to the faith of that church.

3. He makes note of their **“Works”**.
4. Critiques their spiritual condition. Gives criticism and commendation.
5. Issues warnings and urges each church to be sure to overcome those things that are dangerous to their standing as church/believer and their life eternal standing in and with God.
6. All churches and individuals, regardless of commendation or criticisms must overcome in some fashion. Christ gives promises of eternal glory to those who are overcomers.
7. In conclusion: exhorts each believer, each “angel” (leaders and ministers) and church in general: “he that has an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”

CHARACTER PROFILE OF ARCHETYPE CHURCHES

Each under the care of its particular ministers

- **Ephesus** Do not forget your first love.
- **Smyrna** Keep patience and the testimony of the Lord no matter what, even to death.
- **Pergamum** Resist the work of those who would laud themselves over the sheep in a false priesthood or authority, and reject all mingling and mixing with the world and the seduction of the love of money.
- **Thyatira** Flee idolatry and the Jezebel spirit of fornication (in the spirit), mother worship and false prophecy.
- **Sardis** Do not reject the Holy Ghost and become a walking dead person.
- **Philadelphia** Be sure to accept the little worldly strength you have and wait on the Lord with great

patience.

- **Laodicea** Become zealous, drop the spiritual arrogance and pride and let the Lord in your heart.

PROMISES TO OVERCOMERS CHURCH BY CHURCH

EPHESUS OVERCOMERS PROMISED: fulfill our perfect divinely given human nature. To eat of the tree of life which stands in the midst back in the garden. Standing next to and nullifying the effects of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

SMYRNA OVERCOMERS PROMISED: A crown of life, perfectly fulfilled life, all that it promises; & will not be hurt by the second death, never to be spoiled or threatened adversely about life again.

PERGAMOS OVERCOMERS PROMISED: will eat of the hidden manna (the mysteries of God's kingdom); a white stone and new name which no man knoweth but he who has it. (Accepted and a "mystery" himself).

THYATIRA OVERCOMERS PROMISED: power over the nations, rule them with a rod of iron and break into pieces. And given the "morning star".

SARDIS OVERCOMERS PROMISED: white raiment, not blot his name out of the book of life and will confess his name before the Father.

PHILADELPHIA OVERCOMERS PROMISED: to vindicate your faith, keep from hour of temptation and Great Tribulation, make a pillar in the temple of God, go no more out, write the name of God, the name of the city of my God which is New Jerusalem which comes out of heaven, and will write upon him my new name.

LAODICEA OVERCOMERS PROMISED: I will sup with him, you will sit with me in my throne.

141. Follow the Signs Follow the Lamb Now

*The elite company of elect believers They were
'rapture-ready' looking to the Signs of Christ's
Return Taking all the advice of their espoused
husband to be prepared*

by Terry Smith

"And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.

And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:

And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.

And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God." Rev 14:1-5

The above company of believers pictured in chapter 14 of Revelation is a snapshot of the Bride and the special rewards of brideship she will enjoy. Immediately we see the central character of Revelation, Jesus, appearing once again as a Lamb, the very same way He had appeared in chapters 5-7 of Revelation. This time we see a different

group of people with Him, however. He stands on the heavenly Mt. Zion. Surrounding Him are 144,000 people who have been redeemed from the earth. Our first challenge is to identify who these redeemed people are and what connection they have with Christ. Many students speculate that these must be the Jews that we have already encountered in chapter seven. The number is the same and they have the name of Jesus' Father written on their foreheads. At first glance this seems to be the right answer, but nothing in the rest of the description supports that interpretation. These are men and women who had made themselves rapture-ready according to the prerequisites laid down in the Holy Scriptures and in particular in the words spoken by Jesus on the Mount of Olives a few days before accomplishing His mission on the cross at Calvary. It is in the warnings, directives, instructions and promises of the prophecies of the end times and the signs of Christ's return that the faithful end-times believer is made aware of how to become rapture-ready and one of the select group that is the bride which we now see standing in glory on heavenly Mt. Zion with their bridegroom. As with any intimate mate, this group is declared to be the ones who shall follow the Lamb wherever He goes. Even into all eternity.

After we look at all the aspects of this company of believers it is much more plausible that this is an elite part of even the elite raptured saints. Here we are given clues about the characteristics that made them 'rapture ready'. They are a company of faithful believers, who, by a walk of spiritual character and through obedience of faith have attained the "*prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*". Phil. 3:14 Upon further inspection we find that it is certain that the two Revelation groups of 144,000 are not the same. One group is on earth, the other is in heaven. The Jews who are sealed and given supernatural protection from the judgments of the Tribulation are on earth during the entire Tribulation preaching the Gospel. This is why they were sealed and given supernatural protection by God. They cannot be stopped from preaching on earth and they remain on earth. But the 144,000 which we see with the Lamb are ensconced in heaven. They are redeemed from

among men. 'Redeemed' people do not dwell on earth during the Tribulation. Also, it can be noted that Jesus is seen at this juncture of time as a lamb only when seen in heaven. On earth He is a mighty angel, a lion, a judge, a tour de' force. The Mount Zion upon which He and His select group of followers stand is the heavenly Mount Zion spoken of in the book of Hebrews.

"But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Heb 12:22-24

It makes sense that these people are raptured saints because we are told they are redeemed from among men. We are told they are the 'firstfruits' unto God and the Lamb. The 'firstfruits' always and only refers to the raptured saints. They, along with the group of elders, are among the charter members of the 'Church of the firstborn'. We must ask ourselves, would Jews at this point of the Tribulation be said to be firstfruits unto the Lamb? Israel, as a nation, will be saved but not until the end of the Tribulation when they 'look upon me (says Jesus) whom they have pierced'. This epic happening will not occur until Jesus returns from heaven with *"ten thousands of his saints"*. If this group on heavenly Mt. Zion were intended to be a picture of saved Jews at the end of the Tribulation then there is no order in the events of chapter fourteen. But we may honestly ask then, why the name of the Father in their foreheads if these people are not Jews which we have already seen in a previous passage in Revelation? This is because they are God's counterpart to the Mark of the Beast. God will seal 144,000 Jews in their forehead for protection on earth, this is true, but He also seals the forehead of 144,000 raptured saints with glory in heaven for eternity. This is

the fulfillment of two promises that Jesus made to the Philadelphia Church back in chapter three. He promised to anyone who stayed obedient, overcoming temptations to deny His name and keeping the word of His patience that He in turn would *“keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth”* and He promised, *“I will write upon him the name of my God.”*

It should not be that hard to accept that God would have two sets of 144,000 people, one for the Jews and one for the Church. The number 144,000 is a multiple of the number twelve which has great spiritual significance. God will use it at the end, just as He has used the number twelve in the past for both Israel and the Church. The number 144,000 is $12 \times 12,000$. Twelve is the number of leadership in God's kingdom. Twelve patriarchs headed up the twelve tribes upon which the foundation of the nation Israel was laid. The Church was led by twelve men called apostles, all of whom Jesus hand picked (Judas being replaced). Later in Scripture God associated the number twelve with the baptism of the Holy Ghost. It was Paul who came upon *“about twelve men”* outside of Ephesus and baptized them in the Holy Ghost, the mark of leadership and endowment of power in the Church. The name of God written in the foreheads of the 144,000 is emblematic of authority and power in god's name.

If we conclude that this must be a group of raptured Christians we now have some new and engaging information about the Rapture and those who will be *“accounted worthy”* to be part of it. This is the Bride. There will be other companies of believers saved and invited to the *“marriage supper of the Lamb”*. But this is Christ's most intimate love. As noted above, these folk have heeded the warnings, instructions and words of Jesus who solemnly warned them to watch and wait upon the signs of His return. Now God reveals a glorious gathering in heaven. This is the glorious Church without spot or wrinkle being presented to Jesus which was spoken of in the book of Ephesians. The elders, also a part of the raptured

saints, are there as the bride sings a new song and celebrates her espousal and wedding promises given her by Christ.

Notice that these 144,000 are virgins, without fault and with no guile in their mouths. We are getting a picture now of the spiritual makeup, the character of the bride. They are without fault. Scripturally speaking they are “perfect”, not perfect in a worldly or fleshly sense, because that is not possible in this life, but perfect by obedience of faith and walking in the Spirit to the best of each individual’s capabilities. They stand before the throne of God having pleased God because they were unwavering disciples of Christ and true to His word. They picked up their cross and followed after Him. They put their hands to the plow and did not look back. They believed that there would be two together, in one bed, that one person would be taken and the other left, and more than anything they wanted to be the one who was chosen and taken. They never took it for granted that they deserved to be or had a right to be taken. Because they picked up their cross, denied their will and followed Jesus, they will now have the eternal honor of following “*the Lamb whithersoever He goeth*”. Who else but a man’s wife can go everywhere he does?

She is called a virgin because they stayed true to Christ. They were His chaste spouse waiting for their wedding day. They have not committed spiritual fornication or adultery by chasing after or flirting with idols. There is no guile found in their mouth. They are not hypocrites, saying one thing and doing another. They do not want to simply be hearers of the Word; they must be doers of the Word. They were not double-minded in their faith, but they believed God’s Word and kept His commandments. Because of this they sing a new song that no other being or creature in all of creation can learn to sing or ever will learn. They lived the life that made them candidates for the Rapture; they not only believed they should, they lived ‘rapture-ready’. The Jews do not sing this song (although a Christian Jew could be found among this number) because, as we shall learn, they join together with the Tribulation martyrs in singing the Song of Moses and the song of the Lamb

when they are redeemed together at the close of the seventh year of the Tribulation. (ch. 15.1-3). But chapter fourteen's group of 144,000 sing a song that no man can learn except their exclusive company. This is a picture of the people who captured the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. They kept a close eye peeled on the 'Signs of Christ's Return' and all of the advice and counsel that accompanies the revelations of Scripture about the Rapture.

We encourage each and every person having a mind to do so to follow the course of the Signs of Christ's Return as laid out in this major section of our site, so that they may be fully vested in brideship so they will be counted worthy to *'follow the lamb whithersoever He goeth'* for all of eternity. ...

142. Where the Eagles are Gathered

That's Where Christ Will Be

by Eloise Gardenier

In this article I return to the theme of signs of the times, rightly dividing the Word of God concerning the “Olivet Discourse”. Having previously covered the topics: wars and rumors of wars, famines, pestilence, earthquakes false messiahs and “as the days of Noah”; I will treat the “Rapture”, as it was taught in a special moment during the ministry of Christ.

In all three Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, when Jesus was instructing those closest to Him about the future, we discover this; *“And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.”* When we couple this With 1 Thessalonians 4:17; *“Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air:”* how can we not have faith for the “Rapture?” A natural question for those who believe in the Rapture is: Who are those that will be caught up in the clouds? Jesus gives us the answer in the Olivet Discourse Matthew 24:31 and Mark 13:27;

“And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet and they shall gather together His ELECT from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” and *“then shall He send angels and gather together His ELECT from the four winds from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.”* Here we see that those being gathered are God’s own ELECT. We find the Greek for elect, from Strong’s concordance says; “select, by implication, favorite: chosen, elect, to select, make choice, choose (out), chosen”. We believe these are the “Bride of Christ” of whom we often speak. It behooves us all, to find out what it takes to be one of the ELECT

because it is the ELECT who shall be gathered in that moment. The Bible declares in Luke 17: *“pray always that you be accounted worthy to escape all these things (end-times judgments) that shall come to pass, and stand before the Son of man”*.

Take notice that the ELECT are gathered **from** the uttermost parts of heaven and earth. Two places, **heaven and earth**. This also takes us back to 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 *“the dead in Christ”* (whose spirits wait in heaven) and *“we which are alive and remain (on the earth) shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”* The ELECT shall be gathered from both heaven and earth.

But we are not only told who will be among those gathered and that they will be gathered from heaven and earth, but where and to whom they are gathered because it is clear that they are to meet Jesus in the clouds and be joined to Him. There are two most interesting verses, though, that speak of a gathering of eagles. Matthew 24:28 says; *“For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.”* And in Luke 17:37 It is stated; *... Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.”* To further confirm 1 Thess. 4:16-17, Strong's Concordance tells us that in Matthew 24:28 carcass in the Greek means; *“dead body, corpus: carcass”* In other words, (*“dead in Christ”*). The Greek in Luke 17:37 tells us that the word body is *“body, the body as a (sound whole) lit. or fig. bodily, body saved.”* Body saved – those who are alive!

One is a carcass, one a body of believers. Many years ago, when just beginning to study the Word, I felt completely puzzled by the word carcass in Matthew 24. Little by little I gained some understanding of it. At the time I had a poster of a beautiful eagle in flight. Under it was a quote from Isaiah 40:31. *“They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint.”* The Lord woke me one night and said; *“That poster and Scripture is about the ‘rapture’ of the church.”*

That helped me to understand Matthew 24:28 much better. At

least I knew it was about being “caught up to meet the Lord in the air”. I then thought the “carcass” in that Scripture meant those eagles had to have died to self in order to “mount up” or be “caught up”. I still think that is part of it. But as I have just shared the only two times **eagles** (plural), is used in the New Testament is in the two Scriptures I have cited. One saying, “where the carcass (the dead) is’ and the other, “where the body (those alive) is, there the **eagles** will gather” . Then Isaiah 40:31 you notice says; “they will mount up with wings AS eagles”, not just eagles, but AS eagles. The “raptured” saints!

They shall also renew their strength. I believe that to be, our new glorified bodies as spoken of in 1 Cor 15:50-54.

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in a twinkling of an eye at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written,

*Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting?
O grave, where is thy victory?”*

Who are those eagles? They are those, “Who wait upon the Lord.”

Does this not, dear saints, imply waiting and watching for His return and trusting that He will return and spare us from the “evil to come”? By rightly dividing the Word we have built a chain of truth forged together link by link. Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21 reveal the Son of Man coming in the clouds, with power and great glory, then 1 Thess. 4 is attached to it by declaring that the “dead in Christ” and “we which are alive and remain shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air”. Then we add another link, that the elect are gathered from heaven and earth. Next, we see that the eagles, which are the elect, are gathered together as one body to the head which

is Christ in the air and together they are the great power and glory of Christ. And finally, the last link is connected via that wonderful passage from 1 John 3 which gives us that “blessed hope” that we shall be “like Him” for we shall see Him as He is. *“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see Him as He is.”* That glorious day when we receive our new bodies like unto His ... INCORRUPTIBLE.

Recently when singing a song: “I want to be like Jesus-like Him. I want to be like Jesus-like Him”, I thought of that verse from 1 John. It stirred my hope for my new, redeemed; glorified body that we long to receive. ” ... *Ourselves also, which have the first fruit of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves waiting for the adoption to wit, the redemption of our body.”* Rom. 8:23 When Jesus gave these prophetic details and instructions to His disciples and by extension even down to us, He included words of caution. He left us with no doubt that the time of the Rapture is known only by the Father. *“But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.”* Mark 13:32

Scattered throughout the three chapters of the Olivet Discourse (and Luke 17) are prophecy, exhortation, instruction, warnings, and promises. Among the warnings are these:

“Remember Lot’s wife!” (Luke 17:32) She looked back longingly at the world and was not delivered from judgment. *“Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.”* Luke 17:33

We must lose our attachment to the world if we hope to be one of the ones taken. As Jesus warned, *“I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.”* Luke 17:34&37

“Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be

overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.” Luke 21:34

Matthew 24:40-41 says; “Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken the other left.”

Anyone not prepared will be left behind. ARE YOU READY?!

Are You Ready!

Here are the ways the Lord exhorts us to be vigilant and prepared for His call to “come up hither.”

“Watch therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come” Matt. 24:42

also in verse 44 “Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.”

In Mark 13:23 & 37 Jesus said; “But take heed, behold, I have foretold you all things.” and, “what I say unto you I say unto all, WATCH!”

This firm instruction for us to watch is for us today, saints! From Luke 21:36 we have one of Jesus’ most loving and important pleas to us, that we might not suffer the horrors of the seven year tribulation which are *“coming on the whole world.”* One of the horrors will perhaps be execution by guillotine in order to escape taking the *“mark of the beast”*. *” ... and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and which had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their forehead or in their hands”*. Rev. 20.4

“Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.” Luke 21

As always our Lord and Savior is faithful not to leave us without promises and rewards. *“Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that*

servant whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over his goods.” Matt. 14:45-47

In both Mark and Luke we find this; “So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled.” Mark 13:27

I must repeat here. *“And then shall He send His angels, and gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.”* I close with God’s promises that He will gather His body, His eagles, His elect, those who wait upon the Lord (Isaiah 40:31), together. They will come from heaven and earth to be “caught up” in the clouds to meet Him in the air. And so shall we ever be with the Lord. So let us *‘comfort one another with these words’*.

143. The Philadelphian Will Be Willing to Pick Up Their Cross

by T Myers Smith

Of the seven letters which Jesus dictated to the apostle John in Revelation 2 & 3 the letter to those who fellowshipped together in the Asia Minor city of Philadelphia shines above all the rest. For those early Christians, Christ has nothing but love, admiration and approval because among other things they *“loved the truth and did not deny his name.”*

Because of Jesus' unqualified love for the Philadelphians and the brand of faith they held, it is good and reasonable for today's believer to use their faith, just as Paul urged believers to follow his example, as a mirror of their own hopes and faith. To be invited to this great kind of faith is the greatest calling and a wonderful privilege, but it costs everything, including trust and hope in our own “life”. Those who seek the same approval given by the Lord and Savior to the Philadelphians will surely have *“the sentence of death working in them”*, the same sentence Paul declared to the Galatians which was at work constantly in him.

“But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he yet will deliver us.” 2 Cor.1:9-10 KJV

At first, we are confused by Paul's claim – what sentence of death? But if we consider the full gospel as spoken by Jesus and recorded by the Epistles we can begin to understand about this “sentence

of death” through the eyes of faith. Jesus said, *“And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.”* Matt. 10:38-39. Anyone who gives another interpretation to Jesus’ words, other than dying to self and the fleshly concerns that are held in common by all people, need look no further than the dozens of proclamations in the Epistles to understand that Jesus was talking about dying to “self. Perhaps the clearest wording about the reality of believers dying to self comes from Paul again when he said, *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”* Gal. 2:20.

If the born-again Christian is to be free, that is, *really free*, in this life, then he must be delivered from sins, from worldly concerns, from fears, and from false hopes; he must be dead to lust, selfishness, and pride. It cannot be done through our own determination or by following a system of rules or laws, the only way to be free is to give up, to “die” to self. We must give up our ambitions and carnal aspirations, and anything else one can think of that is associated with selfishness, so we can walk in the Spirit, a realm, the only realm, in which a person can live a truly pleasing life to God. What greater example can there be than the Lord himself who literally gave up his life for us. His call to the Philadelphia Faith asks that the prospective Philadelphian “spiritually” give up his “will”, and by this sentence of death, give over his life to him completely.

Death and Resurrection symbolic of Water Baptism

Is this not the real purpose and meaning of the ceremony of water baptism? Jesus himself had it done to him to show he was willing to die to his own will and we now show our obedience to this

call by sinking in the watery grave with Jesus so that we can be raised up in his faith and life. This is an action, no – better called a declaration of faith, whereby we wish to die to self. Colossians 2:12&13 says we are, “**Buried** with him in baptism, wherein also ye are **risen** with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, **being dead in your sins** and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.” Water baptism is a statement of an obvious fact. Death must precede a resurrection. If we are to live in the resurrected life of Christ we must first die. If we wish to do someone else’s will other than our own, we must die to our will? This cannot be a mere theoretical or theological consent; it must be done in all reality, in all actuality. Jesus said time and time again that he did not come to do his own will but his Father’s which is in heaven. Dying to self is about that simple. One particular time Jesus was told that his kin were outside and wanted to see him. His direct reply to the request was, “*My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God and do it.*” Luke 8:21 This is a pronouncement of absolute obedience. This is doing, not merely pronouncing some decree of untested faith.

Dying to self should be simple to understand. But we try to sidestep it by the rationale of fine religious distinction. But it cannot be done within the confines of the Full and True Gospel of Jesus Christ as revealed in the infallible pages of the Bible. By faith, we hear the Good Shepherd, and in obedience we do his will and not our own, simple as that. And that, Philadelphians and prospective Philadelphians is the reason and way to dying-to-self.

It is simple to understand. The incredibly hard part is having a sentence of death worked in us. But the Holy Ghost is faithful to do this “operation of God” for us, if, and only if, we will allow Him to perform it. If we have faith that God’s power of love is great enough to perform a death in us, as the sign of water baptism shows, then we can be free. Not until this happens, however, can we be free to move on in our journey to perfection, for spiritual perfection requires we be ‘dead’. The Bible tells us in Romans that only the

dead are free from sin. Without faith it is impossible to please God; because anything that is not of faith is sin and faith is demanded if spiritual perfection in Christ is to be achieved. Therefore if we want to go on unto perfection (as Hebrews six suggests) in our journey to bride-ship of Christ we must die in order to be free from sin, free to live in the Spirit, free to live by faith. Then we can be raised up in the likeness of Christ, to the resurrected life, having our worldly and carnal desires and aspirations converted into His spiritual will by believing and trusting in the Spirit of Christ to manufacture this in us. We can be perfect in that we are freed up to “hear the word of God and do it”.

144. Some Do's & Don'ts for the Bride

by Eloise Gardenier

*“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and **His wife hath made herself ready.***

*And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for **the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.***

And He saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And He saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.” Rev 19:7-9

Well now, one might ask: Who is this “Bride of Christ?” How can I be a part of “that number”? The requirements are scattered throughout the entire Word of God. Unfortunately, the concept of the Bride of Christ is thrown about with varying degrees of regularity but very little is ever actually taught or encouraged among the churches or within professing Christianity today. The Bride of Christ and all conditions of Brideship are among the mysteries of the gospel which Jesus preached and taught to His initiates (those truly born-again) during His First Coming. These mysteries of the faith were expounded upon in subsequent writings and letters of the New Testament. The actualization of these mysteries will be realized in full, at and beyond His Second Coming. Their manifestation on an earthly plane will take place during what is commonly called the Millennium. As explained in the article: *The Mysteries of the Gospel of Jesus Christ*, these mysteries are not optional truths for the enjoyment of the believer which one can take or leave on their own whim. They cannot be subservient to casual curiosity to the lame soul or be placed in the box of ‘things to get to’ at the discretion

of the lackluster believer who spends all his time and energy at the expense of zeal for the gospel. The mysteries are sacred and should be received and handled with reverence and care all the days of the life of a born-again believer. The mystery of the Bride and her journey to wholesome brideship is prime. The mystery of the Bride, as with all mysteries of the Gospel, has 'imposed rites of truth' which are obligatory truths to be ingested into the faith and the stilts upon which our walk of faith is elevated in the soul. Alas, the fact is, few make any mention of these things at all and could not care less about such things that do not pertain to their carnal lazy spiritual lives and their 'what's in it for me' theology of personal prosperity. These matters of spiritual mystery require, even demand, a desire for true holiness and righteousness and this sort of stuff is a very unpopular subject with anyone who is inclined to believe that Christ died for them on the cross solely so they could get all manner of blessings in this temporary life. There are many counterfeits, but **true** holiness is avoided like the plague, for it means dying to self and finding out what God wants instead. It means being tutored by the Holy Ghost and becoming a true 'son of God' by walking in the Spirit. But let us go on unto this perfection...

In this place of our website we shall dare to list the Scriptures that help identify those who are inhabiting and living the mystery of the "Bride of Christ". They may be identified in part as "called out ones", for we are commanded to *"come out from among them, be separate and touch not the unclean thing"* 2 Cor 6:17. I will also cite some of the characteristics that make up the chosen, or members of that special bridal party. We will set the stage for this segment by reviewing the questions most on the minds of Jesus' closest circle of friends.

In Matthew 24:3-5 we find this account: *"And as He sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately, saying Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and the end of the world?"* Jesus answered and said unto them, *Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying I am Christ: and shall deceive many.*" Another account of the

same happening is in Mark 13:5 and 6 where Jesus is recorded as having said the same exact words as those quoted from Matt 24:5. And in Luke 21:8 we also find; *"...For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them."* This urging by Jesus certainly gives a strong indication of the present nearness of that time Jesus' friends wanted to know about. The mail, airwaves, movie theaters, televisions, concert halls, parks and meeting places of cults, whisper secrets of messianic pretenders. Rumors fly of false Christs or saviours who seduce the masses, as well as those who say they are Christ's head spokesman in His absence. **May the reader be warned!**

The following is a small sampling of the "false messiahs" in our own times. "The Children of God" cult sprung up in the 60's and 70's boasting David "Moses" Berg as the great prophet for the "last days". Susan Atkins, a Charles Manson disciple spending life in prison for her part in the 1969 murders of a group of Hollywood celebrities, in her book, *Child of Satan, Child of God*, confessed this of him, "I felt I had met the world's savior." Still fresh in all of our minds is David Koresh and the Waco tragedy. He convinced his believers that he was the "messiah". The Rev. Sun Myung Moon of the Unification Church is another version of a "false messiah". He has testified publicly, although he doesn't call himself the Messiah, that his followers believe in him. "I have the possibility of becoming the real 'Messiah, he said. We only scratched the surface of all the false prophets, teachers and messiahs that are loose in the world today. No wonder Jesus placed them at the head of his list. The list only grows: Vissarion, Quiboloy, Miranda, Applewhite and others claim to be Christ in the flesh or some other messiah like figure.

As in Noah's time, people were warned for 120 years through his preaching, we have been warned through God's Word, the Bible. One thing which is certain to keep us from being a part of the "bride of Christ" is anything to do with idolatry. In John's first epistle he concludes with this: *"And we know that the Son of God is come and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the*

true God, and eternal life. Little children, **keep yourselves from idols.**
Amen” 1 Jn 5:20-21

Jesus also admonishes us on several occasions of the dangers of having any fellowship with false religion or idolatry. Paul in 2 Corinthians 6:14-17 warns;

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God: as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you.”

Not only are we warned by Paul as he wrote to the Corinthians, but also in Revelation 18:3-5, where we see the exposure and fall of Babylon the great;

“For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.

And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not her plagues.

For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.”

Become detached from the World Jesus warns us on several occasions to make certain we are **ready** for the Bridegroom at His coming, when the trumpet sounds. It is up to us to find out what the requirements for brideship are and then make certain we are

prepared, just as a bride must make herself ready through preparation. The advice of Jesus on this subject is, *“Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.”* Matt 24:44. In Luke 21:34-36 He instructs in this way;

DO See that you are Ready; Watch and Pray

“And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.

For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.

Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.”

Jesus also tells us how He will come when the time arrives for Him to snatch up His bride and carry her away to the wedding. He let us know that He will come suddenly when He does come. *“Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.”* Rev 3:11 In I Thessalonians 5:2 Paul reminds us; *“...For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.”* Although He expects us to be ready, Jesus did warn us that; *“...no man knoweth the day nor the hour, only the Father!”*, when He, Jesus, will be given the signal from His Father to catch His bride away. We are told that not even the angels of heaven know when this day will be, so how could we? But we can know by the signs that the time is drawing near.

In chapters 24 of Matthew and 17 of Luke, Jesus cautions us concerning the last days, He likens those days unto the days of Noah. In Luke 17:29-30 He also warns us of Lot and Sodom’s destruction in comparison with the days just before His return. He says; *“But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.”* We are admonished not to be attached to anything if we happen to be living at that time when the Son of man is revealed and catches His bride away. *“In that*

day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back.” Luke 17:31

In the very next verse we find a very subtle but very important requirement for this event. It is our Lord's way of telling us we must be detached from the world and the things of this world. He simply says, “Remember Lot's wife.” She looked back toward that evil city of Sodom and it brought her destruction. Her outcome fit her heart. She worshiped the world and preferred it to God. Her act of looking back was idolatry! What she practiced she became – a statue (a pillar of salt) like unto a graven image, the epitome of idolatry. Remember, just before reminding us of Lot's wife, Jesus plainly tells us don't be attached to anything. When the time comes, we must not go down, go back, or look back, only look **up** and **go upward to meet our redemption in the air!!!** We must press forward toward the mark of the prize of the high calling in Christ.

Just in case someone might not want to believe that some believers will be taken and others left behind at the time of this thrilling event, the Rapture, Jesus gave us this teaching in Matthew 24 and Luke 17 to emphasize the reality of this important truth. Our Lord and Saviour made sure there was no misunderstanding on this matter by spelling it out succinctly: “**I tell you**, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left.” Luke 17:34-35 “Then shall two be in the field, the one shall be taken, and the other left.” Luke 17:36 “Then shall two be in the field, the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.” Matt 24:40-41 In the Luke 17:33 account, sandwiched in between “remember Lot's wife” and the truth about one being taken and one being left, we find this; “Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.” If we are willing to give up our lives and our own wills and give them over to Him, to die to ourselves and put our lives in His hands, our lives shall be saved. Not only saved but saved from the horrors that are to

come upon the world. This is a clear reference to the “catching up” of the bride. Those who have been willing to do it God’s way and lay down their lives to him, are caught up; the others are left behind.

When Jesus is revealed in the clouds, if you are like Lot’s wife and are too attached to this world, if there are idols in your life, i.e. homes, clothes, jobs, religion, wife, husband, friends, cars, fun, or even children, others will be taken and you will be left behind, wherever you are – in bed, at work or any other place you might be.

Jesus says to his favorite Church, Philadelphia – “Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, **that no man take thy crown.**”

Some Rapture DO’s & DON’TS

DO – PUT ON RIGHTEOUSNESS AND BE ARRAYED IN FINE LINEN

Only those who have put on righteousness shall be part of the firstfruits resurrection as disclosed in Revelation 14. They will be the select group of believers who actually attained to the mark of the prize of the ‘high’ calling of God in Christ Jesus’, as described in 1 Corinthians 9:24 & Philippians 3:14 . The Bride is the one depicted wearing fine linen in Rev. 19:8. Those raptured are those select brides of Christ. The multitudes of others will be resurrected at points afterwards, during and after the Tribulation, If one wants to avoid the Tribulation one will do what is righteous by giving their life to Christ and dying to self according to the wisdom of revealed Scripture.

DON’T – TOUCH THE UNCLEAN THING

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they

shall be my people.

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” 2 Corinthians 14-18

Those aspiring to be Raptured will not walk in both worlds or be content to walk lamely by dabbling knowingly in unrighteous behaviors. If these are occurring, knowingly or not, the doer shall have no part in the Rapture.

DON'T – FALL FOR FALSE CHRIST'S

DO – COME OUT AND BE SEPARATE

We must be come out and separated from the world and all that opposes God and His righteousness. Do the right thing and not what the world is saying is our right and option. To walk solely with Christ means to be isolated not only from the world and Satan's minions, but our own 'flesh'. The flesh being our carnal propensity to do our own will rather than the will of God. Come away from all three opponents of God and be separated.

DON'T – BE UNEQUALLY YOKED WITH UNBELIEVERS

DON'T – LOOK BACK!! PRESS FORWARD

DO – REMEMBER LOT'S WIFE

DO – GIVE UP YOUR WILL, AND ACCEPT GOD'S

DON'T LET ANYONE TAKE YOUR CROWN.

145. An Open Letter to Our Readers from Elisha's Outcast Eagles

The What When, Who and Why of the Rapture

*first published by the editor of The Christian Spirit, Inc.
to the magazine's readers in Jan. 1993, ...still true today*

Re: The Rapture – To explain it, show its Scriptural foundation, suggest other reading material and encourage our readers to live according to its precepts and hopes.

We submit this open letter to the students of our website in answer to questions most often raised in regards the Rapture. While the Rapture has gotten more than just a little play in Hollywood and Christian and secular fiction, as well as on TLC and other television channels, as well as gobs of Christian literature, wild and crazy ideas have added to the general ignorance rather than dispelled it. This glut of fabulous and sensational misinformation is nothing less than a transport full of useless baggage which exacts a great hidden price from those who might be inclined travelers along the way to Brideship. The cost of this bogus baggage is too high a price to pay. The weight of it has dragged the message and purpose of the Rapture to the ground and through the mud of ignorance so that the very word rapture is nothing but a worn out and meaningless cliché, an interesting fiction or fairy tale, like Jack in the Bean stalk, More's Utopia, Stoker's Dracula or whatever the latest outer space or alien craze might be. For the bulk of people the word Rapture conjures up a quagmire of rumor, a quicksand of gossip, just another chapter in the fiction of apocalyptic mumbo-jumbo for Hollywood to cash in on. This hurricane of info constantly swirls about this great mystery of the Christian faith and generally flat-lines its living

reality in the minds of otherwise and normally objective people. Even Christians have accepted all the stolid notions and have been thoroughly anesthetized having lost all vision of the great promise that is The Rapture. False spirits of man and demon demean those who hope for deliverance as cowards seeking escape from trouble even as deserters in the face of the enemy. If they are 'kind' they chalk it up as hope for being raptured as the burden of weaklings who just want to get out of dealing with hard times. They're branded, however kindly, as weaklings and cowards, essentially. But these half-baked ideas just prove the cliché, 'A little knowledge can be a dangerous thing'.

There are a profuse number of people who also acquire just a bit of information here and a bit there, never really studying it, who end up with their heads spinning around so that they give up on the whole promise of promises. Or, they become beleaguered after waiting a measly handful of days, never mind years or decades, or a lifetime as the apostles and early saints, and thousands of other faithful Christians down through the centuries, all have done. Today's evangelicals are hardly better off. They have been cast into a hypnotic spell by presumptive ignorance and indoctrinated by years of repetitive teaching to believe that Christians, regardless of their life of faith, automatically deserve to be raptured because they know Jesus Christ – period! End of story, their 'saved' as far as they are concerned. They like to believe that how they live and what they do is essentially irrelevant. But here we shall try to give people (though they may only have just a smattering of mish-mosh knowledge) a good foundation for starting their study of the Rapture by answering the classic question of the honest news reporter: who, what, when, where and why of the Rapture. In the interest of the ABC's of good reporting- accuracy, brevity and clarity – we seek to supply the student with an outline of basic knowledge in which they can launch themselves into a full study of the all-important promise of the Bible. After cruising through this introductory report on the Rapture, the reader should be able to find a rather complete understanding of the subject in the various articles, testimonies,

gifts of the Spirit and teachings published throughout this website. We begin with the question, what is the Rapture?

WHAT IS THE RAPTURE?

Let's start at the beginning. The Bible is the one and only authoritative source for understanding the Rapture. The movies, The Learning Channel, professors from Princeton University or Books from The Church of the Latter Day Saints will not give you the real dope. The Rapture is one of only a few subjects on earth that even nonbelievers have to agree is the exclusive property of the Bible. Hindus, Buddhists, Confucians, Zoroastrians, or Maharishi Hamburg-Yogurt have never had knowledge, let alone ownership of this great mystery. People who ask for Biblical understanding of this event are very much on the right track. Again, the Scriptures are the one and only source that proclaims the promise of the Rapture.

However, it must be said from the outset that the word Rapture does not appear in the Bible. It is the common name used by Christians to sum up an incredible promise of mercy made by God to His Church. The promise is that He will "catch up" faithful believers in the clouds to be with His Son Jesus forever. That is, in fact, what the word Rapture means, "To catch up". This Scripture from the epistle of 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 expresses the promise more perfectly than any other place in the Bible.

"For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent (Old English for, "go ahead of") them which are asleep.

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.

Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

(The Scripture 1 Corinthians 15:50-55 also adds to the overall picture. Both of the passages cited above should be read in context.)

And that – in a nutshell – is the Rapture. The catching up of Christians, both those that sleep and those which remain alive at the time of Jesus' calling, to meet Him in the air to be with Him for evermore. But this only tells us what it is, not, who, why, or when. To understand the Rapture we must answer those questions as well.

WHEN?

During His three year ministry on earth, Jesus referred many times to this “mystery”, as it is called in 1 Corinthians 15. More than once, Jesus warned us to “watch and pray” and to be “ready” because His call, and His ‘appearance’ to believers, would happen suddenly and unannounced. He said that it would “*come at a time when you think not*” Matt 24:44.

The epistles and Jesus both declare that the day of the trumpet sound, when Christ will call His faithful people into the clouds, will come as a “*thief in the night*”. 1 Thess 5:2. His appearance will come suddenly, without warning, it will be unseen and unheard, just as a thief might come and go in the middle of the night without anyone ever knowing he had been there except for that which was missing. The image is one of total surprise and vanished goods. In a parable He said, if the good man of the house knew when a thief was coming he would be ready for him and not suffer loss, but we are to be always ready, on our toes, looking, waiting, watching, praying, and living as if His return is scheduled for that very minute, so we do not lose out on being part of the Rapture.

Jesus continues, “*Of that day and hour knoweth no man, except the Father in heaven.*” Matt 24:36 But why is its time withheld? Simple. God wishes to encourage Man to live rightly and expectantly day to day. To live in anticipation of the Rapture, is the true essence of taking life “one day at a time”.

But, Jesus did say we could get an idea about the general timing. We must live as if this sudden and instantaneous resurrection of believers could take place in our next breath. Jesus said, when you see the “*fig tree*” budding (alluding to the Scriptural symbol, Israel) then we could know that not another generation would pass away before His promised gathering of the saints and the coming

judgment of the world. The state of Israel budded again in 1948 and Jerusalem became the capital of a Jewish state for the first time in nearly 2,500 years in 1967, constituting the “*budding of the fig tree*”. Jesus said about this, “*When you see these things happening, look up for your redemption draws near.*” Matt 24:32-33

WHY?

The Bible warns us that before Jesus’ return the world will be in a similar state of unrighteousness as it was in Noah’s life. This not only gives us insight into why God will catch up His faithful saints from the earth but it tells us something about the kind of faith people must have if they are to believe in the Rapture. The analogy speaks both of the condition of the unbelieving world and the condition of the faithful.

As in Noah’s day the world is turning reprobate. People are giving themselves over to sin, having as the Scriptures say, “*Their consciences seared with a hot iron.*” 1 Tim 4:2 We need only read the papers, listen to the conversations at work, or go to the movies to see and feel this unconscionable Noah like world. This reprobate condition not only assumes a lack of knowledge of good and evil but the inability to distinguish between truth and lies, even fact from fiction. For example, a completely fallacious idea from human pride is a current boast from Evangelical camps that the courageous will not desert the world but want to stay behind to punch the Antichrist right in the mouth and not run from a fight. This denies the primary purpose, the real why, of the Rapture, namely: that it is God’s mercy that some will escape the terrible, overwhelming and dreadful things that will befall the whole planet in those final days.

On the other side of the days of Noah analogy are the faithful. As Noah was faithful to believe that God would save him from the torrent of coming judgment, so today’s faithful are being required to believe that they will be saved from the flood of God’s wrath that is to come. As Noah was figuratively and literally lifted up by the waters and the people died beneath him in a flood of judgment so it will happen again. This time people of Noah-like faith will be lifted up, “caught up” and removed from the impending doom beneath and

the world below will be deluged with disaster. The Rapture saves the believer from going through the judgment which is intended for the unrighteous and sinful world.

WHO? – The Question of Most Personal Importance

Here is the really all-conclusive question and the one most ignored and abused. Once we know the answers to what, why and when, then – the question, who becomes the million dollar question, the one demanded by the other three. This we know for sure from everything about the Bible – those who are offered this great deliverance must be believers and followers of Christ, they must be watching, praying, and waiting for their Lord's return. Jesus said to His disciples, *"pray that you be accounted worthy to escape all these things (judgments coming on the world) and to stand before the son of Man"*. Luke 21:36

Jesus told many parables about lazy and unrighteous servants who did whatever they wanted and ended up being caught unprepared on the day of their Lord's return. He told a parable of 10 virgins who waited for the coming of a bridegroom. The wise virgins are destined to be Christ's Bride for eternity. They will go wherever He goes. They will be purified by keeping their lamp (light/Jesus) 'stocked' with oil (obedience to the Holy Ghost). They will be perfected by keeping their lamp 'trimmed' (taking care of spiritual business so that the light of Jesus can shine). The bridegroom's appearance came in the middle of the night, came upon all of them suddenly. Five were ready, had their lamps trimmed, filled with oil, and burning bright. The other half, sadly, had let their light go out and had fallen asleep. When the sleepers heard Him coming they tried to prepare. They tried to get the others to help them, to give them oil, but it was too late and they were shut out of the wedding party. The imagery is simple. Be ready at all times! Those who are raptured will have taken heed! They will have been vigilant to the signs of Jesus' Return and have watched. They will have prayerfully sought deliverance. They will have made themselves ready by showing all preference to spiritual things, by preferring the Holy Spirit for Jesus' sake. They will have followed the Signs of His Return

like a hunter follows tracks, like a fan follows his favorite ball club. They will have been poised themselves to be part of the great fulfillment of prophecy called the 'Firstfruits Resurrection' by the Bible, called the Rapture by us of the present day.

There is much more that can be expanded on concerning the Who, What, When, and Why of the Rapture. The Bible has much, much more that it can add to your faith about this great mercy of God, but we all need to escape from the wallboard halls of rumor and gossip so we can enter into the granite sanctuary of Scripture if we want to know the truth about God's "catching up" of the Church.

If you have not accepted Christ as your personal Savior, and that means much more than simply being a member of a Church, then do it today. Only then can you begin to make preparations for His coming and be ready on that day. Only then does one begin the journey to Brideship which ends with destination Rapture.

WHERE?

Three of the Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, tell us this about where the Rapture shall take place: *"And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."* Lk 21:27 Also, when we couple these announcements with the notification in 1 Thessalonians 4:17; *"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air,"* it is clear that we shall be raptured into the clouds to meet Jesus in the air. In Matt. 24:31, Mk 13:27 we are informed of this: *"And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet and they shall gather together His ELECT from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."* and *"then shall He send angels and gather together His ELECT from the four winds from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven."* Take notice that the ELECT are gathered from the uttermost parts of heaven and earth. Where shall they be found? All over the earth and from around the heavens because the Rapture includes the dead in Christ (whose spirits wait in an heavenly abode) and those who living at the time of the trumpet sound. Two places, heaven and earth. This also takes us back to 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 *"the dead in Christ"* (who's spirits

wait in heaven) and *“we which are alive and remain (on the earth) shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”* The ELECT shall be gathered from both heaven and earth to one place with Christ in the ‘clouds’.

This is the literal physical place of our departure and the literal place of our destination. But we are told where the gathering point of departure actually will be also. There are two most interesting verses that speak of a gathering of eagles. Matthew 24:28 says; *“For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.”* And in Luke 17:37 it is stated; *“Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.”* Isaiah 40:31 prophecies: *“They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint.”* The eagles represent those saints who soar by faith, who shall be *“caught up to meet the Lord in the air.”* Where they will gather is around the body, the carcass (dead body) which is symbolic of Christ. Where? The eagles from all over heaven and earth will be gathered around Christ. He will be the center and drawing card of all the saints who stand and fly in the airy realms of faith for the Rapture.

These eagles shall have their strength renewed. They will have glorified bodies as spoken of in 1 Cor 15:51-54. *“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in a twinkling of an eye at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”*

We must lose our attachment to the world if we hope to be one of the ones taken. As Jesus warned, *“I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be*

left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.” Luke 17:34 & 36

“Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.” Luke 21:34 Matthew 24:40-41 says; “Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken the other left.” Anyone not prepared will be left behind. ARE YOU READY?!

Are You Ready? – The Essential Question

Here is the primer for what, when, why, who and where of the Rapture. The Lord exhorts His people to be vigilant and prepared for His call to “come up hither.”

“Watch therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come” Matt. 24:42 also in verse 44 “Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.” In Mark 13:23 & 37 Jesus said; “But take heed, behold, I have foretold you all things.” and, “what I say unto you I say unto all, WATCH!”

This firm instruction for us to watch is for us today, saints! From Luke 21:36 we have one of Jesus’ most loving and important pleas to us, that we might not suffer the horrors of the seven year tribulation which are “coming on the whole world.” One of the horrors will perhaps be execution by guillotine in order to escape taking the mark of the beast. “... and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and which had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their forehead or in their hands”. Rev. 20:4

“Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.” Luke 21 As always our Lord and Savior is faithful not to leave us without promises and rewards. “Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto

you, *That he shall make him ruler over his goods.*” Matt. 24:45-47 In both Mark and Luke 21:31-32 we find this; “*So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled.*” Mark 13:27 I must repeat here. “*And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.*” God promises that He will gather His eagles, His elect, those who wait upon the Lord (Isaiah 40:31), together. They will come from heaven and earth to be “*caught up in the clouds to meet Him in the air. And so shall we ever be with the Lord. So let us ‘comfort one another with these words.’*” 1 Thess. 4:17-18

146. The Bride's Mission Is For Perfect Unity With Christ

The Ultimate Christian Unity

by T Myers Smith

Over time I realized there would never be unity in or among the churches of Jesus Christ, that the so-called ecumenical movement was nothing short of pure bunk. Man's unity would be nothing short of a repeat of the conspiracy at the tower of Babel, it is against the will of God. This is not to say that unity per se is contrary to God's will or his design for creation. He and his eternal relationships with all creatures have their own degree of intimacy just as we humans have degrees of unity with all things and creatures, we have a unity of sorts with animals, like dogs and cats, friends and society, family through both marriage and by blood, as well as spiritual matters and spiritual beings.

Just as there are different degrees of intimacy with all things so there is degrees of intimacy among relationships with humans. There are relationships with friends and cousins, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, husbands and wives; each type of relationship has its own requirements of unity and is subject to its particular proprieties of intimacy, trust and sincerity. The highest degree of intimacy is when the proprieties of intimacy, trust and sincerity are striven for by an individual and accomplished in an ethereal way by the profound moving of the Holy Ghost within the spirit of a prospective bride. It is synonymous with the state or quality of conforming to conventionally accepted standards of behavior or morals.: "he or she always strives to find the way of acting in the utmost propriety". But this action is not realized by the

will of the person or the person's own abilities and consciousness to be perfectly astute, but it is actually realized only when the person confides all trust in God to do this within in them, it can only be accomplished by simply surrendering all to God who is the only one able to bring this about in a human being. Not even the most astute genius can ever hope to bring about this proprietary intimate, trust and sincerity in a perfect spiritual manner of the heart, mind and body. This is the sole province of the Providential One, Jesus Christ himself. It is as Paul told in the letter to the Philippians:

Philippians Chapter 3

[1] Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.

[2] Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.

[3] For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

[4] Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:

[5] Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;

[6] Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

[7] But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

[8] Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,

[9] And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of

Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

[10] That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

[11] If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

[12] Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

[13] Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

[14] I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

[15] Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.

[16] Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

[17] Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.

[18] (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:

[19] Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)

[20] For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

[21] Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

We may have a different relationship with God, for not all relationships with him are standard and equivalent or exactly the same, but they are as diverse as there are people, none being the

exact same as any other, according to things like family, personal needs and quality of life, divergence in family situations and upbringing, as well as physical and mental qualities and different social standing, and physical and mental aptitude, all which place demands and special requirements on one's proprietary intimacy with God, so that no person is "called" to have their life constructed as any other soul that was ever born. An individual's depth of commitment to closeness, intimacy and oneness may be complete and proven by devotion to truth and undying respect and admiration. Just as love can have degrees that define the reality of our love so unity with God has degrees among His people. Some who have a relationship with him have very little or no degree of commitment to embracing His will. Others are subjected to His perfect love only as it serves their purposes, others to a degree as long as it fits with their likes and dislikes.

Jesus had prayed that His sheep would be one even as He and the Father were one. I knew it was a good hope, even if it was romantic to the max. As the years past so my frustrations mounted. I had come to the conclusion that the unity and love of the Bride of Christ would not manifest itself in the Church in any discernable way. I thought Christ's body would remain fractured and that the only vision of the unified body would come to me through the beautiful words of the Bible and its prophetic images of heaven which live in hopes of paradise revealed. The only thing that we hopeful Brides would see in the Church would be what we saw through that spiritual veil with the eagle eyes of faith.

The Lord had shown me some thirty or so years ago that He was establishing little "arks" of faith, here and there, hither and yon, quietly but powerfully, and that these "arks" were places where He would shut up His faithful people to protect them against the flood of judgment coming on the earth, as well as the hideous false unity that would be prevalent in the entirety of all the denominations of Christian humanistic churches.

Together these "arks", actually amounted to the Bride, the Church of brotherly love, as described in Christ's letter in Revelation, those

of the Philadelphia faith where he would make them Rapture-ready in their little havens and homes. Believing this to be an invisible Church, united along the spiritual trade winds of the Holy Ghost, I figured the false unity of ecumenism and the reconciliation of sin cloaked in human love would be the only visible and tangible unity to surface before the coming of the Lord. But that doesn't mean God will not make a call to Brideship which will unify individual believers in the spirit, though not in perhaps a purely tangible way.

Over the years we were urged to venture out from our ark and go out among the brethren, looking for those who also were *"seeking God out of a pure heart"*. 2 Tim. 2:22 Hitherto it has not worked out so well.

First off, what kind of secure and real friendship, or fellowship can one have if there is no agreement about devotion and submission to the Holy Ghost – or, to faithfully acting on giving Christ the preeminence in all things? What kind of a 'pure heart' does a Christian have in these last days if he does not strive to walk in the Spirit and refuses to be satisfied just to live off the fat of the Spirit's blessings without obedience to His will, or entering into the sufferings of Christ? What unity with Christ can there be if one has faith in the world, which God has told us is his outright enemy? *"You adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."* James 4:4

As the Bible puts it; *"If we live in the Spirit we should walk in the Spirit"*.

Unity of Bride with Christ:

One Mind, One Purpose, One Accord

The unity of the Bride will be founded on the same specific concerns or passions of ministry, namely: The love of the Bride for Christ and

the love of Christ for His Bride. That Bride is the Church and the open invitation she issues to anyone along the highways and byways of life who would wish to be Christ's espoused wife. (See Sidebar Scriptures – Matthew 22:1-14 & Luke 14:16-24)

People will never love God just because it is mandated by law. This was proven for all time under the nation of Israel by their failure to live by the Law which He tendered to His people. We have only come to love God because He loved us first, not because it was done by our care or ability to follow the perfect Law of God. God made love irresistible for those who have received a love of the truth because He sent His only begotten son, that whosoever would believe on Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Because of His love within us, we can now love one another in Truth. (Rev. 19:9)

Ministries of brideship will be more likely to be small because of this. Wanting and creating a large church can even be a self-defeating proposition because a large church will always tend to love itself more than Christ and by inclination becomes a competitor of its Lord and at odds with the very reason for existence. The letter to Ephesians makes it clear that Christ will have no other suitor competing with Him for our love. If there is a spiritual paramour in our heart, even if narcissistic, we have betrayed our one and only love. Our candlestick may be removed from the house of God's love, which is called Church. To love self, though this is a prime doctrine of the psychological theologies, is nothing but unadulterated covetousness, which we know is idolatry.

The Bride will be pure in its love, its house will be undefiled by other Lords for there is one Lord in the unity of the Spirit. This is part of the vision of the 'arks'. The arks will be and are floating as homes – churches in the home. Wherever two or three are gathered in His name there He will be also. This truth, when it occurs, and it is occurring, is Church. The body is gathered, unified in Him, because church is where Jesus truly reigns supreme, is feasted upon, is given ear, is preferred above and deferred to in the individual's heart.

True unity of fellowship is metaphorically pictured in the heavenly

form of the Cherubim, those heavenly creatures seen by Ezekiel (Chapters 1 and 10) who worship night and day around the throne of God. The wheel within the wheel and the spirit without is the picture of how Christ is the center of the ring of believers and the Spirit is the guide. The wheel turns and goes wherever the spirit takes it. This is the ideal of a unified body, a body that is one. Christ is at the hub, the ring is a ring of eyes, individual eyes, all coming from their own place on the rim of unity, drawn by praise and submission down the spokes of the wheel to the hub, the inner wheel, that is the gyroscope in the center which gives all union of balance and movement to the body. At the hub to which all eyes flow. It is Christ. It is God. Therein lies the unity of the body – when it comes to the balance point, the center which is Christ – His mind, His thoughts, His ways, which are always higher than ours and perfectly centered on Truth. We can have mutual access to the throne if we follow the proper designated godly path.

Follow the Spirit, come to the Lord Jesus Christ and have access to the Father's throne. This vision of Ezekiel 1 and 10 is fellowship's pattern, its circuit its map. Ephesians 2:18 states the access to the throne by way of the relationship of the Godhead in this fashion: *"For through Him [Jesus] we have access by one Spirit unto the Father."* Through Jesus – By the Spirit – To The Father! Nice! If a body can enter into this formless form of fellowship by love and submission they can do God honor night and day. No part will try to usurp the role of the other; no part will be in competition with another, no part will be jealous of the other. The mouth will not envy the eye, the eye will not steal the ministry of the hand, and the hand will not covet the mission of legs. The Bride will know about and appreciate the miracle that we brothers and sisters, who walk not by sight but in the Spirit, are one body, with one mind, one purpose, and acting in one accord.

ONE MIND

The one mind is that mind expressed in Philippians chapter 2:5-7. *"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: ... (who) made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a*

servant.” We are servants, willing to cast off our reputation and become the greatest among all. “And whosoever of you shall be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.” Mark 10:44

Without this mind – this overriding attitude and pre-determination to be a servant – a saint will not be able to enter into the beauty of the Bride’s unity. The parable says that there will be two people side by side in one bed; one will be taken the other left. One will be in the body (where the body is there will the eagles be gathered) because that one wanted to serve the body of Christ. The one left behind will be looking only to be served, to get, to receive, like a leech sucking out the blood of the body that unfaithful servant will only take and never want to give. Those selfish ones will see the others as objects for their gratification and use. The others will see them as living souls, as people who necessitate a relationship of love. People of the Bride will and may even be in separate churches and fellowships. It could be. I see a vision where the temporal bodies may be detached and yet the spiritual body of Christ may still be joined in the unity of the Spirit. It could happen that it will never be made clearly and manifestly known to our five senses. Maybe the ‘arks’ and the individual isolated saints will be unified in purpose having the same mind because they are traveling the same path, plowing over the same waters of adventure, journeying over deserts and mountains of faith to the same destination of Brideship, sailing on a boat toward the same destination, yet never in the same galley or together, though on the same watch.

ONE PURPOSE

Paul declared that He was dedicated to presenting every man perfect before Christ, this was his ultimate purpose, his final goal for all the sheep which God gave him to feed.

*“I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God
which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;
Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from
generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:
To whom God would make known what is the riches of the*

glory
of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the
hope of glory:
Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every
man in all wisdom; that **we may present every man perfect in
Christ Jesus.**” Col 1:25-28

Paul knew it had to do with the mystery of Christ in us. This is a mystery that can only be understood by pure experience. How can God live in us? This, however, is the real hope of glory. If that which is perfect can live in us and prevail in us, then we can be perfect, as long as we live in Christ's life. We need to be willing to live His life, walk with Him and follow after His hopes. We must be willing to banish our own hopes, ambitions, fears, desires, and such, to throw them into the sea of oblivion. This is the essence of the Bride's perfection, that the Bride would be perfectly submitted to her espoused husband, want to live His life with Him. There is no excuse not to trust His benevolence because He loves her perfectly. She can rely on Him totally, without reservation. What He wants is the very best and He has promised to give her all things. The phrase, “Christ in you” simply means we are one together with Him. We are purely one. This is why Paul can declare that he sees his duty as presenting every man perfect before God:

*“To whom God would make known what is the riches of the
glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in
you, the hope of glory:
Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every
man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in
Christ Jesus.” Col. 1:27-28*

He saw it as His duty to strive in behalf of each one of the sheep in his care, so they could be presented perfect before God, as one with Christ. This ought to be the ultimate aim of every worthy pastor, especially in this last days when the pastor worth his salt will be

trying to make each saint rapture-ready and perfect in the sight of God as a candidate for the Bride of Christ.

Their common purpose is to pick up that which is “lacking in the body of Christ” to glorify Christ and further his cause. She hopes to gather people together for the pilgrimage to another city, one made without hands, the heavenly Mount Zion, where salvation and hope wait for them in perfect eternal peace. We should not be striving to be good citizens of the political powers of this world, but to be citizens of heaven and Bride’s to be.

As warriors, the common denominator will be the complete reliance on the Holy Ghost and His gifts, the steadfast wearing of the armor of God with prayer, and the skillful and potent wielding of the Sword of the Spirit. The singular purpose of each mind and soul? To win her husband’s undying love and affection. Take the time to look upon Proverbs 31 with the eyes of a Bride to be to be schooled in the Bride’s allegiance and devotion for Christ.

This will all be done, is being done in this hour by those wives-to-be who have no guile in their mouths and hope to follow Him wheresoever He goes for all eternity. They are doing it now, with one accord, though, in the same moment, not in the same space or mutual knowledge. God is drawing people out of the ever increasing darkness into the light of the Son of the living God. As a lighthouse on a rocky shore they are beaming light into darkness. The days of excuses, “I have bought some land and need to check it out, or otherwise I would hear your call to the marriage celebration”, or “I have opened a new business, or bought a team of oxen and need to test them, otherwise I would heed your invitation” – are gone. The Bride-to-be will stand alone in the light.

ONE ACCORD

The Bride will gather together, ready to be of one accord. The disagreements of how to minister and worship will not matter. In fact the Bride will appreciate the various ways of God and enjoy the differences of administration offered by the Holy Ghost. Where two or three are gathered together there He will be also. In Revelation, the letter to Philadelphia tells of how the Bride will look unloved and

deserted; but Christ promises that she will be vindicated in a day to come. For everyone shall know in that day that it was she who He loved. Dwelling in heavenly places by the Spirit, the Bride will be made supernaturally aware of the needs of Christ and His body. Her timing, whether in prayer, in gatherings, in actions, will be uncanny. She will “have it all together”. The Book of Joel declares this is her time, she is now coming out of the closet. (Joel 2:16, Matt. 6:6, Lk. 12:3)

Accord means, together in perfect timing, as if a perfectly drilled and anointed choir trained in heaven. The word presupposes differences of opinion, but differences which are resolved because of love’s grace. Discord has given way to accord.

ONLY in SERVICE

If we are to be part of this singular and focused body of Christ – the Bride without spot or wrinkle – we must have the mind and attitude of Christ. We must be a servant, not demanding that we be served. We must be completely and confidently grounded in the sound doctrine of the Word, armed with the armor of God through constant prayer so that our singular purpose is the victory and honor, Proverbs 31 style, of our husband and Savior Jesus. She will totally rely on the Holy Ghost, His gifts, His power, and “*lean not to (her) own understanding.*” Prov. 3:5 This is the Bride’s sole purpose. And we will do it in full accord with one another. Love must rule. There should be no bickering. All disputes will be settled. “*Come out and be ye separate and touch not the unclean thing.*” 2 Cor 6:17 Does it not make sense that those who come with one mind and with one purpose will find a way to be in complete agreement? Even if it come down to two or three people. For, Jesus boldly declares that where two or three are gathered together there I will be also.

The Bride, though separated by deserts, mountains, borders, seas, governments and language, shall find their unity in hope, faith and love – the slogan of the Holy Ghost, if ever there was one. Together, we will be moved by the Holy Ghost in unison and in perfect timing to sing the praises of Jesus and call attention to His wonderful works unto the children of men.

One body – with one mind, one purpose, and one accord this we hope to see in the body manifested by the Bride. We do not expect that it will be manifested in large gatherings or churches. The world revival of the past forty years has proven that large churches are not venues that can produce brideship, for their melting pot agendas produce false security among the swarms of believers, produce a false security of Laodicean proportions. Let the Bride be a slave to the unity of the Spirit, not to the needs of politics and worldly hopes in the goodness of Man. She must be extricated from the usual forms of humanism planted by ecumenism, freed from the tyranny of false unity and Laodicean ego, pride and condescending selfishness. We know and hope the vision of brideship, threaded throughout the scriptures will have its day, is now having its day, though small and under the world's and the Laodicean Church's radar, for the time for bridegroom's return for the bride surely is but a breath away. As the Laodicean churches get stronger the words of Jesus become louder: *"Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."* Matt. 24:44, Luke. 12:40 *"The Son of Man shall come at a time you think not."*

Let the Bride serve this cause until the day star break through, 'til the trumpet sound, 'til the dead in Christ and we which are alive and remain are caught up together to meet the Lord in the air to be with Him forever.

Marriage of Jesus and Bride

Matthew 14:

[1] And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said,

[2] The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son,

[3] And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.

[4] Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the

marriage.

[5] But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise:

[6] And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.

[7] But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

[8] Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.

[9] Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.

[10] So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.

[11] And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment:

[12] And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.

[13] Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

[14] For many are called, but few are chosen.

Marriage of Jesus and Bride

Luke 14:

[16] Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many:

[17] And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready.

[18] And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused.

[19] And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go

to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.

[20] And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

[21] So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.

[22] And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.

[23] And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.

[24] For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

So, we dropped the door to our safe and secure dwelling place, that reassuring “ark” of faith..

which God had set us in, that place in which we were tutored by Him, and we ventured out in the spiritual vitality of hope. We were intrigued that we might be able to issue the full invitation of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb to any listening ear in a spirit of truth, hope, faith and love.

Once again, we sallied forth from our “ark”, which is called Philadelphia. This time offering the sacrifice of praise as we went – just as Noah had done when he first stepped out of his ark; this time hoping that through us the Bride of Christ would be evidently manifest, her words and deeds rising up to God as the scent of Noah’s sacrifice had done more than four millennia before.

Just as Noah’s sacrifice of love had done so we wished that by love, and not just in word, we might be pleasing to God by the pureness of faith.

We had a vision for the hope of a tight, though unseen, tangible unity which could be achieved only in the realms of wholly absolute faithful belief among a vortex of unknown and remote “arks” (churches, fellowships, two or three friends) scattered anonymously

and known only to Christ himself and God his Father, around the globe. This we believe have grown during the post World War II epic and have been built and nourished in the loving care of the Holy Spirit. It has been the Spirit who gave these enclaves gifts and faith, endurance and temperance, and built upon their faith a love, not the love of mankind or some half-baked mystic religion, but the true gospel, a composite for the Bride of Christ strong in the spiritual characteristics of virtue, knowledge, brotherly kindness and the capstone of faith itself – love. 2 Peter 1

Preparing them in the confines of an isolation from churchiness for purity's sake, working since somewhere around the time of the Philadelphia Church's golden age (circa 1800), through the revivals of the early 1900's in America, and especially in the Holy Spirit and Charismatic revivals which exploded with a celestial bang to create a new light among the churches, a world of floating arks that can be seen only by the telescopic vision of unseen faith.

Those days of the renewal of the Holy Ghost power of the three decades after WWII stand legendary as pillars of the message of the Bride of Christ; spiritual and unexplained by science but undeniable by signs and wonders witnessed by the world and all Mankind, not only among the churches. This era roundly refutes both Man's claims of sovereignty and power over the Earth as well as the popular messages of Laodicean Christians who had denied or restricted the Spirit of God within its walls.

Since this time the spirit of Laodicea has been hell bent on corrupting, denying, denigrating or confusing the presence of the Holy Spirit within in composite of the Churches of Jesus Christ. Its first course of action was to deny the call to a godly perfection, to corrupt or entirely usurp the Holy Spirit's power and to mock the notion of the Bride of Christ, despite the message of the Bride being preached and taught and exhorted in every single of the 66 books of the Bible. The attacks upon the truth of the existence of the will of God and Christ for promoting above all else, Bridal perfection, have only escalated as the church approaches the return of her savior. Gospels of Santy Claus prosperity, of show me the

money, of gimme theology, of greedy positive confession, of false unity and ecumenical idolatries, of doctrinal indifference and every assorted humanistic theology masquerading as godly notions of love have been invented and slapped with the brand 'Christian'. All are designed to muddy the waters, cloud the truth, bury the Bride and God's promise to save faithful ones that will come to him and give their whole heart and being in an undying expression of continual and eternal concession and love that has saved them from the second death and given to them eternal life.

With drugs and pharmacia, and carefully crafted lies of political gospels and tampering with God's Word (just to name a few of the tactics of Satan, men and women have sought to seize the wheel of the ship of Christ. It is a mutiny by offering a bounty in this life that sacrifices all eternal riches and reward. It is in opposition to the gospel of the freedom of the Holy Spirit, unswerving faith, righteous love and bridal purity. Not an outright denial but one of careful craft, one that became slightly convoluted, then totally confused, and finally put to utter disrepute. *"The Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron."* 1 Tim. 4:1-2

Today the leaders in the churches define what is right and wrong but social and/or political terms, their guideline for belief is confined to only what their own knowledge and understanding dictates. They wet their finger and put it up to see which way the wind is blowing in social and political terms. Then they mix them together with a lukewarm gospel derived from a raped Word of God to bake a gospel all their own that suits their vision of good and bad. Those lukewarm believers who mingle idolatrous hope in this world with sacred hopes of the Gospel of Christ, are doing themselves and no one else any favors.

This is not only the world, but the Church into which we ventured and in which we now speak.

So we expect that the Bride will be manifest, not in political clout, social influence, organizational strength, or continuity of voice

within the greater Church. Her strength is small, so we are small, but it is titanium-like strength we hope – we pray.

It is obvious from Revelation's Letter to the Philadelphia Church that she will be known by her love, both tough love and gentle consolation. It will be done by conceding to his love not by cultivating and doing their own love.

Further – As far as the Bride goes, her love cannot be swayed by worldly devotions to politics or race, nor will she be seduced by the cheap scent of the toilet waters of humanism which have been sold by the Laodicean church to the mass of Christian churches everywhere. The universal humanism which cries with conviction that Man is basically and innately a good and loving being capable of shaping its own destiny without the interference of the God of the bible.

But those that reside true in Philadelphia, those that are aspiring brides loyally betrothed, are in the position to minister the truth to those on the outs, that there is a marriage supper ready to happen, and they are freely invited to be seated as a friend of Christ's.

Every prospective bride will have personal knowledge that they have been transformed from being part and parcel of the unrepentant world where the depravity of Man's appears to have won (according to Jeremiah's statement of absolutism on the depravity of all humans: *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"* Jeremiah 17:9) They will have been freed from the depraved deception of their own heart. Every prospective bride's heart will have endured the miracles of the scalpel of Christ the great open heart surgeon. The only one that can transform by the Spirit a heart of stone into a heart of flesh. A heart that can receive and allow the Word of God to be truly inscribed upon it. This begins with the uncompromising reality that we must be born anew, become a new creation, a completely new creature, new eyes, new mind, new spirit, new heart.

There is no other way that one can become a bride of Christ but to transcend the death of sin by being completely changed. To be changed by the Master's hand. This is not negotiable, arguable,

debatable, or subject to revision – ever. It is universally, eternally true. Love rejoices in the truth, and does not rejoice in iniquity, lies, or any other idolatrous or false idea. The Bride, whoever she is made up of, rejoices in Truth even when it seems that it contradicts our idea of love, or is seemingly harsh or unfriendly, or when it has no advocates, on earth or in the church – but just the Holy Spirit.

The influence and power of the Bride will be exerted exclusively in the spiritual realm. She will not hope for persuading people to change events in worldly matters, no matter how righteous a thing may seem to be, or how it reflects on politically correct or humanistic notions or accepted worldly ‘truths’.

The tight-knit bonds of love which bind together the otherwise unattached members of the Bride can and are not, bound together with carnal and worldly knots, they are not lasting or valid just because they are tied by bloodline, family, living under the same roof, going to the same church, or because we might be engaged in some worldly crusade together, even when it has been supposedly sanctified by a Christian organization and its cause. History itself proves this is true. Those things are means of binding us in the world as one and just as the world and everything in it is temporary so is man’s unity.

Unity Is Not Good In and Of Itself

Only unity of Christ’s building is lasting and secure. Only it can outlast the world. Unity is not in itself valid, only unity in true love is sacred. The Nazis in Germany were unified almost in totality, but it was not a holy unity by any stretch. A street gang in LA may be tightly unified for a most unsavory purpose. Conspiracy by definition requires unity. Businesses unite in full collusion to gain ill-gotten profit. Unity in the Church, if not true, leads to a spiritual holocaust of souls.

There is, however, True Spiritual Unity

True spiritual unity is validated only when we all come to the same will of God in harmony of purpose. It is not a unity of Man, cannot be in any of its varied forms; for as the Scripture clearly exhorts, we

are to keep the unity of the Spirit not our own unity, or any self-made or man-made idea of unity.

*"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,
With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering,
forbearing one another in love;
Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."*

We are then taught the real prime talking points of unity:

*"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;
One Lord, one faith, one baptism,
One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all,
and in you all." Eph 4:1-6*

These, once again, are not debatable or open for discussion or revision over time. These are among the undeniable 'mysteries' of our faith. Eternal things. This unity is the unity of the Spirit, not the unity, of which there exists in many forms and ways, of any other thing, but the unity of the Spirit is what is being spoken of here as in the Bible. The Spirit's unity declares the oneness of some essential things just as God says of himself there is One God, but also meaning it in the sense of oneness as in unity and not only in a numerical sense. For when God revealed Himself as "One" he knew there were three members of the Godhead co-existent, but unified always and in every way, as ONENess, or ONE in mind and purpose – unified in will and hope and if promise.

So – unity and ONE are synonymous in so far as spiritual concepts. So is one body, but many members unified; one Spirit, but with seven united spirits (see Isaiah 11 and Rev 1); there is also One baptism, but three doctrines and expressions; One Lord, Father, Son and Holy Ghost; One faith, but many measures handed out, One hope of our calling, that we may please Him, see Him, dwell in Him

and be purified in Him by hope; and One true living God who will unify all things. He chooses to bring many to salvation in Himself that they all may be in Him through and through.

Unity is a grouping and bonding together of a multiplicity of things into one. One singular thing does not call for unity. Only a number of things separate but the same call for unity of them together. Oneness is the perfect existence of multiple things so that they are joined in inseparable co-existence. The unity of the Spirit is always Oneness inseparably, two or more in perfect unison agreed. Like the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

147. An End-Times Call to the Bride

A Dialogue

by TM Smith

(Humanly speaking perfection is unattainable, yet there is a perfection which is quite attainable in the eyes, and according to the standards of God. The following hypothetical dialogue between a young Christian and a pastor discusses the true nature of spiritual perfection and the righteous necessity of every Christian to seek this lofty Christian goal.)

Young Christian: I heard a preacher on the radio the other day say that a Christian ought to be perfect. But how can that be? I didn't think it was possible to be perfect in this life?

Pastor: Yes, the preacher is right; all Christians should have perfection as their goal, even, in this life. I know that sounds hard to believe at first, but it's true. To be perfect before God is one of the reasons why Jesus died on the cross for you and me and was raised from the dead by the Father; not just so we could have eternal life but that we could live totally pleasing lives to God, even in this life.

Y C: But I don't understand. How can we be perfect while we are still bound to the flesh with all its sins and temptations? After all, we're only human.

Pastor: At first what you say sounds correct, but it's actually very far from the truth. There's a wide gulf between sin and temptation. We shall always have temptations in this life, even make mistakes but we don't have to allow them to evolve into sin. Don't you agree?

Y C: Yeah. That sounds right to me.

Pastor: If God did not expect His people to be perfect in spirit why would Jesus have said what He did to the multitudes? You may recall what He told them on the mount, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as

your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” Matt 5:48 Peter, James and Paul all wrote things in their letters to exhort believers about being perfect. James 1:4 said, “But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.” Peter prayed, “But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, ‘stablish, strengthen, settle you.” 1 Peter 5:10 Paul advised his sheep, “Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.” 2 Cor 13:11 It seems clear to me that there is some type of perfection warranted in the Christian life.

Take the Bible itself it boasts of being an instrument that creates perfection in the believer when it says, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” 2 Ti 3:16-17 The Lord is not some incurable romantic who puts impossible demands on His followers knowing that those demands can not be realized. If He encouraged us to reach for perfection it has to be possible. Don’t you think?

Y C: Yeah, again. I believe Jesus always told us the truth and would never put unattainable demands on us. That doesn’t fit His way or character. But could it be that we just don’t understand what He means? After all, the Bible says we are still in the flesh and Paul said, “*in my flesh dwelleth no good thing.*” Rom. 7:18 Am I right? No matter what, don’t we have to admit that we are still only human? We’re still sinners?

Pastor: True, my young believer, we are still in this body of flesh and subject to all its temptations and miscues and wrong judgments. We can still sin ignorantly or be provoked into sin by Satan, deceived by the World or overcome momentarily by the flesh. Why should anyone argue against that, for we have the blessed assurance that Jesus is our advocate with the Father and we can always gain acquittal and pardon when we repent and are truly sorry. This is not the sort of perfection God requires. But if we give into the flesh, I

mean concede to its dominance in our daily life then we shall never walk perfect in Christ. The question is: should we, or do we have to give in to sin? Do we have to be dominated and owned by sin? To say we are only human is not exactly true if you think about it with a spiritual mind. I'm not just splitting hairs or playing word games either. Once a person becomes born-again they are no longer "just" human. We are born of the spirit which is not human. But let me explain what I mean by that.

Y C: Yes, please explain because I'm a little confused. Are you saying we are super humans like the Jehovah Witnesses and other cults contend or are we supposed to be a race of supermen like Nietzsche and other philosophers argued for? Are we supposed to make a perfect world out of a race of perfect beings like Nazi Germany tried with such disastrously evil results?

Pastor: No, I'm glad you brought that up; that's not the type of perfection the gospel exhorts us to believe in or strive for. The ideas of perfection you cited are good examples of man's miserable notions of perfection. Those, or any other idea that any man other than Christ Himself can be infallible in this life, are, well – Satanic rouses. Man, including all the efforts of the presumptuous Church, will never produce a perfect world. That will have to be done by the purging of the Great Tribulation and by Christ at His return, but that topic is for another day and time. We cannot discuss the Second Coming now. Now we are talking about personal perfection in Christ by faith. The Bible educates us to understand about spiritual perfection, not worldly, human perfection. We have to learn what God's idea of perfection is in this life and try to allow Him to work that perfect heart in us in the here and now. If one is to understand this spiritual goal of perfection one must keep what the Bible says in the forefront of their mind: *"God's ways are not our ways nor are His thoughts our thoughts"*. Isa 55:8 Do you understand what I have said so far, even if you don't know exactly where I'm going with it?

Y C: Yes, I see now that the Bible teacher on the radio was saying we can and should be perfect. That Jesus told us to seek this spiritual kind of perfection and that we should expect it to be a

perfection differing in substance and definition from our earthly, carnal ideas and assumptions about perfection. But this only tells me that perfection is a designated goal meant for a faithful believer in Jesus Christ. It does not tell me what its nature really is, how to attain it, or who should seek it. How realistic is it for a common believer to think he can obtain a kind of perfection in Christ, this I still don't know; or is it just for pastors and devoted disciples and not for the general born-again believer? I don't know if I want to even know about it if it is not for the simplest believer like myself.

Pastor: Ah! Now you have asked some of the vital questions. Let us deal with them one at a time. As for whether perfection is for every believer or just an elite few, the answer is: it is for anyone and everyone. But you have to have ears to hear it; is the way the Bible explains it. If you are trying to dodge the truth, young Christian, you will say this is only for a few and use it as an excuse as a cop-out for doing the right thing; but I choose to believe that you are not trying to sidestep this truth so I will remind you that when Jesus spoke of perfection he was talking to the multitudes and when the Bible speaks of itself as a means to perfect and purify the believer it certainly is not saying it is only for an exclusive few, even though only a few will attain or strive for perfection in Christ. If God's Word was but for only a few it would be saying that only leaders and selected people can understand the Scriptures and we know this is false. I will tell you that God intends and hopes that all believers will seek to be perfected. Do you recall what I told you; all truly born-again believers are not just human anymore?

Y C: OK. I can see that the call to be perfect must be a general call in the Church. I can see that all believers are in the same boat no matter what their function or job in the Church might be. And, yes, I did take notice of that strange comment you made; we are not just human anymore once we become born-again. What did you mean by that?

Pastor: It is good that you took notice of that because it shows you are paying attention and you will need to from here on out if you hope to understand about perfection, so you can enter into it. This

point about being born-again is one of the main issues of perfection in Christ. Jesus said, If you are not born-again you cannot enter into or even “see” the kingdom of God. One might say, the kingdom of God is a kingdom of perfection. One cannot enter into any kind of godly perfection if he is not first born-again.

Y C: I can see that. It is not enough to believe Christ died and rose again. You have to repent and be given a new spirit, you must be born-again. Is this what you mean that we are no longer the old creature, no longer just human with a strictly human heart? By miraculous and supernatural means I have been given a new nature, a new heart and have been made a new creation in Christ, this I know. Is that what Paul meant when he said, *“Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creature, old things are past away, behold all things are become new.”*? 2 Cor 5:17 In effect was he saying, we are no longer just human?

Pastor: Very good, you understand the essential elements of attaining perfection in Christ and before God. You see that we are not mere humans, we have been given a new spirit, we are new people. Our old spirits have been put in the coffin of God’s forgiveness and we have come alive to God, complete with new spirit and the mind of Christ. Among other things, this new spirit makes it now possible to receive supernatural realities from God that will change the core of our thought and actions. We can receive the power and indwelling of the Holy Ghost, we are able to live a resurrected life by faith through the public confession of immersion in water, and we are able to see the futility of our own ways, hear and discern God’s voice and turn from faith in ourselves to faith in Jesus Christ our Savior in every situation. And we are given eyes, for the first time, that can see the Word of Truth with understanding, and this truth can change our ways of perceiving, acting, believing, even knowing, and most importantly, loving. All these things God wants to equip us with, but we must allow Him to provide us with the equipment. This is what Paul was pointing out to the Colossians when he spoke of Christ’s power in us; *“For in him dwells all the*

fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.” Col 2:9-10

Y C: I sense that you are saying that these things which we can receive once we are born-again provide us and infuse us with supra-human realities and power. These are not human powers, but heavenly, supernatural powers from God and they are not subject to human rules and precepts. I am thinking of Scriptures like: “*When I am weak Christ is strong*; 2 Cor 12:10 “*I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me.*”; Phil 4:13 “*We are now seated in heavenly places.*” Eph 2:6 Is this what you mean by the statement we are not just human anymore?

Pastor: Yes. An example may help clarify things even more. It is as if we are tradesmen; God is the Master and we are the apprentices. A wise apprentice, though he still has a long way to go to be perfect in his trade, will look to the Master for all things that apply to his trade. The apprentice will have as his ultimate goal to be a perfect craftsman in his trade. But from the start He must trust the master to provide him with the tools, the know-how, the experience, the work, and eventually the chance to gain his master’s license. The apprentice’s hope is that he would become like his Master, skilled and perfect in his calling and work. The whole quest involves a process in which the apprentice must believe that his master is able to provide him with all he needs in order to fulfill his dream of being perfected in his trade. In the end the apprentice hopes to follow in the footsteps of the Master. Now to apply this to spiritual matters in Christ, this is the meaning of the words in 1 John 2:5-6 “*But whoso keeps his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that says he abides in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.*” The apprentice, or would-be disciple of Christ, must want to have the love of God perfected in him.

Y C: That answers the question concerning what means we shall have in order to enter into perfection. As any good Master would, God has made all the things we need available to the born-again Christian for perfection in the spirit. It makes sense that God would not leave us with a half empty toolbox, or not teach us, or not

provide us with the necessary experience to attain the perfection that Jesus exhorts us to in the Gospels and Epistles. That even begins to tell me how I should go about seeking perfection in the eyes of God. I know I have to be sure to let Him give me everything I need to get the job done.

Pastor: Bingo. Too many people stubbornly refuse to take all that the Master has for them. They reject the Holy Ghost, or ignore the Word of God, or refuse to go to the cross themselves. The Bible informs us of all the things we need to receive from God so we can be perfect in His sight.

The means to perfection acts like a wheel, keeps on turning and is continuous, never having an end as a circle. You must believe in the Rapture because that is the hope that purifies. You must walk in the Spirit. You must pick up your cross daily. To do these spiritual exercises you must – desire – ask – do. By this I mean you must want to be perfect, really desire to be perfect because you want to please God more than anything else. This equates to believing in the Rapture, because when we believe in the Rapture, I mean really believe so that we want to be with Jesus right now and forever, more than anything else, then we automatically will want to be purified and perfect when we meet Him. We will want to be at our very best. If one does not believe and desire the Rapture and to be with Christ now and forever then there is no chance that striving for perfection will ever be the number one priority in one's life. But desiring 'perfection' for the sake of pleasing Jesus when we meet Him is not the end of it. We must desire perfection with our whole heart but then we must ask to have it come about. This proves to God that we are serious in this desire of all desires. We then must walk in this desire closely tuning our ear to every instruction of God. This is only done by being attuned to the Holy Ghost's voice in our heart. As Jesus, put it, you must have ears to hear what the spirit is saying. We are given spiritual ears to hear when we ask for it, seek and then we will find it. The Holy Ghost is our guide into not only truth and freedom, but perfection. But even this is not the end all.

It is still left to us to do what the Spirit leads us to and speaks to us about. We must give off all our own ways.

We must be like that widow who stood at the temple door and gave her last penny into the coffers of God. Jesus said the action we must perform daily is to pick up our cross and follow after Him. Anyone, He says, who does not do this cannot be His disciple. This action of dying to self-ambition, ego, pride, conceits –everything – is the end all and proof that we have sought out and taken on perfection in the sight of God. Actual desire to be with Christ is actual Rapture belief – Asking to be obedient to God's Word by the Spirit opens the way for being able to walk in the Spirit – Doing for God by giving all to Him is the real action of love and equates to picking up the cross. Rapture belief – walk in the Spirit – Take up your cross. How can one go wrong if one is tending to these things? All these mysteries can be found explained and presented in the Scriptures.

You see now that it is not only possible to be perfect, but God expects us to seek it. We must seek it. We have discussed that this perfection is spiritual and not earthly and can only be possible if we are born-again. And you see that God will provide all that is necessary for us in our quest for perfection. Though we cannot discuss them in detail right now, the things God supplies us with are all enumerated in the Bible. Some of them are the baptism of repentance, the baptism of the Holy Ghost, the gifts of the Spirit, water baptism, which is the expression of faith to die to self and live in the resurrected Christ, the ears to hear the voice of the Good Shepherd, and the faith needed to do God's will each day. Read Hebrews 6:1-2; it tells us six of the fundamental principles of the doctrines of Christ. They lead to the path of possible perfection which is absolutely necessary if we are to be perfected in love. All these things the Son of God gives to us and has made possible by His death and resurrection. That is why the Scriptures frequently use the term – “in Christ” to tell us of the things made available to help us in our quest for “perfection”. We are not given these things so we can have a party or acquire carnal things to gratify our carnal

appetites in this life, earthly prosperity alone is a curse, and we know this. So why has He given them to us if not to free us from sin and teach us to walk in a pleasing way to Him?

Y C: Yes, I think I am beginning to see. Perfection is living a life that is pleasing to God. You already said it. We are supposed to walk in the Master's footsteps - "*walk even as He walked*". 1 John 2:6 I know God will provide me with all I need for this walk, but I still don't know what the key to doing it is. How do I learn to walk perfect before God?

Pastor: Perfection in the spirit is partly negative and mostly positive. By that I mean this: to attain perfection we must flee sin and allow Christ to deliver us from anything that is part of us which is in opposition to God. This is the negative, things that must be negated. The positive we have already proven. It is the hope of the Rapture, yielding to the Holy Ghost and picking up our cross. The great key to perfection, then, is submission. All perfection in Christ hinges on submission to everything He has offered us. We need to submit our whole "new" spirit to the Holy Ghost, the Word of God and the cross. Paul said all he knew was Christ and Him crucified, and by himself he knew nothing. We must ask to learn to discern our own voice and learn to distrust it. We must ask to hear the voice of the Good Shepherd and obey it. We have to trust God that we will hear His Word and be given the faith to act upon it regardless of our fears, the appearances, or the consequences. "*Faith comes by hearing and hearing comes by the Word of God*", Rom 10:17 and "*without faith it is impossible to please God*", Heb 11:6 and "*for whatsoever is not of faith is sin*". Rom 14:23 We, therefore must submit to the Word under the tutelage of the Holy Ghost in order to acquire faith so we may live pleasing lives to God. Anything short of this we can automatically deduce is sin and falls short of pleasing God; falls short of perfection.

Perfection is not merely acting for others and denying ourselves, though this is a fruit of our true faith. There are many people who do unselfish things out of their own cause or idea of righteousness that does not come close to God's cause of salvation or of true

righteousness, which always recognizes the shed blood of Christ at all times. Perfection is, and must always be, submission to God's will. Only He knows what judgment, misfortune, benefit or mercy a person needs in order to come to Him and be saved. We must have faith to reject our own notions of good. If we think we know what is good then we often think we know better than God and this can never be. How stupid those words sound even now. Remember when Jesus' family came looking for Him and demanded that he come outside to address the reservations they had about what He was doing? What did He say?

Y C: Well, some people came to Him and said His mother and brethren were outside and wished to speak to Him, but He told the people, "Those who hear the word of God and do it are my mother and brothers." Right?

Pastor: Yes, you're right. Let me ask you another question now, young Christian, one that hits right at the heart of the whole issue. Do you think that when you go away from here today, if you hear God's voice in your heart, and then ignore all other voices, like the world's, Satan's and most importantly your own, and follow God's voice only, it will be perfect?

Y C: Yes, because I know God could not possibly ask me to do anything that would be displeasing to Him.

Pastor: Let me ask you another question. Do you think you can hear God and then ignore it and do what you think is the right thing on your own power, and that this will please God?

Y C: No. That would just be doing my own thing.

Pastor: But do you believe Christ can provide you with the power to hear God's Word and do it and that He will give you all you need for this great and glorious task if you seek it? This is called in Scripture: "*and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*" 2 Cor 10:5. We can do this because we are also told that we have the mind of Christ. Problem is that we also are armed with our own mind as long as we are in these temporary bodies. We must try to run every thought through the mind of Christ and make them obedient to His thoughts and mind on any subject. This, of course,

is not always precisely or properly done by us. Sometimes we act on our own thoughts by habit or fear or ignorance. Trying to filter every thought through the mind of Christ, accessing by the Spirit the mind of Christ, is a matter that needs to become habit rather than our natural way of relying on our own unchecked, unfiltered thoughts. When we strive habitually to bring our thoughts into the captivity of the obedience of the mind of Christ we are perfectly trying to fulfill the will of God. That we always be successful in this, never are tripped up by our own thoughts is not possible and is not a condition of perfection. We must aim at, and strive at being perfect as our father in heaven is perfect to the best of our ability, utilizing all the equipment and teachings which Christ has afforded us.

Y C: Yes, that is one of the main reasons why He went to the cross was to free me so I could live a life pleasing to God, so I could walk in God's perfect will, and I suppose so I could think His thoughts and feel His feelings.

Pastor: Do you think God expects all believers to submit totally to His Spirit and walk in love and perfection today, no matter what function or role they may be called to fill in the Church?

Y C: Yes, I don't see why He wouldn't want that or expect it.

Pastor: The whole point, then, is that we can be perfect, but the perfection is one of the heart which begins with the perfect desire to want God and give all to Him. God expects it and He gives us the means to be perfect in this way. Our motives are perfect then. But perfect in His eyes is not the same as perfect in man's eyes. He expects us to walk free of habitual sin, hear His Word in our heart and obey it above all other voices. This He wants us to do day by day, one day at a time. When we fall, we have the next day to resume our quest and He is good and kind to permit us to start afresh. Do you believe that there have been saints who have walked in this perfect way?

Y C: Yes, I guess Paul is a good example of this type of living. He was only a man like me. I can see, then, that anyone can do this if he could. We do it on a day to day basis. I know I can fulfill this perfection today because Christ has equipped me with all I need in

order to do it. I can refuse the temptation to sin with His help; I can listen for and hear God's voice, and with His help I can obey it. If I do this today I will be perfect in God's sight today.

Pastor: I guess that about sums it up! We walk with Christ step by step and day by day. We want to be with Him, are not afraid of Him because He is pleased with us: we walk daily with the Spirit, and we daily pick up our cross to die to self and live for Christ and others. If we fail, we have an advocate with the Father who can pick us up and get us started again, back on the road of perfection. If you can be perfect in the faith today then there is no reason why you can't be tomorrow and the next day and the next day after that. We just have to try to be perfectly obedient to the Spirit one day at a time. This is why preachers like Paul pray and teach about perfection for the sheep of God's pastures. Paul told the *Colossians* that he hoped "*God would make known [to them] what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.*" Col 1:27-28 I tell you young Christian this perfection is for all, young and old, who can hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

148. The Church Would Become Corrupt

Prophecies in Joel Warn The Bride

by Leroy Gardenier

The fourth verse of chapter one in Joel states: “*That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten*”. According to the Biblical teaching I mentioned, the Church is represented by a tree. You remember the Lord Jesus likened the Kingdom of heaven to a mustard seed which, when grown, becomes a tree (Mt. 13:31/Mk. 4:31/Lk. 13:19). The palmerworm is the first to attack and completely devour. It takes some time to do its nefarious work but the palmerworm represents those sinister spiritual forces that attack, destroy and devour all eighteen Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Ghost. Close upon the blight left by the palmerworm comes the locust, the second invader. These (like the gypsy moth caterpillars which we became so familiar with) go for the tree’s main source of life – the leaves. In this spiritual teaching the leaves stand for the power and the very presence of the Holy Ghost.

The locusts are those vicious spirits who would remove and eradicate the reality of the Blessed Holy Ghost, the Third Person of the Trinity. In the wake of the locust comes the cankerworm. This third force seizes upon the twigs and the branches of the tree. The cankerworm seeks to invade the limbs and, eventually, utterly kill them. Keeping the spiritual analogy, the twigs and branches of the tree represent holiness and that separation from the world necessary to keep oneself pure and undefiled before God. The cumulative effect of these three clandestine forces is to render the tree lifeless and vulnerable to evil influences within and without.

The final conqueror, the one that seals the doom of this once mighty oak is the caterpillar. The ultimate invader doesn't attack fruit or devour leaves nor destroy branches, for none of these are now left. The caterpillar stands for the final destroyer. It lives and pursues its dreary destructive work in the rotten trunk of that once highly visible, bountifully productive, stately and venerable old tree. The rotted trunk, the debris-filled remains of something once grand and glorious represents those apostate teachings that insist on justification not by faith but rather by works. These are the religious and occult systems that insinuate themselves into an already infested Church and reduce it to a mere shadow of its former vigorous self.

This clear, graphic, perceptive teaching about the Church makes no claim to be an historical, chronological prospect of the Church Age, though in hindsight it clearly was a statement of the state of corruption which would befall the Church. Peter had said on the day of the first Pentecost that the beginnings of the Church were literally fulfilled by what Joel had declared in his prophecy. Peter said; "this is that which the prophet Joel had declared" when he foretold that God would pour out his Spirit upon all flesh, etc.. I do not pretend to say that the foretelling of Church being worm-eaten in the spirit is in any wise meant to be an accurate biological or anthropological presentation or explanation of the condition of the Church. If this simple but powerful scheme of spiritual symbolism witnesses to your spirit, then you'll recognize some of the heretical and schismatic teaching that have caused such havoc in the Church and helped bring it into the condition that the apostle Paul had dubbed by the Spirit, the "great falling away", a description which is allegorically rendered in Joel.

But the birth of the church, as cited by Peter as a fulfillment of Joel, can be seen also in Jesus' first letter to the addressed to the church at Ephesus, the only church of the seven letters which was of actual apostolic origin, being founded by Paul. The persecution, used to stave off worldliness and corruption and to preserve apostolic fervency and separation is represented by the hardship

and persecution of the church of Smyrna, while the corrupted condition of the post-Constantine Church and the power of the Papacy, which ushered in the degradation and worldliness of the Medieval Church equates to the church of Pergamos and Thyatira, churches spirited by the false prophet Balaam and the infamous witch and sorceress, Jezebel.

It is during the predominant time of these two latter churches that the very nature and person of Jesus Christ became an issue of intense debate. The gifts and the fruits of the Holy Ghost were obscured by ceaseless discussions about the procession of the Holy Ghost – whether from the Father or the Son, or from both! Creeds and theological formulas became more important than conformity to God's Word. The power of the Holy Ghost, which was so evident in the apostolic nurturing era and selfless persecuted Church of the second and third centuries was replaced by man-made systems of patriarchates, councils and synods in a determined effort to revive and rebuild what the Nicolaitane clergy perceived to be a “perfect” human organization – a Holy Roman Empire and an Augustinian ideal of a city of God on earth. The very presence of the Holy Ghost was all but lost in a church that continued to name the true Trinity but, in all reality, believed in the deity of the old religion – the father, the child and the mother. With the marriage between the church and the state, hopes of true holiness were all but lost. Eremitical and monastic separation from the world promoted not holiness but rather perversity and, at best, inspired a fanciful romanticism manifested in Mariolatry (Mary-worship) and the code of chivalry. From time to time the true doctrine of justification by faith held sway over hungry hearts and many clung to Jesus and Him alone both throughout life and in death. Justification by works actualized in numberless religious rituals, practices and impressive penitential acts kept people thinking that they knew, loved and served God when, at best, they only knew about Him!

In these dark years, through these Pergamum and Thyatiran epochs, the Church slugged and foundered in deep apostasy, ruling the domain of men, but dredging along in the very bottom of God's

spiritual waters. The sign of the time of Joel's prophecy about the people of God in the days of the end being fulfilled, so that the rise to a brilliant light and the restoration of Joel could be fulfilled as another sign that Christ would return, to those who would be living even closer to the second advent.

149. Simeon and Anna

Symbols of Waiting

Waiting for the Messiah is Same as awaiting The Bridegroom

by Terry Smith

Waiting is one of the hardest things for humans to do. Waiting for Christmas morning can be torture for children. Waiting to give birth can seem like an eternity to the expectant mother. Waiting to hear word about some important matter can actually be harder than handling the news itself. W-A-I-T is the most dreaded four letter word in the Christian vocabulary. When spoken by God to the believer, the word has been known to induce a sudden self-imposed deafness in many Christians. Some of the most creative excuses ever devised by man to ignore God have been in response to God's counsel to WAIT.

But if we are willing to be obedient to God's voice when He tells us to wait it can lead to the greatest possible victories of faith. Waiting is the one thing that the generations of the first and second comings share with one another. Both generations have the notable position in God's plan of redemption to accept the great and awesome challenge of waiting for the Messiah. This Christmas The Christian Spirit stops to take a look at those who watched and waited for the birth of the Messiah because they offer inspiration for our generation to wait patiently for the return of our dear Savior, Jesus Christ.

Bride waits faithfully for wedding day

Giants of Faith Wait for Promises

Waiting is one of the greatest acts of faith a Christian can perform for God. It began as early as Adam and Eve. They waited for their redemption through the seed of the woman, having had it promised to them by God when they were first cast from the Garden of Eden. Though they suffered the murder of their son, Abel, at the hand of his twin Cain, they saw the beginning of the redemption process in their third son, Seth, and they believed. Noah preached for 120 years about righteousness and built the ark, waiting to be saved and vindicated by God. Abraham was promised that his seed would bless the nations and that he would inherit God's eternal promises. He waited until he was 100 years-old until Isaac was born and waited the rest of his life for the promise of inheritance knowing it was many, many generations off in the future. Isaac did not have Jacob until he was sixty years old. Jacob waited and worked fourteen years to wed his beloved. The book of Hebrews runs through a very short list of some men and women waited patiently by faith for the promises never having received them but knowing the day of their inheritance of all things was coming nonetheless. David was anointed king by Samuel when he was a young lad but waited more than twenty years until he was crowned king over all Israel. He could have slain Saul and taken the throne on at least two occasions but refrained from the temptation to rush God's hand, preferring to wait for the timing of the providential wisdom of God. Elijah was given the promise of being caught up to heaven and was content to wait without knowing the day or hour, or place in which the fiery chariot would swoop down from the sky to carry him home. Even Mary stored in her heart everything the angel of the Lord told her about her son and waited for the truth about Jesus to be revealed. Waiting is a fundamental part of the pilgrimage of faithful believers. The church of Philadelphia is highly commended because *"they have kept the patience of His word and not denied His name."* Rev 3:8,10. *"Those that wait upon the Lord will rise up like*

eagles (literally when they are raptured) and they shall renew their strength, walk and not faint, run and not be weary.” Isa 40:31

But these are the exception, these people of faith, and not only in Israel at the time of Jesus’ birth, but throughout all time and even more so today. The cares of this world choke out the fruit of patience and temperance. The lusts of worldly things rob believers daily of the joy and peace that meekness and goodness in the spirit breed. As the separatist pamphleteer and poet John Milton so beautifully proclaimed, “Those who sit and wait, they also serve.”

Though a wondrous, bright new star hung over the city of David and angels serenaded the world in the moonlit sky there was no mad rush of townspeople to see the new-born child wrapped in swaddling clothes. So too now, though signs burst out with regularity and clarity like multicolored fireworks against a purple hewed skyline continually, this evil and wicked generation of these last days before the Second Advent of Christ, pay them no mind. When Joseph fled with his family into Egypt to escape the butchering of the children by Herod in Bethlehem there were no royal emissaries or palace servants poised to greet the King of kings when he arrived. Nor were there any throngs of fawning women or crowds of cheering men when Jesus’ parents brought him to the temple in Jerusalem to be circumcised. Now it is not just one woman who goes through birth pangs to present the world with the Savior of mankind, no, it is all of creation that groans, as the scripture says, to give birth to the second coming of Christ. But where are the waiters in the lobby, where is the enthusiasm, the breathless waiting, that ought to accompany so great a birth. No, even though God had preceded the birth of all births with signs and wonders there was very little notoriety or fanfare that first Christmas. Outside of a few farmers, poor people and a band of wise men mankind was too busy going about its business to pay any attention to the first coming of the Christ. So it is today, people will continue to give and be given in marriage and all things will continue as if nothing is happening and nothing is about to happen as important as the fiery judgment of the earth and the birth of a

new age, and the paving of the way for a totally new heaven and new earth. Only the spirit of the bride was clued in at the first coming – and darn few at that – only the spirit of the bride will have the insight, freedom, heart and gumption to greet the Lord at His return.

Waiting is the great ministry

In Israel there were only a handful of believers who earnestly waited for the Messiah though the event had been promised by Moses in the Law and through all of the prophets. The prophets of old had told Israel that a Savior was coming. The scribes and priests were learned in these prophecies and in Scripture. They knew where the Christ would be born and that He was of the house of David. The nation still looked for the Deliverer spoken of in Isaiah. Micah had promised that this man would be their “peace”. Daniel foretold of His kingdom and that it would be established forever in righteousness. Malachi 4:2, talking of the “*Sun of Righteousness*” prophesied that the Messiah would “*arise with healing in his wings.*” All of the religious leaders were schooled in prophecy concerning the Messiah. It was a tradition and a point of national pride and focus in Israel the way the 4th of July is a source of national observation and pride in America.

At the time of that first Christmas Augustus Caesar had just levied a tax on every household in Palestine. The Roman yoke was heavy on every Jew’s neck, the hope of the Messiah and the promise of His deliverance had to be in the heart and mind of most Jews. In every town a synagogue spoke of this hope on each Sabbath. How could this nation that had the tradition and teaching about the Messiah, not know their Jesus, their Emmanuel, was among them? Looking with carnal eyes, for their own idea of the vision of the Messiah, the nation looked right past the birth of the Christ child. Only a very few saw what was happening. Only a few had the eyes of faith to notice that the Savior had come into the world. But there were two people in particular who were looking and waiting for the coming of the Messiah. Both of these people lived in the city of God and both were in the temple the day Jesus was brought in to be dedicated to

God. These two humble saints, Simeon and Anna, stand as beacons of light to encourage the generation of the last days to wait patiently for the second coming of Jesus. They are examples showing us how we ought to live while we wait for our salvation to appear.

Simeon: Just, Devout, and Waiting

“And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.” Luke 2:25-32

Simeon had four characteristics that God mentions specifically. He was just, devout, waiting for the Messiah and had the Holy Ghost. This is the character God wishes for His end-times saints. They ought to be waiting for Jesus and filled with the Holy Ghost, but they must be living in the righteousness of Christ, covered by His blood and worshiping devoutly, in spirit and in truth. To live just lives we must flee youthful lusts, as it says in 2 Timothy 2, and walk even as He walked, as it says in 1 John 2. To be devout we must forsake all lying vanities and, as 1 John ends, keep ourselves from idols, living like little children trusting and believing Jesus for our very lives. Simeon had the Holy Ghost upon him. For us who await Jesus’ return

we are to have the Holy Ghost dwelling in us. If we do these things we will be directed by God, hear His voice, and be obedient to His commands to watch and wait for His return.

Take note that Simeon was promised by the Spirit that he would not see death until he saw the Savior. Is this not like the promise of the rapture to the Church? Take note also, that it was the Spirit that brought Simeon into the temple that illustrious day to meet his Messiah. We who wait for the second coming are also invited into the temple, brought by the power of the Holy Spirit, into the presence of the One True God. We are encouraged to come “*boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*” Heb 4:16 It is our Messiah’s blood that now gives us access to the Father by the Spirit (Ephesians 2:18). The end-times saint will be like Simeon and take full advantage of being in the presence of God while we wait to see our Deliverer.

When Simeon had seen his salvation in the child Jesus he declared the peace it brought to his soul. We who wait for Jesus’ appearing will also be given great peace in that moment when we set eyes upon him. That is why the Scripture says, “*but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*” 1 John 3:2-3 Waiting for that blessed hope purifies us as it helped to make Simeon a “just and devout man”. Jesus declared the spiritual necessity of waiting for his second appearing in this teaching from Luke 12.

*“Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning;
And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when
he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and
knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.*

*Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh
shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird
himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come
forth and serve them.*

And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third

*watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.
And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known
what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and
not have suffered his house to be broken through.
Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an
hour when ye think not.” Luke 12:35-40*

Simeon’s faith teaches us to be ready, to be clothed in truth, to have our lights burning, always waiting for that moment when the Lord will appear. It could be any time just as it happened to Simeon on an unsuspecting morning that day in the temple. Staying ready for that sudden and unsuspecting moment is a marvelous purifying agent to those who earnestly wait for Jesus.

Anna: Responded “in that instant”

*“And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of
Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had
lived with an husband seven years from her virginity;
And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which
departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings
and prayers night and day.
And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the
Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption
in Jerusalem.” Luke 2:36-38*

Anna had been in the temple serving God with prayer and fasting for eighty-four years. The Scripture does not say she had been waiting for the moment when the Christ would be revealed, but it says she responded “in that instant”. A widow in God’s house she was as a bride waiting for her beloved, the bridegroom. Instantly, like we who wait for the Lord’s return, she saw the Lord and gave God thanks. Her discernment of the Lord in an instant brings to mind the verses of 1 Corinthians 15:52 which talk about the rapture saying, “we shall

all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump". In a moment, in an instant we shall be delivered and look upon our redemption. For eighty-four years Anna served God with patience and when she saw the Lord she told everyone in Jerusalem that also looked for redemption about his coming.

Anna's ministry from that instant on was to tell believers and encourage them about the coming of the Messiah. It is a good ministry, in these last days, for saints to tell one another of the second coming and the soon appearing of the Lord in the clouds. Teaching one another to wait on the Lord is consistent with so many of the pleas that come forth from the Psalms. 1 Thessalonians 4 ends by telling us to comfort each other with the words of the rapture. This ministry of Anna is a good ministry.

Anna and Simeon truly loved Christ's first appearing. They are examples that we should remember Christmas with our mind's eye turned toward the second appearing of Jesus. Take some time not just to thank God for the first coming of Jesus, but thank Him for the promise that He will return.

God has promised a crown for those who love Jesus' appearing. Paul, in his second epistle to Timothy, 4:8 put it like this: *"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."*

Keep looking up, "for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."

150. The Church(es)

Who, What & How She Came To Be

by Terry Smith

The term “church” is the English translation of the Greek word *ekklesia*, and literally means *the called out ones, or separated ones*. The use of the Greek term prior to the emergence of the Christian Church is helpful in understanding the nature of the Church because two streams of meaning flow from the history of its usage that have bearing on the New Testament understanding of church.

First, the Greek term which basically means “called out” was commonly used to indicate an assembly of citizens of a Greek city and is so used in Acts 19:32 & 39. Greek citizens were the elite, they held the political power and enjoyed great privileges, but they also had the duties of state and military service in protecting the people. ***(FOR Christians to put all emphasis on Church without maintaining focus on the purpose for which they gather, and the duties of their service to God, which is, to share and preserve the living gospel within the confines of their assemblies, is as absurd as the event in Acts when the citizens of Ephesus had gathered at a city assembly but did not even know why they had come together. It resulted in a tumult and chaos with no constructive business or result, except in an attempt to kill Paul.)*** The citizens who were quite conscious of their privileged status over/against slaves and non-citizens were normally called to the assembly by a herald and dealt in their meetings democratically with matters of common concern. When the early Christians understood themselves as constituting a church, no doubt exists that they perceived themselves as called out by God in Jesus Christ for a special purpose and that their status was a privileged one in Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:19). Second, the Greek term was used more than one hundred times in the Greek translation

of the **Old Testament** which was in common use in the time of Jesus. The Hebrew term (**qahal**) meant simply “assembly” and could be used in a variety of ways, referring for example to an assembling of prophets (1 Sam. 19:20), soldiers (Num. 22:4), or the people of God (Deut. 9:10). The use of the term in the Old Testament in referring to the people of God is important for understanding the term “church” in the New Testament.

Thus all these groups were exclusive and “privileged” or allowed to be there because they conformed to all the requirements necessary for membership or admittance, and ability to perform the function or be useful to the purpose for which the called gathering was assembled. The defining requisites for membership among the church can be and must be summed up in the Gospel. Therefore the Gospel is all important.

The first Christians were Jews who used the Greek translation of the Old Testament. For them to use a self-designation that was common in the Old Testament for the people of God reveals their understanding of the continuity that links the Old and New Testaments. The early Christians understood themselves as the people of the God who had revealed Himself in the Old Testament (Heb. 1:1-2), as the true children of Israel (Rom. 2:28-29) with Abraham as their father (Rom. 4:1-25), and as the people of the New Covenant prophesied in the Old Testament (Heb. 8:1-13). As a consequence of this broad background of meaning in the Greek and Old Testament worlds, the term “church” is used in the New Testament of a local congregation of called-out Christians, such as the “church of God which is at Corinth” 1 Cor. 1:2, and also of the entire people of God, such as in the affirmation that Christ is “the head over all things to the church, Which is his body” Eph. 1:22-23.

Therefore the only real way to study the Church is to determine where and in what condition the Gospel was at all times. Where the Gospel thrives the Church lives, where the Gospel was perverted or lost, the Church suffered by degrees.

What the word **Church** means in the **New Testament** is further defined by a host of over one hundred other descriptive expressions

occurring in relationship to passages where the church is being addressed. Three basic perspectives embrace most of these other descriptions.

1. The church is seen as the body of Christ; and a cluster of images exists in this context as emphasis falls on the head (Eph. 4:15-16), the members (1 Cor. 6:12-20), the body (1 Cor. 12:12-27), or the bride (Eph. 5:22-31).
2. The church is also seen as God's new creation (2 Cor. 5:17), the new persons (Eph. 2:14-15), fighters against Satan (Eph. 6:10-20), or bearers of light (Eph. 5:7-9).
3. The church is quite often described as a fellowship of faith with its members described as the saints (1 Cor. 1:2), the faithful (Col. 1:2), the witnesses (John 15:26-27), or the household of God (1 Pet. 4:17).

Major Characteristics of the Life of the Church

The preeminent characteristic of the church in the New Testament is devotion to Jesus Christ as Lord. He established the church under His authority (Matt. 16:13-20) and created the foundation for its existence in His redeeming death and demonstration of God's power in His resurrection. Christ's position as the Lord evoked, sustained, and governed the major characteristics of the life of the church in the way members were admitted, treated one another, witnessed to His power, worshiped, and lived in hope of His return.

Persons were admitted to the local congregation only upon their placing their trust in Christ as Savior (Acts 2:37-42), openly confessing this (Rom. 10:9-13), and being baptized (Acts 10:44-48). Baptism or immersion in water was performed because Christ had commanded it (Matt. 28:18-20) and was itself a dramatic symbolic picturing of the burial and resurrection of Christ (Rom. 6:3-4). Joining the church made one a fully participating member in it, unlike many of the religious groups in the first century in which there was a substantial period of probation before full acceptance. Being born-again was the one and only prerequisite and there was

no sacrament demanded for its reality in the believer's life. When Christ accepted the person, the congregation did also, even though the members might be aware of weaknesses (Rom. 14:1-4).

The way in which members of the church were called on to treat one another was modeled by what God had done in Christ for the Church. They were to forgive one another (Col. 3:12-14) and to love one another (Eph. 5:1-2; 1 John 3:16) because God had done this for all of them in Christ. This foundation for Christian fellowship gave ultimacy to its requirements that reflected on each church member's relationship with God (1 John 2:7-11).

Members of the church were called on to demonstrate the power of Christ's redemption in their own lives by exemplary conduct, embracing every area of life (Rom. 12:1-13:7; Col. 3:12-4:1). The overcoming of sins in the lives of Christians was a witness to the redeeming power of Christ in action in the community (Gal. 5:22-26), and the sins to which the communities were prone were clearly identified and challenged (Gal. 5:19-21). The Christians were expected to adopt a new lifestyle wherever it was appropriate to their commitment to Christ (Eph. 4:17-24).

The worship of the early church demonstrated the lordship of Christ, not only in the fact that He was extolled and praised but also in the fact that worship demonstrated the obligation of Christians to love and to nurture one another (1 Cor. 11:17-22; 14:1-5). In distinction from worship as it was practiced in the pagan cults of Greece and Rome, Christian worship not only stressed the relation of a person to the Deity but went beyond this to stress that worship should edify and strengthen the Christians present (1 Cor. 14:26) and should challenge pagans to accept Christ (1 Cor. 14:20-25). Christian worship was often enthusiastic and usually involved all Christians present as participants (1 Cor. 14:26). This openness both inspired creativity and opened the way for excesses which were curbed by specific suggestions (1 Cor. 14:26-33a; 1 Tim. 2:1-10) and by the rule that what was done should be appropriate to those committed to a God of peace (1 Cor. 14:33a).

All of these characteristics of the life of the church existed in

the context of an urgency created by the awareness that Christ was going to return (1 Thess. 1:9-10). Christ's return would bring judgment to the unbelievers (1 Thess. 5:1-10) and thus made witnessing to them an urgent concern. How central this belief was to the early church is illustrated by the fact that the Lord's Supper, which they observed at His command was seen as proclaiming "*the Lord's death till he come*" 1 Cor. 11:26. The return of Christ was to result in glorious joy and the transformation of the Christians, a hope that sustained them in difficult times (2 Thess. 1:5-12).

Ordering of the New Testament churches A striking feature of the order, as opposed to organization, of the early churches is that every member of the church was seen as having a gift for service which was to be used cooperatively for the benefit of all (Rom. 12:1-8; 1 Pet. 4:10). Paul used the imagery of the human body to illustrate this unique feature of the church's life, stressing that every Christian has a necessary function and a responsibility to function with an awareness of his or her share in the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-31). In the context of this strong belief that every member has a ministry, certain persons were designated to fulfill specific tasks in relation to the functioning of the church such as apostles, bishops, elders, and deacons. As these offices are examined, it is important to remember that the order of the early churches was not necessarily the same in every locality. A large church would need more functionaries and works and helps than a small one, and the presence of an apostle or his designated representative would cause the other leaders in a given church to be seen in a different light. In addition to these variables, the church was in a period of rapid growth; and as it responded to the needs of ministry, roles or offices, such as the appointment of the seven in Acts 6:1-7, were created to enable the church to fulfill its ministry in Christ. "Apostle" usually designated one appointed as the authorized representative of Jesus Christ, and the term in the New Testament is most frequently applied to one of the Twelve (Acts 1:15-26) or to Paul (Gal. 1:1-24). The term was occasionally used in a wider sense to indicate the validity and importance of one of the early

church's leaders, such as James (Gal. 1:19) or Barnabas (Acts 14:4; compare Rom. 16:7); but there is no hint in the New Testament that an apostle could appoint a person to succeed himself and establish a continuing line. The office is, in fact, seen as foundational in the church's history and not as continuing (Eph. 2:20).

Bishops and elders had quite similar responsibilities; and Paul, addressing the elders in Acts 20:17, stated that they were bishops or overseers (v. 28). Usually, however, the term "bishop" is in the singular (1 Tim. 3:1), and the term "elders" is plural (Jas. 5:14) as a specific church is addressed. The responsibilities of a bishop are described in 1 Tim 3:1-7 and Titus 1:7-9. He is described as representing the church in a way which would suggest that each church had one designated leader who functioned much in the way a contemporary pastor does.

Deacons were required to be exemplary Christians like bishops (1 Tim. 3:8-13). Since their duties are not specified and they are usually listed with the bishops, it is usually assumed that deacons devoted themselves to the larger work of the local church, assisting in whatever ways were most appropriate to the local congregation of Christians as the seven did in Acts (6:1-7). The order, rather than organization, of the early churches was not governed by a rigid plan that each church had to follow. The guiding principle was that the church was the body of Christ with a mission to accomplish, and the church felt free to respond to the leading of the Holy Spirit in developing a routine or order, not so much a human structure, that would contribute to its fulfilling its responsibilities (Rom. 12:1-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-11; Eph. 4:11-16).

The main structure, if it could be called such, was assembling together in the name of Christ as full-fledged, equal citizens of the Kingdom of God, to worship God, for the Gospel's sake, and for the promotion of the salvation of every member of the body. By faith each member was expected to assemble, striving to love one another and knowing that wherever two or three gathered together in His name there he would be also. As eagles flocking to the body, they could spiritually and in all reality, feast on His body

and drink His life-giving blood. This was in the spirit of the ekklesia, or ‘the called out ones’, just as the Greek world had acted out in their worldly culture which provided the name ‘church’ for Christ’s believers. They had been exhumed from the world and risen into the life of Christ. They had been removed, ‘called away from, and separated’ to God.

The Growth and Expansion of the Early Church

Jesus taught His disciples that by following Him they were to be involved in a movement that would continue (Matt. 16:13-20; John 14:12-14), but it was after the resurrection of Jesus that the mission of the church really began (Matt. 28:16-20; John 20:19-23; Acts 1:6-11). The earliest Christians were Palestinian Jewish followers of Jesus and found it difficult to witness to non-Jews (Acts 10:1-48). The bridge to the Gentiles was the Hellenistic Jewish Christianity, which sprang into existence with the conversion of Jews from the dispersion who were visiting in Jerusalem and converted at Pentecost (Acts 2:5-47). These Jews whose residence had been in the cities of the Roman Empire were called Hellenistic because they were generally more open to the Greco-Roman culture than their Palestinian colleagues. They spoke and wrote Greek as their primary language, gave their children Greek names (such as Stephen which means “crown” in Greek), and were more willing to relate to Gentiles. It was this group of the early Christians that was the major channel in spreading the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 19:11-26). It was also the phenomenon of persecution of the early Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, Stephen, Peter, James) that sent them from their comfortable place in Jerusalem into the rest of the world to preach the Gospel in Antioch, Babylon, Africa and other far-flung places of the Roman Empire, including Rome and the Far East. Ironically, God used persecution to further the Gospel and spread it far and wide among the Gentiles. The thousands of converts who had sold their property to live communally had nowhere to live once they were rooted out by persecution and were forced to ‘go into all the world’. The spread of the Gospel through the dispersal of the early church at Jerusalem was so great, in fact, that Paul could tell

the Colossians twenty years hence, that the Gospel had gone into all the world. (Col. 1:6) Christ was to be a light to the Gentiles as Isaiah had seen, and so the move into the world had to be able to relate to the Greeks and the rest of the Gentile nations as well. Paul said he became all things to all men for this reason: that some could be saved (1 Cor. 9:18-22).

Paul was a Hellenistic Jew (Acts 21:39); and when he became a Christian, he was called to and accepted a ministry to the Gentiles (Acts 22:21; Eph. 3:1-13). Significantly, he inaugurated his ministry of founding new churches from the base of a church composed of both Gentiles and Hellenistic Jewish Christians (Acts 11:19-26; 13:1-3). Paul's strategy was to visit synagogues in the cities of the Roman Empire and to proclaim Jesus as the Christ (Acts 18:5). The usual result was that some Jews and some Gentiles who were interested in Judaism (called God-fearers, Acts 18:7) believed in Christ, were expelled from the synagogue, and formed the nucleus for a growing church (Acts 18:5-11; 19:8-10). Be persecuted and expelled, once again was the idealistic catalyst of church expansion, and even, spiritual growth in the individual members of the body. The Acts of the Apostles gives only a glimpse of the early Christian heroes and heroines with a focus on Peter, Paul, and a few others (Acts 18:1-4, 24-28). There were, however, many heroic Christian witnesses unknown to us who first carried the gospel to Rome (Acts 28:14-15) and to the limits of the Empire in India, Egypt, and the outlying areas of Europe. Each of the twelve apostles has traditions and fables surrounding their evangelistic expeditions and ministries. Each one is supposed to have died a glorious martyr's death which only furthers the cause of Christ and the disseminating of the Gospel throughout the world during the first thirty years of the Church's existence.

Special thanks to Harold S. Songer for the meat of this article.

151. “And Then There Is The Bride”

A Word of Knowledge given to Elder Roy Gardenier of The Open Door Fellowship June 15, 1988

There's the story of Creation, the Fall, the Flood, the details of the life of the first patriarch...

and, then, there's the Bride in Genesis 24.

There's the story of the many Judges and the complicated work of the Holy Spirit in that hectic era...

and, then, there's the Bride in the book of Ruth.

There's the long history of the Kings; the exaltation and the degradation of Israel; the very personification of Wisdom, the agonizing's of Job; the comfort of the Psalms; the clear directions for Wisdom and Understanding in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes...

and, then, there's the Bride in the Song of Solomon.

There's the long prophecy of Isaiah, but...

then, there's the Bride in Chapter 62.

There's the variegated panoply of exciting, foretold events; some looking back to Eternity Past, others giving us a glimpse into Eternity Future – all these found in the long list of Prophets; and again...

there's the Bride in Ezekiel 16 and 24 as well as in Hosea.

There's the wonderful Good News of the Kingdom; the accounts of Jesus' earthly ministry; the teachings, the very touches of the Lord Jesus...

and, then, there's the Bride in Matthew 25.

The Scriptures record the birth of another Nation in Acts; the Spirit's searchings' and soundings in the Epistles; the final consummation in Revelation...

and, then, there's the Bride in Revelation 19:7-8.

Throughout this marvelous and wondrous outpouring of God's

Love manifested in the Word, the Blood of the Lamb is shed that we may be saved and the Spirit and the Bride invite us to come and feast at the Banquet of Redemption so that, at last we may be satisfied!

“And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are true sayings of God.” Rev. 19:9

“And the Spirit and the Bride say, come. And let him that heareth say Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Rev. 22:17

152. Urban Nutcracker

A Pageant of The Bride

by Joelle Gagnon

I went to see an Urban Nutcracker show this week-end and the Lord showed me it was a beautiful pageant about His Bride. It's a modern version of the "The Nutcracker Ballet". It starts off with an urban city scene and people dancing. There are many cultures and nationalities and a variety of dances in this from Hip-Hop to a kind of Michael Jackson character, some tap, modern and ballet. As the show continues we meet many characters, at first we get only glimpses of a mysterious character the Snow Queen. First, she appears in and out of a few dances with others on stage. She is so beautiful all dressed in pure white, with sparkling jewels on her outfit and wearing a crown. Every time she appears on the scene she out stages everyone and you can't help but focus in on what she is doing. She almost always appears with the Snow King. It's very rare that they aren't seen together on stage. As the performance continues there are numerous dance numbers performed by all kinds of talented people from all over the world, but then we see The Snow Queen and King appear and do the most beautiful and spectacular dance I had ever seen. The Queen does a number of turns and difficult jumps and remarkable poses, the King is always by her side helping her, holding her hand, supporting her in all that she is doing. He lifts her up and helps her perform these beautiful turns and all the while he is looking at her with awe and never taking his eyes off her. You can feel the absolute joy he takes in helping her and dancing with her.

As time progresses she gets a wonderful solo performance; she's so beautiful and graceful as she dances. There is barely a sound in the audience and everyone is so captivated by her. He then comes

back to join her. But then the onlookers began to wonder, will He dance solo too? Will He show us what He can do? He is so muscular and in top form. Here he is making her look so wonderful. I was hoping I would see Him do His thing. At last, He takes center stage alone and performs the most spectacular jumps and leaps through the air like there is nothing to it. He made everything seem so effortless and yet they were indeed difficult maneuvers. The audience is mesmerized by its beauty, It was so euphoric. I was on the edge of my seat watching this awesome performance and feeling a kind of spiritual high. At times it was so beautiful I had to fight back tears. Then she joins him back on stage and they are reunited, dancing so beautifully together again, so graceful so tender, so perfect together and loving toward each other. All eyes were on them and everyone was in silence almost holding their breath hoping that their silence would keep the moment frozen in time. Even the audience was in unity with the unity of the King and Queen.

Later they appear again on the scene only this time they are dressed in Shades of Purple/Lavender and again they woo the crowd with their graceful beautiful performance. In other Nutcracker performances, I've even seen them get taken off the stage in a horse-drawn carriage. Which is so symbolic of the chariot of fire and tied closely to the rapture.

APPLICATION

The Lord showed me how this was a glimpse of Jesus and His Bride. In all the difficult jumps and turns that she performed the King was by her side supporting and helping her achieve all these difficult tasks. The Bride is dressed in pure white (Purity) and outperforms all else surrounding her. Even though they are all talented they don't even compare to Her and her beauty and grace. There is a large retinue of dancers throughout the ballet, some are more talented and better fitted for their roles than others, but only the Bride is perfect and perfectly suited to dance with the King.

Then she goes from being the Bride to becoming Royalty (symbolized by her change from simple white to Purple) with her

most Beloved King by her side for indeed if it had not been for Him she would never have been able to accomplish the difficult maneuvers that had been required of her.

There is definitely a great reward for the Bride of Christ and we are on the very verge of Jesus returning to take his Bride away. There is none that can compare to the Bride of Christ. Throughout eternity she will always be His Bride and will never be absent from His presence. Jesus is all about His Bride and He too is waiting for Her to be presented before all the world to look upon beauty with awe and inspiration. Her testimony will be what Jesus has done for Her.

“And the Spirit and the Bride, say Come!....” Rev 22:17

153. The Constellation Foretells the Story of a Bride Prepared & Ready

CASSIOPEIA:

by Joelle Gagnon

“God in the beginning created the lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years.” Gen 1:14

The constellation universally known as Cassiopeia beautifully depicts the biblical Bride of Christ. Cassiopeia means: The Enthroned Woman, or The Beautiful, also called The Daughter of Splendor, or The Glorified Woman.

She is pictured as a glorious woman sitting on a throne with one hand holding a branch and the other holding her hair and brushing it with the branch. The branch that she is holding is symbolic of Jesus. Often in scriptures Jesus is called “The Branch” so we can say that she is holding onto him. Next she is brushing her hair with the branch. Hair is symbolic of glory, “But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given her for a covering.” 1 Cor 11:15

Jesus is her covering, and that is precisely what makes her glorious and beautiful.

From the beginning of Man's appearance on earth God had recorded his whole plan of the ages in the stars in heaven. The names of the stars and signs of the Zodiac and accompanying constellations recording the story of redemption through the Son

of God was passed on from Adam, his son Seth to Shem and down through his word to present day.

Although people throughout time have spun their own version of the signs and their meaning, it has not altered God's plan. It still remains plainly written in the heavens and especially in His Word for everyone to know. God does not do things in the dark. Everything He does is done in the light for all to see. This revelation about the Bride of Christ he has done through the lights shining out of darkness.

His plan has been to find a Bride for his Son that will love Him with her whole heart and reign with Him throughout eternity. The constellation Cassiopeia depicts this woman. She allows her beloved to bestow gifts of salvation upon her. She was not content with simply being saved. Jesus, the Son of God, is everything she wants to be and she is persuaded she can become like Him.

She is depicted looking in the mirror, she yearns to measure up to her loves likeness. This hunger and thirst to be like him drives her forward pressing her "toward the mark of the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus". She is not presumptuous. She knows she is in a spiritual state of 'becoming' the Bride and it will not be over until the day of her marriage supper.

She not only has been Born Again but has also built her foundation on sound biblical doctrinal teachings, adding pillars of knowledge, while being brought through a purification process. By these disciplines she has become a partaker of his divine nature. She lives a crucified life in Christ and has learned to endure the pressures hardships that cross her path daily. She is undergoing a spiritual makeover that is complete and consistent with the Bible's advice and instruction. Even still, she recognizes that she is in constant need of his help. She trusts and loves him and knows that He only wants what is best for her. He's everything to her; she clings to Him and him only.

Another depiction of Cassiopeia pictures her holding the branch in one hand and holding a strap of her garment. If we consider this picture again it shows the woman holding onto "The Branch" Jesus

and the other hand holding onto the straps of her garment, which is symbolic of her being clothed in his righteousness. The following scriptures confirms this:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

Having predestined us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” Eph 1:3-7

“But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,

Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:

That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God:

Not of works, lest any man should boast.

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” Eph 2:4-10

”...even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it;

That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” Eph 5:25-27

What a blessed Saviour we have that he would give up his place in heaven, become a man to redeem us so we can live and reign forever with him in glory. He did it all for us.

This is illustrated in her by the brightest star that is on her right breast bearing the Hebrew name Shedar, the Freed. She is freed from her bondage and slavery to sin and self and by the the milk of the Word is nourished by Christ, sanctified, perfected and prepared.

There is another star on the back of the chair with the Hebrew name Caph meaning: The Branch. , which refers to Christ the Savior. Also the Arabic Caph means “hand” or “palm” which portrays that she is in the palm of his hands and is the work of his hands, not of herself. It also speaks of his being the sacrificial lamb for mankind, the nails that crucified Him being driven through his hands of flesh.

Then there are four principal stars of the third magnitude which never set and they form the throne upon which the resurrected Christ sits in eternal life. Therefore they are always visible in the sky no matter the season, there until the end of time.

Another notable bright star in this constellation is called “Ruchba” or” Rukbat” meaning “knee” possibly symbolising her humility before God. The last bright star which I have not clearly seen a name for, which if that is the case, also hints at a scripture in Revelation 3:12 regarding the church of Philadelphia ... *“I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.”*

The Constellation next to Cassiopeia is King Cepheus who is to her right holding out the Royal Scepter to her, just as we see in Esther 5:2 when the King held out his scepter to her to show that she had found favour in his sight. Esther, also being a symbolic person of one submitted to the Holy Ghost and finding favour with

the King, was made a Queen and even had a part in saving other people.

Cassiopeia is a beautiful picture of the glorious Bride of Christ, seated on a throne ruling with him forever. Jesus will be everything to her and she will be faithful to him. She will be prepared and waiting for his appearing until her final breath on this earth, nothing or no-one will be able to get in the way of that. She is His forever.

“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.” Rev 19: 7-8

“And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” Rev 21: 2

“And the Spirit and the bride say, come.....” Rev 22:17

If you haven't entered into this Journey of Brideship, please don't delay in doing so. We want to see you on the other side.....come....

Sources: The Bible, Wikipedia, Joseph Seiss “The Gospel in the Stars” and William D Banks “The Heavens Declare”.

154. The Bride is to be God's Jewels

by T M Smith

The prophet Malachi, prophesied of a day when God would gather together all those who love Him to make them into the jewels and centerpieces of a totally new and revamped universe. *"Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."* Malachi 3.16-17 We can only wonder at what this imagery means and how such splendor could possibly be displayed through the children of dust. Somehow, though, our time-worn flesh will be turned into such stunning beauty that it will surpass the radiance of the sun, the magnificence of the moon, the brilliance of the stars, the majesty of any nebulae, red Mars, even the Aurora Borealis, or any resplendent thing that this present universe has ever known. God will turn the saints into the crown jewels of His new creation. As a king wearing a royal ring, or a bejeweled crown of gold, or an insignia to declare his power, to enhance his majesty, so God will adorn His new worlds with the testimony of His saints. Their light and beauty will gleam into every corner of the universe like enormous sapphires, rubies, emeralds, and topaz, declaring the power of the love of Christ that saved them from the grip of death and decay and renewed them eternally by Christ's saving blood, the elixir of all eternal life.

So it should be no wonder that the Bible ends with the Bride of Christ descending out of the heavens personified as a city, the New Jerusalem. She is the capital of a wholly new universe. What will be the cause of this newly configured universe? Another Big

Bang type-thing! Maybe Jesus by speaking creation into being, or by simply declaring His new name? Or most likely, by something not yet comprehensible? Regardless, the Bride will be the eternal habitation of the Father and The Son. She will become the eternal “hub” of the universe from whom He reigns over His kingdom of Love. Everything will gravitate to her. All authority and majesty will flow from her. She will be His and God will be her Father.

It is no accident of fate that the Bride of Christ is revealed at the very conclusion of the of God’s revealed plan with Mankind. It is so because from the start it always has been the ultimate purpose of the creation of Man and earth itself. It has been the aim and object of the creation of Adam from the very beginning. Therefore, the story of the Bible begins, quite naturally, with the creation of man and how his relationship with God was severed through sin and continues with God’s pursuit of returning to His Son a bride who will be perfect and loyal to him for all eternity.

The institution of marriage, like so many things that are set up by Providence, is a shadow of the true spiritual things which will take place between Jesus and Man. The history of man can be seen as a story of his betrothal to God, of becoming Christ’s fiancée, then His Bride in waiting and finally, His eternal wife. This is why there is no marriage in heaven; no gender. Jesus informed us that the redeemed shall all be as the angels. For it is God’s will that those redeemed should be part of His family, free and without division. There shall be no corruption, no liars or nefarious souls of any sort. The Bride shall be married to Him only. There shall be those in the wedding party, and throngs of souls at the marriage supper, but there will be but one Bride, one without spot or wrinkle, filled with the Holy Spirit forever. One that was in this life wholly and fully subjected to Him in perfect love.

For this cause, the Father has worked to give His Son the hand of the perfect wife. A bride for His Son is the reason why the Father has willingly suffered so much pain and heartache in creating man. To receive a perfect loving bride is why Jesus gave up His glory in

heaven and became, not just the Son of God, but also the Son of Man.

At times God was so hurt, so fed up, by man's rejection that He regretted He had created man. He had nearly scrapped everything 1,500 years after it began, but found one man, named Noah, that gave Him delight and so encouraged Him to continue with the process of bringing to Himself a people who could fellowship with Him for all eternity. All along the way, at critical times, He found men who had faith in His love and caused Him to take heart and have hope for mankind. There was Job, the man who was able to resist the Devil and by his faith effectively countered Satan's claim that men would not worship or revere God unless everything was going well. God found Abraham who believed the Almighty One could do all things and thereby was able to please God. The Lord found His dutiful servant Moses who, when God was about to destroy the rebellious Jewish nation in the wilderness and start over with his seed, rescued them from God's anger by appealing to His mercy. God found David, a man after His own heart, to lead His people. There were the prophets who were obedient and told Israel about the coming Messiah. This epic story of faith was leading up to the coming of the Savior, the creation of the Church of God and the marriage of all faithful believers (both Jew and Gentile) with Him for all eternity.

In the first part of chapter twenty-one of Revelation we discovered that God had always planned that man should be His eternal habitation. God did not want to live alone or simply with the angels in the vast expanses of heaven. He did not want to live in a palace or temple, but He wished to live in a home "made without hands". His residence would be among the souls of the creatures that He Himself had made and then carefully nurtured to salvation through His Son. He would make these people into a nation of lively stones, building them one by one into an eternal dwelling place that would provide Him fellowship and return His love. The book of First Peter tells of this plan to make the saints into a royal priesthood of believers and a house for God's habitation.

“Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that Ye may grow thereby:

If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,

Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter 2:5

Symbolism using a city

Later in chapter twenty-one of Revelation, we discover that God employs the symbolism of a city to illustrate this great truth. He uses the city to personify the Bride. The characteristics of the ancient city, with its security, riches and full provisions for body, soul and spirit serve as a perfect description of the Bride’s eternally secure existence in Christ. (Herein lies the true nature of eternal security. Once we have been converted in this life and resurrected into immortality we are secure, and only then. This is the proof of our election and how we have made our “election sure”. We are not only the called, not only the called and chosen, but we are proven to be the called, the chosen and the faithful. Calvin’s doctrines of the ‘elect’ and the concepts of eternal security in this life, as once saved always saved, are erroneous and nullify every warning to believers to be holy, see that no man take your crown, to cease from sin and all sober advice given us by Jesus in the gospels.)

The city, being a center of learning, health, government, and worship, is a fine reflection of the Bride’s vast riches of wisdom, health, security and liberty in Christ. A symbol, mind you. This represents a portion of the inheritance of those who loved Christ and gave their all to Him in this life. Be sure, they did not give their all matter of factly, or by some compulsion of predestination to do so or by spiritual fate. They gave their all to Him by faith. God called Abraham His friend because Abraham believed Him, not because He

had made him a robot by pre-selection. The Bride shall reap the rewards of being His eternal wife because she returned Christ's love to Him. Anyone that loves the Son – the Father adores. This is what we have already learned in the first half of chapter twenty-one, but seeing and desiring the promised inheritance and understanding how to attain the inheritance and the right to be called Christ's wife is quite another matter.

The Second Half of Revelation 20 we see Her

In verses 19 and 20 of Revelation we see that the Bride of Christ, appearing as a city, has descended from its place in heaven; its foundations shimmering brightly with the glorious light of *twelve types of precious stones*, each one in some way is representative of a carefully cut and polished ethereal foundation spiritual characteristic of the saints who sit on a firm and lasting foundation of beauty and truth and are the beautiful expression of the living, eternal Bride.

God lists the twelve stones using them as analogies to teach the student of Revelation about the process of polishing and refining that is necessary in preparing the saints to become the unblemished Bride of Christ. Each one, therefore, has its own meaning and significance regarding God's personal approval, love and delight.

“And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald;

The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolyte; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.” Rev. 21:19-20

In searching the names of each gem, their root meanings garner some very interesting facts to be associated with the Bride and her overall character. The foundations have the names of the twelve apostles written on them, but they are garnished with these twelve precious stones. This symbolism begs the question. What meaning

do these stones really have? Why are they named by name? And what significance does each one have?

Six of the gems names have traceable etymologies that are significant symbolically. They can be said to symbolize the process of purification within us at our root being.

The other six stones have symbolic meaning in their attributes and their uses, but not in their etymological roots each being obscure and their origins unknown. Those six mystery gems symbolize the mysterious operation of purification that often takes place in the inner and the outer person, directly having to do with what a person's actions and deeds actually are. Often the work is unknowable even to the doer but with God all things are possible.

These twelve stones represent the perfect and full order of change that believers could undergo, yet only the Bride actually undergoes. Some actions are discernable with the five senses, some understandable, even predictable; other actions and changes are hidden, subtle, done only in quietness of heart with God as its witness.

The Gem's Symbolism Covers the Whole Person

The whole person – body soul, and spirit – finds representation in the symbols of the foundational stones of the great and eternal habitation of God which He is building, called the Bride. When analyzed, each stone reveals a characteristic(s) lending itself to a process of purifying, perfection and/or beautification of the inner being that inevitably must spill over to the only proof and validation of change – action.

They Are About Purification & Perfection

These stones are the foundation of the Bride, the process which, whether supernaturally quick or long and arduous, she must go through, even endure. It begins with polishing, as the first stone's (jasper) etymology reveals. A sanding is required, a removal of the

rough edges, a hollowing out, a shaving away, a reforming, and an abrading of the imperfections of the soul. God is determined to perfect the saints in a spiritual way so that He can present to Himself a perfect Bride. Ephesians 5:27 says this quite plainly,

“That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”

A list of the six stones that have significant word roots is given first, along with their root meanings. A discussion of their connotations and symbolism follows. A discussion of the symbolism of the subtler second group of six follows.

1. **Jasper:** to polish
2. **Sapphire:** as used for scratching other substances, to score with a mark as a tally or record; (by implication) to inscribe and also to enumerate; to recount i.e. celebrate; commune; count, declare, number, reckon, scribe, shew forth, speak, talk, tell(out), writer.
3. **Chalcedony:** copper-like; through the idea as hollowing out as a vessel(this GEM metal being chiefly used for that purpose); appearance, fashion, shape, sight; to know, be aware, behold, consider, (have) knowledge, look (on), perceive, see, be sure, tell, understand.
7. **Chrysolite:** gold or yellow stone; to furnish what is needed; (give) an oracle, “graze” (touch slightly), light upon, i.e. (by implication) to employ or to act towards one in a given manner; entreat, use.
10. **Chrysoprasus:** greenish-yellow gem; (through the idea of the utility of the metal); gold, a golden article, as an ornament or coin.
12. **Amethyst:** purple clear gem to prevent intoxication; , from two

root words meaning to drink to intoxication, i.e. get drunk; and an intoxicant, drunkenness.

1. **Jasper – We Are Polished**

A pattern emerges showing that these stones represent a process that we as believers - partakers of that heavenly calling, are required to go through to be a “lively” stone, a part of the foundation of that great city, holy Jerusalem, the Lamb’s wife! Aptly, the first stone in the foundation - Jasper - signifies “to polish”. To make refined or elegant is one of Webster’s definitions for being polished. Christ takes us. Initially, we are raw gems in His hands until He performs the work of polishing us.

This is one of God’s great mercies at the heart of the Gospel message. All of us are sinners in need of God’s grace. All men’s hearts are desperately wicked Jer.17:9, but Jesus died for us while we were still His enemies. Rom. 5:8 When we admit our sin and are truly repentant then He is faithful to forgive all our sins and we are miraculously converted into a new creature. 2 Cor. 5:17 He gives us a new heart, one that can please Him, one able to bust free from the hold that sin has had on us. It is malleable and able to be worked on as a fine jeweler can work on a rough stone to polish, cut and find the right setting to enhance its value and maximize its potential beauty. Christ holds the promise that our initial conversion will lead to a polishing, a perfecting, if we allow His Spirit to work within us. He uses the Scriptures to instruct, rebuke, correct and reprove us. 2 Tim. 3:16 The Scripture is designed as a polishing agent, a cutting tool, so that we *“may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”* 2 Tim. 3:17 Christ promises to send the Holy Ghost to us to reprove us of sin and convince us of judgment and righteousness. The Spirit will work diligently on us to polish our souls if we let Him so that we can live lives of victorious and reputable faith in Christ. Jasper summarizes this process of polishing the soul and spirit.

2. **Sapphire – Rough Edges are Sanded Away**

The second jewel - Sapphire - connotes a “scratching” action. We’ve all heard the term “sanding off the rough edges”. People are sent off to finishing school to have the rough edges removed. In our walk with the Lord he sometimes has to scratch us up, or sand us down a bit to get to a more perfect finished product. What must be sanded away is our flesh, our will, and that always hurts; but when an area of the stone is sanded it is in a state so it may be polished. Without the sanding it cannot become a beautiful polished stone, a stone that is ready and willing to, as the root word implies, “recount, celebrate, declare, show forth” what the Great Polisher has wrought. Without the sanding of rough spots a saint cannot tell the story of God’s grace to others with veracity. The Sapphire, then, also implies testifying and publishing the Gospel with our mouth, our pen and our lives. It is no accident that the elements of sanding away our flesh and testifying for the Lord are combined under this one symbolic precious stone. What the saint teaches and testifies to must be the truth. We cannot say one thing and do another and hope to have an effective testimony. God does not abide hypocrisy. To be a true witness for Christ, and therefore an effective one, the saint must be transformed by the Gospel. He or she must have allowed this sanding process to be active. To tell of the glories of Christ without letting Christ have His way with us is to tell of an experience which we ourselves have not partaken or allowed in our life. Sanding and testimony go together as declared by this one precious jewel.

3. **Chalcedony – We are Emptied Out**

The third gem, Chalcedony, is a very significant stone in the overall foundation of the Bride. As noted in the definition, it is “the hollowing out as a vessel”. Again the Scripture speaks to Timothy the servant of God saying, *“there are vessels of gold and silver, of wood and earth; some to honour and some to dishonour, ... purge yourself from these so that you can be a vessel unto*

honour, sanctified and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." 2 Tim.2:20,21 By fleeing youthful lusts and following righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart we become vessels of honor. We are taught here to hollow out ourselves, empty out the old man who is dead in sin, and let God fill us up with the new and spiritual beauty of Christ. Rom. 6:6, Eph. 4:22, Col. 3:9. Also noted is the last part of the definition which tells us to "be aware, behold, consider, know", and again, as with the definition for Sapphire, "to tell". We cannot be slothful or lazy in understanding the Gospel and knowing God's Word. We are expected to be alert and communicative to others about God's mercy to us. We must study the Bible and let the Holy Ghost be our tutor. Knowledge is one of the fundamentals, or base elements of faith. The only way we can gain in knowledge and have understanding is when we consider that we are blind and that Christ must give us sight to see, to know the truth and have awareness of reality according to Him, for He is the Truth.

7. Chrysolite – Imbued With the Holy Ghost

The seventh stone, Chrysolite, also relates to this overall refining and polishing operation, in particular referring to the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Ghost, who is absolutely vital in the burnishing process. The Chrysolite is golden. The root meanings for Chrysolite are, "to furnish what is needed" (give an oracle); "graze" (touch slightly), and "light upon". If we are to have a victorious life in Christ then we need to be furnished with what is necessary. This can be accomplished for the Bride only by the Holy Ghost, having Him "light upon" her. It is He who gives the oracle (the gifts such as; prophecy, wisdom, healings and faith). It is when the finger of God touches the person that they are healed, restored and changed. It is not only He who provides us comfort and consolation in the trials of this life, but He is the one who leads us into all truth. John 16:7-14 If

the golden light of Christ is brought to us by the Holy Ghost we are enlightened indeed.

10. Chrysoprasus – Great Worth and Purity

Number ten, the Chrysoprasus, is a greenish, yellow stone but the word, as a root meaning, is connected with the most precious of all metals - gold. Gold must be refined, the dross separated from the pure gold and burnished to a glittering luster. The implication here is great value, extreme beauty and immeasurable worth. The prospective Bride must be refined in the fires of the trials of this life. The dross, as in gold, must be separated so that only the pure value of what Christ has done in the life of the believer will be left to shine forth to enrich the lives of others. Extreme heat is required to refine gold. The Bride must be baptized with fire, take the heat, suffer persecution, even tribulation to be gold and as valuable to God as possible. We with much tribulation must enter the kingdom of God, as Paul told all the disciples he taught. Everyone who lives a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution, Paul warned his protégé Timothy. Pure gold does not come about but by burning off the dross. So it is with the Bride who is made by foundational process symbolized by Chrysoprasus.

12. Amethyst – To Prevent Intoxication

The twelfth, Amethyst, has as a root meaning to “prevent intoxication”. The epistles command us to be sober; *“Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”* 1 Pet. 1:13 Peter also admonishes, *“But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.”* 1 Pet. 4:7 Paul tells us to *“be not drunk with wine, wherein in excess; but be filled with the Spirit.”* Eph.5:18

Coming into our “right mind” is so vitally important as a Christian. We are told in Ephesians not to walk as other Gentiles do, in the

vanity of our minds. We are supposed to acquire the mind of Christ. We are told expressly that once we are born-again we actually are given the mind of Christ. This means we have access to His thoughts and mind on all things. We have to utilize this, avail ourselves of the mind of Christ which is made available to us. We must shun our own personal thoughts. Man's thoughts are lower, more pitiful, even disreputable, always short of the mind of Christ, but now we have access to God's mind through Christ. The Bride will allow God to give her His thoughts and feelings. She must receive, drink in, concede. The way God looks at things is quite different from the way men do. *"My ways are not your ways, nor are your thoughts my thoughts"*, God tells us in Isaiah 55:8. Once again, the Word of God is given to the Church for this purpose. It is used to save our minds, to transform our views of life and to point us toward righteousness which always conforms to God's Will on any matter. This process, this happening, will occur and re-occur in the conduct of the Bride's life.'

And there is another spiritual implication of great significance; we must not be intoxicated with ourselves. We are to be moved and impassioned by the spirit of Christ in us. Pride is a form of intoxication, everybody knows this. No one feels comfortable around an egomaniac. But self-intoxication is more prevalent in the human spirit than most want to believe. In fact, Self-reliance, self-confidence, self-love, and the like is what our current world suggests and teaches as the only safe path to trod. But, these are beliefs which God hopes to divest His people of. The Bride will be delivered from these misconceptions, seeing them for what they really are: self-intoxication and an automatic dismissal of having Christ flood the soul instead. Selfishness is not at all, no matter what form it is in or how it is justified, what God expects of His Bride-to-be. He wants us to be thoroughly dependent on Him, ready to receive anything and everything He has for us, not relying on self.

– THE MYSTERIOUS BRIDAL FOUNDATIONAL GEMS –

The remaining six stones, the *emerald*, *sardonyx*, *sardius*, *beryl*, *topaz* and *jacinth*, also have significance, though not by the meanings of their root words, because of their natural properties and uses. These six are shrouded in a bit of mystery, just as aspects of the process of purification and change can be hidden and mysterious in the Bride.

#4 – Emerald: Used to Sand Others

Emerald is a corundum type mineral which means that: *it can be used itself as an abrasive*. The oriental emerald is a beautiful green gem, highly prized as jewelry, but because of its hardness is also used to grind, cut, smooth or polish another substance, especially other gems. It works on others and is beautiful at the same time. While the previously mentioned gems were themselves improved and polished to a beautiful state of perfection, this stone is used to help in the polishing and perfecting of other stones. This is part of the mission of the Bride. She is to work to perfect others. Proverbs 27:17 says, “As iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.” The stones of the New Jerusalem will have been involved in sharpening one another, not only honing the spiritual discernment in one another about their spiritual perfection, but helping to heighten their awareness and attention to details in their fellow saint’s perfection. The emerald stands as a symbol of the concern of the Bride for helping one another stay on track for the perfecting work of the Holy Ghost through the ministering of the body one to another. The Bible says for each one to look to the things of others and not to their own things. The lion’s portion of those ‘things of others’ is spiritual enhancement and refinement through the ‘abrasive process’ of smoothing and cutting into shape so that the ‘lively stone’ may be fitted into its proper setting.

#5 – Sardonyx: Nailing Our Sins to The Cross Sardonyx, is a translucent onyx with reddish streaks running through it. Its color harkens back to the blood of Christ and the nature of the walls

surrounding and defending the city called THE BRIDE. As annunciated before by the symbolism of the Jasper stone, it is Christ's blood that pulses through the spiritual veins of the Bride. This bloodstone is also an onyx which derives its name from the Greek word onyx meaning: "nail". The color of the stone and its meaning combine to point to the cross and the forgiveness that it purchased for the Bride. *"And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross". Col. 2:13-14* The nails that were driven through Christ's hands also nailed our sins to that cross. The sardonyx signifies Christ who willingly died for His Bride. The Bride will forever testify of Christ's love for her and how it was manifested on Calvary. The power of His shed blood has redeemed her and been instrumental in making her God's most precious jewel of the universe. The sardonyx was considered a double stone in that it had a clear or white layer and an opaque layer, often of a fiery orangish-red tint. This resembles the relationship between the judgment brought to bear upon the bride by Christ's burning and delivering power. For the Bride undergoes a purging process subsequent to her submission to the burning of the fiery judgment of truth because of her relationship with her Lord and Savior, and espoused husband. But the two layers also represent the deeper mystery of the Bride being willing to take on the sufferings of Christ and to pick up her cross daily. She too must experience the crucified experience, crucifying her own flesh that the Spirit may reign in her mortal body. Jesus made it clear that anyone who does not do this cannot be His disciple. Dying to self has a purifying effect. Thus, the clear layer of the sardonyx stone laid against the fiery red blood layer, the blood red being Christ which purifies the Bride when she also nails her flesh (spiritually by will) to the cross by picking it up and walking with it daily. Picking up the cross and following after Jesus is a great mystery to all of mankind and only discernable by the true Christian who can understand things that are foolishness

to the world, but are the wisdom of God to the born-again believer striving toward the beauty of holiness.

6 – Sardius: Emptied Out

The sardius is a sard stone that has layers of white and reddish color and once again speaks of the blood of Christ which was shed for the remission of sin. Instead of a clear accompanying layer the sard has an opaque white layer which is more suited as a symbol of the white traditionally associated with a virgin's bridal gown. Spiritually, Christ considers her a virgin because she has no other gods, no competitor for His affections, does not balk at His advances. The righteousness of the saints is associated with clean and pure white linen as well.

Also, any stone considered to be a 'sard' stone is a *chalcidony* by definition, which from gem #3 we know means to empty out, as with an empty vessel. We can infer that by the blood of Christ we are to take His lead and empty ourselves out. This suggestion is different from the implications of the previous gem, the sardonyx, which pointed to the experience of the cross. We are to follow the lead of Jesus who emptied out Himself for our sakes. We are told, as an example, that He left His heavenly glory and became of no reputation. We, too, should concede our reputation and ambitions to God. Forgo our personal glory. Leave all that to God who will exalt us in due time. Jesus said the things which are esteemed among men are abhorrent to God. The Bride will have to follow her husband's lead who emptied himself out for the glory that was set before Him in eternity. She, too, must be willing to empty herself out and be humble and trusting of God. She must flee youthful lusts, she will have to renounce the hopes of the world, not aspire to the esteem of men, be unmoved by bribes which could lure her from perfect fidelity to her Lord. She will not only die to self as the sardonyx gem implies, but empty herself out, be divested of hope in this world as a sard stone symbolizes.

#8 – Beryl: Strengthened and Whitened

The Beryl is a family of gems noted for extreme hardness. *The quality of being unbreakable speaks of the Bride's intractable position.* As the scriptural simile, "like a tree planted by the waters I (she) shall

not be moved.” She is fixed on Jesus, wants to cleave to Jesus and she is impervious to all other suggestions or temptations to be wooed away from Him. Her relationship with God cannot be severed or broken and once she has been married to Him it will not be able to be broken nor divorced for all eternity. The word has its roots in the Greek word *Berullos* meaning: to whiten. The red beryl is one of the rarest gems in the world. It speaks of the whitening or cleansing of the saint by the blood of Jesus. Her immovable strength is in her unswerving devotion and loyalty to Christ though it may look like narrow-mindedness to the worldly, even hardness to the pseudo-gentle humanists, both in and outside the Church. This is part of her purity and whiteness. She wears the white and pure linen of the righteousness of the saints and her husband respects her for it.

#9 – Topaz: The Light Of The World

Topaz is a yellow corundum. As corundum it can be employed to cut and abraid other gems just as the emerald, but beryl is transparent yellowish, even golden. It is a light shining forth with brilliance. This speaks of the open life of the Bride. She does things in the light. She does not live life hiding or hiding things from people. She does not sneak about, deceiving being deceived. She tries to do her work in the light and there has been nothing hidden or secretive about her ministry in Christ. She has been the light on the hill and reflected the light of the world. Jesus said, *“ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”* Matt. 5:14-16 As represented by the topaz, The Bride has been faithful as a witness to Christ’s light in the world and has desired to step out of the shadows and walk in the light.

#11 – Jacinth: Blue-Blood Royalty

Jacinth, the final gem, is perhaps the most mysterious of all the foundation stones to be found in the Bride. The word Jacinth is derived from the word hyacinth which in the ancient world was a variety of flower, as it still is today. Both plant and stone are purple

or deep blue, the flower was supposed to have sprouted from the earth from the blood of a slain god. The connection again is to the blood of Christ which has its great supernatural and mystical life-giving powers. The Bride has been given eternal life by the blood of Jesus but the jacinth points to the promise that she will be granted to sit in His throne Rev. 3:21 and rule with Him. The purple color suggests royalty and kingship as purple was the color worn by the Caesars and blue associated with royalty throughout the ancient world and in the Middle East. It is the spiritual equivalent of the term 'blue-blood' used when referring to monarchs and the heritage of kings. So the Bride is destined to rule, with her husband, the nations with a rod of iron.

Conclusion

Jesus promises overcomers of the church of Pergamos that He will give them a white stone with a name written on it that only he knows. An edifying definition for this white stone is as follows: "a pebble (as worn smooth by handling) i.e. (by implication of use as a counter or ballot), a verdict (of acquittal) or ticket (of admission), a note, stone, voice; to verify by contract; feel after, handle, touch; also to twitch or twang, i.e. to play on a stringed instrument (celebrate the divine worship with music and accompanying odes) make melody, sing (psalms).

So this one word tells us the story of how we are acquitted of a verdict, given a ticket of admission and then we celebrate our admission into eternal life and godly bliss with divine music and psalms. The culmination of all of this is: *"ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."* Eph. 2:19-22 The twelve foundational stones, represented in the apostles, the founders of the Church represent our being made as solid as a rock and beautiful as all the most wonderful gems.

155. The Bride in All Her Glory

The Bride: At The End in The book of Revelation

by T M Smith

Christian Spirit Magazine December 1997 – God told John at the beginning of the book of Revelation to record the things he would see and hear because the time was at hand. Obviously, God did not intend those words to mean that everything He prophesied about would happen immediately or come to pass in one fell swoop. Anyone who takes even a glance at Christ's great prophetic dialogue known as the Olivet Discourse depicting the signs of His Return knows that the prophecies would extend over a wide range of time during this Age of Grace. What God was getting at was simply this: everything recorded in Revelation could be put to spiritual use by the believer right away, and could have impact on their life no matter where they lived in the timeline of God's extended time of salvation for the Gentiles. Everything in Revelation could be pertinent and would be beneficial to their understanding and applicable immediately to their faith. What that means is that all the things written in Revelation have been pertinent to the followers of Christ from day one. It has been God's hope that all Christians, from the first century A.D. on, would absorb the lessons of Revelation, heed its warnings and accept its charitable, loving admonitions and advice. If the time for its understanding and application was immediate, then so be it. If more pertinent to a succeeding generation then, let it be. Everything that was once pertinent certainly must be even more vital now as the day of Christ's appearing and His Second Coming draws nearer with each passing day.

The vision of the Lamb's bride in the second part of chapter

twenty-one, which we are about to study, is no less important to our faith than any other part of Revelation. This panoramic picture is actually a detailed analysis of the Bride's character and must not be viewed superficially, merely as a passing portrait of an obscure subject of mere curiosity. She is beautiful, yes, but what her beauty symbolizes is what should penetrate into our faith, get hold of our heart and mind and serve us as a role model that our personal life should validate. In verses 9-27 God has revealed to us a glorious Bride without spot or wrinkle. This is the Bride in all her holiness, goodness of character and faith. God has made this vision available to all Christians, down through the Church age so they could have something with which to compare themselves, a sort of mirror in which to adorn and prepare themselves so they would be ready for the appearance of the Bridegroom. This representation of the Bride, descending out of heaven to be merged with God as one forever, is a metaphor used by God to show us the spiritual requirements and condition of faith through the mysteries, parables and exemplary lives of illustrious women who represent attributes and faith of Christ's eternal wife.

Intro to Eternity

The first part of the second to last chapter of the Bible introduces us to eternity, the promised utopian paradise of God. We are told how everything will become new. Nothing in the former world will be able to tempt us or overcome our hope, faith and love in God. We are put at ease, God will not permit fearful people, doubters, liars, haters or sinners of any sort to enter into this realm which is the exclusive domicile of the Bride. Only the righteous in Christ will dwell as one with Him. The Father and The Son shall be its light and power source. There will be no moon, sun, stars or such 'artificial' light. Perfect beings in a perfect setting secure for all eternity. God will be all in all. The Scriptures advance the thought in this way – everything is ours, we are Christ's and Christ is God's. We belong and everything belongs to us.

In the first part of the chapter we had been alerted to the vision of the Bride of Christ, that glorious body of faithful believers who

have been taken into eternity to live with Christ: *“And I John, saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”* Rev. 21:2 We recall the words of the Bible, the mystery of Christ and the Church, which is revealed in Ephesians declaring Christ’s ultimate purpose for The Church, *“That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”* Eph. 5:27 A few verses later we are directly and explicitly told by an angel that this city is a symbolic representation of the Bride, a visual aid of the mystery now complete and in full order, of Christ and His perfect Church, the Lamb’s wife descending from heaven, fitted out and fully suited as the eternal dwelling place of God.

“And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife.” Rev. 21:9

Details of her beauty are about to be revealed in the powerful symbolism afforded by a rich and magnificent city. God reserves this epic depiction of her beauty for the second half of the penultimate chapter of the Bible. We are closing in on His final few words of Holy Writ. It is more than a fleeting glimpse into the eternal marriage of Christ and a spotless church, the vision being full of symbolic meaning. The Bride’s importance in the grand scheme of redemption and into eternity should not escape the reader as it is exhibited by the fact that she, the glorious wife of Christ, is also the final major topic to be revealed in Holy Scripture. It can be said that God ends His revelation to mankind by showing him the Bride of Christ. Up to this point she has only been mentioned briefly, her reality alluded to by prophets Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Solomon and David, her future glory only hinted at, spoken of merely for the record and to give hope to those of us who accept what Abraham accepted, that we are strangers in a strange land, looking for an eternal home not made by hands, but by God, wherein

righteousness dwells. It is worthy of note that the Bible begins with man alone in a garden. It ends with man in an enormously rich city in a vast social setting with countless friends and eternal relationships of undying love.

Now God is about to give the serious student of Scripture, those who have forged their way through Revelation, a series of snapshots within the overall picture of the Bride. Each one is a small picture within the big picture, each giving us deeper insight into her development, her holiness, her fidelity and her unimpeachable character of spirit. Each snippet should be scrutinized with the care which an art dealer inspects a master piece he is considering for purchase. Each picture detail of the Bride is worth examining with spiritual eyes seeking the mind of Christ for personal application. Each brushstroke of this picture of the Bride is worth analyzing so that we, the prospective Bride, may peer at the handy work of Christ who is preparing the Bride so that He may present her to Himself holy and unblemished, a perfect piece of beauty artfully formed and lovely. We should use this picture to peer into our own heart, as a mirror, that we are prepared for His coming in hopes that He will find us to His liking, humbly waiting for His arrival among the others who have sought out eternal Brideship with God. Do we conform to her? Are we without spot or wrinkle or any such blemish, spiritually speaking? Are we doing the best we can to please Him by faith? God is giving us one last mirror in which to see our own reflection, to see if we are matching her beauty, in hopes that we will be found among her number. Verse nine offers the first clear picture where we can stop to rest and begin to compare ourselves to the bride-in-waiting.

It is not a coincidence that it is one of the judgment angels of the seven last plagues that introduces us to the Bride. To be counted among her number is a great judgment, though it is a good judgment, it is nonetheless a judgment, also for those who do not make the grade. To be excluded from her is a total spiritual disaster. In the preceding verse we learned who and what she will not be like. Those who couldn't find it in their heart to truly trust God are not part of the Bride. Those who were afraid and could not believe

that all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose will not be among the chosen ones as the Bride. There is no place for naysayers or doubters in the eternal bosom of Christ? And, of course, those who hypocritically cling to their sins (not those who fall occasionally or sin unwillingly, but those who love sin, willingly sin, hate repentance and cling to unrighteousness and self), such as: idolatry, fornication, hatred, lying, stealing and any other thing that is opposed to the sound doctrine of the Bible will be cast into outer darkness. Christians who claim they are Christian, but really are not in word and deed will be exposed by the Truth. The Father will not give away a corrupt Bride to His Son. There is no place for duplicity in the Bride. She cannot have one foot in the world and one in Christ's bed. She cannot be kind or gentle, but still be whorish. She cannot be faithful and free of idolatry, but still lie in her heart. She cannot be reverent and obedient, but be a rebel or non-submissive to God's will, or a hater or have murder in her heart. She must be without spot or wrinkle or any such blemish. Ninety percent good and ten percent bad is not good enough. We are not talking self-righteousness here. All the righteousness of the Bride will have been worked in her by Christ Himself by the ministry of the Holy Ghost. Those who walk in the Spirit they are the sons of God. Above all she cannot be full of fears and doubts about God's goodness or that He is in control of all things. She must be 'perfect' in these things, perfectly situated and settled and trusting in God's perfection. Not perfect according to man's ideas but according to the standards of God's perfection. She will believe in the way that the Psalmist describes the desire for a perfect walk. *"I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart."* Psalms 101:2

It is a matter of having a perfect heart toward God. The philosopher David Hume defined perfection as: "That which is perfect is that which conforms to its standards." When it comes to spiritual perfection in Christ it is God who sets the standards and not man or any sport of church doctrine. The standards of godly

perfection for the Bride conform to the standards of God's hope, faith and love and have been declared throughout the Scriptures in things regarding righteousness, walking in the Spirit, conforming to Christ and bringing all thoughts of our mind into the obedient captivity of Christ. His standard is holiness, as the Bible says, *"without which no man shall see God"*. Heb 12:14

Holiness is being separated from ungodliness to godliness. Not that man can be perfect on his own account without the grace and help of Jesus Christ the Savior, but that we can be perfect in Christ by the requisites of faith. It is not that we will never stumble, it is only that when the weight and sin of this life and world beset us we seek Christ to shake them off our back for us. We do it His way and let the Holy Ghost guide us out of the dark and out of the ditch and into the light. The Bride sings in her heart with trust, along with David's song of Thanksgiving: *"God is my strength and power: and He makes my way perfect."* 2 Sam. 22:33 How else could the Old Testament and Jesus both say, (without laying a guilt trip on us) *"Be perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."* Deut. 18:13 & Matt. 5:48 This is the perfection and spotless character of Christ's wife. God gives her the power to walk in perfection. He does it by His magnificence, but she must allow Him.

Do not buy the deadly doctrine that is foisted upon us by the ill-advised doctrines of fabulously popular Laodicean indifference a call to humility and perfection. There are a ton of things required of the Bride which we will see pictured in the snapshots of the verses we are about to inspect. She must dress in proper spiritual apparel. As the famous theologian Karl Barth noted, the commands in Scripture are issued in the form of imperatives rather than laws. For instance, we are directed to 'put on' certain things, the new man, righteousness, Christ, and so forth. This is something we have to learn how to do and make sure we keep doing it according to need. Just as we put on some proper article of clothing to suit a particular purpose or social occasion. It requires our action, our discretion, our obedience, just as when mom told us to put our coat on as we were going out the door in the dead of winter. We must be obedient

to the imperatives issued the bride, they are those things imposed on us by the realities of the mysteries of the gospel. Accordingly, we must submit, concede, receive, walk, wait, humbly serve, separate ourselves, bring our thoughts into the obedience of the captivity of Christ – love Him, set our heart to be wedded to Him for eternity. These the Bride must decide to do and then actually do them. God cannot and will not do them for us.

The Bride has no other God than her Lord; hides no other God in her back pocket or purse while standing before the Father. She must be a dutiful wife, faithful wife, with all fidelity, she is a green virgin, she has faith and confidence in her husband precisely in the way that the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 **lives for her Lord's glory and reputation and serves with joy**. Otherwise, how could the marriage work? All the interactions and lessons of marriage in this life are nothing more than transitory images meant to show the eternally great spiritual truth that Christ is to be married to His beloved Church of the separated ones. Eph. 5:24-32 If fornication and adultery are not permitted, are not accounted as righteousness in this life, should we think that God will permit them in the marriage of His Son?

God's Blood Runs Through Her Veins

"And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper [red] stone, clear as crystal;" Rev. 21:10-11

The angel at once carried John away to a high mountain to show Him the Bride. It must be that her beauty and enormous glory could only be seen from a great vista. When we look at the Bride we are looking at the domain of Christ; this is His kingdom to which there shall be no end. The mention of a mountain overlooking a kingdom transports us back to another time when another angel, a fallen one, took Jesus to a mountain to show Him the glories of this world and

to tempt Him to give up His quest for a Bride and rather bow down to him. *“The devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.”* Matt. 4:8-9 Christ resisted the Devil and won the battle. Now Christ’s faithfulness and truth has received its rich reward. We go to the top of the mountain to see the kingdom for which He awaited. The light emanating from the Bride pulsates with life. The jasper stone is clear as crystal, but has laser-like streaks of deep red light running throughout her. It is the cleansing, life giving blood of the Lamb. The blood of Christ runs through her veins, forever giving her strength and life. She is infused with the life of God. Every saint who is blessed to be part of the Bride is empowered with the authority and almighty unction of the blood of Christ their Savior. It is by the blood of Christ that she has utilized authority in His name and won victory over demons and devils that were at work to try to defile and subjugate her to sin.

The blood of Christ has given her power to resist temptation, that blood which has purifying power as the initial remedial healing for what ails man’s dysfunctional soul. The blood of Jesus alone gives access to the throne room of God during these trials and toils of earthly life. It made it possible for the door of God’s correction and hope to swing open, so that God would hear prayers and cries for deliverance. This Jasper stone, with the blood-red vein of redemption running through is the symbol of her covered shortcomings and sins, and by the blood she won the forbearance of God and relied upon His living mercy in a merciless and cruel world. By it she is cleansed and made clean from past defilement’s. By the blood she defeats the enemy of their souls, and by it all perfection was initiated, and by it life was granted to her.

The jasper stone, in which the city is encased, is pure and perfectly transparent and clear, except for the streaks of deep red veins in her. She has nothing to hide, no hidden sin, no dishonest agenda, no subversive ideas, not even a flaw. She is redeemed. They are permanent reminders of the wonder-working power of

the Lamb's blood. No member of the Bride will be without this covering, or without the victories that the blood of Christ brings in this life, not least the perpetual covering of God's love and grace. Because of the blood she will be able to love God for all eternity without reservation or restriction, in full assurance of faith because He wooed her and courted her and loved her first. How can she be casual or indifferent about this love? She loves Him the way the beloved loves her suitor in The Song of Solomon, with her whole heart, unrestricted.

She is perfectly secure; and rests on a perfect foundation

“And she had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:

On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.

And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.” Rev. 21:12-14

In verses 11-13 some of the details of the bride/habitation of God start to come clear to us. There is a high wall, twelve gates, and it rests on twelve foundations. It is immense. Our attention is captured by her twelve gates and twelve foundations. Each gate and foundation has a name written on it. We suddenly realize that the Bride is made up of both the children of Israel and the Church, represented in name by the twelve sons of Jacob and the twelve apostles of the Church. This is the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham which God made to him: *“And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.”* Gen 22:18 Men and women of faith from every epoch of this age and every nation on earth make up the Bride and are now living under one banner, dwelling together with faithful Jews, together as *“The Commonwealth of Israel”*, as the Bible puts it. Eph. 2:12

The Bride which exists in these last days is only different from those who have prepared themselves by holiness and purity in the fact that they are the last generation; she is the Bride making the

final invitation to the world to spotlessly and virtuously walk worthy of the Bride of Christ. The way of being a part of the Bride was made possible by the twelve tribes of Jacob, who, for our sakes, were used as examples to show the Gentile world the truth about sin and the way of salvation.

Remember, the letter to the Romans spoke about our being the “wild” olive tree grafted in at Israel’s expense and that someday the Jews would be restored to God. In previous chapters of Revelation we see the 144,000 believers out of each tribe of Israel being sealed with the protection of God during the Tribulation, and we see the salvation of Jerusalem at Christ’s return. Chapter 14 of Revelation shows a group of 144,000 followers of the Lamb, redeemed from among all the peoples and nations of men living atop heavenly Mount Zion, indubitably a snapshot of instruction about the nature and character of the promises and the imperatives of spiritual conduct for the Bride herself.

The picture of a ‘city’ or place of habitation for God, now coming down from heaven is the moment when the true “brotherhood of man” and the utopic union with God becomes established reality for all eternity.

The Church is fully represented as seen in the city’s foundations which are named after the Lamb’s closest friends and pillars of the Church. They are those who left everything behind; separated themselves for the gospel’s sake as Matthew did when he left the money changer’s table, as Andrew did when he left off following John the Baptist, as Nathanael did when left his cynical lounging spot beneath the fig tree, as Peter did when he put down his net and left his father’s business, all of them to be followers of Jesus day and night no matter where he went. The Bride is all they who leave everything behind in favor of being the espoused husband of their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. These twelve apostles are general representatives, with their spirit of faith and loving trust in the Savior, with a common spiritual character which the Bride must and will have. Like the 12 apostles, she has left the world with its lures and cares behind, so she can be with Jesus.

“And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof.

And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.

And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.

And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.” Rev. 21:15-18

We are then shown the dimensions and magnificence of the Bride. These measurements, like all the other pictures, are symbolic. The Bride is not actually a city, that would be absurd, God’s purpose for creating Man and undertaking all the abuse and heartbreak involved in redeeming Man is not to acquire for Himself an inanimate city. The city we are shown merely personifies the living Bride. *“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” Eph. 2:19-22*

To understand the symbolism we must take into consideration what the metaphor of a city symbolizes in Scripture.

Cities in Biblical days did not conjure up the same image in a believer’s mind as they do in today’s America. Today we think of the city as a place of violence and decadent living. We think of poverty and drugs, confusion, pollution and turmoil, rundown buildings and methadone centers. There are threats on every side. But in the days of the Bible it was just the opposite. The city was a place of refuge. God tells the dispersed Jews of the Babylonian captivity to seek “the peace of the city”. Under the law a person who accidentally killed someone could run to a specified city and be safe from retribution

by one of the victim's family members. Cities were places of wealth and security. The walls provided the inhabitants within a haven from robbers and warring or marauding armies. When her gates were shut at night, sin and lawlessness was shut out. Inside her walls law and order prevailed and was strictly enforced. It was in the city that the authority of the king offered full protection and recourse under the law.

Outside on the plains, the mountains or in the woods, man was on his own, left to fend for himself and defend himself against attack. Caravans laden with gold, spices, tapestries, camels and oxen, delicacies, tools, fuel and weapons, even books and styluses, streamed into every major city of the Middle East. It was in the city that commerce flourished and could be conducted without fear of being vandalized. The shops of craftsmen and skilled artisans in every trade were to be found lining the streets of her commercial districts. Wealth was concentrated in the cities. If riches and luxury was to be found in a nation or region, it was to be found in its cities. These are the first places that the Gospel was preached.

Physicians and medical care could also be found in the city. Outside the city there was very few doctors and even less knowledge of medicine. All of man's physical needs were accommodated in the ancient city. The mind, too, was nurtured in the city. All libraries and seats of learning were situated behind the comfortable walls within the peaceful confines of city life. Schools of learning and education were the sole province of the metropolis. There, priests and scholars taught and instructed pilgrims who came for education and to worship their favorite god.

The city did not only provide for the needs of the body and soul, it was also the center of worship for every nation. The temples and shrines were placed within the confines of a well-guarded city. The king, often the high priest or center of worship, resided in a palace within the city. In short, living outside the city was risky. There were threats on every side, with no place to run and hide other than the city. Living inside the protective walls of a city provided every

possible security of law and order while affording its inhabitants the chance to acquire wealth and to live in luxury.

The city of the ancient world, therefore, is a fit symbol for the Bride of Christ. God has taken the measure of the city and it is a perfect cube 12,000 x 12,000 x 12,000 furlongs. (It is a 1,500 mile cube, or about the size of the United States.) It measures out a perfect multiple of twelve, the number of God's perfect government as illustrated by the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles. It could be argued that the twelve tribes are the Father's representatives and the Apostles are the Son's personal emissaries of orderly perfection. Her walls are also a perfect multiple of twelve measuring 144 cubits high. Within her walls is the perfect government and rule of community under God. (Thus the 144,000 Jews and the 144,000 followers of the Lamb are numbers representative of perfect government and order, perfect leadership of the Father and the Son together, within the habitation of the eternal Bride.) There is nothing like anarchy and or rebellion within her. Everything is in perfect harmony and is perfectly proportioned and perfectly led down to the slightest detail. All sin is shut out and nothing evil or threatening can enter through the gates and into the Bride (city) ever again.

She will be a Mecca for each and every kind of unimaginable riches and beauty, of good and holy spiritual things – for all eternity. The Bride, being likened to a city, is a promise of all that is safe and secure. All that is good and strong about the great commonwealth of mankind and God. She is secure, rich, beautiful, learned, healthy and free to worship God in peace for all eternity. Reason enough to strive to be part of her... wouldn't you say?

156. Spirit and Bride Say, “Come”

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb

by Joelle Gagnon

“And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.

Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many.

And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready.

And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused.

And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.

And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

So that servant came, and showed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.

And the servant said, Lord it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.

And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.

For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.” Luke 14:15-24

As I was praying to the Lord the other day, He recalled to me the above passage and told me it was time for his bride to send out the invitations for the marriage supper. “Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in.” were the exact words that were spoken to my spirit. Immediately the spirit pierced my heart with much excitement knowing that we are, indeed, close to Jesus’ return. God has given the Bride the job of sending out invitations (as the spirit leads) while she awaits the bridegroom’s return. She doesn’t have to wait for the replies because the R.S.V.P. (Repondez sil voit plait – French for respond if you please.) goes to the Father, the master of the house, the initiator of the Marriage Supper invitations.

What an exciting time we are living in. Jesus will be returning soon to catch His bride away. What must his bride do to prepare for his coming? Here is a story I’d like to share about a traditional Jewish wedding taken from the book, An Israeli Love Story by Zola Levitt that illustrates the preparations for the Marriage of the Lamb and His Bride. It is a wonderful foreshadowing of Jesus coming to steal his bride away.

Most Jewish weddings were prearranged and planned so that they fit the needs of the whole society. Sometimes a young man chose his wife, but he had to consult with his father about marrying the woman he chose. When the bridegroom’s father approved of the choice (or chose the woman) the young man would go to the bride’s house and speak with her father. At the bride’s house the young man did three important things in connection with their wedding: 1.) He would make a covenant with the bride – an actual contract; 2.) he would drink a cup of wine with her, which sealed the covenant, and 3.) he would pay a price for her. Her father was entitled to payment for his daughter.

After this was done he would make a speech to the bride because he was going to leave her for a long time and go back to his father’s house to build a bridal chamber for her, where they would have their first coming together in marriage. Before he left her he would tell her, “I go to prepare a place for you”. The bride didn’t worry because

she had the contract and the money that was paid for her. He had to build a beautiful bridal chamber and stock it up with provisions for seven days – the prescribed length for the honeymoon. Most importantly, it had to meet his father's approval. If people asked him when he would be getting married he would say, "I don't know, only my father knows".

The bride then waited, and waited with dignity. She would wear her veil whenever she went out, so that no other young man would try to initiate a contract with her. She was called "set apart, consecrated, bought with a price". In effect, she was no longer her own person, but an individual contracted to her bridegroom. She conducted herself with due respect of her agreement with the groom. She never kept company with any other young man and used her time to think about married life and to prepare herself. She gathered her trousseau (bridal clothes) and waited in her home every night. Traditionally, the groom would come at night, even at midnight and try to take her by surprise. She didn't want to be caught away from home, for she was to be "stolen" out of her house. The bride and bridesmaids, her sisters and whoever was in the wedding party, would be waiting and watching with oil in their lamps in case the groom did choose to come at night.

Suddenly one night the groom would come to steal his bride away. The custom was, when the groom's party was close enough to the home of the bride to be heard, they would shout; and when the bride heard the shout, she knew she was as good as married! The groom's party would grab every girl in sight, especially the one with the veil, and head towards the groom's father's house. When people heard the noise in the streets they would look out their windows. Strangers and people who weren't members of the family wouldn't know who the bride was because of the veil, nor would they be concerned about this particular wedding. The bride and groom would then enter the bridal chamber while the wedding party waited outside until the bridegroom would tell a trusted friend, through the door, that the marriage was consummated. Then the celebration would start. The next time the bride appeared, at

the end of the seven days, her veil would be off and she would now be a wife, not a bride. There would then be seven more days of celebration and at the end of those seven days, there would be a grand marriage supper. Everyone would congratulate the new couple and it would be a scene of wonderful joy. Finally, the new couple would leave his father's house to take up residence in the husband's house, a place he had prepared for them to live in his own kingdom!

So we can parallel Mr. Levitt's wonderful story of the bride and groom, with the reality of Christ and His bride. This is a living illustration of what will take place when Christ comes to steal His bride away. I pray all who read this will settle for nothing less than being part of the bride of Christ.

"And the: Spirit and the: bride: say, Come. And let him that is athirst come, And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" Rev 22:17

157. Heaven and Earth Will Be One

Word from the Lord given to Eloise Gardenier

In the summer of 2003, I was still driving my car. I was on my way to Walmart alone to do some shopping. When I was about half way there, I passed by an old book store, where Roy, my husband, and I used to stop. When I just passed that, I saw something unusual, starting on the ground and going up straight as high as you could see. It was like a white cloud very straight and slender.

I knew right away that the Lord had called my attention to this. He made it clear to me to stop on some ground near the old store. So I did at once. I seldom had my camera with me when just going shopping, but the Lord arranged that too. As I took the picture I wondered where it came from. But I took my shot and returned to the car and went on shopping.

I'm not sure how long it was before I had the film developed. When I did, I began to know it was very special and wanted to find out what it was about. I enlarged the picture and framed it.

From time to time I would pick it up and study it on the floor or in front of a book shelf. Once in a while I picked it up and looked at it. Sometimes I would ask myself what is it all about. Then one day, in almost a year since it happened, I said to myself three different times, I'm going to hang it on the wall. So I picked it up and went to the wall where other photos were. I had to step on my couch to remove the picture hanging. So I stepped up there. I got a picture off, with the one I wanted to hang in my hand. But instantly I fell on the couch on my left arm but especially on my shoulder. At once the pain was unbelievable. For quite some time I screamed for help! It took about 20 minutes before people realized I was hurt. A number of people heard at the house. They called the ambulance to come and take me to a hospital (The one close to our home.) Terry, my

son, went with me in the ambulance and Sam, my grandson put my picture on the wall.

They took care of me the best they could and sent me home. It is too long to go into the rest of this, except to say I went to therapy for 18 trips. Sarah, my granddaughter took me for help, I could not have gotten there all of those times without her!

A few weeks before my therapy was finished, one morning as I was sitting in my prayer chair, the Lord said: "Look at our picture on the wall and say the "Lord's Prayer". So I began "Our Father which are in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on Earth, as it is in Heaven." As I said this I knew at once that words and picture had been what it was all about.

All about, God's telling us that there will be a time when heaven and earth will be one.

That is the reason He arranged this picture of one! The Lord wanted to show me about the importance of knowing about, the time is NOW! But most of all: One day they will be one.

Now I know why the Lord went to so much time and happenings to teach me the importance of the Earth and Heaven becoming one when the time will come!

"For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under [him, it is] manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him.

And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." 1 Cor. 15:27-28