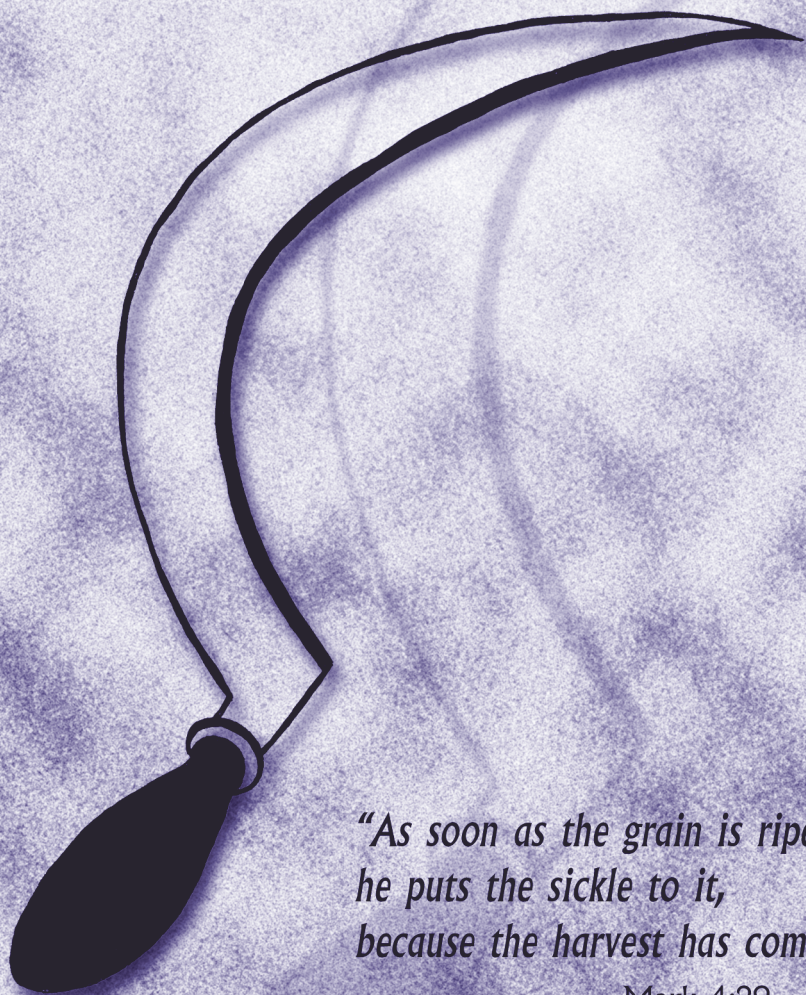


The Sickle

Clearing the Land and Harvesting Change

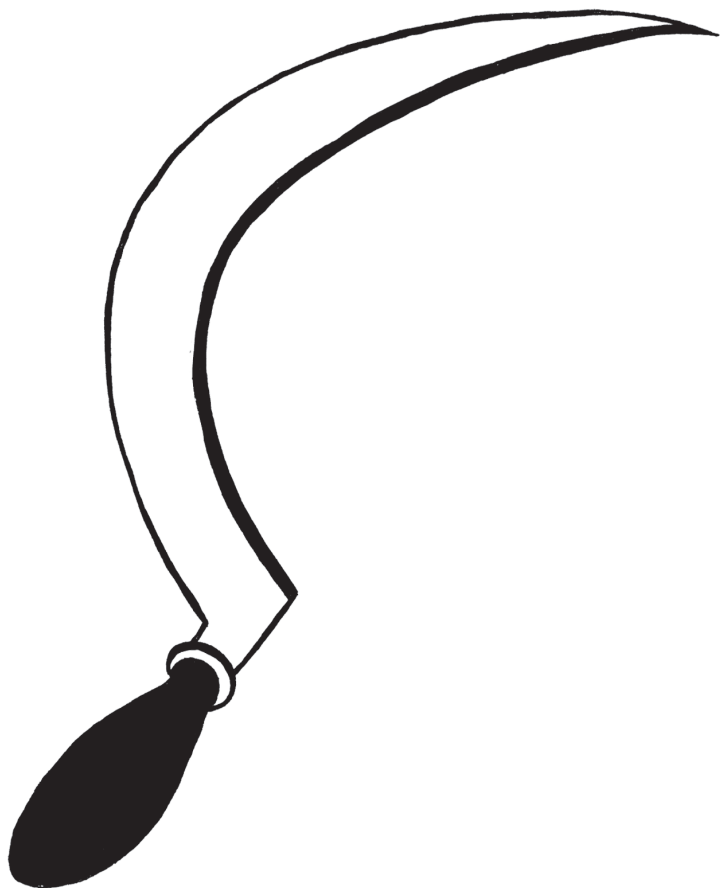


*“As soon as the grain is ripe,
he puts the sickle to it,
because the harvest has come.”*

Mark 4:29

The Sickle

Clearing the Land and Harvesting Change



As always, if we can help you in any way, please contact the church here at
P.O. Box 68309, Indianapolis, IN 46268 USA.

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Below is the list of titles in a 10-part series of books about Foundational Issues of the Kingdom of God and the Bride of Christ.
www.JesusLifeTogether.com/Foundations/

THE HAMMER—Breaking Down Misconceptions

“Is not my word like fire,” declares the LORD, ‘and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?’” Jeremiah 23:29

THE PLOW—Planting Hope & Vision

“The days are coming,” declares the LORD, ‘when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills.’” Amos 9:13

THE SCALES—Holding to God’s Standards

“The LORD abhors dishonest scales, but accurate weights are his delight.” Proverbs 11:1

THE CRUCIBLE—Refining and Melding Relationships

“The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but the LORD tests the heart.” Proverbs 17:3

THE SICKLE—Clearing the Land and Harvesting Change

“As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.” Mark 4:29

THE TROWEL—It Matters How We Build!

“This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: ‘See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.’” Hebrews 8:5

THE SWORD—Cutting Through the Fog

“Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.” Matthew 10:34

THE CHISEL—“I Will Build My Church...”

“In building the temple, only blocks dressed at the quarry were used, and no hammer, chisel or any other iron tool was heard at the temple site while it was being built.” 1 Kings 6:7

THE ANVIL—Forging Out a Life

“See, it is I who created the blacksmith who fans the coals into flame and forges a weapon fit for its work.” Isaiah 54:16

THE PLUMB LINE—True Foundations

“Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord Almighty... Then he will bring out the capstone to shouts of ‘God Bless it!’... Who despises the day of small things? Men will rejoice when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel.” Zechariah 4

The Same— Yesterday, Today, Forever!

Monday Evening, October 23, 2000

In January of 1930 a man named Frank Laubach made a radical decision. He was generally unhappy with his relationship with God, as well as the quality of Life around him, and his usefulness. He decided that he would cultivate the habit of turning his mind toward Jesus, instead of living independently under a Christian “banner.” He deeply desired to have a REAL and constant conscious interface with God about all things. Our inheritance! Frank decided to *intentionally turn his mind toward the person of Jesus at least one second out of every minute*. After only four weeks he said, “I now feel simply carried along each hour, doing my part in a plan that is far beyond myself. This sense of cooperation with God in little things is what so astonishes me, for I have never felt this way before. If I need something, I turn around to find it waiting for me now. I must work, to be sure, but now find a partnership with God that was previously unknown to me.” Hmmm....

How to Have a Rich, Full, Overflowing LIFE!!

Thursday Night, May 21, 1992

Do you want to live a Rich, Full, Overflowing, Abundant Life? Is the Life and the Light of Jesus of Nazareth shining through you to the extent that it convicts people who are walking in darkness and warms the hearts of those who are walking in the light? Are you changing people's lives? Well, guess what? If that's not who you are today, it's because of how you lived your life six months ago. And if that's not who you are six months from now, it's because of how you lived today. This is the law of sowing and reaping—set in motion by God Himself. If you continually sow bad seed in your life, you will reap destruction. If you sow to the Glory of God—Unlimited Potential and Opportunity await you! ☺

There's No Way Around It

If you think you can somehow overcome the law of sowing and reaping, then you are mocking God. Do you think you're spiritual enough, nice enough, or knowledgeable enough that the law of sowing and reaping does not apply to you? If you are not really sowing to the person of Jesus and investing in Him passionately, then you *will* fall. I guarantee it. If you're just doing things to try to keep your nose clean—you will be devastated. You *will* eventually be crushed under the weight of your own foolish sin.

You think you're safe, but you're not. You think you're keeping your nose clean now, but you wait. You are prime bait for satan if you're not sowing vigorously to the Spirit of God and crushing the things that have no value. It's not just "poison ivy" I'm talking about right now. Poison ivy has a detrimental affect. It's a bad weed, right? Well, there are all kinds of weeds that choke out the harvest, and not all of them

give you goose bumps or make you itch. A lot of weeds look pretty harmless, but they will choke out true life.

If you are not investing passionately in Jesus...if you're not doing *all* to the Glory of God but just *some* things to the Glory of God—then you are disobeying the Scriptures. “*Whatever* you do, do *all* to the glory of God.” You're disobeying God right off the bat if you are not doing *all* to the Glory of God.

Besides the fact that you are disobeying the Scriptures, you will never bear good fruit that way. And what is good fruit? *Changed lives*. Lives that can look back to you and say, “That person permanently altered my life and made me more like Jesus.” You're not bearing good fruit if people cannot point to you and say: “That person brought me closer to Jesus. My life is changed. I've repented of sin in my life; I've gotten rid of imaginations that were unlike Jesus. I've found a fullness, a fellowship, a wholeness with the person of Jesus of Nazareth *because that person touched my life*. That person challenged the things that were unlike Jesus in my life. That person saw through my facade and ripped the mask off and brought me to a wholeness, to a measure that I never would have encountered (to my knowledge) apart from their influence in my life.”

If there are not people who would say that about you, then you are not bearing fruit right now. There is no other kind of fruit than lives that are more like Jesus and closer to Him. And I don't mean a little nicer or a little more moral. Rather, their personal relationship with Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of God, has been changed as a result of your direct influence on them. Not a smile and a back pat with a howdy-doodie and a verse for the day. I'm talking about seeing into people's hearts and lives to bring about change in their marriages, with their children, and in their relationship with God. Unless that is happening, you are not bearing fruit.

So, apply these words to your life as both *teaching* and *warning*. First of all, if you are not bearing good fruit now, it's because you didn't sow good seed six months ago. You were self-centered. You sowed to your flesh six months ago. You did not passionately pursue Jesus with all your heart (no, not half!), all your soul, all your mind and all your strength six months ago.

Now if you *think* you stand—beware! You will fall. You will have devastating problems in your life if you are sowing neutral seeds now. You will fall. Satan is far smarter than you are. He's far more

devious than you can imagine. And your holes are far bigger than you think they are. So, the only protection for your future is the law of sowing and reaping. Be not deceived—don't kid yourself, don't lie to yourself—God is not mocked. Don't mock God by thinking you're bigger than this law. *A man reaps what he sows.*

There's No "Neutral" Seed

If you are not bearing fruit now, there is very little you can do today to bear fruit *today*. But I want you to know that if you continue to sow garbage into your life, you will fall. That includes neutral garbage, the things that you could point to and say, "Well that's not sin."

If you sow stuff into your life that doesn't bring Glory to God, it is sin. Paul said to the Corinthians, "Do all to the Glory of God," even food and drink; whatever you do. The word "whatever" is there in the *koine* Greek text. If someone couldn't somehow find God's Glory in your motives for doing something, then it is sin for you to do it. Don't think it's neutral.

When you sow to the flesh (even to the neutral things in your life that have nothing of God's Glory in them), you mustn't think that's innocent just because you think you're not doing anything "immoral." "Well, I'm not *hurting* anybody." If you hide behind any of that stuff, then your next six months will be bigger garbage than your last six months. I guarantee you, in the name of Jesus, be not deceived: God is not mocked. That's how Paul introduces the law of sowing and reaping.

Ready or Not, There's Going to be a Harvest

What will your six months from now be like? Mark the day. Your future is dependent on the sowing that you are doing now. That will determine your authority over sin, your fullness of fellowship of life in Jesus, and your ability to change lives and walk with the light of God. The seeds you are sowing now determine your ability, like Stephen, to have a face shining like that of an angel, and to see the Son of Man standing at the right hand of the Glory of God—instead of just being a religious puppet. If you are sowing garbage, you'll reap garbage and God will make sure that you have a far bigger fall than you ever thought was possible in your life. "Be not deceived: God is not mocked." *Please sow GOOD seed, not neutral stuff.*

Can you pinpoint the things you are doing and say, “I know this is for the Glory of God. This is not for my glory, this isn’t for my education, this isn’t self-centered, this isn’t for my rest and relaxation or for my entertainment—this is to Glorify God.”?

If you can’t figure out how what you are doing is supposed to glorify God, Don’t Do It! Quit playing with fire. Be not deceived: God is not mocked. You will reap what you sow. When you sow weeds (worldly, self-indulgent, meaningless, trivial things), you fight as one beating the air. You never contact what is right in front of you, but you just try to add a little bit of good to your mediocrity. That’s lukewarmness. Do not deceive yourself. You’re not above God’s laws. There are not enough people around you to protect you from it. God is not so merciful that He’s going to break His own law. God is not mocked; you will reap what you sow.

Sow garbage and you’ll reap garbage. Sow lukewarmness and mediocrity, and that’s what you’ll reap. Sow worldliness, your own entertainment and lack of self-sacrifice—do whatever pleases you, without spending yourself for God’s Glory—and that is exactly the harvest you will reap.

Mark it down, right now, on your calendar. Six months from now, whatever you are doing now to sow to the Glory of God will be hanging all over you on that day. I guarantee it on the Authority of Jesus of Nazareth and on His Word. Be not deceived: God is not mocked. If you’re worthless right now spiritually, you’re not going to be able to change that tomorrow morning. Six months ago made you worthless today.

HOWEVER, there’s no reason in the world why you can’t sow good seed, humble yourself before God and call it what God calls it—TODAY. Be up front with it. Nail it down. Are you worthless spiritually in terms of bearing fruit? I’m not asking you if you’re a nice person and if you manage to control your temper most of the time. That’s not it. ***Are you changing people’s lives?*** Is Jesus’ light and love shining through you to the extent that you are a convicting stench to those who want to live in darkness and a ray of hope in the hearts of those who desire to live and move and breathe in the Light?

If that’s not who you are today, it’s because of six months ago. And if that’s not who you are six months from now, it’s because of today. It’s because you have made choices that have sown junk into your life. You decided to be a “good-ol’-boy”; you decided to be self-indulgent; you

decided to go on automatic pilot and just cruise along and try to keep your nose clean—but you never passionately pursued God’s Glory. You sowed stuff that no one in the world could ever establish as being to the *Glory of God*.

“Whatever you do, whether food or drink” means don’t even have a meal unless it has some permanent value. Find a way to get permanent value even out of your food and drink. Bring a cup of water for somebody else. Invite somebody over for dinner. Go do *something*. The Scriptures say even food and drink must *somehow* count—***Make it count***. Do not be isolated in your little glass booth with your smile patched on your face—yet be worthless before God.

Now, *what you do* about what you are reading right now will be hanging on you six months from now: If you are still even in the race six months from now! You may not be. :(If you choose to sow to your flesh, you may be a statistic six months from now. You may have totally shipwrecked your faith. Paul mentions all kinds of people that he knew who chose to shipwreck their faith. They chose to go into the world. Now, I don’t care *who* you are or who you *think* you are, you are not above the law of sowing and reaping. I’m not above it and you’re not either. My six months from now is determined by what I do tonight, tomorrow and the next day. And who I am right now is based, not on my commitment tonight (my grunting and groaning and striving), but on the sowing that I did six months ago.

When Satan Drops the Bait—Crush IT

“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction” (Gal. 6:7-8). If there is something in your ego or flesh that you stroke, if there is something you desire—beware. It may seem like such a small thing now (so “harmless”) but baby dragons grow up into *fire breathers!*

Let me give an example of something that I had to deal with in my own life and heart. Whenever I would give a presentation at Rand McNally, standing in front of the board of directors or a bunch of hot shots, I would come in so ready, so prepared. I would use imagination and creativity to find a way to add some pizzazz, some power, some authority that had everyone’s mouth hanging open. I wanted them to think, “Wow, this guy must be some kind of genius or something.”

I lived for that. I wanted that. I wanted to impress. So I would crank out some report and graphically orient it, doing things that people hadn't done before. I would massage the data and come up with all sorts of things that could impress others.

Now, it wasn't wrong to do a good job and "to work heartily as unto the Lord." But, here's where the rub came in: I would sit around half an hour after I could have been out of the office and doing something more productive, and I would look at those reports, those presentations, or that equipment I had designed. *I would sit around and look at it!* I did that under the pretense of "maybe I could do this a little better next time." But it was nothing but pretense. The fact was it was ego and pride and self-centeredness. I was stroking my flesh.

Those are the kinds of seeds that will reap destruction. Think about it. How will it reap destruction? What happens when someone else comes along and designs or presents something better? Jealousy springs up because I had something invested in it. Or anger springs up. Or maybe I'll gossip about that person later on. Maybe I'll take credit for something they did or get angry when they take credit for something I did. Maybe I'll boast and look for people to tell about all the good things *I* did. Can you see the progression toward destruction? If we stroke the ego, somehow pad the flesh and allow those things to move into our lives and hearts, *we do reap destruction*. Sin comes forth.

James said that satan drops the bait, and our sinful nature *grabs after* the bait if it hasn't been sufficiently suffocated. Can you see the progression? If you don't suffocate it and destroy it, but just allow it to hang there, it will destroy you. You'll just stroke it a little, then push it aside a little so nobody can see it. Then you'll go a little bit further next time, then stroke it and hide it back in the shadows again. Instead of crushing it, you fool with it and have a coexistence with it... "Well it's not so bad." And later on that thing will become a gaping hole that satan will drive a Mack truck through, *and you will be shipwrecked!*

You will be shipwrecked because of that one little thing that you didn't crush and suffocate! It will rise up to *DESTROY* you later on. If it hasn't happened already, it will, *if* you allow those things to take place in your life. "The one who sows to please his sinful nature, *from that nature will reap destruction*." If you pad yourself and allow yourself to just hang on, you're living to please yourself. If it's not for the Glory of God, it's for you.

“Well it’s not so bad. It’s not sin. It’s not immoral.” If you do it for *you* rather than for the Glory of God, it will rip you off later on. Be not deceived: God is not mocked. A man or woman reaps what is sown.

God Said “DESTRUCTION”

This is really serious stuff. This is important! God doesn’t introduce something with that kind of power (“God is not mocked: Be not deceived”) if He doesn’t mean business with it. He’s saying: “Would you please listen to Me? This is an irrevocable law. Listen up or you will die. If you sow even little seeds to please your sinful nature rather than sowing to the glory of God, you will reap destruction.”

“Well, I think I’ll reap not being quite as spiritual as I might have been.” *That’s not what God said. He said you will reap destruction.* “Well, I just won’t get as big a crown or as close a place to Jesus.” That’s *not* what He said. He said you will reap destruction. Do you believe Him? Don’t deceive yourself. Don’t think that it’s going to be okay, that you can get by. You won’t get by. And if you harden your heart to what you are reading right now, you’re in big trouble.

Do you sow to please the Spirit? In other words, *why* did you do what you just did? Why did you just turn down that invitation? Why did you just go take a nap? Why did you just decide to come here by yourself or to go there for this purpose or that? Why did you just decide to open the newspaper? Why did you decide to read this book instead of that one? *Why* did you decide to do what you did—*was it to please the Spirit?* If so, you will reap eternal life (and that’s not just going to heaven, but having life that’s truly life, life to the full, abundant life).

If you can honestly say, “The reason I did that was to please the Spirit,” you’re in good shape. If you can’t say that, you are in big trouble. What was the reason you made this decision, placed that phone call, did this action, accepted this invitation, didn’t accept that other invitation, initiated, didn’t initiate? If you can honestly say that because you wanted to please the Spirit you did this thing, you will reap a wonderfully awesome life as you keep sowing that kind of seed. But if you choose to sow to please yourself instead—you reap destruction. Not less maturity or fruitfulness. That will happen, too, but “*destruction*” is the word that God used. If you don’t believe me, you’re deceived. God said that. I’m not making this up. I’m just reporting it.

So, What Are You Doing About It?

“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up” (Gal. 6:9). This implies, of course, that you may have a tough time with it. It’s going to take a little while. It’s not going to be much fun. Otherwise, why would you be tempted to give up? Right? It’s going to be a little bit tough. But, if you don’t give up, you will reap a harvest in due season, at the proper time: if you don’t faint, if you don’t quit, if you don’t give up.

We all know it’s true. But if you get lazy and say, “What’s the big deal? Nothing bad has happened to me yet, so I don’t think I believe all of that. I don’t think it makes that much difference. I mean, I’m going along okay. I’m happy. My life is fine. I’m at peace...” BEWARE! At the proper time, you will reap a harvest. Whether a good harvest or a bad harvest, be assured that you *will* reap a harvest—*absolutely guaranteed*.

“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers” (Gal. 6:10). Do not become weary in well doing, in doing good. In other words, there’s action required. You can’t think, or wish, or imagine your way into this. This has to do with doing things. Not to earn your salvation, but it certainly has a lot to do with what’s in your heart. If out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks, then also out of the overflow of the heart the actions come. James said you don’t have any faith if there’s nothing to support it. If I can’t find what you’re doing to the Glory of God, if I can’t identify how you are living that pleases the Spirit of God, then you’re probably not.

James said that faith without works is dead. He wasn’t saying you earn your salvation by works. He was saying that if you are really living in faith, if you really see God and know Him, then there is absolutely no question that the outworkings of that faith will be evident to all. Even the pagans will see it, Peter wrote. They will give God glory when He returns because of your quality life, not just because you were a “nice” person. There are plenty of nice people around.

Jesus was not a “nice” person. He was nice, wasn’t He? Yes, but not to everybody. Not everyone thought Jesus was nice. If everybody thinks you’re a nice person, curses on you. *Curses on you!* Jesus said that (Lk. 6:26). “Curses on you if all men speak well of you.” If you’re so nice that everybody thinks you are such a nice person, then you’re really *not* a nice person. You’re deceived. Curses on you, Jesus said. Jesus said that

no man is above his master, so if they hated and persecuted Him, they will do the same to you. If that's not happening, then you are not very much like Jesus.

Now, the point is not to be obnoxious, or rude, or "bold." The point is simply to be like Jesus in every attitude of your heart, every action, and every word that proceeds from your mouth. If you do that, not everyone is going to think you're a nice person. So I'm not talking about being a nice person when I say, "Be like Jesus." You'll be the stench of death to people who love darkness, and you'll be the aroma of life to the humble and contrite in heart. If you're not the stench of death to people who love shadows (darkness), then you're self-deceived and you're weak in your faith at best. If you're the aroma of life to those who seek God with all their hearts...if you have words that God speaks to you at night while you sleep and you speak them to sustain the weary...if you can see and provide an aroma of life for those around you, then you're on the right track. Okay?

Break Up Your Fallow Ground

"Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unplowed (fallow) ground; for it is time to seek the Lord, until He comes and showers righteousness on you" (Hos. 10:12). Break up your fallow ground. That was the part God asked us to play. Break up the hard heart. Break up the big clods of dirt, so that the seed can take root. Break up the fallow ground and, as a result, He will come and shower righteousness on you. But He went on to say to those people: "But you have planted wickedness, you have reaped evil, you have eaten the fruit of deception. Because you have depended on your own strength and on your many warriors..."

Notice what has happened here. God said that because you think you're good looking, strong, intelligent, popular, and can *do* things—you have eaten the fruit of deception. According to the Scriptures, whatever those particulars happen to be in your instance (whatever it is that you're depending on rather than Jesus of Nazareth) that puts you in the place of being wicked and sowing bad seed for your future. Now the opposite of depending on yourself, of course, is to be totally broken and contrite in heart before God, with humility and dependence on Him.

Guess what is going to happen if you're dependent on God? You're going to be on your face before Him praying and worshipping all

the time. If you're not doing that, then you couldn't possibly be depending on Him.

“Well, I just don't pray enough.” No, that's *not* your problem. **YOU TRUST YOURSELF TOO MUCH**—*that's the problem*. If you knew that your very next breath of air depended on God's provision, you wouldn't be arrogant. You wouldn't be so cut off from Him to the point that you just barely think about Him at beddy-bye time and before meals. If you really understood how dependent on Him you are for your holiness, for your very life, for your next bite of food, for your physical well-being (so that your joints all stay in their sockets, your eyes aren't gouged out, and your head isn't crushed), you would be worshipping all the time! If you ever really understood how dependent you are on Jesus, in whom all things consist and are held together, and how gracious He's been to sustain you and protect you from yourself, from the world and from the enemy, you would never dream of going long periods of time without being near Him.

“As the deer pants for the water, so my soul *longs* after You.” That's what God is calling us to be. If you really knew how much you needed Him and how kind He has been to you, you would have no problem worshipping Him. You wouldn't forget to “pray.” You wouldn't have to work in a little bit more “prayer time” or be a little more disciplined in your “quiet time.” It's got nothing to do with that! It has to do with loving God and knowing how utterly dependent you are on Him, and then pouring your life and heart into Him who died for you. *Prayer (whatever that is) takes care of itself when you're in love with Jesus.*

His Grace Brings the Blows

“This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘These people say: The time has not yet come for the Lord's house to be built.’ Then the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai: ‘Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?’ Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.’ This is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘Give careful thought to your ways. Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored,’ says the Lord. ‘You expected much,

but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?’ declares the Lord Almighty. ‘Because of My house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with his own house. Therefore, because of you the heavens have withheld their dew and the earth its crops. I called for a drought on the fields and the mountains, on the grain, the new wine, the oil and whatever the ground produces, on men and cattle, and on the labor of your hands’” (Haggai 1:2-11).

That Scripture goes on to say that the people obeyed the voice of the Lord their God and the message of the prophet Haggai *because the Lord their God had sent him and the people feared the Lord.* What was it that turned them around? They didn’t just say, “Well, hey, that’s a nice sermon, Haggai. Nice little teaching, Haggai, appreciate it brother.” They didn’t do that! *They feared God and they did something about it.* They moved. They took action. They heard it, retained it, persevered in it, and produced a crop with it. Things changed and the House of the Lord was built.

These things were written for our learning, according to Paul. This has to do with you and me. It has to do with your house and my house and how we are paneling or wallpapering—whatever we are doing to entertain ourselves and to please ourselves rather than the Lord. If that’s what we’re doing, then God says to us: “Out of My mercy and kindness to you, I am going to judge you. You are going to put a \$10 bill in your pocket and, when you pull it out, it will be a \$1 bill. Go ahead—calculate your budget for the next five years, and make your big ‘five-year plan.’ But more terrible things are going to happen to you than you can count—**BECAUSE I WON’T ALLOW YOU TO PROSPER OUTSIDE OF ME.**”

His GRACE does that! It’s by His grace that He brings these crushing blows and unpredictable things. He says: “Because I love you, I can’t let you prosper while you become numb and dull in My sight. I have to make the rain stop falling and the dew fail to produce. I’ve got to bring a drought into your life in order to get your attention.” And Israel said, “Oh, we get it!” So, the fear of God rested on their hearts and things changed in a serious way. “On the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month of the second year of King Darius.” There was a particular day in their lives when something changed. So it must be with us.

In Luke 6:38, Jesus gave the same principle out of His own mouth: “*Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken*

together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

Try to catch a picture of what Jesus is saying there. A man goes down to the marketplace to get some grain, using the skirt of his robe for a grocery sack. Now Jesus said the measure that will be poured out into your lap—into your skirt—will be pressed down, shaken together and running over. It won't have a lot of air holes in it.

He went on to say that with the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you. In other words, "If you hold back on Me, I will hold back on you. But if you spend it all for Me (like the widow with her two mites giving all that she had—her spending money, her grocery money), if you'll trust Me like she did and put it all in My lap, I'll put it back into your lap with a measure that's running over."

I Will Not Offer to God....

It's like the law of gravity. If you sow in a way that costs you something, rather than at your leisure, it will overflow. If you spend in a way that costs you, not out of your extra, God will see to it that you are rewarded for your faith. Now, it doesn't take any faith to give the extra. It takes no faith whatsoever to give out of your spare time, or out of your extra money (if there is such a thing). Giving whatever is *convenient* gets you nowhere. The cry of King David's heart (and a song written by a precious young believer among us) was, "I will not offer to God that which costs me nothing." Is that your heart? If it's convenient, if it's pleasurable (in the sense that you are doing it to please yourself, rather than offering to God that which costs you something), then it's not good sowing at all. It's worthless!

"Well, I gave so much money last year..." You didn't give a penny in God's sight if it came only from what was convenient for you, from your extra. You didn't give anything at all! You have to understand that God doesn't count the same way Uncle Sam does. God only counts that which costs you, that which is to please the Spirit rather than to please yourself. If you pray on the street corner to be seen by men, **HE DOESN'T EVEN HEAR YOU!** *You've already received your reward.* If what you do is for your own benefit or is costless to you, then God doesn't even see it. It never even makes it past the ionosphere. He doesn't get it.

But that which is sown in a costly way will be pressed down, shaken together and running over. That's a promise from Jesus of Nazareth. If a man who walks on water, raises dead people and gives sight to the blind tells you something, you'd better listen up—He means it and He will do it. Jesus says that if you'll give that which costs you something, He will press down the blessing, giving to you in return until it runs over.

Go Ahead, Try to Make Me Feel Guilty

“I will not offer to God that which costs me nothing,” was the cry of a man after God's own heart. But what if I then start to function out of guilt? Every time something comes up in my face I say, “Well, I don't really have time to do this, but God said it would cost you something.” So I end up functioning out of guilt instead of a real relationship with God. That can't be right!

Satan loves to take good things and twist them. He always counterfeits the good. He always twists the good in order to turn it back on you. If he can't stop you from moving ahead, then he'll make you feel guilty for moving ahead. But one of the surest ways I've found to overcome that guilt thing is to take everything directly to Jesus. I can say with a clear conscience that I don't function in guilt. Now maybe God will keep right on helping me grow even more in this area, but I'm not controlled in any way by guilt. Men's expectations of me have almost no effect.

I think the main reason for this is that everything I do is taken directly to Jesus. It's not about principles; it's about the person of Jesus of Nazareth. What if I do something sacrificial, but I haven't talked it over with Him first and I haven't talked it over with Him while I'm doing it? Then it's just religion—it's junk. Where is the relationship? It's so easy to fall into a religious trap and miss the person of Jesus. That's where you find the guilt—in religion. I say “religion” in the negative sense. There is right kind of religion, but the right kind of religion is fellowship with the Holy Spirit—a friendship, a relationship.

I haven't had much problem with guilt since I found my affirmation in Jesus. I won't feel guilty for not knowing anything. I don't have to feel stupid if I'm in a conversation and I don't have anything to say. I dare you to make me feel guilty in any situation. You can't make me feel guilty. You can bring me to a place of *conviction*, but not guilt. If I don't have anything to say, I'll look you right in the eye and say, “I don't have anything to say.” I just don't care whether you think I'm stupid.

Why? Because I trust God so implicitly, and I know this has to do with Him and me. It has nothing to do with things I've learned about Him that hopefully I can do for Him. It isn't like that. It's about being with Him. Now, hopefully, I can be meet for the Master's use. Hopefully, I can somehow be useful to Him...but that's *His* choice. I just need to be a prepared vessel, a pure vessel for Him.

You can't make me feel guilty if I don't have anything to say. If you were to ask me a question right now and I just honestly had no idea, I wouldn't feel guilty about it. Hopefully I would know how to keep my mouth totally shut rather than to speak out of nonsense, out of just words. Hopefully, I would know that lesson. But the other lesson beyond that is not to care if you think I'm stupid, because Jesus is the wisdom and the revelation of God. I care whether I know Him well enough that I can be a vessel, but that's between Him and me.

If I can't be a vessel for Him, you can't make me feel guilty. He can convict me: "You could have been a little bit more diligent in sowing good seeds six months ago. So get on it." OK. Conviction comes and, with it, a new direction. That's necessary when I find myself coming up empty-handed in situations where I didn't before. That concerns me, and I am convicted about that. And you can help be a catalyst for that conviction, but you can't make me feel stupid because it's simply not between you and me when I don't know something or when I can't accomplish something.

It's between God and me, and I'm going to work it out with Him. And I may have things to work out with you along the way and you may be able to help me work something out with Him. You can be a vessel for Him to let me know that I'm off track, but I don't have anything invested in trying to please men (very, very little anyway—anybody can be tempted).

The reason guilt doesn't even enter into the picture is that before I do it, while I'm doing it, and after I do it, I'm working it through with Him. "Whatever you do, *do all to the Glory of God.*" I'm asking Jesus: "Is this a gift that You can accept? Is it something You desire? If not, I don't want to do it. I don't want to be anybody's hero. If it is something that You can accept, I want to do it for You. The ramifications (good or bad), and whether or not anybody notices, are immaterial. But what can I do *for You*, Jesus? Jesus, what can I do for *You*? How would this affect *You*? What do *You* think of this thing I'm about to do? Is it

wasted effort? Is it macho? Or is it a fragrant offering to You? What do You think about this?”

By the time I get that answered, it doesn't matter to me how it turns out. It could be a total failure, but my conscience is clear because it was a vertical transaction between Him and me. If it failed, if it blew up in my face and was totally misunderstood, I still don't have to feel guilty. He knows that I offered the gift to Him. Now if I'm just trying to do good things, I am going to be in a lot of trouble when I mess some of them up. Because I'm going to get the idea: “Well, I must be stupid. I must not be spiritual. I must need to try harder. Maybe I didn't give my best.” I'm always going to be churning over any failures. They'll crush me because my identity is in the thing that I'm doing for God rather than in God Himself.

But if it's a gift that I've given to Him and then let go of, I don't need to be affirmed for it. And I won't be crushed by bad results either. Now I may need to retrace my steps. I may need to humble myself and ask for forgiveness. I may need to find out why six months ago I sowed the bad seed that put me in this situation. But that's still all between Him and me, so guilt has no hold on me. It's actually a good thing. I can actually be crushed and at the same time have the corner of my mouth turned up with a grin.

I can be excited—“God, I have the fear of God! Hallelujah! He's not turned me over. I'm not so hard that I don't feel this thing. Thank God I'm convicted for this!” That's a gift (Php. 4:14-19). *Guilt just doesn't have a place when it's a vertical transaction rather than stuff for Him.*

Jesus Didn't Come to Simply “Meet Needs”

Now here's a similar trap of the devil. I know I can't be controlled by the desires and expectations placed on me by other people. But usually the needs are so real and I just hate to say no. So I end up being driven by other people's needs rather than, like Jesus, only doing what I see the Father doing and saying what I hear Him saying (Jn. 5:19, 14:10, 24). That can't be right, either!

Well, let me tell you something you probably already know. If you function in order to meet needs or to please people, to earn their favor, you will be one miserable bambino. You don't have a chance. You will be crushed if you function to meet people's expectations or to be viewed

as spiritual in their sight—even if you simply respond because there’s a need. The poor you will always have among you, Jesus said. There will always be needs. You can’t outrun the needs. But if you check out Jesus’ life pretty carefully, you’ll notice that He walked right past an awful lot of needs. And He didn’t experience any guilt over it!

I say that cautiously because if you let your flesh be lazy and have its own way, then you will be crushed—guaranteed. If you put yourself on that little pedestal of hyper-spiritualism that says, “I don’t have to please anybody. I’m too spiritual for that. I don’t care what anybody thinks of me; I only get my divine will from God...” then you’re also going to be crushed. You are going to find yourself to be very lonely and very fruitless. And this fruitlessness is the proof and the mark—the stamp—of your deception. *Fruitless.*

The fact is, if I ask you to do something, I have got to give you the ability to pursue God on it. I can’t just expect you to do it. And likewise, you can’t expect those that labor hard among you (1Thes. 5:12) to do anything. Are there people you know who labor hard among you, who pour themselves out? Are there some people that you yourself have called at two in the morning after five other people probably just did the same thing? Please, honor those people. In the name of Jesus, according to the Scriptures, *show honor to those who are over you in the Lord and who labor hard among you.*

Part of that honoring process is allowing them to follow God, rather than needs. Yes, you have needs, they have needs, everybody has needs. But you can’t always expect people to jump when you say jump. That doesn’t mean you shouldn’t ask, but part of our responsibility to each other is to give each other the freedom to follow God. Now that doesn’t mean the freedom to gratify the flesh. If you sense someone is being lazy or irresponsible—ask about it. If that is the case, if they’re being lazy and irresponsible, you might have saved them a lot of trouble later on in their life. Moses got a little haughty when he struck that rock. He ruined his whole life because he got haughty. All of a sudden these people were a big bunch of trouble to him. God judged him as surely as He has judged anybody: “Oh, Moses, you’re a big shot now are you? Ok, you can’t go into the Promised Land. You get to watch from the mountain and you’re going to die there.” God loved Moses, but He couldn’t let him get away with that nonsense of being over God’s people in a haughty way. If He didn’t let Moses get away with it, He’s not going to let any of us, either. So if you sense people being lazy

or presumptuous, arrogant or prejudiced, ask and you may spare them a permanent trip to Mount Nebo. You might actually save their future by asking them that. Don't accuse...just ask.

But what if that's not the case, and the reason they are "holding back on you" is because they just can't find freedom in Christ to do it? God just doesn't allow them to function in this thing that you have asked them to do, whatever it may be. Can you give them the freedom to follow God? You ask them to come pray for your sick, even dying, child and they say: "No, I'm sorry, but I just can't." Can you give them the freedom to do that? Can you give them the freedom to follow God? That happened to Jesus, didn't it? "Come pray for Lazarus..."

"Can't do it."

"Where were you, Jesus? You could have healed him."

"I couldn't do it."

"Come forth!"

Something spectacular happened. Lots of people were healed, but not many were raised from the dead. Lazarus was a man of great influence and a lot of Jews were really shaken when he was raised from the dead. They might have thought he wasn't really all that sick if he happened to get well, but the man "stinketh"! He was in the grave a long time. If he wasn't dead before he went in, he was dead from being mummified for over three days in a stinky cavern.

The point is, not everything we expect people to do is really the right thing for them to do. You've got to give your brothers and sisters the opportunity to say no to you and accept it graciously, knowing that possibly God has some other plans. So what do you do when there are so many needs and expectations all around you? Well, you seek God on it, and you do what God wants you to do.

Now don't hide behind that as an excuse. If you're not bearing much fruit to the Father's glory, then you're not abiding in Him. So if the end result of your picking and choosing is that nothing ever comes of it, then you're deceived. If lives are not changing as a result of your life, then you're not abiding in Him as you could and you're not sowing the seeds that produce a harvest. But the seeds come from God's voice, from our real-time relationship with Him.

We must give each other the same freedom to pursue that as Paul gave to Apollos in 1 Corinthians 16:12. Paul said, “I saw the needs in Corinth. You guys were having some big problems and I pleaded with Apollos to come, but he could not. He would not. He adamantly refused.” So Paul said, “Well, maybe next time.” He didn’t hold it against Apollos. He didn’t curse Apollos or talk about him behind his back. Paul’s thinking seems to have been that either it wasn’t God’s will or Apollos made a mistake (in that case, God would work all things together for the good). But the theme of Paul’s response was, “I trust God. I’ve challenged Apollos, and to the best of his ability he seems to be functioning with a clear conscience by not going to meet your great need. But, I trust God with the results. Whether he’s right, whether he’s wrong—I trust God to work this together for the good. So, he’ll come when he can.”

That’s the attitude we all have to have. In fact, we need to expect it. If you ask somebody to come pray for you (or for your child) and they show up, you ought to look them in the eye and say: “Did God send you here or did you just come because I called? If God didn’t send you here, your prayers are not going to do all that much good anyway, so go on back out the door.” Now, I’m exaggerating a little, obviously, but the point is that we shouldn’t be asking people to meet our needs, nor should we run to meet other people’s needs. We ought to be seeking God on each new situation.

Here’s one last example. Someone says to you: “Come and help my family situation.” Well, maybe God wants it to reach a point of crisis before dealing with the situation at a different level, one that’s far more humbling. Maybe there’s another agenda that God wants to accomplish and if we just rush in ahead of God to fix it, saying our magic words over the situation, it will just be perpetuated. The real issues will never be addressed and the real problems will never be solved.

If a person is just wanting some attention rather than willing to hear and obey the word of God, it is sin for you to give them that attention. Carnal sympathy, guilt trips and expectations from others are terrible reasons to do anything. You’ll find yourself running around in circles like a little dog, with satan holding you by the tail, if you’re not seeking God in a vertical way on every issue. You’ll feel guilty when you fail (“I guess I’m just not good enough.”) and prideful when you succeed (“Aren’t I a great counselor?” or “Don’t I pray good?”). If all this stuff is coming from you, you’re going to end up making a mess of everything and satan will end up turning you into an emotional wreck.

So make sure that your center of gravity in every issue of life is a fellowship with Jesus Christ. That doesn't mean you're going to be hearing audible voices all the time, but if you don't seek Him (you just run off doing good or stay back waiting in some unproductive mode), then God isn't going to bless it and your life will be spent just spinning your wheels in the mud.

Bad Seeds—Rip Them Out With a Fury

I don't want you to end up someplace God doesn't want you to go just because you are ignorant of the law of sowing and reaping. "I don't know how I got here, why I fell into this mess of sin. I don't know why I'm not bearing any fruit." Yes, you do know. You do now: bad seeds, acts to gratify the flesh, temper tantrums. "Well, it was justified. It was their fault. If they hadn't done thus and such." Hey, that's not what it's about. The things that come out of your mouth are the overflow of *your* heart—no matter what anybody else does. So if you sow the seeds of allowing those things, without repenting very quickly, they will come back to haunt you.

Don't think you can just gloss over it. "Well, I feel better now. It's over with now." Wrong! You've just sown a seed. Nothing bad happened yet. But how often do you know a seed to grow up and bear fruit in one day? If you don't repent today, that seed still may not affect you tomorrow, but it will affect you six months from now. How could it? *Because it's an inescapable law in the unseen, spiritual world.* If you don't repent of it now, it will affect you six months from now. If you have a little tiff, a little temper tantrum, a little frustrating moment when you decide to go ahead and gratify your flesh by kicking the cat (or whatever you do), don't think that you can get away with it. You won't. It will raise its ugly head and bite you six months from now. It will rob you of life six months from now. It may not seem to have a big effect on your today or tomorrow (maybe it will have some effect) but the *major effect* of any sin that's unrepented of comes to the surface six months from now.

Deal with it violently and radically. Rip out the weed before it germinates and grows, before it ends up choking the life out of something valuable. Maybe for you it's the lust for material things. You find yourself flipping through catalogs or drooling as you walk through the mall, looking at the wares in some clothing store, computer shop or office supply

house. You had better shut it down in your head, your eyes and your heart. Cast it down! Crush it!

“Well, I was just looking. I didn’t actually spend any money.” That’s not the issue. We’re talking about issues of the heart. David had a lot of stuff, billions of dollars, but it didn’t mean anything to him. He was able to walk out of the palace with bare feet and leave it all behind. It didn’t matter to him. God blessed him with material wealth, but it didn’t have his heart.

So it’s not the stuff that’s the issue. Don’t you dare make an excuse out of that—“Well, my stuff doesn’t hurt me any because, after all, David had a lot of stuff.” If you’re saying that, it probably *does* hurt you. If you don’t have the fear of God in you about your stuff, then it probably does hurt you, just like the rich young ruler. Just the thought about it, just drooling over it, is the seed that will destroy you. You are sowing to please the sinful nature if you let that thing sit there in your heart rather than saying, “No, God, No! I don’t want to value that thing (what a neat color, neat house, neat dog, neat...!). Whatever that thing is, you had better get control of it and learn to see it exactly the way God sees it so you can uproot any affection in your heart for stuff. Whatever it is, you had better make sure it’s under God’s righteousness. *Do not judge according to the flesh!*”

God Wants Your Heart!

Now that doesn’t mean you can’t appreciate a rainbow or a landscape. You can appreciate, and even enjoy them. But there is a line you can cross in your heart. God knows where that line is for you, and if you are listening to Him and you care, you’ll know too. You’ll sense that you just prostituted yourself, you just became a whore, for that thing. Maybe you didn’t even *buy* it, but you sold your affections to it when you walked by and *looked* at it. If you didn’t crush it, and repent of that thought, then you just sowed a seed that *will* rip you off later.

Have you ever seen something that you wanted, but you couldn’t afford it at the time? You knew you probably didn’t even need it, but you still wanted it. And you let that thought just sit there. You said to yourself, “Well, I can’t have it anyway.” Do you know what? I’ll bet you had that thing six months later, didn’t you?! Am I right? You sowed a seed and you didn’t deal with it properly—you just allowed it to sit there. You knew it wasn’t from God, and that it was your own flesh

screaming. But you couldn't have it anyway, so you just allowed the fleshly seed to sit there.

In fact, you really didn't have the guts to buy it anyway. But slowly your conscience became hardened to that thing, because of the seed you planted, and eventually it was no contest. You weren't even convicted anymore. There was no more challenge at all in your heart about it. That thing was yours, buddy! You saved your money...you earned the right to have it...and you got it!

Can you see what happened? You restrain nothing from yourself when you refuse to deal with the seeds and judge them righteously from the very beginning. Eventually you will have just what you want.

Do You Rob God?

*“Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need. Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account. I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. **To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever**” (Philippians 4:15-20).*

You can hear Paul exploding into worship in that last sentence. Why? Because he's seen the law of sowing and reaping! They met his needs when he was in trouble in the material world—because they saw God and responded to Him in faith. They amply supplied his needs to overflowing with sacrificial hearts, and this has been credited to their account in the heavens. Because of that, Paul knows that God will amply supply all of their needs according to His glorious riches out of His storehouses. Praise be to the God and Father of us all! He saw the law of sowing and reaping and it excited him. Because they sowed in faith, God Himself would enter into their personal lives and change things according to their sacrificial giving.

“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should

give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written: 'He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever'" (2 Corinthians 9:6-9).

Again, Paul is talking about financial areas. A very good barometer of how you're doing spiritually is how you're doing financially with *giving* to God. If there is always a "better" thing to do, or a more "urgent" need than to give the first fruits to God, then something is wrong. And that is a pretty good barometer of where you are at spiritually.

"Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God" (2 Corinthians 9:10-11).

What you sow is what you reap. Sow generously and you will reap a bountiful harvest. Sow sparingly (just scrape a little bit off the top in order to have your spiritual parking ticket validated) and you will reap sparingly. This is a promise from God, and we'd better take it very seriously!

"I the LORD do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you," says the LORD Almighty. But you ask, 'How are we to return?'" (Malachi 3:6-7).

How do I come back to God if I find that I'm not near God? Well, here's how God says to return: *"Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' In tithes and offerings, You are under a curse—the whole nation of you—because you are robbing me" (Mal. 3:8-9).* Now that's God's view of not being sacrificial with the first fruits of all that He brings into your house. If Uncle Sam is your god, then he gets the first fruits, somebody else gets the extra and whatever is left belongs to God. Whoever or whatever your god might be, that is where the first fruits go. That's a fact.

So what do you do if you feel like you've drifted far away from God? "Well, here's the place to start," He says. "Consider the fact that you're

robbing Me by not giving Me your first fruits. You're stealing from Me." If someone steals money from a drug addict, he might spend a little time behind bars. But when he steals out of the governor's pocket, he's in big trouble. And when you steal from God, you've got yourself in a real jam.

I'm not just talking about money (although that is the context here), but about all these other areas we've covered. *What* is your life about? *Who* exactly are you? *Why* do you do what you do?

Vertical Transactions

As for guilt and being driven by needs, the same principle applies to finances as to everything else. Make each situation a vertical transaction with God. "God, I can't meet every need. I'll do absolutely anything You want me to do. I won't be motivated by fear ('If I give sacrificially here then what will happen to me down the road?'), but I'm not going to be motivated by ambition, pride or zealously either."

Be motivated by the *current* Word of God. Find out what pleases the Lord (Eph. 5:10). If you don't know exactly what that is, give it your best shot and then talk to Him about it. Don't just do it and then zone out. "God, You know I've wrestled through this thing with You and I don't know exactly what to say or what to do—I just don't know. But here's my best shot at it. Hopefully I'm not motivated by fear or guilt. I've rooted out any worries about how I'll look to others. I've rooted out any kind of lust for things that would treat You like a genie in the bottle (if I do this then God will give me that). As far as I know, I'm an empty, clean vessel before You as I offer You this gift. It's a stupid gift, because I don't even know for sure that it's the right thing, but to the best of my ability my heart is pure before You. Will You please receive my gift?"

It's your best, not because you couldn't have given any more, but because you've dealt with any false motives for giving or not giving and you're willing to do anything. Now He'll receive that! And guilt is out of the picture because it's a vertical transaction with Him. It's from Him and through Him and to Him.

It's the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil that says it's always good to do this and it's always bad to do that. You've got to do all these things to

please God, but all those other things will never please God. That's the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. No matter how accurate you may think your tree is, on the day you eat from that tree you shall surely die. You will be dark and empty inside.

It's the Tree of Life that brings fruit into our lives. Jesus referred to it in John 5 when He said, in effect, "You've listened to the prophets, you've memorized My commands, but they all point to Me. Now, why won't you come to Me? My commands about tithing—come to Me about those things. They're not an end in themselves. They're to draw you to Me. They're to humble you so you will need Me. That's what it's all about. I don't need your money—I need your heart!"

If we don't deal with Him, we miss all that. It ends up just being religious junk—legalism. It just makes us more and more empty rather than more and more full.

A Harvest IS Being Reaped

"You are under a curse—the whole nation of you—because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit," says the LORD Almighty. "Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land," says the LORD Almighty" (Malachi 3:9-12).

In other words, there will be great things happening! God doesn't want you to be under this big, heavy weight all the time that's crushing your bones and making you walk beneath a cloud of despair. He wants to bring you into a delightful land, free from guilt and all the pressures that drive you insane. He does need to refine you to get you there though. He means to free you from all the false motives that have separated you from Him.

"You have said harsh things against me," says the LORD. Yet you ask, "What have we said against you?" You have said, "It is futile to serve God. What did we gain by carrying out his requirements and going about like mourners before the LORD Almighty? But now we call the arrogant blessed. Certainly the evildoers prosper, and even those who challenge God escape" (Malachi 3:13-15).

That's where the mocking comes in. "Look at all these sinful people. They're blessed. Nothing ever happens to them. And what do I get for all the good things I do? It seems like I get away with most of the bad things I do, and so does everybody else. So what difference does it make anyway?"

But God said, "You're mocking Me." Be not deceived: God won't be mocked. You may not see it in your lifetime. You may not see it when God is causing a wicked man to rot away on the inside, or someone else to just be ready to commit suicide. Lives are falling apart all around you—there is total unhappiness, no peace whatsoever. Yet they smile at you the whole time, looking like they have it all together. They look like successful businessmen, great athletes, the life of the party. But inside they're rotting away. So don't be so sure that they are not reaping what they are sowing. In fact, *I guarantee you they are*. Hour by hour and minute by minute, a harvest is being reaped.

God Invites Us to Test Him

"Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honored his name. 'They will be mine,' says the LORD Almighty, 'in the day when I make up my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him. And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not'" (Malachi 3:16-18).

I guarantee you that distinction will be made. This brings us right back to the law of sowing and reaping. They asked what they could do about being so far away from God. He said: "Make choices that honor Me. Sow good seed. Test Me. Stop pleasing your flesh and sow to please the Spirit. If you'll do that, you will reap eternal life rather than destruction. Test Me! *I will bring blessings*—pressed down, shaken together and flowing over! Your storehouses won't even be able to contain it."

"Well, I don't think it's really such a big deal," someone might say. "Nothing bad is happening to me now." That day will come when God will make His distinction between the righteous and the unrighteous. On the authority of the Lord God Almighty, that day is coming quickly and He hears those who fear Him. He hears the voice of their cry. He has inclined His ear toward them and determined to make them His

treasured possession. He will bring them to Himself so the world will know that these chose, from a pure heart, to sow to please the Spirit rather than themselves. Be not deceived: God is not mocked.

Did You Really Give it Up?

No one, Jesus said, not one person who has ever really given up lands, possessions, homes and relatives has failed to receive a hundred times as much in this age, and in the age to come—eternal life (Mark 10:30). Now, it's possible to think you've given up these things just because your environment has changed. For example, just because you're not hanging around all your old immediate family at the moment, doesn't mean you have "given them up." You are still yoked to them if they still control your life, and if your allegiance to them could actually maneuver you into doing things that don't please the Lord. You don't even have to be in the same location as they are to still be "hanging on." If your heart is still yoked to that which is not God, then you haven't given them up and you will fail to receive anything in this life from God.

Now, I'm not advocating cutting yourself off from your parents. But if you are yoked to those who are not living for Jesus with all their heart, soul, mind and strength—you won't reap God's fruit. I don't mean that you should dishonor them, but any yoke of affection, any yoke of drawing and control where you're still hanging onto the apron strings in your heart, *is* going to affect you. If you are hanging on to them in your spirit, even though physically you might not be right there with them, you will reap a bad harvest. Anything in you that allows them to have more sway over you than the righteousness and the truth of Jesus of Nazareth is going to reap bad fruit in your life. I'm just giving that as an illustration because sometimes it looks like we've given things up, when we never really did.

When I left Rand McNally to go off into the "mission field," I thought I was giving up *everything*. But, I found out two years later that I really had never given up *anything*. I gave up 70% of my salary, and that seemed significant to me at the time. But the truth is, two years later, I found out that it was very easy for me to pull out that old résumé, update it a little bit, and jump right back in. I could plead insanity to the next company I went to work for and just keep right on going. When I saw that, it crushed me! I finally threw all my résumés into a grill and burned them because I realized they still had a hold on me.

So, you see, I thought I gave it up. Anyone in the world would say, “Yeah, you gave it up.” They’d examine the evidence and say, “Look he gave it up—70% cut in pay, gave away all the credentials, blew his future and the hope of worldly ambitions...” But I never gave it up.

What I want to say to you is that just because something’s not in your face right now, doesn’t mean you’ve given it up. If you used to be addicted to something that you’re not doing right now, but in your heart it still owns you (if nobody else was around and nobody was saying anything to you about it and no one could ever possibly catch you at it, you would be right there in the middle of it again), *then you never gave it up at all*. God never saw it. He never even witnessed this great sacrificial act of yours—because it’s the heart He’s looking for.

HE WANTS YOUR HEART! He doesn’t just want your stuff; He doesn’t need your stuff. He wants your heart. The stuff will take care of itself, if He has your heart.

No Excuses—Bear Fruit!

If you’re not hearing this, I don’t know what else to say. When you’ve done it all, what else can you do? God said: “What more could have been done for My vineyard than what’s already been done?” (Isa. 5:4). If you’re not hearing it and it doesn’t provoke you to change, if it doesn’t apply to you because you’re above all that, then the fear of God is not in your heart. The awe of God isn’t there.

“Well that was an interesting teaching—that certainly was food for thought.” If it doesn’t mean any more to you than that, I don’t know what else to do. You’re going to continue to justify yourself by your own foolish standards rather than the standard of Jesus of Nazareth. You’re going to try to pretend you’re not doing anything different from anyone else, so what’s the problem? If there’s no fear of God in your heart and there’s no everlasting fruit to show for your life, what else is there? Who cares what anybody else is doing? Don’t you dare compare yourself to how you used to be or to what you think is happening in other people’s lives. You don’t even know what that is. Maybe, in fact, they are sowing to please the Spirit a thousand times more often than you’ll ever notice.

Don’t you dare compare yourself to what you think the accepted norm of activity is or what you think you can get away with doing. *If you are*

not bearing everlasting fruit to the Glory of God, then you are not abiding in Him. Period. If nobody else in the whole assembly of believers is bearing fruit, that's still no excuse for you. And if everyone around you is bearing fruit, Jesus didn't say that if everybody else is doing well, you'll bear much fruit too. He said, "If you abide in Me, you will bear much fruit." That applies to you and to me on a personal basis. If I live in Him and make my home in Him, (if I live and move and have my being in Him) and His Word makes its home in me, I will bear much fruit, showing myself to be His follower to the Father's Glory. That's a fact—regardless of what anybody else around me does.

The standard for our lives is JESUS. If you lower the standard from Jesus to what you see around you (or think you see around you), you're making a huge mistake. First, you're probably not seeing it right, and second, the people around you have never been, nor shall ever be, the standard. **JESUS is the standard.** And He's called you as a person to stand up and give an account. He's given you everything that pertains to life and godliness. He's given you every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus. He spilled blood so you could live and so you could walk in His life, His liberty and His peace. *It cost Him His blood!* And when you're standing all by yourself in front of Him, you won't be able to say, "Well I wasn't any worse than anybody around me." That isn't what He wants to hear.

Go Vertical!

Stop reading right now, would you, and please just make sure that even this is vertical. All right? This has nothing to do with guilt. This is an opportunity. This is a threshold of opportunity wherever you are in your walk with Jesus—high, low, middle. You don't even know where you are anyway. 😊 Who cares where you think you are or where other people think you are? The truth is that if you'll sow better seed more bountifully and quit sowing weeds (and uproot the weeds that are there now by confession and repentance), it doesn't matter who or what you are now. In six months you will be unrecognizable! Regardless of where you are in your walk with Jesus, there's not a single person reading this who couldn't be ten times further than where they are right now.

That goes right back to the law of sowing and reaping. Do not wait for God to zap you. He isn't pulling rabbits out of a hat. He's asking you to sow good seed bountifully, to make your home in Him. Even as you

read this, understand that you have an opportunity for a rich, rich, rich, rich, rich future (in the things that money can't buy). Wherever you are spiritually, that's where you are. Fine, you're there. It doesn't make any difference where you are, the only thing that matters is where *you could be six months from now*.

Bad Seed

Here are some seeds that will produce bad fruit six months from now if you don't see them and deal with them properly. As you read these things, look to God and ask Him if this is something you've made any room for in your heart: Boasting. Jealousy. Lust. Complaining (whining and moaning). Hypocrisy (acting one way and then changing into someone else as soon as the show is over...saying something or pretending to be somebody in one setting then as you walk into the next room [or in the inner chambers], you have a different opinion, a different evaluation...having a judgment about someone that you never let that person know you had when you were face to face. That kind of stuff infuriates God.). Selfishness. Murmuring about others ("I can't believe they...").

Or what about neutral seeds like wasting time on computers, hobbies or news? "...*So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God*" (1 Cor. 10:31). What is the spiritual value of this thing? If you're going to spend yourself, make sure you're spending yourself on something that has value. Redeem the time, Paul also said. Don't fight as one beating the air. Don't run the race as one running in circles. *Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God*. The neutral stuff is sin if it isn't to the Glory of God. How do I know that? Because God commanded that whatever we do, do all to the Glory of God.

If you can't figure out how this thing glorifies God without stretching yourself into some realm of insidious imagination to get there, if it has no value to the Glory of God, then it is sin. He gave that absurd example of food and drink—do not even eat unless it's to the Glory of God. Unless you can somehow bring this thing together so that it has spiritual value, you're just feeding your own flesh and making your god your belly. (I'm not just talking about sweets, either, but all food. You can make food your god by letting it control you. Whatever determines how you go about making your decisions is your god, and only One—Jesus—deserves to have that kind of sway over your life. Anything else

is an idol and it cuts you off from Life.) If this thing, whatever it is, brings you to a place of separation, isolation, independence, enmity or judgment of others, then it is wicked. It's wisdom from below that's unspiritual and of the devil (Jas. 3:15). *It's not to the Glory of God if it doesn't draw you closer into the image and likeness of God and help you to change other people's lives. Everything should draw you into the fellowship of believers, rather than outside of the fellowship of believers.* Otherwise it's from the devil and it can't bear eternal fruit.

Good Seed

Now here are some seeds that will produce good fruit six months from now if you'll only see with the eyes of faith, even when things appear to be falling apart all around you: Acts of sacrifice and uncompromised obedience to please God. Acts of self-control, like turning away from lust. Acts of forgiveness.

Here again, this is something that has to be done vertically. If you choose not to lust when you have an opportunity to lust, don't you dare stop at that. That's just religion. What you need to do is turn toward Jesus with a heart that cries: "Jesus, I've chosen to live for you because You died for me. I know this thing is not in Your heart. I know it defiles my person—it defiles my heart. I know it opens the door for the pit of hell to lodge itself in there, for satan to build a stronghold so that later he might destroy me. And so I've chosen not to lust for Your sake, because I love You."

Now if you decide not to lust just because the Bible says not to lust, then you're making a mistake. You're losing 99.9% of the value of even resisting sin. God doesn't place any real benefit or premium on self-control if it isn't unto Jesus. If it's just religion, it will make you prideful—"Well, I overcame this and that, so why can't you?" It will make you judgmental or prejudiced against others who have fallen into that sin. It will destroy you. It won't bring you into the fullness of Christ.

If it's just religion, then even your good acts will later on destroy you. They'll be bad seed, not good seed, unless they're unto Jesus. If you can't commune with Him over it, it's religion and it has very little real value. There are lots of moral people around who have good family values but are going to hell. Why? Because what they did was not done "as unto the Lord." Rather, it was simply their own self-righteousness, which God sees as filthy rags. He's not impressed by our righteousness.

All He cares about is communion with us. These things only have value as avenues for communion with God.

Every temptation you encounter is an avenue for communion with God. It all works together for the good. If you draw near to God, He will draw near to you. See, all these things are channels, avenues, opportunities. Don't just close your eyes real tight and try somehow to barely make it through life surviving all the temptations of the enemy! These are all opportunities to offer gifts to Jesus and to draw closer to Him. These are for your life, your future, not for your destruction. Though satan means them for your harm, God means them for your good. He means to bring you into the fullness of the pleasures of His house and His land.

So don't view all this as some heavy burden. These are great opportunities that God gives us: to choose to forgive; to decide not to internalize or retaliate against a personal injury, but rather to loose on earth what's been loosed in heaven; to sacrifice material things for the Kingdom of God (However, let me say again that it's not about trading God—"If you do this for me, I'll do that for you." God doesn't barter with us. He wants our lives: heart, soul, mind and strength); to crucify temper rather than making excuses; to refuse to prop ourselves up with stories, like "Here's something I did—now aren't you impressed with me?" So look for the opportunities to sow bountifully in your life.

Harvest Comes in Due Season—Faint Not

Here are some principles governing the harvest that should help you along the way. First, the harvest is always later than when the seeds were sown. If you sow good seeds now, the harvest will probably not be today or tomorrow. It comes in due time, in the proper season. *So today you are building your future.* You are not solving today's problems. You are building your character and capacity for God's love, for God's righteousness, for fellowship with the Holy Spirit. *You are building your future capacity today.*

It's like building a big reservoir. The things you do today are like a spade for digging a reservoir to hold the rains that fall sometime later. It's an opportunity to capture the fullness of God into your vessel. So hang in there! There are no instant crops. Don't grow weary in well doing. Keep on going. Don't faint. If you don't see immediate results, so what? The farmer, James said, is that patient man who waits for the harvest

to come, and God honors the sort of patience that doesn't demand something from Him instantly. The demand for instant gratification just indicates a selfish heart. It's bad seed, not good seed.

"Well God, I did this thing thinking that You would redeem me from this other situation. I thought if only I would do this, then You would..." That wasn't good seed—it was selfish. You were trying to trade God. The way He tests our hearts to show whether it's really for Him or whether it's for ourselves is by making it happen in due season, if we faint not. He tests our hearts by allowing some lag time between sowing good seed and finding a good harvest.

Sow an Apple Seed and Reap an Apple Tree

Another principle is that the harvest is always of the same kind, good or bad, as the seed that was sown. It's your choice, according to Galatians 6. Apple trees grow from apple seeds, and orange trees grow from orange seeds. There's no way you can end up with a different kind of tree than the seeds you planted. So I can guarantee that if you sow to please yourself, you will reap destruction—not only because God said so, but because that's the only thing that can grow from it. It's impossible for anything to grow up from a cruddy, worldly seed other than cruddy worldliness.

You can't grow to be more like Jesus sowing even neutral seed. It doesn't help; in fact, it gets in the way. There's only so much room in your heart. Jesus said to the Pharisees, "You haven't made room in your heart for My word. Therefore you are a child of the devil. Your father is the father of lies" (Jn. 8:37-44).

Now why was their father the devil? Because they didn't make room in their hearts for His Word. You've only got so much capacity in your heart and in your head, so if you choke the word by filling up your head even with neutral stuff, you are going to have a crummy harvest unto destruction. The Word of God clearly decrees it.

Your Capacity is Unlimited!

Here's a third principle: the harvest is always in proportion to how much seed was put out. When you sow bountifully, you reap bountifully. When you sow sparingly, you reap sparingly. Keep putting it out there. Keep throwing seed out there again and again and again and again

and again. If you sow sparingly (a little bit of seed here, a little bit of seed there), then you're going to have a field that's almost empty when the fall comes. The more seed you sow, the more harvest you'll have six months from now. The same will be true in a year, in five years, in ten years, and in twenty years. As you're reading this, chances are that you will have at least twenty years left to live. A lot of you will. A lot of people who read this are going to have twenty years of opportunity to sow good seed. But if you put it off now, you're going to blow the whole deal.

If you'll sow bountifully now, the things in life that will happen to you, around you and through you will boggle your mind. Yes, little of you! Even with your limited intellect, your limited commitment, and your limited ability to be holy all the time. Yes, even with your limited ability to worship and love God, to speak His word or to live it out. Whatever limitations you may feel like you have right now, little of you, *I guarantee that your capacity is as broad as the universe because the Son of the Living God promised that you will reap in accordance with what you sow.* It's not in your mom and dad's genes, but in direct proportion to how you sow to Him as a person. That's your capacity—and it's unlimited. More than you could ask or even imagine in your wildest dreams. Yes, you! This isn't just for everyone else. This is you! Unlimited capacity and mind-boggling possibilities in the next five, ten or twenty years. Unbelievable potential!

The Great Redwood

How do you tap that potential? You sow bountifully now, and faint not. Seeds seem too small to matter, but God says they do matter (Heb. 11:6, Lk. 17:6, Mk. 11:22-25). How could a tiny seed grow a redwood tree? Do you know what? A TINY seed is the *only kind of seed* that *can* grow a redwood tree! There's no other kind of redwood tree. You don't bring in a 14-pound watermelon and plant it to grow a redwood tree. The only kind of seed that can grow a redwood tree is a tiny seed. All the capacity for infinite life is in this little dinky seed. It seems unbelievable that for a small act of kindness—just a cup of water—you'll not lose your reward (Mk. 9:41). Unbelievable. But small seeds matter.

Granted, they are very small. There's not much you can do. I understand that. There's not much I can do. I don't have that much to offer. I can't figure out how to save the world. I don't know. But I can sow tiny

seeds that seem too small to matter. Jesus said to be faithful with the little things, with a few things, and you'll be granted much. Don't despise the day of small beginnings. Seeds don't seem to really have any life in them, but God calls things that are not as though they are (Rom. 4:17). Faith is the evidence of things hoped for, the substance of things unseen (Heb. 11:1). And nations are subdued. Children are raised from the dead and given back to their mothers. Things unseen, things only hoped for, things that don't seem to have any life in them, little specks of dirt called seeds, grow up into redwood trees so large that you can drive a truck through them. You can build a highway right through the middle of that thing!

That tree came from a dead piece of wood, so it seemed. Do you realize that God created seeds all the way back in Genesis for this purpose—to show us the nature of the Word of God? Jesus said it again and again and again, “The seed is the Word.” The seed is the Word. And the Word of God sown in your heart, with good soil and a willingness to keep rooting out the weeds, allows this tiny, meaningless piece of dirt to grow into a redwood tree, an awesome thing that reaches farther than you can see.

That's your capacity if you'll demand from yourself that you will not allow any junk to sit in your heart and crowd out the Word of God. Make room in your heart for Him and get all the junk, neutral or otherwise, out of your heart. Now, *that's* your potential based on this silly thing that God invented to show us the type of His Word planted in a fruitful and fertile heart.

That's why He created seeds—to show you that point. A meaningless nothing—just a cup of water. A meaningless nothing—“No, I'm not going to look.” A meaningless nothing—“Yes, I'm going to ask forgiveness”... “No, I'm not going to allow even the slightest temper”... “Yes, I'd be glad to come over, I don't care if it's convenient for me or not.” You probably wouldn't say all that out loud, but in your heart you're saying, “for Jesus, for Jesus.”

Many Small Seeds

You ask, “What difference does it make? No one will really care. They probably won't even appreciate it. So why do it?” It's a seed that grows a redwood tree, that's why! It seems so foolish, but I guarantee you that the only fool is the one who *does not* do it. That's foolish. The kind

of heart that says, “I don’t see what difference this is going to make anyway,” will yield a very spare harvest.

Don’t concentrate on big seeds, but many small ones. Don’t worry about trying to plant a huge seed, always trying to accomplish some massive undertaking and telling yourself that if you can’t do it you’re not worth anything. That’s not what it’s about. Don’t even worry about planting big seeds. If God grants you that opportunity, thank Him for it, but you don’t have to be any kind of hero. Thank God you don’t have to be a hero! Plant the little seeds, but plant them bountifully. God will take care of the rest in your life.

Turn Bad Seed Into Good Seed

Do you want to know how to change bad seeds into good seeds? *Confession* changes bad seeds into good seeds (Rom. 8:28). If you are willing to call sin what God calls it (the true meaning of the Greek word), if you’re willing to deal with it, then God can take a bad seed and turn it into a good seed. Maybe I make a baboon of myself with you because I have some resentment in my heart toward you or something like that. (From the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks, and something bubbled out that showed me what was in my heart.) I didn’t even know I resented you for whatever reason. But suddenly I found myself in a precarious situation and something happened. I got a little riled, a little impatient. I withdrew from you or I didn’t want to look at you. But if I go to you and make it right, then what satan meant to destroy me, God works together for the good. Now, all of a sudden, God can bless this relationship we never had before! He can bring a loyalty and a commonness of heart, mind and purpose into our lives that was never there before—all because we were willing to take the bad seed and confess it, crush it, even at the expense of humiliating ourselves if necessary. God takes that seed of humility, sacrifice and confession and makes it work together for the good.

So what satan meant to destroy us and divide us ended up building something spectacular. A cord of three strands is not easily broken. God builds with the thing that was originally our biggest fear, our worst enemy, our greatest failure. It becomes a matter of strength that’s been tested and tried and now can withstand anything (read 1John 1:9, James 5:16, Colossians 2:15). Water the seeds with your tears (1Cor. 3:6, Ps. 126:5-6). In other words, care about it! If you will

sow in tears, you'll bring in a harvest. You will be dancing when you come in with your harvest. But it takes sowing in tears; it takes caring. "I will be found by them that search for me with all their hearts." God tells the man who cares. He empowers the man who spends himself for Him. That's what it's about.

Now Determines My Future

Now, we know that the past does not predict our future. Today's a new day and the blood of Jesus is more than sufficient. But how does all that fit in with the Law of Sowing and Reaping?

That's exactly the point, really. *Your past doesn't determine your future. Your NOW determines your future.* That's why there is hope. The old season is past and today is a new day. Great is His faithfulness. Our opportunities are right in front of us, right now! I'll never be depressed or discouraged over last year's bad harvest or even my current bad harvest. I can fail infinitely right before your eyes, but I'm not worried. You might be worried about me, you may even judge me for that (I hope you wouldn't). But, you see, *my future doesn't depend on my past. My future depends on my decision to follow Jesus, and to humble myself before Him. I have an infinite future and an infinite hope, regardless of anything that's ever happened to me in my life.*

No past failure determines my future. What I sow now determines my future. I am not a product of my parents, my upbringing, my limited IQ, my limited willpower, my limited memory or my limited personality. That's not my limit. I'm only limited by my own attitude.

"Well, I know I'm all those things because look how crummy I've been doing...I don't have any friends...I don't have any fruit..." That has nothing whatsoever to do with anything! Your past does not predict your future. What you sow now determines your future, so your potential is limitless. The only thing that determines your limit is your *willingness* to sow good seed and your *refusal* to sow bad or neutral seed.

Your potential is wide open, no matter how bad you are: Mary the prostitute; Matthew and Zacchaeus the tax collectors; Simon the murderous, hateful, prejudiced zealot. Just go right down the list of anybody who ever was—Bathsheba—David—Abraham. You'll see one common thread, which is the fact that their past didn't

determine their future, and their hope was in a living God—I AM. It had nothing to do with the mistakes they made. As they humbled themselves before Him, His forgiveness was as deep as the ocean and their potential was only limited by their willingness to humble themselves and to sow good seed.

So, I'm not whoever I was. I am who I will be, depending on how I see God and how I respond to Him at this moment in my life. Think of me what you will, but I know where I'm going. And by God's grace I'm going to sow good seed, and my potential in so doing is limitless. Whatever and wherever you've been (it doesn't matter "who made your bed"), God is going to draw you to Himself. That's the mystery of His grace, His faithfulness. All this is dependent on how you see Him in His forgiveness and the potential that's in Him, as well as your willingness to submit yourself into His hands. Just care for the future and do not crowd Him out, but make room for Him in your heart. Make all this vertical, rather than just religion.

No Fear—I'm Free

Now, that is not to say that there won't be ramifications from past choices. What happened when Moses struck the rock? He didn't get to go into the Promised Land. And God told David that the sword would never leave his house. How do you turn your heart toward God and say: "OK, I know I blew it. Now what are the ramifications in my life, and how do I deal with it from here?"

Keep this in mind: where do you see Moses after Nebo? After he died on the mountain, where does he show up next? He's on a different mountain, and he's doing OK. Now, there were ramifications—He didn't get to go into the Promised Land. But he wasn't looking for a nation or a city built by men's hands, anyway! See? Now, there were ramifications. I know he would have loved to have gone in, and it broke his heart. There were ramifications for David, too—his child died. The sword never left his house. His son had to build the House of God and David never got to see it. Although he gathered the materials for it, he couldn't build it.

There were ramifications. But, David was free—Moses was free. They accepted the ramifications as due course. David didn't whine and complain about it, nor did Moses. They acknowledged the God who was and is and shall be, and they humbled themselves before Him,

accepted the ramifications and the discipline of the Lord, because discipline speaks of His love. But they never lost their identity. There was no fear. Moses wasn't whining and complaining on the Mount of Transfiguration, and God brags on Moses so much it's unbelievable. All the way through the Scriptures you hear it—Moses, My man. David, a man after My own heart. Again and again and again. These guys do stupid “bozo” things but in their hearts they were free. They did reap what they sowed and there were ramifications, but because they came forward before God, they were free. While they never saw Mount Zion on the right side of the river, they saw the Mount of Transfiguration (which is where it really counts, anyway).

So that's something that can never be taken from us. It's like the words of a song—“I'm free, they can't take away my destiny, because the greatest Love of all is inside of me. Whether I fail, whether I succeed, I'm free.” It doesn't matter. I will accept, even glory in, the ramifications. Hopefully some of God's people can learn by revelation, rather than by fire, from my mistakes. If I have to become a vessel of wrath in that area, a vessel of dishonor in the household rather than honor, *I'm still in the household*. I'm still being used by God. Moses wasn't insecure on the mountain that he died on, and David wasn't insecure when the sword stayed in his house. It was disappointing to him; it was heartbreaking. He realized he blew it when he took a census and 18,000 people died because of his stupidity. But he didn't curl up in a little ball and die. He was *still* free. When his child died, what did he do? He washed his face, got up and went back to the Father's business. When Peter failed miserably, just totally blew it in utter humiliation, what did he do? He went right back into the Father's house.

“All right,” he must have said to himself, “I'll be a doorkeeper in the house, then. I don't care. I wish I hadn't done that—AAHH!” But it wasn't wrapped in fear. It wasn't guilt that drove him. These men didn't curl up in the fetal position and die. *They saw God's grace, received it and went forward, regardless of the failures*. They accepted the ramifications, but they weren't destroyed.

That's where God's called us to be, if we live by faith and not by sight. There's no fear there, even if there are certain ramifications in the physical world. What do you think happened to Ananias and Sapphira, or to the people who died in 1 Corinthians 11 because of their sinful presumption, their arrogance and their selfish factions? God even brought physical death in those cases,

but it was all unto His honor. It wasn't as if some big failure just crushed them so that they fell apart eternally. It wasn't like that. It was a process of building, building, and more building. A process of seeing things through eyes of faith, not through the natural eyes of 72.4 years.

It's Only Caterpillar Skin

"Well," you say, "that's all I have. If I blow my 72 years, I guess that's it." Not when you see things through the spectrum of "if a man believes in Me, he shall never die!" When you look at a believer, a true-hearted disciple of Jesus of Nazareth, you only see the caterpillar skin. You see that ugly old thing that we just carry around for a little while until the tent of this physical body is set free into a glorious body, transformed in the twinkling of an eye. Transfigured! That's what we're called unto.

As you look with your natural eyes, right now, you're seeing physical bodies. But that is not what's there. Stop seeing that, if that's all you see! That's not what's really there. That's just a shell of the eternal thing that's fashioned in the image of the Godhead, living inside, behind those little ol' eyeballs. If you don't see it very well just yet, it's probably just been choked quite a bit by worldliness. But, given the process you've been reading about, that Glory of the Godhead is going to emerge with ever-increasing measure in your brothers and sisters all over the world. And it's going to be spectacular. Spectacular!

Again, *there are ramifications along the way*, but those are just temporary setbacks. So I have a wart on my caterpillar skin! I've got a little cut from a rock or a spider bite on my caterpillar skin. Well, there's a butterfly inside here! It's only a temporary setback to die on Mt. Nebo. Moses didn't die. *He didn't die!* His body fell away, but he didn't die. It wasn't a permanent setback.

Jesus is Lord—Hallelujah!

Father, grant us understanding. Take anything the enemy would want to do (to turn opportunity into unhealthy fear or guilt) and slap it back into his face. God, we know that You love us, that You have plans to prosper us and not to harm us. You've opened a door for us. You brought us this far, and You're not going to leave us now. We are not orphans. You are our Father—You love us, care for us, nurture us, help us. You sustain us and we are counting on You. We know that if we'll sow seeds, then we can go

to sleep and wake up to find that those seeds have somehow germinated and grown. We know not how. That's Your awesome plan. We need to plant and we need to water with our tears, but You give increase, to the praise of Your name. And taking that nothing, little ol' seed, You bring life out of that thing. Once that corn of wheat grows, it becomes a stalk and a head and then a full kernel in the head that's capable of reproducing again and again. Father, we want Your Glory to fill the earth, and we know this is how. Count us in. Amen.

The Real World

1948

Ohhhhh!! Even in most “living rooms” and most “house churches” around the world and clearly in the meeting halls of the institutions...a MUCH NEEDED MESSAGE!!! Right? You know I’m right. There is nothing intrinsically superior about meeting in a home, if we don’t have this (what you are about to read) right, (as well as LIVE DAILY Hebrews 3:12-14; 1 Corinthians 12:21; John 13:34-35, John 3:19-21, John 4:23-24). Stale, egocentric, disconnected life shouldn’t care where it meets. TRUE LIFE... well only then does “where, and how we meet” begin to matter. “Houses” do not CREATE Life. In fact, “house meetings” or (overstated) “house churches” are frequently only a placebo and hiding place for egos and ambitions, or for rebellion and laziness and opinions, and for worldliness and self-life and wander-lust and grotesque independence. Let’s get these other things, mentioned by God in the Scriptures above, RIGHT—as Jesus desires them! It’s actually not to be feared or resented—It’s the BEST part of the Journey!—THOUGH IT REQUIRES YOU YOURSELF TO TAKE UP A CROSS, rather than just “do your thing.” But remember, the CROSS is where the enemy is humiliated and made a public spectacle, according to the Holy Spirit. Therefore, LIVES change at that Place. And that IS our Objective, our Quest, our Calling...right?!! In Jesus, “take up YOUR cross”—and See what He always wanted you to See!

Take a minute and read the verses mentioned above, prayerfully...and enjoy our brother Aiden Tozer’s thoughts below...

Have a terrific day pouring out your Life for Jesus in the Saints.... (And we’re NOT talking about some Sunday “service”—whether in your blue jeans sitting on the floor, or anywhere else!! Live the LIFE!!!)

Apprehending God

“...notions about God are many and varied, but they who hold them have one thing in common; they do not know God in personal

experience. The possibility of intimate acquaintance with Him has not entered their minds. While admitting His existence they do not think of Him as being knowable in the sense that we know things or people.

“Christians, to be sure, go further than this, at least in theory. Their creed requires them to believe in the personality of God, and they have been taught to pray, *‘Our Father which art in heaven’* (Lk. 11:2). Now personality and fatherhood carry with them the idea of the possibility of personal acquaintance. This is admitted, I say, in theory, but for millions of Christians, nevertheless, God is no more real than He is to the non-Christian. They go through life trying to love an ideal and be loyal to a mere principle.

“Over against all this cloudy vagueness stands the clear scriptural doctrine that God can be known in personal experience. A loving Personality dominates the Bible, walking among the trees of the garden and breathing fragrance over every scene. Always a living Person is present, speaking, pleading, loving, working, and manifesting Himself whenever and wherever His people have the receptivity necessary to receive the manifestation.

“The Bible assumes as a self-evident fact that men can know God with at least the same degree of immediacy as they know any other person or thing that comes within the field of their experience. The same terms are used to express the knowledge of God as are used to express knowledge of physical things. *‘O taste and see that the LORD is good’* (Ps. 34:8). *‘All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces’* (Ps. 45:8). *‘My sheep hear my voice’* (Jn. 10:27). *‘Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God’* (Mt. 5:8). These are but four of countless such passages from the Word of God. And more important than any proof text is the fact that the whole import of Scripture is toward this belief.

“What can all this mean except that we have in our hearts organs by means of which we can know God as certainly as we know material things through our familiar five senses? We apprehend the physical world by exercising the faculties given us for that purpose, and we possess spiritual faculties by means of which we can know God and the spiritual world if we will obey the Spirit’s urge and begin to use them.

“That a saving work must first be done in the heart is taken for granted here. The spiritual faculties of the unregenerate man lie asleep in his nature, unused, and for every purpose dead. That is the stroke, which

has fallen upon us by sin. They may be quickened to active life again by the operation of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. That is one of the immeasurable benefits, which comes to us through Christ's atoning work on the cross.

"But why do the very ransomed children of God themselves know so little of that habitual, conscious communion with God which Scripture offers? The answer is because of our chronic unbelief. Faith enables our spiritual sense to function. Where faith is defective the result will be inward insensibility and numbness toward spiritual things. This is the condition of vast numbers of Christians today. No proof is necessary to support that statement. We have but to converse with the first Christian we meet or enter the first church we open to acquire all the proof we need.

"A spiritual kingdom lies all about us, enclosing us, embracing us, altogether within reach of our inner selves, waiting for us to recognize it. God Himself is here waiting for our response to His presence. This, eternal world will come alive to us the moment we begin to reckon upon its reality.

"What do I mean by reality? I mean that which has existence apart from any idea any mind may have of it, and which would exist if there were no mind anywhere to entertain a thought of it. That which is real has being in itself. It does not depend upon the observer for its validity.

"I am aware that there are those who love to poke fun at the plain man's idea of reality. They are the idealists who spin endless proofs that nothing is real outside of the mind. They are the relativists who like to show that there are no fixed points in the universe from which we can measure anything. They smile down upon us from their lofty intellectual peaks and settle us to their own satisfaction by fastening upon us the reproachful term 'absolutist.' The Christian is not put out of countenance by this show of contempt. He can smile right back at them, for he knows that there is only One who is Absolute, that is God. But he knows also that the Absolute One has made this world for man's use, and while there is nothing fixed or real in the last meaning of the words (the meaning as applied to God), for every purpose of human life we are permitted to act as if there were..."

"...The Christian is too sincere to play with ideas for their own sake. He takes no pleasure in the mere spinning of gossamer webs for display. All his beliefs are practical. They are geared into his life. By them he

lives or dies, stands or falls for this world and for all time to come. From the insincere man he turns away...”

“...Now by our definition also God is real. He is real in the absolute and final sense that nothing else is. All other reality is contingent upon His. The great Reality is God, the Author of that lower and dependent reality which makes up the sum of created things, including ourselves. God has objective existence independent of and apart from any notions, which we may have concerning Him. The worshipping heart does not create its Object. It finds Him here when it wakes from its moral slumber in the morning of its regeneration.

“Another word that must be cleared up is *reckon*. This does not mean to visualize or imagine. Imagination is not faith. The two are not only different from, but stand in sharp opposition to, each other. Imagination projects unreal images out of the mind and seeks to attach reality to them. Faith creates nothing; it simply reckons upon that which is already there.

“God and the spiritual world are real. We can reckon upon them with as much assurance as we reckon upon the familiar world around us. Spiritual things are there (or rather we should say here) inviting our attention and challenging our trust.

“Our trouble is that we have established bad thought habits. We habitually think of the visible world as real and doubt the reality of any other. We do not deny the existence of the spiritual world but we doubt that it is real in the accepted meaning of the word.

“The world of sense intrudes upon our attention day and night for the whole of our lifetime. It is clamorous, insistent and self-demonstrating. It does not appeal to our faith; it is here, assaulting our five senses, demanding to be accepted as real and final. But sin has so clouded the lenses of our hearts that we cannot see that other reality, the City of God, shining around us. The world of sense triumphs. The visible becomes the enemy of the invisible; the temporal, of the eternal. That is the curse inherited by every member of Adam’s tragic race.

“At the root of the Christian life lies belief in the invisible. The object of the Christian’s faith is unseen reality.

“Our uncorrected thinking, influenced by the blindness of our natural hearts and the intrusive ubiquity of visible things, tends to draw a contrast between the spiritual and the real—but actually no such

contrast exists. The antithesis lies elsewhere—between the real and the imaginary, between the spiritual and the material, between the temporal and the eternal; but between the spiritual and the real, never. The spiritual is real.

“If we would rise into that region of light and power plainly beckoning us through the Scriptures of truth, we must break the evil habit of ignoring the spiritual. We must shift our interest from the seen to the unseen. For the great-unseen Reality is God. ‘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). This is basic in the life of faith. From there we can rise to unlimited heights. ‘Ye believe in God,’ said our Lord Jesus Christ, ‘believe also in me’ (Jn. 14:1). Without the first there can be no second.

“If we truly want to follow God, we must seek to be otherworldly. This I say knowing well that word has been used with scorn by the sons of this world and applied to the Christian as a badge of reproach. So be it. Every man must choose his world. If we, who follow Christ, with all the facts before us and knowing what we are about, deliberately choose the Kingdom of God as our sphere of interest, I see no reason why anyone should object (to our seeking to be other-than this world). If we lose by (seeking) it, the loss is our own; if we gain, we rob no one by so doing. The ‘other world,’ which is the object of this world’s disdain and the subject of the drunkard’s mocking song, is our carefully chosen goal and the object of our holiest longing.

“But we must avoid the common fault of pushing the ‘other world’ into the future. It is not future, but present. It parallels our familiar physical world, and the doors between the two worlds are open. ‘Ye are come,’ says the writer to the Hebrews (and the tense is plainly present), *‘unto mount Zion, 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’* (Hebrews 12:22-24). *All these things are contrasted with ‘the mount that might be touched’* (Heb. 12:18) *and ‘the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words’* (Heb. 12:19) *that might be heard.* May we not safely conclude that, as the realities of Mount Sinai were apprehended by the senses, so the realities of Mount Zion are to be grasped by the soul? And this not by any trick of the imagination

but in downright actuality. The soul has eyes with which to see and ears with which to hear. Feeble they may be from long disuse, but by the life-giving touch of Christ they are now alive and capable of sharpest sight and most sensitive hearing.

“As we begin to focus upon God, the things of the spirit will take shape before our inner eyes. Obedience to the word of Christ will bring an inward revelation of the Godhead. It will give acute perception enabling us to see God even as is promised to the pure in heart. A new God-consciousness will seize upon us and we shall begin to taste and hear and inwardly feel God, who is our life and our all. There will be seen the constant shining of *‘the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world’* (Jn. 1:9). More and more, as our faculties grow sharper and surer, God will become to us the great All, and His presence the glory and wonder of our lives.

“O God, quicken to life every power within me, that I may lay hold on eternal things. Open my eyes that I may see; give me acute spiritual perception; enable me to taste Thee and know that Thou art Good. Make heaven more real to me than any earthly thing has ever been. Amen.”

A Tozer
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What is in our Soul and Spirit?

1930's

It is the limit of who we are, and what we can REALLY do for Jesus.....

Whether we can do the Lord's work depends not so much on our words or actions, but rather on what comes forth from us. We are not able to edify others if we say one thing and emit from our lives another thing, if we act one way and live another way. What emanates from us is an important consideration.

We often say that our impression of a certain person is good or bad. How do we receive such an impression? It is not just from his words, nor even from his actions. A mysterious something expresses itself while he is speaking or acting. It is this that gives us the impression.... We may be able to control our speech or action, but we are unable to restrain that which expresses our nature. What we are, we cannot but reveal....

We should ask ourselves, what impression do I give to others? How often we have emphasized the need for our outward man to be broken. If this brokenness is not accomplished, others meet the impact of our outward man. Whenever we are in their presence, they are made uncomfortable by our self-love, or pride, or obstinacy, or cleverness. Perhaps the impression we leave is a favorable one, but is God being satisfied?... If God is not satisfied, and the church is not helped, any impression we leave is for naught.

Beloved, God's full intention requires that Jesus' spirit be released. It is imperative for the growth of the church. How urgent then, that our outward man be broken! Without this breaking our spirit cannot come forth, and the impression we leave with others will not be a spiritual one, or of any true value—no matter how religiously, Biblically, or emotionally impressive it may be coming forth from the sister or brother.

Suppose a brother is speaking of the Holy Spirit. Though his subject is the Holy Spirit, his words, his attitudes, and his illustrations are full

of himself. Perhaps without knowing why, those around him inwardly suffer while listening to him. His mouth is full of the Holy Spirit, yet the impression he leaves with his listeners is of himself. What is the spiritual value of such empty talk? None. None whatsoever. Little but harm was done, in truth.

Rather than stressing teaching, let us place more emphasis on what it is that comes forth from us. God is not watching to see if our teaching becomes deeper; He wants to lay hold of us as individuals. If our nature is not properly dealt with, we may give forth so-called spiritual teaching, but there is not spiritual impartation. How tragic when we merely impress the outward man yet do not impart something of a life impression to the inward man!

Again and again, God arranges our circumstances to break us in our strong point. You may be stricken once, twice, but still the third blow must come. God will not let you go. He will not stay His hand until He has broken that prominent feature in you.

What the Holy Spirit accomplishes when we are being disciplined is totally different from what happens when we are hearing truths. A message we hear may often remain in our mind for several months, possibly even years, before its truth will become operative in us. Thus the hearing often precedes the real entering into life. However, through the disciplining of the Holy Spirit, we more quickly see the truth and thus possess it.

How strange that we grasp mere knowledge through a message much faster than we learn reality through discipline! Once we hear, we remember. But we may be disciplined ten times and still wonder why. The day discipline accomplishes its purpose is the day you really “see” the truth and enter into its reality. So the work of the Holy Spirit is to break you down on the one hand and to build you up on the other. Thus your heart will say: “Thanks be unto the Lord. Now I know that His disciplining hand upon me for these past five or ten years has been just to break this strong point in me.”

At times, the discipline is shown in circumstances aimed at leveling our outstanding feature; at other times, God graciously shines upon us to enlighten us. The flesh, as we know, lives hidden in darkness. Many works of the flesh are allowed to exist because they are not recognized by us as such. Once His light, through His voice, circumstances, or His Body reveals the flesh to us—we tremble, not daring to move....

Whatever is revealed “in the light” is slain by it... We are not first enlightened and then, with the passage of time, gradually brought into death. Rather we fall down instantaneously at the coming of light. As the Holy Spirit reveals, we are dealt with. Revelation, then, includes both seeing and slaying. It is God’s unique way of dealing. Once the uncleanness is really exposed, it cannot remain. Therefore light both reveals and slays.

This being slain by the light is one of the most needful Christian experiences. Paul did not rush to the roadside and kneel down when the light shone upon him. He fell to the ground. Though naturally capable and self-confident, he reacted to the light by falling down somewhat perplexed, yet inwardly exposed. How effectual was this light which struck him to the ground! Let us note that this happened all at once. We might assume that God first enlightens our understanding and then leaves us to work it out. That is not God’s preferred or normal way. God always shows us how hateful and polluted we are, and our immediate response is: “Alas! What a wretch I am—so unclean, so despicable!” For God to reveal our true self is to fall down as dead. Once a proud person has been truly enlightened, he cannot so much as make an attempt to be proud anymore. The effect of that enlightenment will have its mark upon him all his days....

Such enlightenment, such self-aborrence, such shame and humiliation, such repentance delivers us from the bondage of long years. When the Lord enlightens, He delivers. Enlightenment is deliverance, and seeing is freedom. Only thus does our flesh cease to operate, and our outward shell is broken....

Has the Lord for years disciplined us, but instead of recognizing His hand we blamed it on other people or on fate? May we be reminded that everything is measured by God for us. He has predetermined its time, its boundary, and its force, in order to break our hard-to-deal-with outstanding feature. Oh, may we have the grace to recognize the meaning of His hand in seeking to shatter this outward man. Until that happens, people will only meet that imperious self when they come in contact with us. Until that breaking is effected, our spirit cannot flow forth freely toward them.... The issue is: can God be fully released through our spirit—or will we cling to the forever limiting and destructive “comforts” of our self-life, and thereby ruin our lives to relative valueless flesh?

When the spirit is released, it supplies the needs of the world. No work is more important or thorough than this, and nothing can take its place.

The Lord is not so much concerned with your knowledge or good deeds or contacts as He is with the impression you give—the spirit you are of, in the INNER man. What is it that comes from you—that is the final yardstick? Do you impress people with yourself or with the Lord? Do you let people touch your words or personality, or your Lord? This is really vital, for it determines the value of all your labor and work and life for Him. Most will build from “wood, hay, and stubble”—and though they remain loved, their work is worthless, a clanging gong, only to be burnt up. Regardless of the applause of men, and the pleasure of man’s ego of good deeds, only the spirit of Christ in the inner man can do anything of true value. Let us not fool ourselves, as we may fool only fools, but never God. Let us truly prepare a place for HIM to come forth by offering ourselves to brokenness and repentance, willingly.

Beloved, be assured the Lord pays far more attention to what comes out of your inner life than what comes out of your mouth or mind or study and prayer disciplines, or your so-called “ministry.” It must be said that this concept and translation “ministry” are foreign to the Book that God has written, and is a further propagation of ego and control of men. “Not so with you,” and “you are all but brothers” are not understood or practiced in the religions of flesh and control. Gifts and respect and submission in relationships must be a part of the daily Life of the Church. Hierarchy based on title or position must be eradicated as they destroy Life and Gift in the People of God. Since the flesh of “my ministry” will rob you of a vital relationship with the Father and His Son, and greatly harm others (while the visible goal may be to help them), it must be mentioned here.

Do not forget that in every contact you make with another, something comes out of you. It is either yourself or God flowing forth, whether your outward man or the spirit. Finally, I would ask, when you’re with people, what is it that comes forth? And lest we are too quick to give an answer, let us remember that this basic question can only be rightly answered “in His light.” Only the deep calls to the deep. What is flesh will only birth flesh. Choose to allow God’s Spirit to break you and penetrate your fleshly veil, and bring you home to Him in the inner man, in this present lifetime. Volunteer for death to self. For those who will allow the Spirit’s work to break them, the pain and rarity only make the gemstones shine all the brighter, unto the full Day.

-W.N.P.M.

Holiness!!

What is THAT?! 😊

Saturday Evening, August 9, 2003

Generally, a western mind has been trained to think of “holiness” as a “lifestyle” that does not do bad things, and perhaps does good things—though primarily the former.

Biblically, “*Be HOLY as I am Holy,*” says the Lord! and many similar Commands may RESULT in turning away from certain choices—and, in fact, most certainly WILL have that net effect! And yet, holiness is NOT about that, in God’s heart and mind. Holiness ALWAYS involves a relationship between two or more. The Greek word means “Set apart FOR” and does not imply specific actions, per se!

“Holiness” is always about a relationship—not a lifestyle or action.

The Father and the Son have a perfectly “holy” relationship. Why? The Father and Son exist in unapproachable Holiness because the Father does all for the Son, and by the Son, and in the Son. “*All things are created by Him and for Him.*” And, Jesus does “*nothing*” apart from the Father. Nothing whatsoever is about “self” or “my agenda” or “my ministry” or any other “me, me, me” things—religious, “good” or otherwise.

Likewise, we are to be a *Holy People*, are we not?

What does that MEAN? Do-gooders? Always avoiding bad things? Perhaps some of that is the END result of holiness, but that is NOT what “holiness” means. It ONLY means “*set apart FOR*” and implies RELATIONSHIP—or nothing at all.

Therefore, there is no Holiness, in the Biblical sense, if we function independent of the Father, and Son, and Spirit, and His Body! No matter how “good” our actions may seem, if we are not intimately intertwined RealTime in dialogue and heart, our actions are not “holy” at all!

Whenever we function independently (no matter how “spiritual” our actions seemed), without connection and relationship to Head and Body, we have missed holiness. When we live “on our own” without

acknowledging the living Jesus and those He lives within in Gift and Life and Love, we have missed holiness. If all things are not wrapped up in and for and through the Head and Body in the holiness of daily relationship, regardless of how spiritual they seem, “something has gone very dark,” to quote a man from Australia. Holiness is about relationship.

There is no Holiness, regardless of good deeds, when we are living life out on our own terms. His “Intent” is a Together-Life in and through the Son and His Body, in eminently practical and observable ways. There can be no holiness, no holy relationship, apart from the “daily” interdependence and intertwined and committed lives to Him and one another (Heb. 3:12-14; 1Cor. 12, 13).

“When you’ve seen them, you’ve seen me.” “We being many are ONE Body.” “Baptized by one Spirit into ONE Body.” Really? Do YOU live that way, or just talk about it and hyper-spiritualize it as some unfathomable ethereal “positional” thing, instead of the Reality of the observable Life of Christ? Don’t ever let a man “steal your crown” by selling you THAT!

“THIS is how all men will know you are MY disciples!” Hallelujah! ☺

1) Some do ignore these truths and do their own thing, within their four walls at “home”—and then try to “add the Kingdom” by “attendance-based” religion. It is unholy to do so, for reasons of the very definition of the word Holy. 2) Some, also, have never known the Truth about Holiness and Life in Him, because it has been hidden from them. Now, we can see that this “holiness” is plain in the committed daily Life of Jesus together with the Twelve. There were no “sermons” or “bible studies.” They “rose up, sat down, and walked along the Way.” That was holiness, set-apartness, Together-Life! “Christianity” was not, and IS not, a “teaching session” or “worship session”...and “back to our own lives.” In Acts 2:42-47 with Jesus in the Spirit and one another, Holiness lives on! Some have genuinely not yet “SEEN” it, but in the last of the last days, and the manifestation of the Feast of Booths and Tabernacles, they will! 3) Some, unfortunately, “deliberately forget” these Truths, and twist them “to their own destruction.” They fool themselves and others. Underneath it all, when you touch them and they scream bloody murder, you will often find they do not WANT these Truths of Holiness and Life due to nearly totally hidden motives of ambition, or pride, or laziness, or greed for esteem, or lust for

money, or fear of submission and love. They talk about concepts of Love and Truth and His Plan, but will not live it. Not so with you!

“HIS Intent is NOW, through the Church, to make known His manifested Wisdom to the principalities and powers!”

Whatever anyone else does, YOU “be Holy, as HE is Holy”—and live *in* the Son, *by* the Spirit, *for and unto* the Father, truly *with* the Saints—in daily Connectedness and Life with all! Be HOLY! It’s FUN and FREEING, not a burden!! Explore His daily Together-Life in the “power of an indestructible Life” that always was (in the Father and the Son) and always will be (in the Head and with and through the Body), by the Spirit!

This will, of course, involve a costly “daily” Cross for others...but we DID sign up for that, as I recall. ☺ *“If ANY man would come after Me...”*

Whatever anyone else does, YOU can *be Holy, AS He is Holy*, in intimate relationship with all that is Him! ☺

“Without holiness, no one will SEE the Lord.”

“He has made perfect forever those who are BEING made holy.”

Pinocchio's Realm

Thursday Night, September 5, 1991

Excerpts from an unplanned, extemporaneous outburst from a brother, at a gathering of the saints... Extract patiently! ☺

*“Meekness and majesty, manhood and deity,
In perfect harmony, the Man who is God.
Lord of eternity dwells in humanity,
Kneels in humility and washes feet.
Oh, what a mystery—meekness and majesty!
Bow down and worship, for this is Your God.
Father’s pure radiance, perfect in innocence,
Yet learns obedience to death on a cross.
Suffering to give us life, conquering through sacrifice,
And as they crucify, prays ‘Father forgive.’”*

Clanging Gong??

Jesus is the One who kneels in humility and washes our feet. I’ve been very convicted, challenged, excited and renewed by something lately. This has to be firmly rooted in us: what we really must represent to one another, and to the world is the Person and the way of life of Jesus.

Unfortunately, this can so easily be turned into some sort of gimmick. For a few years, the phrase “church life” and “house church model” has been stirring and circulating. You can talk about things like a lot of people living near each other, and a lot of relationships that are “daily in public and from house to house,” and there’s some satisfaction about that way of life. But really, all I have to say about that is, “BIG DEAL!” unless it kneels in humility and washes feet! The *vast* majority of what we’ve seen around the world is *far* from Jesus’ thought for the depth of daily, penetrating relationships with Him and with one another. House or no house—vulnerability, self-sacrifice, confessing sins one to another, bearing one another’s burdens, admonishing one another daily—with *no* programs or assignments or gimmicks—THAT’S the

Life that Jesus rose from the dead in order to birth! Anything less is far less than “church” as Jesus builds it!

You see, the test of Real “Church Life” is not in how often people see each other. The authenticity is in the cost involved in laying down lives for each other. Do you see and care for and love the unlovable? And, in Jesus, are you willing to say some “hard” sayings to one another also, rather than just back-patting and conflict avoidance? Jesus did and still does say sometimes, even to the “good” person who is standing strong in their own self-will, “Get out of my sight, satan!” Are you *really* willing to live the way Jesus lived and lives? Will you care for those who, for some reason, have a history that has robbed them of their vitality and their spiritual life and their hope and future? Are you willing to really care, or are you going to get buried in your own little clique? Getting buried in a clique could be considered “church life” by some faddish standard, but it isn’t Christ Life. To be together often in any setting is meaningless unless there is something real about our own personal willingness to lay down our lives for others. It doesn’t matter how “spiritual” the purpose or topic of conversation may be. Who cares what we know! Who cares how much we talk about spiritual things! Who cares how much I might be able to see things and know things! So what if I have faith to move mountains and revelation that would make angels cower! None of that matters if I’m not willing to kneel in humility and wash feet when no one else is watching! That’s the real issue, and that’s a personal thing.

The Kingdom is neither here nor there, it’s within me. It’s a personal thing, and there is a *BIG* difference between giving yourself for others when no one else is watching, and just theorizing, globalizing or verbalizing about it. A website hero or a christian chat room heroine, or an e-mail expert, or a wise one-hour counseling session big shot, or a boardroom or pulpit “talking head”...*those* are easy to come by. But, am I able to speak words of kindness and hope into a situation that is rocked with complexity and fear, at 2 a.m. on a “workday”? Will I risk the favor of others, in an attempt to “wrestle to present them complete in Christ”? Will we be willing to endure the pain of fatigue or rejection or slander in order to be “in the pains of childbirth until Christ is fully formed” in those in His church? Will I, at my own personal expense live my life for other people in the secret places? The Father who sees what’s done in secret rewards in secret (in our own hearts, as well as openly in His Kingdom).

I just want to encourage you to reconsider your life from the standpoint of kneeling in humility and washing feet. Please don't look at things based on what you know or how often you are with other people, as wonderful as those things are. It really comes down to the things that aren't quite so glorious and don't get a lot of praise or look to be all that monumental. It comes down to what we do at 2:00 in the morning when the phone rings and someone has a flat tire. That's not nearly as neat as standing around "Solomon's picnic table" and just talking about awesome things that are happening.

Pinocchio's Realm

I was recently challenged to renew my life before Jesus in a really simple way, and I'd like to pass that on. We have used the description in the past about a person who is truly a believer of Jesus, but they are still like Pinocchio—still wooden. They are not a real boy or a real girl yet. They are doing the right things, saying the right things, going to the right places and hanging around the right people, and everything seems to be in order from an external standpoint, but there is something that's just not real there. It's still wooden. Their life is not filled with vitality and energy and creativity and flexibility and revelation. It all seems to be borrowed and somewhat mechanical.

"I want to do the right thing, I want to do the right thing. I fail. What else can I learn that will help set me free? I know! I will learn a few more new things and I'll apply those and then I will feel a little more free." It's like oiling a squeaky limb, but it's still not real.

Well, the process of being transformed from a wooden boy or girl to a real boy or girl is very much related to the secret places. Your destiny is Zoe Life—real, substantial, supernatural Life. And your opportunities to receive that are in those secret moments of decision when no one else is watching. There are times when you come to a fork in the road and you have to decide if you are going to walk by integrity, or if you will walk by compromise, or duplicity and deception. You have to decide if you are going to go the extra mile when no one would know about it, or if you are going to take some shortcut, knowing in your heart you stopped short of where God wanted you to go.

Are you going to pretend to have a spiritual walk? Are you going to pretend to have a life of prayer and a life of praise by the way you carry yourself in public? But in secret, it's not really there at all?

Perhaps you talk about spiritual things and generate discussion about spiritual matters, but that true, deep Life is just not really there. Maybe your “spirituality” is self-centered and self-immersed rather than reaching to heaven in sincerity with hope and faith and strength. It’s easy to just basically sit down on a couch and psychoanalyze yourself and call that prayer. But are you really reaching out to the eternal Godhead and fellowshipping friend to friend with Him? Or is it just religion—“quiet time”?

Our responses to the intersections in our path have a lot to do with whether God will be able to honor us and fill us and immerse us and surround us! Will He count us faithful and clothe us from on High? Or instead, will we just try to grind it out and mechanically try to keep up with things? A lot of the transition from being a wooden boy or girl to being able to breathe the very air and wind of Heaven as you go through your day has to do with the choices you make when no one is watching. It is not without a cost and not without some fatigue and frustration at times. This Real Life is clearly Divine.

Your Inheritance

These crossroads, whether they are seen or unseen, are so important. God is trying to show us whether or not we try to use self-life to master bad habits and a loose tongue and various vices and sensual indulgences. Do we use self-life to try to master it, or do we live in another Realm altogether? Do we breathe God’s air and Heaven’s air, or do we use our self-life—our determination, our knowledge, our relationships, our accountability, or some external sorts of things—to try to accomplish our goal? God’s intention is to teach us how to live in Him and through Him and with Him. He wants to teach us how to live in a Realm that can’t be seen with our eyes. “Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.” “My Kingdom is not of this world,” Jesus said. The Kingdom in which He’s calling us to live is in an unseen Realm. We are called to live there, right now, in a Realm that is not controlled by the factors that control this planet! Walking on water is the potential for someone who is living in fellowship with God and breathing Heaven’s air rather than earth’s air.

I’m trying to give you pictures that you can use to ask God to make these things real in your life. You mustn’t be satisfied with being a wooden boy or girl. That is not your inheritance! And the way you get from

point A to point B has to do with those crossroads. Those decisions to live in His life rather than your own strength, your own willpower, your own sense of humor, your own “whatever.” Those decisions are so crucial. Living by your self-life will generate a false sort of security, or a false sort of spiritual high. It’s rubbish. It doesn’t bear fruit and it won’t satisfy. It will be fleeting. Don’t be satisfied with being wooden! Ask God—cry out to God—to endue you, to clothe you with something that is clearly from Him, to breathe His air and to live that kind of Life with Him NOW!

You are not subject to the principles of this world and false humility and religion and willpower, or a “movement for God.” We are not interested in a movement for God. We are not interested in generating a biblical theology or a biblical ecclesiology about the way the Church is supposed to be. We are interested in living the same kind of life that Jesus led, a life of...

*“Meekness and majesty, manhood and deity,
In perfect harmony, the Man who is God.
Lord of eternity dwells in humanity,
Kneels in humility and washes feet.
Oh, what a mystery—meekness and majesty!
Bow down and worship, for this is Your God.
Father’s pure radiance, perfect in innocence,
Yet learns obedience to death on a cross.
Suffering to give us life, conquering through sacrifice.”*

This isn’t just Jesus. This is your inheritance and my inheritance! And the way to get that inheritance is “suffering to give others life, conquering through sacrifice,” returning good for evil, overcoming evil with good and serving Him in meekness and humility and kindness. Answering gently those who oppose you, and as they crucify, praying, “Father, forgive.” “Wisdom unsearchable, God the invisible, love indestructible, in frailty appears. Lord of infinity, stooping so tenderly, lifting others to the heights of His throne.”

Father, I pray that you would allow these seeds, the thoughts that are important to you, the things that are a part of the nature of your Son and His very visible, very free and very tangible walk with You to be planted in us. In the midst of a crooked and depraved generation, with frustrations and all the opposition that the world system and satan would offer—financial problems, and all those sorts of things that certainly

could have encumbered Him. Jesus learned how to walk in those things. He learned to rise above them out of relationship with You—even to walk on water, to conquer sin, to overcome death and blindness and illness. He walked with You and saw what You saw. He stretched out His hand as an extension of Your hand because of His relationship with you. Father, please teach us to live that way. We want to be marked as people that walk in Your anointing and by Your life, not as people that have a certain ecclesiology or theology. God, don't separate us apart from others on the basis of anything other than that we are filled with power on high, we are walking with humility and frailty, and yet with authority and love and kindness and an overcoming Spirit. We want to be those kind of people. Not theologically, not philosophically, but with a wash basin and a towel and self-sacrifice at 2:00 in the morning. Teach us how to say, "Get out of my sight, satan," and how to say, "Your sins are forgiven. Go and sin no more." Please teach us how to live that way.

Let Him Have It!

One of the best things about growing in the Grace and the Knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and growing from one degree of Glory to another degree of Glory is that the way to get there is so much easier than we ever imagined. It isn't some hocus-pocus thing that you have to just hang on to the edge of your seat until some day it happens to you. It's an inheritance. Every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus is an inheritance for you. It's not something you have to run off and get somewhere through some magic secret formula you have to achieve. It's grace. It's God's gift to you. The components of it are very, very simple.

Recently, I was laying my life before God and talking to Him about it. I had had a pretty busy day, and I was overwhelmed by a lot of different things, and all of a sudden I found myself a little bit nervous, a little edgy and tense. I could see that I could be impatient pretty easily. Had I had an opportunity to express impatience, I knew it was in there somewhere and it probably would have come out. I knew it was time to retire and to get away and get alone with Jesus. I didn't do that very well yesterday and I snapped on one occasion in response to something I felt was unfair. Today, I really knew it was essential that I get alone with Jesus for awhile, not to hide from anything, but really to pursue His heart.

In the process of talking to Him about some things, I realized that so often the way God teaches us things is subtle—a still small voice or a whisper in the garden with Him. I started asking Him about different things. I asked, “Well, what’s Your perspective on this area of my life? How do You view it?” And, “What’s Your perspective on this other area of my life and how do You view that?” I was talking with Him about some of those things and it was humorous. I’ll give you the specific involved, because it strikes me as funny—I saw the root of a problem in there somewhere. I said, “What’s Your perspective on playing golf?” I found myself answering Him quickly, “Oh, I know what Your perspective is on that!” And I thought, “Wait a minute!” I yielded other areas to Him, “What’s Your perspective on this?” And I really wanted to know His perspective on it in an honest way and I was willing to accept whatever it was. But I caught just the slightest, slightest inclination of my heart to put words into His mouth. It was interesting to me that satan was trying to find a root in me in that area and I had to let go of it.

“Oh, let the Son of God enfold you, with His Spirit and His Love. let Him fill your heart and satisfy your soul. Oh, let Him have the things that hold you, and His Spirit, like a dove, will descend upon your life and make you whole.”

If you will let Him have the things that hold you, then His Spirit like a dove will descend upon your life—*AND MAKE YOU WHOLE!* He will clothe you with power from on high. It’s just the simplest little things. It’s not some magic formula way off there someplace.

If you are a child of His, if you have truly made covenant with Him, if you have been bought by the blood of the Lamb and have been sealed in that covenant, then the way to have the Spirit descend upon you like a dove is first and foremost to behold Him and to walk by faith, and not by sight. If you have entered into a true covenant, not dating Jesus, but having clearly married Jesus forever, this other area of walking in power from on high, doing greater works than He did (which is part of the inheritance), having joy unspeakable and full of glory, and tasting the powers of the coming age is totally related to beholding Him, to continually beholding Him. To see HIM, not a movement for Him or a bunch of things that you are supposed to do or not do in order to achieve something. That is a works mentality, and God will never honor that. But God WILL honor gifts that are offered out of love as you behold Him and respond to Him out of gratitude and thanksgiving. If

your sacrifice isn't coming out of a relationship with Him and because you are beholding Him, then God will not honor and bless it and it will only frustrate you.

Then, beyond beholding Him, *let go* of the things that hold you; and His Spirit like a dove will descend upon your life and make you whole. I had to deal with that. I had to look Jesus in the eye and say, "Okay. It's settled. I don't have to put words in Your mouth. Whatever You think of it is fine with me. I don't have to push that question quickly away and say, 'I don't care what You think about it,' or 'Well, I already know what You think about this. It's a good thing. Think of all the good that has come of it.'" I don't have to convince Him of anything. I just need to lay it down and be willing every minute of every day to totally submit that to Him. And if I won't do that, then His dove will not descend upon my life and make me whole. I won't be able to let go of the tears of sadness and years of pain. It will consume me, and embitter me and it will control me. I won't have Peace that transcends understanding, which can only come from the hand of God, as long as I am trying to make my own way and cling to things that I think will make me whole.

"Oh, I just need to get away from it all. I just need a little break, and then I'll be okay. I just need this *thing* to give me security or to make me feel strong, to make me feel like I'm worth something. I'll do this thing or accomplish this task and then I'll add God to the side." He will not honor that. He will not bless that. You will be consumed by your own vanities and your own selfishness and your own pursuits. Let go of it. Let go of your past, your talents, your pleasures and the things that you want to make yourself whole. Stop it! Let go of it. Let Jesus give it back to you. Let Him be the Source of Life for you. Trust Him to be your security, your strength, your rest, your value, and your worth. If you will trust Him with those things and stop filling yourself, His Spirit like a dove will descend upon your life and make you a real boy or girl. He will make you whole. He will make you free indeed.

This is not so complicated that it takes a magic doctrine and a magic formula and then you have to try to somehow make God do something. You don't have to climb on your hands and knees over broken glass and go through some secret ritual and learn this magic handshake and then God will fill you. It's not like that. It's so simple. Behold Him, and let go of the things that hold you in your heart.

Life in the Vine

Why do we do what we do, and how do we do what we do? We can go through a lot of costly things. We can give our body to be burned and give all of our money to the poor, but there has to be that abiding in Him in the process, otherwise it can just be religion. And if it's just religion, it's unsustainable—and you won't be able to do it. Sooner or later you will “pop your cork.” All of a sudden this valiant, hard-working great man or woman of God that does all these awesome deeds will lose their mind if their life isn't in communion with Jesus. If it isn't abiding in the Vine, it will blow out and you will wonder what in the world ever became of this person. This great man or woman of God that has done all these great feats of faith and mighty exploits—all of a sudden they are worse than infidels, and you wonder, “Why?!”

There was a man that was a “preacher” (an unBiblical concept, but that's another story) for twenty years that many people would have said was a great, awesome man of God. Yet, when secretly falling apart on the inside, he checked himself into a stress center to be evaluated. The professional diagnosis? He was right at the brink of total annihilation and they prescribed shock treatments! That was the world's assessment of his life! And I guarantee, if you trace back his life, you would find that he was not abiding in the Vine. He could not have been abiding in Jesus, as evidenced by the bad fruit.

Jesus said, “This is My food, to do the Father's will and to finish His work.” When we are really in touch with the Vine, it is food to us! Father's work is meat, and it's Life to us. We grow stronger and stronger at every place of self-sacrifice, not more and more put out! If I'm abiding in the Vine, I won't keep a record of how many sacrificial things I've done for other people, and then eventually burn out. “It's too much!” If it's religion, I am going to search for justices and injustices. “Well, I've done all these things and no one has done anything for me. I reach out to others and they don't reach out to me. I'm the one who always initiates this, that and the other, and now, here I am in this spot and no one seems to notice and no one cares.” If it's religion, you will keep records and blame other people. “Well, you did this, and that's my justification for doing that.” You begin to think that way when your life is centered in religion, rather than Jesus.

But it doesn't have to be that way! If you offer your life to Jesus on a continual basis and you abide in the Vine, then you won't keep a record

and there is no such thing as justice or injustice. You will be abiding. Your self-sacrifice, regardless of how costly, will be in communion with Him and a gift offered to Him. It will be food and Life to you. But if it's religion, if it's just a zealous attempt to do the right thing, then you will eventually crash and burn. If you're not really abiding in Him, you'll eventually be filled with pride if things are going well, or you will end up disgusted, fatigued, angry and bitter.

ALL You Have—Not How Much!

The roots need to go deep. There needs to be something real about the costliness of your offering—rather than giving something cheap and shallow and superficial. Like the widow with her two mites that Jesus bragged on, it wasn't how much she gave; it was the fact that what she gave was *all* that she had! It's the same with us. It doesn't matter how much we give, it's the percentage of what we give that matters most to Jesus. We don't compare ourselves to each other and what someone else may give. We compare our gifts to what we are capable of giving. And if we give all that we have, God will exalt that. It is a costly thing, but the desire to offer it has to be out of communion with Him.

There are other reasons you might do something costly. You might sacrifice to be seen of men, or to feel good about yourself, or because all the teachings that you've heard say it needs to be costly. That's all superficial. But beware! That kind of thinking can accumulate in us. It will build up behind the dam of our carnality, and the dam will eventually burst. Your costly choice can be from a communion with Jesus, from abiding in the Vine. If it's a real gift offered to Him, then it has to do with a real relationship with Him. If we are beholding Him in what we give, then the costliness will continue to build strength in us and renew us day-by-day, rather than drain us and sap us and cause us to compare ourselves to others.

So beyond costly, our offering also has to be *with* Jesus and *because of* Jesus rather than just an external thing done because it's supposed to be the right thing. We mustn't simply do things because it's "the right thing." I know I will lose my mind if I do things because it's the right thing. We do things because we want to commune with Jesus, as a Person. It doesn't really matter if I don't sense His closeness and immediate presence. I can still say, "Jesus! I know You hear me. It sounds like an echo chamber to me at times, but I know You hear me

and I know You love me. I want You to know that this is a gift to You for the saints of God and for the Lamb.” Why should I do this sacrificial act? For the saints of God and for the Lamb! It has to be that sort of motivation rather than just doing what’s right and hoping some day it will pay off.

I AM the Resurrection

Why is it that those eleven men who saw Jesus raise people from the dead, saw Jesus walk on water, saw lame men walk and blind men see, saw demons cast out...why is it that they couldn’t believe that Jesus Himself was raised from the dead? They, themselves, were able to cast out demons and to heal the sick and to raise the dead, at certain times when Jesus had authorized them and commissioned them for that purpose. So what was the obstacle that kept them from being able to believe that Jesus Himself was raised from the dead? Why would they stubbornly disbelieve, not only that He could be raised from the dead, but that people had actually seen Him and talked to Him? Why wasn’t that enough for them? What was the obstacle? Of course they believed that dead people could be raised. They saw that happen. But why did they have such a hard time believing that Jesus, Himself, was raised from the dead?

The difference is between believing “for things” and actually *believing in the Life that was the Light of men*. On the one hand is the wooden, Pinocchio world of doing or believing in “things.” “I want to have my bills paid, so I believe God for my bills being paid.” “I think that no one ought to be sick, so I believe God for my sickness being healed.” Those types of things are external, and the disciples did believe in them. They saw all kinds of things happen as a common occurrence, really, as they walked three years with Jesus. It was common to see a coin come out of the mouth of a fish, or a deaf man hear, or children raised from the dead. But there is no way you can experience Jesus’ true Life—to be real and full and free—if you are looking at events and situations, and being filled up with “things” in some self-centered way. Jesus rebuked them when He walked on the water because they hadn’t learned anything from the loaves and the fishes. They couldn’t quite catch it. It was always a series of events to them. They were still living in a carnal, superficial, secular world with godly events added on to the side, and they weren’t really living in the same Life that Jesus was living in.

“Jesus did many other miraculous signs that His followers saw. Those miracles are not written in this book, but these things are written so that you can believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, then by believing you can have Zoe life, you can have life through His name” (John 20:30-31).

True life is to believe that He is the Christ, the Son of God. Believe more than just that He does good things—which He certainly does—but instead believe that He is the very expression of the Father’s heart, and that He is the Word that became flesh. When you’ve seen Him, you’ve seen the Father. To live in that kind of life is unshakable. That life doesn’t fear. It doesn’t resort to cynicism and skepticism and despair and discouragement and self-analysis and frustration. It’s not the sort of carnal life that is always reaching out to a God that is somewhere out there and trying to get Him to do something for you.

The disciples couldn’t believe that Jesus was raised from the dead, because they didn’t see the Man who IS the Resurrection and the Life! They saw a man who *gives* resurrection. They saw a man who *gives* bread, not a Man who IS the Bread of Life. It was a superficial thing. When Jesus was raised from the dead, they were incapable of seeing that He really could have not only done that, but BEEN that—been resurrected. He was actually LIFE—and they missed it!

The apostle John learned how to live in the same place Jesus lived, seated with Christ in Heavenly realms. Here is a man who experienced the kind of life that Jesus experienced rather than just watching the things that Jesus did.

“We tell you now about something that has existed and lived since before the world began. This we heard, we saw with our own eyes, we watched, we touched with our hands. We write to you about the Word, Christ that gives life. That life was shown to us, we saw it, we can give proof about it. Now we tell you about that life. It is life that continues forever. This is the life that was with God the Father. God showed this life to us. Now we tell you the things that we have seen and heard. Why? Because we want you to have fellowship together with us in that life. The fellowship we share together is with God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. We write these things to you that you, too, can be full of joy with us” (1 John 1:1-4).

John is obviously living on the other side. He’s living where it is not just God doing a bunch of things, answering prayers, teaching us morality, but he is sharing in the Life that was with the Father before

the world was. He is sharing in a fellowship of supernatural, divine Life. I don't really know how else to say it, but Jesus could rebuke them for not having been fully convinced of His resurrection life. He could rebuke them because they hadn't really experienced it. They were still following it, they were still obeying it, they were still believing in the external things, but they weren't really living *inside* of the kind of Life that Jesus was living in. That's really what He is calling us to.

I want to ask you to consider what our brother David wrote to us, and what our brother, the apostle John, wrote to us and ask you to really look hard at those kinds of things. It escapes words. There is something in the life and experience of these brothers that you have to experience before you die. If you don't, it won't be because He didn't offer that inheritance to you. It's available to all.

“Father, we ask You that You would show us Your Son who is the Life and who is Your Christ, Your Anointed One. We don't want to be the kind of people that stubbornly refuse to believe, that when things happen to us we are discouraged and depressed and we just ask You to solve our problem. We want to be the kind of people that know You are The Life, that live in You and move and have our being in You. We are not discouraged, we are not set back and depressed and we don't throw away the confidence that You have planted in us. We ask You, Father, that You would plant a hope deep within us, that we would be unshakable and unmovable and unswerving as we hold onto the things that You've said and the promises that You've extended to us, and the character that is in Your Son, Jesus. We believe in His character. We believe in Your character and Your Father-heart, and so we are confident of the things that are still to come in the midst of any persecution or accusation, in the midst of failures and setbacks in our own lives. We cling to You, not as the answerer of our prayers, but as the Person who is our Hope and our Stay and our Anchor and our High Tower. We really believe You as being the Yes and the Amen to Your promises. Father, please, impart Your hope and Your word and Your Spirit to Your people.”

The Real Boy

There is no such thing as a Christian that doesn't have the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13-14; Gal. 3). If you believe in the name of Jesus, if you have given your life to Him and have truly been born from above, then you have the Holy Spirit. The point is that there is a distinction to be made

between the indwelling Holy Spirit and the fullness of the Holy Spirit, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and clothing with power from on high. There is a distinction made, and that's the distinction between the wooden boy and the real boy—one has been clothed with power from on high, one has been *touched*. I really prefer that terminology because the words “baptism in the Holy Spirit,” and “fullness of the Spirit” have been argued over so much. So, let's just call it “clothing from on high.”

The point is that we need God desperately to touch our lives and to fill our lives and to set us free. It isn't a hocus-pocus thing, where we are back to the place where we started, trying again and again to get from point A to point B. It comes from beholding Jesus, communing with Jesus, abiding in the Vine and by making those choices to let go of the things that have the affection of your heart. In the case of those men in Acts 2 who had a visitation of the Holy Spirit, they still had to deal with those things, because two chapters later they were fearful under the opposition of the Jews. They had another crossroad in their lives and they decided to stand in faith and say, “God, stretch out Your hand, fill Your followers with boldness. Give us words, give us utterance. Show us who You want us to be and how You want us to be and touch our lives. Shake the fabric of our lives.”

I don't want to get into a theological discussion, but suffice it to say that we desperately need a touch from Heaven to pull off anything more than just striving. It's important that you commune with God and beseech Him to bless you with that unmerited favor, and with grace. That isn't just a one-time thing where all of a sudden you don't have any problems or challenges or bad days anymore. But you do desperately need God's personal touch from Heaven in your life in order to be the kind of person that can see and experience and understand and walk in power and authority in the unseen world.

The law is a schoolmaster that drives us to Christ. Somehow in our failing, we are driven to cry out for more. In Acts 1, they cried out in one accord in the upper room, craving whatever God would do in their lives to equip them for the future. There is a craving of God's presence that only comes through failure, through coming to grips with the reality of our poverty, and that's what He was helping them to do in Acts 1. He wanted them to come to grips with the reality of their poverty. He was saying to them, “No. The way you are living, the way you are seeing things is unacceptable. Don't think that because you have seen miracles and you have done some miracles and you've

heard good teaching that you have arrived. That's not enough. Don't you dare be satisfied. You are walking a shallow existence and you better come to grips with that. Otherwise you'll never crave more."

If we are satisfied with being wooden, we shall remain wooden. I want to stir up a craving for God's presence and the ability to see Him as the Light, the One who is from the beginning, and to hold Him up as Jesus the Christ, the Son of the Living God. If we will hold Him up that way, if we will behold Him, if we will commune with Him, if we will do what we do for Him and with Him and through Him and in Him, if we will live that way, then He will accomplish His purposes through us.

Prophetic Warning: JESUS...ALONE!

Thursday Night, December 7, 1989

A few days ago something happened that could be described as prophetic. The substance and the warning of it all basically boiled down to something that God wants absolutely clear in every single heart in this room. He wants it saturating your mind and your thoughts and your responses to everything. This subject has shown up in about a dozen individual situations since then, but I'm positive that it has application for the Church as a whole.

You'll remember that the disciples said, "Show us the Father and that will be enough for us." What were they really wanting? What did they expect? What did they demand from Jesus? It seems clear that they thought that what they had wasn't enough. What was it that they wanted that would be enough for them? What was it that they had in their minds that they thought they would run after and get? What were they begging God to show them?

Let's see if I can't try to put this into words. *Father, we pray to You that if this has application to us, You would bring clarification to each of our hearts as to what it's about. I know the ramifications of not getting hold of this are devastating and far reaching into every family. I know that it's Your heart and desire to awaken us all to these things. So I pray, Father, that You would help us now to grab hold of them and to apply them in our lives.*

What Are We Looking For?

I was talking to someone a couple of days ago who was talking about being faithful. This same conversation had already taken place several times in several different ways. We were talking about how there's one way to be faithful where we're not feeling anything and circumstances aren't the way we want them to be right now. But we say, "That's okay. We'll be faithful until it gets to be the way we want it to be."

That way of thinking may be a minor step up from just despairing and dragging our feet until somehow we get a new level of adrenaline, but there is a kind of faith that isn't like that. There is a faith that isn't just a hanging on, isn't just "being faithful" with a long face because after all, we don't have any adrenaline or anything lighting our fire at the moment. But we're being faithful anyway. We moan and groan and make it through by thinking, "We just need to be faithful; we're in a dry time right now."

It doesn't need to be that way. We can have an energy that comes from being totally dedicated to the historical fact that Jesus died and rose again, and He is coming back. See, faithfulness until the dry times are over implies that I am demanding something else from God. I want something else. "I want the Father, and that will be enough." "I want something else out of it and I'm not content with the way it is. But I'll hang on with the slim hope that maybe someday it will be better. Maybe someday I'll feel more spiritual and good things will happen. I'll just well up inside with good things happening."

Jesus said it very clearly, "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." He overcame death; He overcame sin and He holds the keys of death and Hades. It is a fact: He is coming back. He is coming back on the clouds the same way He left. It is a fact.

What Jesus Has Done is More Than Enough for Us

Now, you can hang on in faithfulness waiting for an experience to happen to you again or waiting to feel an experience for the first time, *or, instead, you can say*, "It is a historically documented fact that 2,000 years ago Jesus rose from the dead. He did this after He had already established Himself as being a force to be reckoned with by these facts: walking on water, raising the dead, giving sight to the blind, healing the sick, and calming the storms." He did anything and everything He wanted to do at the Father's beckoning because God said, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye Him." Listen to Him. Obey Him. Walk with Him. "The work of God is this: to believe in the One He has sent." "But these are written that you may believe

that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.”

The facts are the facts. Faithfulness isn't some kind of substitute for feeling until you get the feeling back. Faithfulness is obedience because God is God and it is so! The sign of Jonah is sufficient: three days and three nights in the belly of the earth. Then, God confirmed His servant Jesus, raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand forever and forever and forever. He has given Him the name above every name. It is so. It is finished.

That's a different kind of faithfulness than hanging on until I feel something and thinking, “Well, I'll just do the right things. If I keep on doing the right things, then maybe it will turn out all right.” God doesn't need us to do any more right things. When Philip said, “Show us the Father and that will be enough,” Jesus replied, “If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father.” I've done My work. I have accomplished what I have come to accomplish. I humiliated the principalities and powers. “It is finished.” The cross and all that the cross represents is a historical fact, as well as a hope for the future. No matter what you ever feel, no matter what happens inside of your head or inside of your belly, no matter if your backbone gets shivers up and down it or your words ever come out in some powerful way (which is just not necessarily going to happen)—it doesn't matter anyway. Trust your life to the God who died for you. Period. Go on because He is coming back and that's the blessed hope. And if you happen to groan, as the creation itself groans, until He returns, until you see Him face to face, know this: when you see Him face to face, you'll be like Him. You'll see Him as He is. The work of the redemption of your body, your soul and your spirit will be accomplished.

In the meantime, don't bypass something that is so precious and so important and so powerful by looking for something else. Don't be movement-oriented; be Jesus-oriented. Don't be things or feeling-oriented; be Jesus-oriented. Being Jesus-oriented doesn't mean that you have to feel something; being Jesus-oriented means that you believe with all your heart *that God has shown Himself in the face of Jesus Christ*. “And now there is one mediator between God and man. He sits at the right hand of the Father interceding for you and is an advocate before the Father on your behalf.” These things are facts. You need to establish yourself in these facts and stand on these facts. That is the only way you will ever walk in the courage and the hope that He

means for you to walk in. Faith isn't waiting or hanging on until you feel something. Faith is establishing yourself on the fact of Jesus Christ and all that He has done.

If you need to add something to the work of Jesus Christ; if you feel you have to have something beyond what Jesus had accomplished when He said, "It is finished," then you are really making a mistake. Even though God does wonderful things, it's a wicked and adulterous generation that demands a sign beyond the sign of Jonah. Don't demand that. Walk forward in courage expecting God to confirm His Word, but don't demand anything else. You'll be surprised at how freeing; how liberating that is.

Jesus is Enough for Anybody, Anytime

There's a guy that I met early one morning a couple of weeks ago at a local park. He's a cocaine dealer and a number of other things. After I talked with him awhile, I went away from the conversation frustrated because I couldn't find any words and what I did say sounded dumb. I don't think he knew that, but it did. Well, he called me a couple of days ago, and I saw him again yesterday. I was very prayerful about it knowing how I bungled it the first time.

He is this super-cool guy with all the jargon. He is just one of those guys with whom there is no way to compete. Anyway, God really did give me utterance yesterday. I was really, really impressed with God, because God shattered the guy's coolness. He got right to the core of things even through my bungled, vain attempts just a couple of weeks earlier. It was really a powerful time.

Earlier, the guy told me he had some CAT scans and other tests done because of this massive pain on one side of his head. He said the doctors had never been able to find anything. He also said that the pain happens particularly when it's raining. Of course, yesterday it had been raining all day. Well, we had just one more real piercing thought that was really just God, for sure and he started to walk away and push the door closed. But then he reopened the door and walked back around. He said something like, "You're not going to believe this, but the whole time we were together, my headache was totally gone." I kind of grinned and said something like, "Fancy that." Then he said, "No really! It's totally gone." And I said, "Well, think about it." He closed the door and went on.

I use that as an illustration because I didn't demand that of God. I didn't make that happen. How could I have made that happen? But somehow God did, in the simplicity of just saying, "Look John, here's the way it is—you've tried everything else and so have I. Here's the way it is." In the midst of just saying, "The sign of Jonah is all you get," God made something special happen. It needs to come back to the simplicity of just saying: "Jesus is enough for anybody, anytime—and you too. I offer you nothing but the risen Lord. I offer you nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. That's it. It's settled. That's all. If that is not enough for you, then nothing ever will be. I'm not dangling anything in front of you. I'm proclaiming a risen Lord, forgiveness of sins, and life in His name. Period." God works through that.

But He had to work some stuff out of me to be able to have done that. I went into that first round nose to nose with John and tried to be as cool as he was. I had a mindset of how I was going to show him a thing or two, and I got butchered. He ran circles around me. My head was spinning by the end of it all. He was just too cool. I couldn't deal with it. But when I emptied myself of that and said, "Look, I've got one thing to say, 'Jesus Christ, Him crucified, Him raised: He is standing in glory at the Father's right hand and the trumpet is at Gabriel's lips—and you better be ready.'" Then I was as surprised as John was. I wasn't really surprised about his headache being gone as much as I was just grinning about it. It was the product of God demonstrating simplicity; the simplicity that God works through.

No Demands—Just Jesus

I say all of that to say: "Yes, there is more—God does do more." But it only comes when we're fully devoted to the one thing. It comes when we put behind us every demand we have of God. We put behind us every expectation that God would do something marvelous to make us do this, to make us feel this way, to solve this problem, and that problem, too. Jesus said, "What else do you want, Peter? What else do you want, Philip? When you've seen Me, you have seen the Father. When you have Me—you have everything. You have the Door, you have the Vine, you have the Resurrection, you have the Life. You have everything when you have Me." Don't be looking for other things—Jesus plus something. You have heard that phrase used in regard to your faith: faith plus anything is an abomination. If you have to add something to your faith in Jesus, then it can't be right.

I want to say this about a walk with God. Jesus plus anything; a demand of anything beyond Jesus is wrong. Anything beyond our names being written by the Lamb's blood in the Book of Life is a faulty expectation, and God will have to purge you of that. Don't be looking for a movement or a feeling; but simply acknowledge that what God did 2,000 years ago is sufficient for you. It is finished. God dying for you is sufficient. Is it not?

It's a historical fact. This is the work of God: to believe on the One whom He sent. Don't put demands on God. Don't demand signs from Him in your own personal life; just trust Him implicitly. Though He slay you, still trust Him. Fall down and worship Him when the worst things that could possibly happen end up happening. Do not have a faithfulness until somehow God makes you feel better; but have a faithfulness because His work is finished. I don't put any demands on God for the Church or for my own personal life beyond the work of Jesus Christ, which historically began 2,000 years ago, and was historically completed in Jesus by His blood.

That was what was tied into the warning that came a few days ago. I dare say that anybody who would demand more than the foundation of Jesus Christ to place their faith in and to base their life on, anyone that would demand more than that in their own personal lives or even in the Church, will go through some severe trials, because God wants nothing but His Son elevated and exalted.

I say that as a warning because probably the most severe internal warning of my life so far, came just a few days ago, and was all related to that. So rest your case in Christ; settle it forever. When you have seen Jesus, you've seen the Father. It is enough for you to share in the life of God by the blood of Christ.

He is ALL You Need—Settle It!

The primary thing I am saying to us as individuals is this: don't say things like "I want to feel good. I demand to feel spiritual. If I don't feel spiritual, then I am going to shake my finger at God. I'm going to whine and complain. I am going to make sure everybody else is miserable with me if I don't feel spiritual. I have my rights, you know. My right is to feel spiritual. So, just watch out. If I'm not bursting with joy, energy, peace, the utterance of God and fruitfulness at every turn, then I'm going to make all of the rest of you miserable. I'm going to go

from person to person and cry on everybody's shoulders. I'm going to threaten to leave. I'm going to do this, I'm going to do that. It'll be a big issue." Settle that issue with Jesus Christ and His cross. Period. Every single heart must be *settled* on faith in Jesus Christ no matter what else happens in your life, good or bad. Forget those things. Settle it completely by faith in Jesus Christ and His life and His death and His return. That's the primary thing that I am saying.

Take it very seriously individually, because I announce to you as clearly as I can, without any particulars, that there will be massive devastation if you demand more than Jesus Christ. We're at the point where it's just very serious. Take it very seriously, personally, no matter what else. If you never see another person in this room after you walk out of here tonight, make sure that Jesus is what your life is about and that you're not wavering one bit. Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever; therefore, your faith is not shaken by any facts.

Jesus Christ of Nazareth who walked on this earth and then died so that you could live, and who is seated at the Father's right hand, is all you need. Nothing will shake you from that, no matter what it is. Family, friends, possessions: absolutely nothing will cause you to turn back. You'll not be a hypocrite; you'll not live in two worlds. You'll not sell-out for anything or anybody. You're going forward based on that one thing, no matter what. No feelings will in any way, shape or form, set you back, or turn you aside. No cost will be too high.

Our Father, I know these are words of the simplest nature, of the most basic and foundational first principles. But you've placed a real gravity on my heart about making sure that everyone has heard this at least one more time. So, Father, seeing that this is the second testimony, I pray that everyone would be fully attentive. I pray, Father that there wouldn't be anyone who thinks they are beyond this or above it or an exception to it. Instead, I pray that each of us would be fully turned toward You and be absolutely resolved that we need nothing except Your Son. We're grateful for anything else that You may do for us, in us, and through us. The only issue that really matters though, is that You sent Your Son, and we fully trust in that. That's Your work and our work. So we cast our lot with Him forever and will not turn aside. Amen.

I know it's simple, but I have just felt the need to say this in the clearest of terms so that everyone would have a chance to resolve it one more time.

Obedience— “On Earth as it is in Heaven!”

Sunday Afternoon, November 4, 2001

Legendary coach Vince Lombardi's former Green Bay Packer football players came to understand a few things as they became back-to-back world champions. With Lombardi, all of these years later, they are renowned for the growth and victories on and off the field, in such fundamental issues as respect, authority, gift, leadership, teamwork, and each player fulfilling their role.

Vince and his players were often questioned about the foundation of their Hall of Fame success. While speaking at a business conference in Dayton, Ohio, Lombardi relayed this story:

In that common quest to understand the root of their greatness, one of Lombardi's players was asked, “*So what's it like to work for Vince Lombardi?*”

The man answered, “*Well, I'll tell you in a nutshell. When Lombardi turns to us in the locker room and tells us to sit down, I don't even look for a chair.*”

Ohhhh, for the days when men and women and children understood such things. How can we EVER know God and begin to know His Wisdom, when we have learned to depend SO much on our own opinions and feelings, thoughts and personal experiences? We are very clever in this generation at finding ways to justify our personal rights to be “gods” and “kings” and sovereign vessels within ourselves, without calling it that. The battle is as old as the Garden of Eden, if you will ponder what took place there, and cost Adam and Eve so very much. We are still making that same mistake, and continue too often to live in the days and ways of Adam and Eve, Cain, Korah, Ananias and Sapphira, Diotrefes, and Laodicea.

When God has spoken, through His Voice, in ways or people of His current choosing, do we say, *“When God tells us to sit down, I don’t even look for a chair!”??*

Oh, of course there are “abuses” “out there.” Sure. But what a great hiding place for your flesh that can be, eh?! You know. So, will you so easily, because of someone else’s mistakes, allow satan to cause you to disobey God?! Do we rationalize, defend, procrastinate, make excuses, and set ourselves on the Throne claiming “freedom in Christ,” when it is truly unwillingness to “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ,” and a refusal to bend our knee to Jesus’ Call on our lives in the details and decisions and living circumstances? Often, this “freedom” we demand for ourselves is instead the slavery and deception of self-life and pride. Wouldn’t it be helpful in our relationship with Father and our brothers and sisters, if we just admitted this is in our hearts, and softened? Oh, what a precious and peaceful existence this brings in His Church. Those who have never seen the reality of Acts 2:42-47 in the Life of the Body of Christ around them day in and day out, decade in and decade out will universally have to admit that this has been a problem for them, and part of the root of what Jesus is therefore unable to Build around them.

As the Master has taught us to pray: “On earth, as it is in Heaven!”... Let’s LIVE that way, together! That IS how it is in Heaven when Father speaks! Can you imagine Gabriel, Michael, Moses, or Elijah wandering around looking for a convenient time or way to respond to Yahweh’s current Command or Desire? ☺ *“On earth, as it is in Heaven!”* SO BE IT!

Together let’s SHOUT and live, in our everyday lives together, *“When God tells us to sit down, none of us even look for a chair!”*

Train Your “Soldiers”!!

Wednesday Morning, February 28, 2001

We understand that our minds, our emotions and our bodies are to be **SOLDIERS**, under the Leadership of Jesus Christ, the Captain of the Lord’s Hosts. We have oversight of some of the Master’s soldiers. Our minds are soldiers, waiting for orders, and are to obey. Stray and wandering thoughts are AWOL, and this must not happen. We are serving a Glorious Commander, Full of Light and Love and Liberty—and He deserves our full attention and every thought “taken captive” for Him and by Him. Left on their own, the soldiers will “seize command” and our lives will reflect this dishonoring chaos. (Most choose this path, unfortunately. Some hyper-spiritualize it, while others simply ignore His ways. “But we think better things in your case!”) Offer the parts of your life as instruments, as soldiers for Jesus’ service alone. He is worthy!

Our emotions are soldiers waiting for orders; they must be trained. Emotions of “depression” or “loneliness” or “passionate ambition” or “wander lust” or any such thing must be taken captive! The soldiers of “emotions” are to be trained and brought into good working order and under rapid and crisp Command of the Spirit of Christ. They must not be permitted to take control. Our emotions are only soldiers, to be under the Direction of Jesus Christ, alone. They belong to Jesus! **OFFER** your thoughts, and your emotions to Jesus—as good soldiers, loyal and dedicated to their Master. No straying, no sloppiness or contempt for His authority and leadership!

In addition, we offer the parts of our bodies as instruments of Righteousness. Our hearing, our seeing, our eating, our habits, our time, and our bodies: **ALL ARE SOLDIERS FOR JESUS’ SERVICE**. Permit no insubordination amongst the soldiers (your thoughts, your emotions, your will, your body). Train them. “Buffet your body daily, and make it your slave.” Train your mind and your will and your emotions and your body by the fruit of the Spirit, self-control and “constant use” for Him (Heb. 5).

Present to Him a well-trained offering of your gratitude for what He has done for you. He has entrusted these soldiers to your under-
leadership! All are His—from Him and through Him and to Him. Let's
bring them into submission, by His Spirit and for His Honor and Glory
as a gift of love and devotion and loyalty!

Busting Strongholds

Tuesday Morning, October 30, 2001

Question: Hi! I don't know you at all, but I can see that you have a heart for Jesus Christ and a deep desire to obey Him in your life. I have begun reading some messages and this one ("Train Your 'Soldiers'") speaks to me a lot, but I feel "stuck." I want with all of my heart and mind and soul to be totally transformed—in every area of my life—by Jesus. (He's already done amazing work in me, but there are still lots left to burn off in me.) Even though I give myself over to Him in every area I can think of (and I name them), I think there are still strongholds against me. Any suggestions on how to deal with strongholds?

The "small things" such as one of the "fruits of the *Spirit*"—"self-control"—as mentioned below, are a huge part of Father's Provision for our Deliverance from the enemy's attacks in our lives. You CAN take control of the "small" thoughts. If we don't deal with those, and we're "*never* tempted beyond what we can bear," then we are simply "painting a bull's-eye for the enemy on our backs." We do need to, and *can* deal with the "small" things. Erratic, foolish, bitter, and sinful thoughts of any kind...will make you fair game for the enemy, if you *allow* them to stay in your head unopposed. I'll include *Anatomy of a Spiritual Suicide* below to give you more of an opportunity to know "satan's devices"—so that you can lay your pain and weaknesses at the Messiah's feet, and avoid the things that "feed" the enemy's ploys.

This is an essential Element, which is often all the difference between religion, self-will, and human life....and Life in Messiah's Spirit and Fellowship with the Godhead, and sweet but humble Victories in Him: Offer your temptations as a gift to Jesus rather than dealing with them "horizontally" and just relying on will power or apathy or guilt. Talk to Jesus directly about the temptations, and offer your obedience case by case, every new situation to Jesus personally as a Gift to Him. "Jesus, I want to cast this thought, this temptation down right now as a fragrant Gift to You. Please accept this Gift as a token of my love and devotion and my gratitude to You."

Secondly, our Light-walking (Jn. 3; 1Jn. 1) relationships with others (Heb. 3:12-14) are a *huge* Tool in Jesus' Toolbox for us. They are opposed and ignored by those with an agenda at times, but it is what God says, and the fruit, if done IN Him, rather than "for" Him...is *immense*. Our investment in one another, *contending as one man; we being many are one; joined and knit together; never saying, "I have no need of you"...*this is an *incredible* Tool in His Tool Box for turning victims into VICTORS over the years. That is why He could say, "I will build my CHURCH, and the gates of Hades will *not* prevail." His plan is that we help each other (1Cor. 12) in such a devoted, daily way that "together with all the saints" satan is shoved out of our lives. ***Find some others to live your life with, spiritually.*** It's God's Plan.

"Confess your sins one to another, that you may be *healed*." "Admonish one another *daily*, and you will avoid, for yourself and for them the *hardening* and *deceptions* of sin." "See to it, brothers, that *none* of you has a sinful unbelieving heart." "See to it, brothers, that no bitter root grows up among you, defiling many." "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the Law of Christ." "This is *how* all men will know you are *my* disciples: by the love that they witness that the saints have for one another." This Promise of the Gates of hell not prevailing is not to "individuals" alone, but it is Jesus' CHURCH that satan *could not* overcome. Jesus means to push us together as His Body. "Two or three" is a start, though visible local "Lampstands" (Churches) where, "from the least to the greatest they *all* Know Him" are His Plan and Desire. Some who welcome "leaven in the batch," or who *are* "leaven in the batch" aren't fond of these Scriptures, but it is what God has said about His Deepest Desire for us *to be one, as He and His Son are one*. "A *hundred* mothers, brothers, sisters"—*intimate daily relationships*. Korah hates this, as does Cain and Balaam and satan. But it is the Heartthrob of the Son of God, calling to His Bride to be *just like him*, by the same Spirit that empowered Him and raised Him from the dead! Yee-hah! Look for a City whose Builder and Maker is GOD, and "accept no substitutes"! "Church" was never meant by GOD to be some "memorial service" of what He did and taught, but "God's INTENT now, through the CHURCH" (Eph. 3:10) is to "make a public spectacle and open humiliating show" of the enemy, on the Cross and through lives living the Cross! And Father means to include you in that number who *boast* in Him, and *worship*—not as something to "attend"—but as the product of a Life *set free indeed!* ☺ And the "Tool" Father has provided as one of the most potent...is deep, honest, vulnerable

relationship with Him and with His Body, *people* with Treasure in that earthen vessel—His Church, *alive in daily life with one another* as His True Body always was and always will be.

Also, just as a practical application of the heart of what is above, in Ephesians 4:11 and following, there are a *ton* of Promises for individuals that *any* Christian would deeply desire that are *directly attached to being in relationship with those who can equip you*. Those promises are not attached to “pray and read your Bible more”—but to *relationships* that we give our lives into. And in that context, things that would have been incredibly destructive to our lives and our children and generations to come are overcome within Relationship, within His Plan, TRUE CHURCH that Lives Like HIM (Acts 2:42-47). Often it is *just that simple*—we’ve seen it hundreds and hundreds of times. And, we will pray for you. Ask others to do the same and we’ll ask others to pray for you as well. *JESUS* desires this Victory for you even more than *YOU* do. Now *that’s* Good News! 😊

Thank you for your heart.... May God honor your honest pursuit of His Highest....

PS Again, keep reading and you will find some things that many have found incredibly useful in learning to “not be ignorant of satan’s devices”—and “girding up the loins of their mind, ready for Action.” Satan’s “power” lies in *deception* and what we *let* him do to us by our dabbling in wisdom from this world, “which is unspiritual, and of the devil.” TRUTH in Yesu sets us Free!

Words are Creative

Words and Thoughts Empower

Tuesday Morning, October 21, 2003

Paul said to be certain to “never give satan a foothold.” What does this mean, practically? It means, amongst other more obvious things (such as “Make no PROVISION to fulfill the lust of the flesh”—don’t put yourself in situations where you can easily be tempted), to build your Life in His Spirit, by careful choice of words, heart and mind. There is a subtle and little known, but an OH-so-powerful point to be made about “the power of words” and how carelessness or lack of disciplined thinking and speech can have devastating results in a life.

For example, if, in the heat of a moment when you are not pleased with someone or something, you react with wild thoughts or speech, you are violating a huge Spiritual Truth. Instead of “laying your gift down at the Altar and going to make it Right” or “Going to him and him alone” to try to “win your brother,” you instead react with carnal passion and dark energy and say, “I’m leaving” or “I’m not going to talk to you anymore” or “I’m not doing this...” or “I’m sick of giving in this” or mention the word “divorce” if you’re married—if you allow these thoughts or words, you are CREATING your future. Bad news.

Make a vow to your Father that you are never going to carelessly say words that are not quotations from the Spirit and heart of Jesus. Words and thoughts are powerful things. Allowing them in your mind or out of your mouth cracks a hole in the Spiritual Ozone layer, allowing demons, or angels, to descend into your world. Words of God’s Promises and Faith and Worship and Contentment in Him bring in the fresh breeze of the intervention of the Spirit of God, and His Angels. Words of unbelief and rebellion, or of greed or fear, jealousy or unforgiveness, or of pride or of carnal obsessive energy bring in the cloak of darkness and a supernatural invitation to the Enemy to be involved in your life. We welcome demons, or angels, by our thoughts and words.

God created the universe with words. He spoke and He created something out of nothing with words. If you speak satan’s words, then

that is exactly what you will do—create something out of nothing. Situations beginning with rash reactions, ungoverned by the Spirit of Christ and unwashed by the “water of the Word” may begin as small issues. But, empowered by satan and his opportunity created by your words, they will escalate. With your words you create mayhem and devastation. Or, you participate with God in creating Order and Life and Love, by your words and attitudes and thoughts, enveloped in Faith and Love, resisting all unbelief and reaction and selfishness. We choose our futures thusly.

Quote God...NEVER quote satan. There is Power in words. “In the beginning was the Word...” If you quote satan then you are empowering satan. On the other hand, the determination to “call things that are not, as though they are” for HIM...empowers GOD to Work in you, and the Spirit of God is welcomed into that place of the testing of your Faith.

Jesus, in the wilderness, QUOTED GOD when tempted, regardless of what he felt or wanted or needed. And Angels, in time, met Him at that place.

“But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.” Matthew 12

“Heaven and Earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.” Matthew 24

“If you remain in me and my words remain in you...” John 15

“For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them.” John 17

“The word was with God, the word was God...and the word became flesh and dwelt for awhile amongst us.” John 1

“Calling things that are not as though they are...” is “the Faith of Abraham” making us “sons of Abraham.” Romans 4

Anatomy of a Spiritual Suicide

Monday Evening, November 4, 1996

Ways to destroy yourself and waste into nothing, drifting far away from Jesus...

1) Maintain ties—unchallenged and unbroken relationships with children of the devil. (“Children of the devil” is the description that the Bible, and God call those who have not given Jesus ownership of their lives and become washed in His Blood in a second birth.) Let these relationships lie dormant, or boldly fellowship with the unregenerate, non-disciples of Jesus in your family, your workplace, your past, your neighborhood, or other stomping ground. Either way, whether you pursue the relationships or just keep them on hold in the background, if you want to commit spiritual suicide, leave the doors open to embrace them as if they are the same as you, and part of you. Let it be “okay” with you to open your heart and affections to them. Have fond memories of them, and the things you did or *could* do with those that have not bowed before Jesus. Maintain heart ties with unbelievers. Thus saith the lord of darkness.

2) Keep some secrets back about your past. Don’t say or imply too much to anyone, particularly those that are strong in Christ, about past or current tendencies or temptations (the things that are still “alive” in your bones that you know are not from Jesus). Convince yourself that it is not in anyone’s best interest to know who you really are. If they knew, they’d reject you for sure, so just keep it to yourself and, perhaps, solve it yourself.

3) Tell half-truths about what you think, how you feel, where you’re going, and what you’re doing. Confess things to Jesus only, and don’t be open and vulnerable to your brothers and sisters. They don’t understand like Jesus does. Keep everyone guessing and make sure they feel like they are being nosy if they try to care for you. Give them impressions that are only partially accurate. Project an image, and don’t

let anything or anyone inside of it. Maybe not even yourself. That could be depressing. Resent all intrusions into your space.

4) Allow attitudes to dominate your mind and control your thoughts and emotions. Let things like judgments or misery or lust or guilt or weakness or pain or loneliness or self-hatred or resentment of your circumstance or of others' circumstances to have full reign over you. Allow your mind to go wherever it pleases without challenge. Let the "temperature" go up in your mind by toying with radical or sloppy thoughts and emotions—without stopping them intentionally. Let them run until they're out of control. Let the avalanche begin with little stones of wrong thoughts unchecked, and let these thoughts build into something immense and unstoppable. Don't renounce thoughts; after all, you're just being realistic. (And besides, that's just who you are, since you thought the particular thought. It obviously originated *inside* of you...sooo, that's who you are and how you think.) Revel in the thoughts, or swim in them, or just tolerate them. But whatever you do, don't *CHANGE* those thoughts, saith the worm.

5) Permit yourself to sin without clear repentance. It's not really your fault. Someone else or your terrible circumstance is to blame. Besides, you deserve destruction anyway. Why should He waste His grace on you? So why fight it?! Die, saith the twisted lord of the flies.

6) Make sure that you are the only true authority in your life. Not the Word of God. Don't allow the Word of God to cause you to drop everything and relent. Don't give it THAT kind of authority. You would be taking it too literally. And don't give any true authority in your life to anyone that the Bible would call "over you in the Lord." That is a faulty concept. Reserve final judgment and "last say" in every matter of importance for yourself. After all, who is better qualified to decide than you? And it's a fact that no one can be trusted to have authority in your life but you.

7) Sow bad seed whenever you're in the mood. Watch television or do other things that are "on" or "over" the Line of God's Desire. Do it whenever you want, and when you're bored or depressed. Especially do it as soon as you know that no one who Cares could find out about it. You can handle it. They may be too weak to handle things like that, but you're not. Let's not be so extreme.

8) Long to be by yourself. Enjoy your own company best. Prefer to do things by yourself in most cases. At least stay in control of the matter

so that you can decide whether you want other people involved or not! The solitude of your own thoughts is preferred to pouring your life out for others. They'll probably all let you down anyway. Or just waste your time. It's safe with just you.

9) Always view yourself as “the exception” to any teaching or Truth that you hear. Believe that it was said a certain way to certain people, so it doesn't apply to you. Though clearly it makes sense for most people, your circumstances are different.

10) Consider yourself often. Consider your appearance, your rights, the things you have done, the things you can do, the work of your hands, the impressiveness of your speech or thoughts or creativity or clothing or body or skills. Think about yourself (whether good or bad) and dwell on “externals” often.

11) Love yourself, or, if you'd prefer, even hate yourself. Either way will do if you want to degrade yourself and your Best Friend. Be self-absorbed. Self-awareness, self-consciousness, and self-thoughts on an ongoing basis, whether self-love or self-hatred, guarantee that we lose our heart for Jesus.

12) Don't do “right” things because you talk to Jesus about them and offer the good choices as a gift to Him. Just do the right things because everyone expects you to, or because you might get caught (and that would look bad or cost too much), or because it's just “the good christian life.” Don't talk to Jesus about it directly. Let it be a lifestyle choice or a reluctant compromise. And if you fail, be sure to feel bad about it, but don't apologize to Jesus or confess it to others and ask them to talk to Jesus on your behalf.

13) Shut down your mind and your heart when things are tough. It doesn't do any good to talk. They're just words anyway. Why bother? You've heard it all before. Just shut down. It's safer in there if you don't let anything in, or anything out.

14) Be so consumed with your view of end-time theories, conspiracy theories, conservative politics, church methodology, church government, not “rocking the boat,” or avoiding false teaching...that Jesus and people aren't your passion anymore. Let fear, pride, ambition and family heritage eat up the time and energy that is meant for God and His Bride.

15) Maintain your composure at all times. Never be humble. That would be viewed as weakness. Remain proud and keep your head up high.

16) Never tell really revealing things about yourself to anyone. They might use it against you in the future. And you will be viewed as weak or immature.

17) Interpret God's Word the way it best suits you, and for whatever circumstance you wish to manipulate. After all, there are contradictions all throughout the Scriptures. Don't ask wise and true brothers and sisters to help you understand. They wouldn't see it from your point of view.

18) Think about how other people will view what you say or do instead of thinking about what God wants you to say and do. Other people's reaction and viewpoints to what you do or say are more important than what God has asked you to do. Always think of the consequences of what God has asked you to do, and THEN decide if you should do it.

19) View yourself as the weaker part of the body and therefore don't contribute to the whole. If you are the "belly button" there is no expectation of participation. So you can stay quiet because you don't have anything to offer anyway.

20) Believe that it's okay if you go two or three days without talking to Jesus. He knows you love Him. If you think nice thoughts, say grace before your meals, and have warm fuzzies about Him, that will help you draw closer to Him and know Him better.

21) Find something spiritual about the things you really want to do for entertainment sake...videos, basketball, golf, hunting or whatever. And convince others of its spiritual value for them, too.

22) If you have questions about something in someone else's life or your own life, don't ask people who can help. Just wonder about it, but don't *do* anything about it. Someone else will notice. Someone else will do something. They're probably more qualified than you anyway. So, just sit and watch and do not risk contributing anything.

23) Be content in your current circumstances and don't expect to grow in maturity. Don't do anything too aggressively. Don't make any hard decisions or act decisively. If your hand causes you to sin, talk to it at length and do a "bible study" on it. You've always been the same and you always will be, so why bother? saith the king of hell.

24) Always choose your words carefully. Don't ever say anything that you're not certain you're absolutely right about. You don't ever want to be wrong about anything.

25) Build walls between you and others by holding critical thoughts, judgments and opinions. Judge others for their decisions and actions. Reserve your right to criticize in your heart. Let it sit there and then forget about it, believing it really isn't bad seed. They were just fleeting thoughts (or so you think).

Do you know the "Antidote" for each of these?

The Antidotes and Solutions for these problems can be found throughout this 10 book series. (Where's Waldo? 😊) Find them. They're Glorious!

Addictions, Strongholds— Versus the Power and Wisdom of Our God and His Christ

Sunday LATE night, December 9, 2002

Saints, there are many, many who wear Jesus' name and care deeply for Him and His Commands who find themselves repeatedly feeling totally blown away by controlling urges of temptation and sin. They repeatedly anguish in tears, deeply desiring to rip the claws of the enemy away from their flesh, even to the point of being willing—as the Master taught to demonstrate the gravity of sin—to gouge out an eye or cut off a hand rather than fail again in this addictive sin. You need to know this with absolute certainty: There is much hope for you, regardless of how deep sin has ravaged you! No matter what the enemy would try to tell you about your life and his assessment of it, if you CARE—there is endless Hope!

For those who would read this, and you know by the Scriptures that you live in sinful excesses or addictions or practices—and yet you do NOT care, you do not wrestle, you do not feel conviction about these things—but instead excuse them, rationalize them, compare yourself to others, defend or rename the sins, or mind-block regarding them—without sadness in your heart for these things—may God have mercy on your soul.

A man or woman or child who *Truly* has been born a Second time, with the Spirit of Christ within as the Proof “guaranteeing the Salvation”—every Saved person will CARE about sin, according to the Scriptures. When apart from His Will and Life, a truly Saved person

will exclaim, “What I do, I *hate*.” They will care, if they have met our Messiah, Jesus, the Anointed One. They will, as our Savior said, “*LOVE the Light*.” Those who have the Proof of Salvation: the Spirit within (Rom. 8), will applaud and “Amen!” (not evade or attempt to excuse away) this Teaching of the Spirit of Christ through our brother John, the Apostle:

“EVERYONE who has this hope in the Coming of Jesus purifies himself, just as He is pure.

Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. Whoever abides in Him does not continue in sin. Whoever sins onward has neither seen Him nor known Him.

Little children, let no one deceive you. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. No one who is Born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother”(1 John 3:3-10).

So, I only speak to those who *CARE DEEPLY* about addictive and overpowering sins, rather than justify them. Those who excuse sin, feeling nothing, are “dead even while they live” and have perhaps already received “a powerful delusion, that they would believe the lie.” But, for those who want to please Jesus with all of their hearts, and find themselves “easily beset” and “dragged away and enticed by their own lusts” and take full responsibility for this—we write to you. If you *know* you can and should overcome sin because you have “everything that pertains to Life and Godliness” and “every Spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus”—and all Provision in the Godhead is available, and “the Power that raised Christ Jesus from the dead and seated Him at the right hand of God” is “IN you, the Hope of Glory!”...for you alone these things are written. Part of exploring and experiencing the *full power of God* in this present age (Rom. 6, 8) is in this Scripture: “You shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall set you free.” To walk in agreement with God, and to know and cooperate in His Truths—is paramount

to *experiencing* the full blessing of the Cross and of Pentecost, in our lifetimes, “in the mortal body.”

The thought under consideration in these couple of pages is this: *What* does it mean to “cast down imaginations” in order to tear down “strongholds” in our lives? Or put another way, besides renouncing satan and totally agreeing with God about what is sin (the obvious Beginning place of Life)...besides this, what correction of our thinking might we have that will more fully manifest the Power and Life and Love of Jesus that lives within us, if we are truly Saved?

We have written much to you about these things over the years, and much more might be said about the necessity of seeing ONLY the Blood of Jesus as our ability to stand before the Father, and how to appropriate the “weapons of our warfare which are not of the flesh,” and “take up the full armor of God.” And yet, here, there is just this one point we want to make in this brief note:

MANY OF OUR ADDICTIONS AND “STRONGHOLDS” (IF NOT ALL OF THEM) CAN BE TRACED TO TRYING TO PROTECT OURSELVES FROM OUR FEELINGS OF HELPLESSNESS, AND THE FEELING OF BEING OUT OF CONTROL. Our humanity screams at this crucial circumstance, as the Father woos us at this exact same place.

Without a lot of mumbo jumbo or self-important sounding psychobabble to clutter the thought, just do this: Consider your addiction or addictions openly before Father and Jesus (the “Master Teacher”!). And, *pay attention* to what launches your “addictions” and “failures.” If you truly pay attention to how and when you fall back into these wretched “controlling” sins, you will likely find that there is a *pattern* in that mess of previously confusing and disheartening circumstances. There are situations or people (“Bad company corrupts good character,” says the Lord), and certain kinds of events that the enemy uses successfully again and again to hold you in bondage and then to beat you with thoughts of self-hatred and disillusionment. Identify those areas where he has tricked you (“We are not unaware of satan’s devices!”), and let the *TRUTH* set you free, indeed!

What are some addictions or strongholds that you have allowed to be your master? (Rom. 6)

- Movie or television addiction
- Procrastination
- Food addictions
- Pain relievers
- Mood-altering drugs
- Vitamin or supplement pill popping
- “Health” food obsessions
- “Good” water controlling “preferences”
- Coffee (“have to have, or else _____”) addiction
- Sugar, sweet desserts and candy
- Chocolate
- Sleeping late, hiding from life or decisions by sleeping
- Staying-up-late obsession
- Reading obsession
- Alcohol addiction
- Exercise or bodybuilding vanity, or schedule or thought controlling
- Self-imposed depression
- Self-imposed illness
- Daydreaming habits
- Hiding away in a house or room
- Being argumentative or angry or demanding
- Hiding in sport or music
- Traditions or rituals that we are upset if we don’t have
- Travel lusts
- Biological family controlling emotions and decisions

- Lust for being seen as important, intelligent, special or different
- Lust for a “best friend” or “soul mate” or “close companion”
- Lust to “belong to something,” or “be part of something,” or “movement lust”
- Excitement addictions
- Lust for change
- Physical self-indulgence
- Hyper-religious in jargon, or way of carrying oneself (Jesus was not)
- Religious dress-up (hats, hair, choice of clothing, office, position)
- Finding comfort in shopping for clothing or other material goods
- Shopping for, thinking about, “needing” latest techno-gadgets or stereo or computer gizmos or software
- Playing in the dark, dark world of the internet (surfing or chat rooms, or the like)
- Mysteries
- Secrets
- Gossip
- Pornography
- Things forbidden
- Jealousy

(Invariably, someone will ask, “So what is WRONG with ‘thus and such’ *anyway*? Are you saying that ‘thus and such’ is SIN?!” For everyone but the one who asked this, I would say that many things like reading or travel are of course not “automatically” sin, in moderation and by the Spirit’s leading. If they are driven, guided and unhindered instead by our fleshly appetites—of course this is always sin. And, to the one who is incensed about *their* particular hobbyhorse being on the list, I would say, “Absolutely. It is sin.”)

ALL OF THESE ADDICTIONS AND STRONGHOLDS, AND THE OTHER FORTY-TWO THOUSAND I DIDN'T MENTION ARE ISSUES THAT HOLD CAPTIVE MANY THOUSANDS OF PRECIOUS LAMBS WHO TRULY DESIRE TO BE FREE AND TO PLEASE JESUS. These overpowering temptations seem to have “a life of their own”—taking us off guard at times, even at times when we had thought we had already left the allure of that temptation behind forever.

But do you know what? Instead of seeing these strongholds and addictions as reasons to feel unclean, useless, foolish, weak, ugly, degraded, self-indulgent, and worthless—we can use those abhorrent temptations *against* satan. These addictions *point toward* opportunities to Fellowship more deeply with the Father and One Another—by showing us areas where we have tried to solve our feelings of *helplessness* with things other than Jesus and His Father's Love! *Find* the areas satan has *truly* held you captive in—the places where we have felt helpless—instead of focusing merely on the sins we have tried to *Fill the void* with! The addictions and strongholds are the *symptoms*, the *outlets*—not the issues themselves. The sins themselves are often just a smokescreen of the enemy to cloud the *real* issue. That is why “hard work” and “scripture memory,” or “12 Steps” and “self-control” and “accountability” and the like—*so seldom permanently solve any real problems*. “Fewer than six percent” would be a good estimate of how many have overcome addictions and strongholds in this way.

And while Father...by prayer, fasting, the laying on of hands, by Gift, or by a dove or donkey...can Sovereignly heal us and transform us in an *instant* (and often does!), we also are all keenly aware that there are other times He is Training us to use His Weapons and Shield and Helmet by making us apply Truth, Love, Prayer and Perseverance, all in His Timing, to overcome. The man born blind, Job, Joseph, and Moses learned, and all of God's Men and Women will learn this Lesson as well! Not ALL sin problems are “instantly” healed, as we wish they would be. Why not? We sometimes need to appropriate the Truth, the Tools, and the Timing...because God “leaves enemies to train His People who have not experienced war...who have not had any previous battle experience” (Jdg. 3:1-2), and “so the Work of God might be openly displayed in your life” (Jn. 9:3).

So, reread the above list of addictions and bondages and strongholds. Is there anything that just has you by the throat, and you *despise* that sin, and “hate even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh”? Do you

know anyone who has demonstrated their hatred of sin, and their deep passion for Jesus and willingness to do *anything* to be free of sin and fully passionate for the Father and His Work, the Son and His Bride? They, like a man of God must be, “are distressed by the filthy loves of lawless men,” and “are tormented in their righteous soul by the lawless deeds they saw and heard” and were themselves tempted by? And yet, for some reason, the tentacles of the sin continue to choke their Fellowship with Him and His People (1Jn. 1:1-7)—while still “what they do, they *HATE*”? If so, then consider this:

Most every addiction or sin or temptation you can think of or experience has its root in the fact that we feel *helpless* at times, and *react* by running to addictions or “strongholds.” Remember, satan’s “power” is *not* in his ability to *make* one sin that has JESUS living within them, but rather in his *lies*. He is the “father of lies,” and Jesus is the Truth, the ANTIDOTE! For that reason, it is not that we ought to be *afraid* that Father will “smoke” us for these sins, but more importantly *WE NEED TO BE “CONSCIOUS OF GOD,”* knowing that He means to *BE OUR ALL-IN-ALL*, and we are *NEVER ALONE* or *WITHOUT A HELPER!!* He can Teach us the TRUTH about ourselves, and about Him, and about the world around us...and the TRUTH will set us free.

Begin to identify what it is you are afraid of, or what areas of “helplessness” trigger your mad dash to the addictive endorphin-inducing sins listed above. What things are we trying to compensate for, and what things do we feel helpless to deal with and are tricked into seeking “pain relief” for? If we can *See* it, we can turn to Him—instead of to sin at those moments. The Solution is *not* in “more self-control,” and “trying harder,” and “more accountability” (though certainly these are tools He has recommended to us in His Word, at times). The Solution is Seeing where we have not Trusted Him completely and hidden our lives in Him in a real-time way in the stresses of life! We actually can *use* satan’s temptations *against* him by learning what areas of our lives we have not yet allowed the Spirit of Jesus to come alongside us in to Comfort and to Counsel. “RESIST the devil, and he will flee from you!” We can be “aware of satan’s devices” and turn to the Father in these areas that have incited fear within us. When previously we have used sin to *hide* from the Father, we can identify these areas and learn to *run* to Him and offer these temptations as a *gift* to Him—*before* we turn to the “drugs” listed above!

What triggers your run to these sins above, as an escape?

Helplessness about:

- Insufficient time to do what you are “supposed” to do
- Lack of ability to do what you are “supposed” to do, or something you deem “worthwhile”
- Fear of others’ expectations
- Feeling unworthy
- Feeling unforgiven
- Feeling unloved, or the inability to make others love you
- Fear of no control over finances
- Lack of control over health issues
- Family members’ actions or decisions or loves—depression or anger that we can’t control these things
- Fear of being alone
- Fear of chaos or disorder, or noise
- Fear of entropy—the decay or loss of material goods
- Fear of pain or discomfort
- Fear of inconvenience
- Fear of change, or the unpredictable
- Fear of the future
- Fear of being stuck in a situation that won’t change
- Fear of growing old
- Fear of being unattractive
- Fear of being not liked or not popular or not “included”

These are a few of the things that *launch* our addictions and strongholds, if we fall for satan’s tactics and give in to the sinful diversions. We find ourselves *running* to “the sins that so easily beset” when we are not close to Him and His Thoughts in an area—not because we’re “unclean,

useless, foolish, weak, ugly, degraded, self-indulgent, and worthless.” If we are washed in His Blood and He has made His home in us, we are *anything* but all of that! However, when faced with the helpless feelings above, we can *learn* how to *turn to Him as our all-sufficiency* in these exact matters! Then, we will not need the endorphin self-destructive addictions that we use to try to numb the pain of what we haven’t even yet clearly identified. The sin is the *symptom*, not the true issue Father wants to Teach us!

So, “what shall we say, then, Brothers and Sisters” when we identify the *root* insecurities and mistrusts—the things that have previously sent us scurrying for bread that is not Bread? How then can we answer the enemy and *RESIST* him, when “self-control” and “accountability” yield such short-term results?

WHAT IF we were to “look to JESUS, the Author and Finisher of our Faith” as the fulfillment of every need, and every hope and dream that brings pleasure to the Father?!

WHAT IF the Father has all of His sufficiency for *every* issue and every insecurity, every worry, pressure and confusion *all bound up in His Son? It is so!* Every issue of life and Life is perfectly formed and resolved in the Love of God and His Wisdom, and He’s *training* us to See the universe as *He* sees it, and to *trust Him* in all ways. We don’t *need* the gall to dull the pain, but rather to commit our lives into the Father’s Hands, in all things. And, in this we are being *trained* to be like Him and to be a Bride fit to be yoked for all Eternity to the King of Kings! Hallelujah!!

Trust Him—turn to Him and His Thoughts about the matter that troubles you. “*Think on THESE things*”—not the false fix of sin—when you feel discouragement or trapped by things out of your control.....

Insufficient Time

Ps. 90:4

2Pet. 3:8

Mat. 6:25-34

1Cor. 6:20

Eccl. 3:1

Gal. 6:10

Eph. 5:16

Jas. 4:13-15

Lack of Ability

Col. 1:27	1Cor. 12:4-11	2Cor. 4:7
2Cor. 9:10	Ex. 4:11-12	1Pet. 4:19
1Cor. 15:9-10	Lk. 12:11-12	Jdg. 6
Jas. 1:5		

Fear of Others' Expectations

Lk. 12:4-6	Acts 5:29	Rom. 8:15
Mk. 3:31-35	Lk. 14:26	2Cor. 5:9-11
Rev. 12:11		

Feeling Unworthy

Heb. 10:14	Heb. 4:14-16	Eph. 4:1
Jas. 4:7-10	2Pet. 1:3	Rom. 5:9-11
Rom. 8:1	Rom. 6:5	Heb. 9:11-14
Eph. 2:13	Rom. 5:9	Rom. 3:21-26
Rom. 4:19-21	Gal. 4:7	Eph. 2:8-10

Feeling Unforgiven

Eph. 2:8-10	Heb. 10:10	Lam. 3:23
Gal. 4:7	Mat. 26:28	Ps. 103:12
Rom. 8:1-4	Ps. 130	Jn. 1:29
Jn. 3:16-18	1Jn. 1:9	Lk. 1:76-79
Acts 2:38	Lk. 24:45-47	Php. 3:13

Feeling Unloved, or the Inability to Make Others Love You

Php. 2:3-4	Mat. 20:28	Ps. 40:17
Mat. 7:12	1Pet. 1:18-20	Rom. 5:8
Lk. 7:47	Gal. 6:15	Mat. 6:25-27
Prov. 8:17	Ps. 57:10	1Jn. 4:19
Ps. 63:3	Ps. 66:20	Ps. 23
Ps. 86:13	1Jn. 3:1	Rom. 8:31-39

Fear of No Control Over Finances

Mat. 6:25-34	Php. 4:6-7	Php. 4:12-13
2Cor. 1:3-6	Mk. 10:29-30	Php. 4:12-13
Ps. 50:10	Ps. 119:36	Ps. 55:22
Mat. 6:25-34	Heb. 10:34	Lk. 12:27
Mat. 6:25-26	Ps. 37:25-26	Ps. 34:10
Ps. 23	Deut. 28:2-8	Php. 3:7-11
Lk. 6:38	Prov. 13:22	Mat. 9:29
Php. 4:19	Jn. 15:7	

Lack of Control Over Health Issues

Rom. 5:2b-5	Prov. 1:33	Prov. 3:25
Rom. 8:35-37	Rom. 8:18-26	Isa. 8:11-14
1Pet. 4:19	Prov. 11:19	2Cor. 4:16
Mat. 10:30-31	Mat. 6:25-26	Ps. 12:5
Mk. 9:43-48	2Cor. 12:7-10	Ps. 41:1-13

Family Members' Actions or Decisions or Loves— Depression or Anger that We Can't Control These Things

1Pet. 3:13-16	Prov. 24:19-20	Ps. 23
Ps. 34:17	Isa. 43:2	Mat. 10:19
2Sam. 22:29-31		

Fear of Being Alone

Ps. 68:6	1Cor. 12:12-31	Isa. 41:10
Isa. 43:2	Mk. 10:29-30	Mt. 28:19-20
Mat. 28:20	Isa. 43:1-3	Isa. 40:1-11
Jn. 14:16-18	Heb. 13:5	Mat. 28:20
1Sam. 12:22	Isa.41:10	Rom. 8:35-39
Deut. 4:31, 31:6		

Fear of Chaos or Disorder, or Noise

Prov. 1:33	2Cor. 6:14	Lk. 8:21
Lk. 10:38-41	Prov. 2: 1-22	Prov. 10:8-32
Prov. 12:3	Prov. 14:29	Prov. 15:28
Jn. 14:27	Lk. 2:14	Jn. 14:27
2Ki. 6:16	Isa. 26:3	Isa. 9:6
Php. 4:6-7	Ps. 29:11	

Fear of Entropy—the Decay or Loss of Material Goods

Hab. 3:17-18	Prov. 3:25	Jer. 29:11
Lk. 9:23	Php. 3:4-11	Php. 4:11-13
Ps. 34:3-10,	Nah. 1:7	Mat. 6:19-21
Mat. 6:28-33	Isa. 57:1-2	2Cor. 5:6-7
1Thes. 4:13-14	Rev. 21:4	

Fear of Pain or Discomfort

Rom. 8:17-26	2Cor. 6:3	2Cor. 12:7
Ps. 37:23-24	1Pet. 5:7	Lam. 3:17-33
Ps. 91	Deut. 8:5-9	Ps. 69:29-32
Lk. 21:17-19	Isa. 43:1-5	Heb. 12:11
2Cor. 1:3-11	Rev. 21:3-4	

Fear of Inconvenience

1Cor. 6:20	Jas. 1:12	Jas. 1:2-4
Rom. 12:1-2	Rom. 8:28	Lk. 9: 23-25
Mat. 19:29	Php. 2:3-4	Php. 2:13
Acts 2:44-45	1Pet. 4:9	

Fear of Change or the Unpredictable

Php. 4:6-7	Jas. 1:17	Jn. 3:8
Jer. 29:11	Ps. 90:12	Lam. 3:22-23
1Cor. 10:13	Isa. 8:12	Heb. 13:8
Mat. 6:25	Php. 1:20	Jer. 7:5
Mat. 18:3		

Fear of the Future

Isa. 46: 3-4	Prov. 16:31	Prov. 20:29
Jn. 3:16	Jer. 29:11	Heb. 13
Rom. 8	Mat. 6:34	Rom. 8:31-32
Col. 3:1-4	Mat. 7:7	Mat. 7:19-21
Mat. 10:29-31	Ps. 37:5, 23-24, 34	Ps. 31:14-15
1Pet. 5:7	1Pet. 4:19	Job 13:15
2Tim. 1:12		

Fear of Being Stuck in a Situation that Won't Change

Rom 8:28	Mat. 6:33	Rev. 12:11
Isa. 54:17	Rom.8:31-39	Mal. 4:2
Ps. 96:2	Ps. 118:14	Isa. 12:2
Isa. 59:1	Jer. 3:23	Jer. 50:34
Jn. 2:9	Jn. 3:16	Jer. 29:11

Fear of Growing Old

Ps. 73: 25-26	1Pet. 3:3-4	Prov. 31:30
1Sam. 16:7	Prov. 16: 31, 20:29	Isa. 46:4
Rom. 4	1Cor. 15	2Cor. 4:16
Ps. 92:14	Job 12:12	

Fear of Being Unattractive

1Sam. 16:7

1Pet. 3:3

Isa. 54:1

Isa. 53

Gal. 1:10

Jos. 24:15

Acts 5:29

1Cor 3:4-5

Prov. 31:30

Php. 3:7ff

Col. 3:12

Gal. 6:15

Fear of Not Being Liked or Popular or “Included”

Mat. 10:24

Isa. 51:12

1Cor. 12

Acts 4:19-20

Mat. 5:10-12

Rom. 8:31-32

Php. 2:4

Col. 3:14-15

Mat. 23:11

Mat. 20:26-28

1Pet. 2:9-12

Nobody!

An illustration reminds me of what must be our resilience when we've messed up. Our rest and our confidence must still stay in the Blood of Jesus, no matter what. And our strength is in the indomitable Spirit of Christ—who lives within those who let go!

The tennis legend Vitas Gerulaitis once lost to a dominant Jimmy Connors 16 straight times. Finally he upset Connors and crowed to the crowd, "Nobody beats Vitas Gerulaitis 17 times in a row!"

When you find yourself, so regretfully, having blown it *again*, with your tongue or moods or eyes or pride or selfishness...KNOW that *"He who began a good work in you—will finish the work"* and *"He is able to present you unspotted before his glorious throne."*

And then *boldly crow to the enemy: "Jesus is far better than you! You will not win! He who is in me is greater than he who is in the world!!!"*

You Can Overcome!

Wednesday Night, May 24, 2000

(excerpt from a time when some Saints were together in Indianapolis)

Some thoughts that might be helpful in getting a perspective of our lives, the journey that we are on, and how to get farther down the road than perhaps you feel like you are right now...

False Religion

There is a stage that a lot of us have gone through, and it seems virtually impossible to me that there could still be anyone here in this stage (although the world is full of this stage). I'm speaking of a form of christianity, a form of godliness, but in this case denying the power. There is a stage of doing things that has a religious overtone to it, but in essence is "using" God. It is using God because we are really *not* going to do what He wants and no one is going to make us. And we are not going to let anyone talk to us about it when we are not doing what He wants. We are going to do what is right in our own eyes. "The rest of you do what you want. I'll do what I want. You are just being judgmental... Get the log out of your own eye." This stage of existence is basically just false religion and it's blasphemous. Jesus is not Lord. He is just a figurehead. He's an icon. He's a logo who means nothing to our daily lives.

That's a religious stage and it probably describes a huge, huge, huge number of people, and probably a huge percentage of the christian world. People do whatever they please; Jesus will not hem them in in any way. They will not be restrained. Their self-control is non-existent. They will do *what* they please, *when* they please and no one would dare say anything to them. There is a lot of religion, a lot of so-called "christianity" that way. Jesus is not Lord, and therefore, according to Peter, He is also not Savior. It is false christianity. It's junk. It's the mental pacifier, the placebo that all the atheists talk about and make fun of.

And the atheists are right about people in this stage. Religion is just the opiate of the people for their own conscience salve, but it means nothing to them in their daily lives. They do whatever they please. They sing the songs to feel good and they might even pray the prayers to feel good, but they are going to do what they want to do and will not be restrained by anybody or anything. There is no point spending much more time on that, because we are aware that it is false religion. It is false christianity. It's nonsense. It has nothing to do with what Jesus died for or anything that Jesus taught.

Moving On

The next stage—which is difficult to get out of—is when a person is genuinely sincere about following Jesus and there has been a genuine conversion. This second stage is one of doing things ABOUT Jesus. We find out all the right things that are supposed to be the “christian things to do.” We might even ask people—“So what should I do? What about this? What about that?” Then we go through our lives sort of confused, frustrated, wondering what people think, wondering what we are supposed to do, not knowing between choice A and choice B, feeling guilty at times, depressed at other times, failing, succeeding, or thinking we are succeeding, and then finding out later we are not and then we are depressed.

This stage is basically a legalistic thing that is genuinely about Jesus in an external sense—because the desire is honestly to please Him—but it is, as you can guess from the description, sort of embarrassing and sort of depressing and somewhat of a bondage. But it's sincere, and I know God will honor that. The things that go on in our minds will not affect our salvation in that sense if we are genuinely sincere about doing what we do for Jesus. That state of affairs is not an issue that is about salvation, but it is obviously a very unfortunate state that a person would be in to always be frustrated and confused, always looking around trying to find out the right thing to do and never quite finding it. It's a very difficult thing to do. It's a brain game that seems to be endless and excruciatingly painful with almost no relief.

For Him and With Him

The next stage beyond doing things about Jesus is to do things FOR Jesus. In other words, there are vertical issues going on here—“Jesus,

I want to do this FOR You.” This person is involved in the highest possible sense of really desiring to do these things for Jesus. They talk to Him about it. They want to please Him—“Jesus, what do You want me to do? Jesus, this is going to cost me. I’m going to make this choice to turn away from this temptation, I’m going to make this choice to turn away from this thought process. Jesus, I offer this to You as a gift, this issue of self-control. I want to do this thing; my flesh desires it. But not my will—Yours be done.” It’s a vertical issue, and it’s a love affair with Him. Our souls want to melt into His soul and really enjoy Him and worship Him. We behold Him and are transformed into His image from glory to glory. It’s a vertical issue and it’s real. It’s alive and there is substance to it. It’s a relationship with a person. We know that has to be how it is. We know it *at least* has to be that, right? We are not going to just do things about Him, we are not just externally doing things for Him, but we are going to do it with Him as a Person, for Him because He is a Person.

That is an awesome state of affairs in some respects, and frankly there are a lot of people in christendom who don’t even know that that is what they are supposed to do. They would be shocked to hear that there is more than simply making a “right choice” given a set of circumstances and some potential temptations. If they make the right choice, most people in the christian world just say, “I’m supposed to do this because it’s the Christian thing.” There are a few people, a small percentage, a fraction that say, “Jesus, I want to do this for You.” And they talk to Him about it. They say, “Jesus, I want to offer this gift to You. I’m about to make a good choice. I want to show You my love by giving You this gift.” There are a few people that do that. Not very many, because most people never knew they could. They never knew they should. They’ve just been taught a religion about Him, but not necessarily with Him and for Him as a person. It’s certainly a quantum leap toward reality to actually relate to Him as a person, talk to Him about the choices, ask questions about the things that perplex us or frustrate us, and to find comfort in discussing things with Him.

Breaking Free—Life IN Him

The next thing that I want to describe to you is something even a smaller fraction of people walk in, and I just want to make sure that everyone has an invitation to go there if you are not there already. It’s a life of doing things IN Him. Not just about Him (religion that

is external, “doin’ the right thing”). But also not just about Him as a person, doing it technically for Him. Not even technically doing it with Him, discussing it with Him. But even a step further than that is to do it IN Him.

I think, having gone through the other stages as many of you have, that there are still a lot of us who maybe find ourselves frustrated with failures and find ourselves somehow unable to find victory over things that have been in our lives for a long period of time. What I want to make crystal clear for us is that the Jesus who died for your sins to forgive the past, also lives in resurrection power to empower the future. The Son of God was manifested to destroy the devil’s works, to utterly uproot them and destroy them. And, in the context of 1 John 3 (where that Scripture is), it goes on to say that we don’t have to sin anymore.

We *don’t* have to be subject to sin any longer. We don’t have to be tossed around like a rag doll in a dog’s mouth, just gutted and thrown aside in the yard with our stuffing hanging out and settling for praising God because “we are saved, anyway.” I don’t have to fail day after day, year after year and be miserable. Even though I’m doing it for Him, I find myself failing. I find myself miserable. That doesn’t have to happen. It’s good to be forgiven. It’s good to find some comfort in our discouragement or in our problems or in our failures by talking to Him about it. But there is another issue that could be described as overcoming. It could be described as, “The prince of this world has come, but he has nothing in me.” It could be described as, “We don’t have to sin anymore” (1Jn. 3).

If we’ve seen Him and we’ve known Him, and we’ve experienced His presence in us, then we can live in such a way as to be as free as He was free. That doesn’t mean without temptation, but He didn’t have to look back on a day knowing He’d failed, either.

Most of us look back—need to look back—on a good number of our days (if we are honest with ourselves, perceptive enough, sincere enough, and thorough enough) and say, “I have failed on a number of occasions. I failed with these thoughts, I failed with this attitude, I failed with this reaction in my home, I failed to give when I should have given, I failed to notice when I should have noticed, I failed to respond correctly when someone insulted me or slighted me or didn’t give me credit on the job or stole from me in the workplace. I’ve reacted. I’ve felt things I shouldn’t feel, and I acted on them or harbored them.”

Most of us would have to look back on a number of our days in any given week and say, “There was higher ground there that I didn’t plant my feet on. There is a way that Jesus is that I know wasn’t in how I responded to my children, how I responded to my financial problems, how I responded to my lack of sleep or to my hunger, or to a lack of discipline in some area or another.” Fair?

Now, what I want to make sure is deeply rooted in our understanding is that Jesus, if you are born a second time, *lives inside of you*. Jesus does not need to sin. There is absolutely nothing about the Jesus that is inside of you that is willing to sin or be subject to sin. He lives in a resurrected life, in the power of an indestructible life. If Christ is in you, THE hope of glory, if that is true (and it is true if you are born a second time), then Jesus Himself has come to live inside of you, which goes way past forgiveness into victory. Now if Christ doesn’t dwell in you or live in you, you are not one of His (Rom. 8; Eph. 1; Gal. 3). But you do belong to Him if you are saved, if your sins are forgiven.

Now, here is the dilemma: I find myself failing in some area or another—maybe on a consistent basis or maybe a sporadic, surprise basis. But, either way, I find myself sinning. Maybe I was ignorant that it was a sin, and then I find out that it is. Perhaps it’s a lack of control, or perhaps I’m dealing with it and it sort of overwhelms me. I have a choice to make in a situation like that. I could decide to be depressed, frustrated, angry with myself, hostile toward others, and close myself up in my room. I could do that, but that’s obviously not how Jesus would be, is it? I could also harden myself and be cocky about it: “Well, praise God, Jesus lives inside of me! Death, where is your victory? Where is your sting, sin?” ... “Forget all that stuff. I’m forgiven. I don’t have to worry about it...” Well, that’s a hardness and self-deception that will continue to perpetuate the sin also. I don’t want to be depressed. I also don’t want to be calloused to it. I have to be sensitive to it.

But if I’m not depressed and I’m not calloused to it, what is the other opportunity here? What is the other situation that is more appropriate for an overcomer? What is more appropriate for someone who is born a second time and has the Creator of the Universe living inside of them? The most appropriate choice *to believe* that Jesus lives inside of you and, therefore, all the potential in the galaxy to bust satan to smithereens, to overcome any sin, any temptation, any mood, any emotion, or any lack of self-control *lives inside of you*. All of that stuff is vanquished in the sight of Jesus. Therefore, all the potential in the galaxy to live in a free

way, unfettered by sin—no depression, no fear, no failure—all of that potential lives inside of me.

So now, if I have failed, what does that mean? That means that I have not learned how to tap the potential that Jesus presents inside of me. We can sing worshipful songs all day long and then still find ourselves failing again and again, right? Can anybody relate? Before you sang those songs to Jesus and truly plugged into His heart, you were very shallow and very empty in those times of failing. You were able to find some satisfaction in being a worshipper. You found some peace, some comfort in turning toward Jesus and talking to Him about it and being with Him in the transaction of dealing with your sin. You found some comfort in that. And that is far better than just “trying to do better next time,” which is so unvertical, so religious, and so powerless. There is something there in being a worshipper and turning toward Him, for Him, with Him.

But what I am saying to you is that there is something else still available. If you find yourself, in spite of all your worship and in spite of all your discussion with Him, continuing to fail, falling back again and again into this torturous situation that tempts you to be depressed, tempts you to despair, tempts you to quit or to be hardened and spiritually arrogant (whatever it may be); if you find yourself being a worshipper toward Him and still continuing to be battered, then I want to suggest to you that instead of being depressed or religiously calloused and arrogant about it (“Praise God, I’m forgiven. I won’t be condemned”—meaning “I won’t be convicted”), instead of falling into those categories, view it as an opportunity. View it as an adventure. If the potential that Jesus has lives inside of you—the person of Jesus, Christ in you, the Hope of Glory, Christ dwelling in your hearts through faith—if Jesus Himself, the One who cannot be touched by sin (“The prince of this world has come, but he has nothing in me.”) lives inside of you, then you do not have to sin. I guarantee it. Because He *doesn’t sin* and He *doesn’t have to sin*, therefore, you don’t either.

You can be dead to the world and the world to you. You can be crucified with Christ. You can die in His death and be raised to resurrection Life in His life. That is what the Scriptures say. We can reckon ourselves dead to sin. We can participate in His power and His death to sin and share that in a practical, real way. But what I am saying to you is this: If you don’t find that to be your experience, and you are tossed around, then instead of being depressed or becoming calloused because you

just don't want to feel conviction anymore, turn to Him and look toward Him as a source of power to overcome—a Source of power that you have not yet found out how to tap into.

Find Those Keys

Let's say I had an automobile and I couldn't get it to work, but I knew theoretically that the power to drive this automobile existed. I knew that for a fact because someone very credible, like God, for example, said that the power to drive this automobile exists. But I couldn't get it to work. What would I do? Would I be depressed and just climb into the back seat and go to sleep? Would I be arrogant and sit behind the wheel and pretend that I was driving when I really wasn't? Who am I kidding? We really do want to drive. We really do want to overcome sin. We really do want to be full of the Holy Spirit and full of wisdom and see the Glory of God and the Life of God and the power of God in our homes, in our workplaces, in our personal lives, in our secret lives! We DO want to see that! We don't want to sit behind the wheel and steer like crazy, pretending we are driving. And we don't want to climb in the back seat and cry and moan and whine, or be angry and fall asleep doing all of that. So what we have to do is search. If the power of God lives inside of you as a person—and that is a fact if you are saved—then the power to overcome sin and be victorious might be dormant, but it is absolutely, totally within you.

Never think, for even a second, anything less than that, because God said that the power to overcome every sin lives inside of you. God said it, so it's a fact. So, perhaps I can't drive the car, but I'm not going to pretend I'm driving it and I'm not going to climb in the back depressed and frustrated and angry—whining, moaning, accusing. If I'm not going to do that, then what remains? Look for the keys, man! Look in the crack of the seat. Look in the glove compartment. Look under the seat. Look up on the dash. Pull the back seat out and dig in the trunk. Try to find the keys because they are there. What I am saying (just to revert this back to the original intention) is this: If you feel weak—spiritually, physically, emotionally—it's not because Jesus is weak. If He lives inside of you, then the potential to be an overcomer in those areas is there.

Now, I don't mean that it will be without temptation and I don't mean it will be without pain. But, I do mean that it will be without the constant failure, constant cycle and barrage of failure and dullness, etc. I mean you can and shall—by God's grace, His power, and your faith—overcome those things. But you have to look for the keys.

If I am failing, I don't need to be depressed or angry with myself or anyone else. What I need to do is say, "So where are the keys? What am I doing wrong? How am I not tapping the power of God that lives inside of me? I'm not drawing on the life of God. Somehow the Christ that's in me is not expressing Himself very well in these sorts of situations. Why not?" So now it's an adventure. Now, it's an exciting journey because I know the potential for all that Jesus is. "Greater works than these shall you do." I know all that potential is there to not be a rag doll and have my stuffing all over the yard when I go to my grave. All that potential already lives inside of me. I'm not just talking to Him about it, though that's wonderful. I'm not just asking for forgiveness and worshipping, though that's good. Do that too. But beyond that, understand this: You can tap the life of Jesus of Nazareth and all of His power to overcome sin by learning how to live in the Spirit rather than just *for* the Spirit or *with* the Spirit. Learn how to live *in* the Spirit.

If you are a wimp, if you are a failure, if your character and personality traits are less than the character and personality traits of Jesus of Nazareth...guess what? The potential to have the full measure of the stature and the fullness of Christ Himself dwells inside of you. It's not far off to be attained. He lives inside of you. So my lack is not my lack of trying. My lack is not my inherent weaknesses. My lack is that I've not yet found the keys to the car that I know I can drive. I know they exist. I'm not going to doubt that. I'm not going to fear and I'm not going to pretend and I'm not going to quit and fall asleep in the back or be angry. I'm going to find the keys. Those keys are in the Scriptures. Those keys are in the teachings of Jesus and the apostles who did learn how to live in that life and in that power.

"Christ dwells in your hearts through faith." What does that mean? I want to know how Christ dwells in my heart! I know He does, but I'm not experiencing that. How can I experience that?! Maybe I haven't been living in faith. I thought I was. I believe in God. Well, maybe that's not what He meant when He said that He dwells in our hearts by faith. He must mean more than that because He is not dwelling mightily in my life and I know He can and I know He wants to. So, what is getting

in the way? What am I missing here? Think, think, think, think. What am I doing wrong here? What am I missing about the life of Christ and how to tap into the riches of the glory of God? There must be some things that I am missing, because I know it's available. I know it's His desire, and yet I am not experiencing it. So what's missing?

It's an adventure. Your failures only mean that there is a lot of stuff out ahead of you that is available to you if you would pursue it with all your heart. What I'm saying is, don't just be religious, doing the right things and trying to please everyone—"What's the right thing, what's the right thing, what will make everyone happy?" Wrong. That's not Christianity. It's also not, "Jesus, I want to do this for You. Jesus, I want to be a worshipper and I want to relate to You." It's not just that. *It is* that, but there is something beyond that.

Many of you already know there has to be something beyond that because you do turn to Him. You do fellowship with Him. You do relate to Him. You do talk to Him about your failures. You do talk to Him about the things that trouble you. You are not disconnected, doing stuff for yourself. You are worshippers. Most of you, if not all of you, are worshippers from the heart and that is good. But still, I think if I took a poll, a number of you would find yourself to be feeling like failures a lot more often than you want to—a lot more often than you know pleases Him. You know your personality is still foolish or childish or temperamental or easily frustrated. You know your temperament, your moods, your choices, the things that come out of your mouth—you know those attitudes and decisions are not really Jesus far too frequently. So, what's left? You either accept it the way it is, fall asleep in the back seat, get angry, blame someone else, pretend it's the way it's supposed to be and sit behind the steering wheel going nowhere (driving your little steering wheel as fast as you can and sitting still while you are doing it—there are people in the world who do that), or you can search desperately for the keys while you are fellowshiping with Him, and find out why these are still weaknesses for you. Find out why you are still tossed to and fro like a child.

All That Jesus Is

The Scripture that is right after "the full measure of the stature of Christ" in all of His fullness and glory and personality and character qualities...the one right after that is, "...no longer infants tossed to

and fro...” Not babies who are pushed around by all the same ol’ junk year after year. There is a fullness and a stature and a personality that is available if we learn how to live in Christ rather than just with Christ and for Christ. So, find the keys. I’m tempting you. I’m tormenting you, I’m jabbing you. I’m not trying to give you answers. I’m trying to say, be desperate to find those answers, because all that Jesus is is available to you.

All the weaknesses that you have had with your drawn face and moods—it just doesn’t need to be that way anymore. All that Jesus is and every character quality that you have ever sung about, every character quality that you have ever admired and loved about Him is available to each of us if we would find out how to live *in* Him rather than *for* Him. We learn how to draw on and commune with His Life. We learn how to *experience* Him rather than just do it *for* Him—how to experience Him when the temptations come, when the moods hit us, when the hormones hit us, when the circumstances bang us. So, how do we experience Him and let Him live, rather than just trying to do the right things and then talking to Him about it? By all means, try to do the right things. By all means, talk to Him about it. But also understand that you can let Him live rather than just trying really hard to do the right thing. And, what is seen then, in your circumstances is, “The prince of this world has come, but he has nothing in me.” Your character and your personality will change right before the very eyes of your co-workers, your family, and so on.

Has anyone attained to such a thing? I know I haven’t. My tongue is too sharp sometimes. My moods get too unraveled, at times. There are times that I know that I am not living in Him when that stuff happens. Sometimes I immediately talk about it. Sometimes I just dwell on it, think about it late at night and talk to God about it. But, what I know for sure is that I don’t have to be that way and I don’t plan on being that way in the future. Also, I know it’s an adventure. That’s what I want to try to give to you, if you are not already understanding. I could be depressed when I fail. I could think, “Well, everything God has ever done for me is bogus. Everything I’ve always tried to do for Him is a sham, because after all, I’m still tossed around by this.” I’m still tempted this way or that way, so therefore I’m going to be angry, bitter, depressed, whine, accuse, quit, or pretend that everything is okay when it’s not. I could go through all that stuff—and it’s not that I haven’t at times. But, here’s the difference. Now, I know this: Because He does

live inside of me, it is an adventure to find out how to draw Him out so that He is the only one exposed to those temptations! No longer I, but Christ! He is the only one now exposed to these temptations. I'm not. I know it's an adventure to find out how it is that I'm not yet living in faith, how it is that I've shortchanged the opportunities that are in front of me. Somehow I have sabotaged my own potential and now I am intrigued about where those keys are. Where are they? I know they are there. Where are those keys? I want those keys!! It is an adventure to live *in* Him. It's a burden to do stuff *for* Him. It's a joy, but there are too many failures just to do it *with* Him. But there is a massive amount of victory, more than we have ever asked for or imagined, in doing it *in* Him, rather than just for Him or about Him.

Spring That Trap

It is possible to booby trap our own fullness, our own stature in Christ, our own ability to vanquish the enemy and scoff at him, to make a public spectacle, an open show of the enemy, humiliating him, as the Scriptures say. Here's one of the ways we booby trap our own futures—let me ask you this question: How many of you got the alphanumeric page from Betty about Ephesians 1-2? How many of you got my page after that saying, “Please read Ephesians 1 and 2 and really meditate on it?” How many of you did it? I don't know if that's 100% or not; I don't think so. But, if you want to booby trap your own future, go ahead and be lazy and sloppy.

If you are asking yourself, “Why do I fail? How am I not able to draw and tap the power of God that lives inside of me?” One way you could booby trap it is by being sloppy and lazy. If you didn't read Ephesians 1-2, maybe there is an outstanding reason why you didn't, and that's fine. No problem. But in your own heart, you know whether you were sloppy and lazy, or if it was really God saying, “Not now. You will have time later. What I have to do for you right this minute is more important.” You know which one it was. But if you didn't pursue that, that sloppiness and laziness is unraveling your potential. It's undermining, booby trapping, sabotaging Christ in you, the hope of glory. And, living that way is a foolish and ridiculous waste. There is a practical example for you.

One thing that would have been very fair to do, just for the pure fun of it would have been to say, “Everyone who actually spent some time

with God reading Ephesians 1-2, based on Betty's page, raise your hand. Everyone that didn't raise your hand, go home. You are not welcome here tonight." That would have been very fair to do, wouldn't it? God is serious about it. Why shouldn't we be?

So, let's go back to the practical for a second. "I will be found by those that search for Me with all their heart." You can decide whether your time and attention and affections wander off in other ways or if you really do want to know Him. You can decide if you do want to experience the power of His resurrection in your mortal body. Those are decisions that you will make for yourself, because it is possible. It is His desire. The keys are right there to drive away in His glory. "I rise up to worship, I stand to acclaim, the King of all glory, Christ Jesus His name. Fill me, make me a chariot of fire." Great song. But is that really what you want out of your life, or do you just want to be a mortal crybaby, weakling, a rag doll strewn about in the front yard by the dogs that come and put their saliva all over you? Is that really what you want? What is it that you want with your life? That is a decision that each of us can make only on an individual basis. What do we put our attention into? Is it landscaping, computers, sports? What really is most important to us? "I will be found by those who search for Me with all their heart."

YOU Can Overcome

The potential to be an overcomer and have His life, His power, His character, and His ability to overcome temptation—all that stuff is very, very available to us if we will search for the keys rather than fall asleep or pretend or be angry with someone else. The power of God to overcome even your hormones, your temptations, your fears and failures—the ones that have ransacked you for the last twenty years—the power of Jesus is not a weakling! He is not subject to those things. "The prince of this world has come, but he has nothing in me." That's what's available—the full measure of the stature, the personality and the character of Jesus of Nazareth. That's what the new covenant is about: Christ in you, the hope—not of survival—but of glory! Make the choices. Find the keys and make the choices.

"For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom His whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your

inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the Love of Christ, and to know this Love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:14-19).

That same passage in the Amplified: *“For this reason, seeing the greatness of this plan by which you are built together in Christ, I bow my knees before the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for Whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that Father from Whom all Fatherhood takes its title and derives its name. May He grant you out of the rich treasury of His glory to be strengthened and reinforced with mighty power in the inner man by the Holy Spirit, Himself indwelling your innermost being and personality. May Christ through your faith, actually dwell, settle down, abide, make His permanent home in your hearts. May you be rooted deep in love and founded securely on love, that you may have the power and be strong to apprehend and grasp with all the saints, God’s devoted people, the experience of that love what is the breadth and length and height and depth of it; that you may really come to know practically, through experience for yourselves, the love of Christ, which far surpasses mere knowledge without experience, that you may be filled through all your being, unto all the fullness of God, may have the richest measure of the divine Presence and become a body wholly filled and flooded with God Himself! Now to Him Who, by, and in consequence of the action of His power that is at work within us, is able to carry out His purpose and do superabundantly, far over, and above all that we dare ask or think, infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, hopes or dreams. To Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever. Amen. So be it.”*

You know what would really be fun? It would be fun if a year or two years from now there was no place you could turn in the body of Christ locally (worldwide would be cool, too, for that matter...but, at least locally...that’s kind of what we have the most to say about), where if someone really didn’t express the personality of Jesus in some situation—they let fear or discouragement or some other temptation come their way and they gave into it with a sharp word or with depression or anger or lust or whatever else it would be—where there wouldn’t be someone who could say, “That really wasn’t Jesus coming through. That was the old man, that was the sinful nature, that was

flesh, that was the old dead you, your corpse before Jesus came to live in you; that was that thing. That wasn't really Jesus coming through." And, our response to that wouldn't be defensiveness ("Well, wait a minute! What about you?"), or depression ("You're right, you're right. I've failed again. Now what are you going to think about me?"). Instead of any of that stuff, our response would be, "You know, you're right. I wonder where I messed up. I wonder why I wasn't drawing on the life of Christ in that situation. I wonder where the key is that would free me in a situation like that in the future. I'm glad you brought that up. Thank you, because I want to find that key, too. I hadn't even noticed that I was missing access to the life of Christ when situations like that came up." Or maybe our response would be, "You are bringing it to my attention, but I kind of knew that in situations like that the personality of Jesus doesn't come through. Yeah, you are right. Thank you."

Because we want to access that, it's not about religion anymore. It's not about some standard that has been set that everyone is supposed to live up to. It's not about fear or guilt or any external failure of any kind, any external measuring rod of any kind. It's just about whether or not we accessed and lived in the person of Jesus and He came shining through in situation after situation after situation. He didn't in this situation... Well fine, that's an opportunity to access the life of Christ, to learn why He doesn't come through in that kind of situation every time when He should.

So, we are working together so that we'll shine like stars in the universe, so that we'll all together, the whole family of God, shine in the full measure of the stature of Christ and glow and emanate His personality, His character and His victory in situation after situation. That would certainly be His desire for His own body, right? The Body of Christ would reflect the character and personality of Christ from tip to toe, from head to furthest fingernail. That's His desire.

It's a process then, of working together in this adventure of not just living *with Him* or *for Him*, but the adventure of discovering the fullness of what it means to live *in Him*—and let Him show Himself in ten thousand situations that our flesh would be so incapable of even conceiving. But far beyond, immeasurably, superabundantly beyond, anything we could ever conceive of—*that's* what He wants to do powerfully within us...together and as individuals.

Excerpt From “Jesus In His Fullness”

Friday Night, May 7, 1993

But suppose you and I (if we are truly in Covenant and in love with Jesus, rather than ourselves) approach our lives in a radically different way?

Let's begin with the decision that Jesus, Himself, will be our All in All, believing that He alone is the way to the Father and that every spiritual blessing exists in Him.

That decision will have some revolutionary implications for our lives...

“From Now On, You Know Me”

“Thomas said to Him, ‘Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?’ Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know Him and have seen Him’” (John 14:5-7).

It Takes a Bunch of Children!

We look in the mirror and wonder, “Hey, do I really know God?” It's interesting that Thomas and Philip and the others had been with Jesus so long, yet were still asking these same sort of questions. They really didn't understand exactly who Jesus was; they didn't know who the Father was; they didn't know how the two were connected. After all this time with Jesus, it still wasn't clear.

But Jesus made the comment: “From now on you know God.” I'm sure they scratched their heads at that point and said, “We do? I mean, five

minutes ago we didn't. But now we do—right!" I'm certain Jesus' words were a little frustrating for them. But it is encouraging that, while there's a part that we play in being fertile soil and in not letting weeds take the place of God's crop, the "work" of our knowing God seems to be God's responsibility. The rest of John 14 records that Jesus went on to talk in great detail about the Holy Spirit's place in the believer's life in nurturing that relationship.

So I feel OK being dumb and having Jesus look at me and say, "You don't know God, but now you know God." The faith the Father is speaking from through His Son is that He knows the end as the beginning. It's clear in His mind, and He's actually trying to pass on a confidence to us that we won't measure ourselves by how we feel or perform. There's something bigger than that going on!

If you have ears to hear, understand this: Jesus' commitment to you is more real than your current introspection.

"Now you know Me."

"We do?" Well, I can live with that. If Jesus says I know Him and His Father, then I'm not going to argue with Him. And while I may not be expressing the fullness of it, isn't it also true that "greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world"? Isn't it true that it is by faith that we can throw mountains into the sea? Doesn't Christ dwell in our hearts by faith? As a prerequisite for our experiencing what He said, we must believe what He said. And if He says that my knowledge of Him in His mind is real, then the only question is whether I'm willing to believe that my knowledge of Him is complete in Him.

If I don't believe that Jesus is the Way, I'm going to be constantly frustrated and wandering and experimenting in confusion. But if I believe Jesus is the Way, it's a pretty simple matter to escape the confusion that satan would try to throw into my mind. As God has promised us that we can know Him—and that in His mind, we already do—then we must believe Him before we can live it out.

That's a real mystery. I admit it to you freely. We're wired in such a way that we tend to demand proof before we actually accept something as true. Jesus came to rewire us! He has told us, "What I say is true. The Word became flesh. I am the Truth. Forget what you've heard or experienced—what I say to you is truth." It takes a bunch of children to live that way!

“Now you know Me.”

“OK! I don’t know what that means, but I know it’s true. Now all I have to do is find out how it’s true.” There’s no debate about whether it’s true; it is true.

“Now you know Me.”

“Help me to see how I know You. I didn’t think that I did, but I’m obviously wrong, because You said I do. So I do!”

Actually, there are a lot of Scriptures that call us to make that kind of response. For example: “Reckon yourselves dead to sin.”

“Unh, unh! I’m not dead to sin. No way! Why, just this morning...”

And in your mind you can argue with God! I don’t recommend that. For one thing, you’re going to be wrong every time! For another, you’re never going to experience life in Christ as long as you’re walking in unbelief. You’re never going to be able to experience the reality of the gospel of Jesus in your life, and you will be like millions of others who have gone to their graves never experiencing Christianity, although they professed it. Why is that? Because they walked in unbelief. Just like the Hebrews, they didn’t combine it with faith. They heard the words, but they didn’t believe them. They let their experiences dictate how they felt and how they looked at themselves. Whether they considered themselves dead to sin depended on how they did this morning, not on what God said.

I *am* dead to sin. I am *dead* to sin. How do I know that? Because God said so. My experience doesn’t measure up? Well, that’s my problem. God said it’s true, so it’s true! Now I just need to believe that. The living out of that truth will follow belief. It won’t precede faith!

You have to get that straight about Christianity. That’s the point Jesus was making when He said, “I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. If you’ll just understand that your ability to have the Way, the Truth, and the Life—the *Zoe* life, the eternal life, the power of the galaxies inside your mortal body—depends on whether you are hiding in Jesus for their fulfillment. To attempt to attain those things by your own effort is futile! You will never attain the Way, the Truth, and the Life; they are hidden in Christ to the glory of God. The only way to have them is to rest in Jesus, to find your life and your hope in Him no matter how you feel, to “believe in the One whom the Father sent.”

Stop right at Jesus as the answer to your questions.

“Am I saved?”

“Is Jesus saved?”

“Am I wise?”

“Is Jesus wise?”

“Am I holy?”

“Is Jesus holy?”

“Am I dead to sin?”

“Was Jesus dead to sin?”

“Am I happy?”

“Was Jesus content?”

“Can I pray?”

“Well, could Jesus?”

The answer to every single question is in Jesus. He is the answer. He doesn't give a big rule book so that we can figure out the formulas and memorize the answers, and—provided we figure all the formulas right—then: Yeah! “The Victorious Christian Life” (whatever that is). Or “the perfect church.” Life in Christ is not a matter of formulas, and neither is corporate life. The church consists of a bunch of people that are totally sold out—not just in a committed sense, but in the sense that Jesus is the answer to their every question about their lives. Otherwise, you can be saved, but you can't experience salvation in this current life. If Jesus isn't the answer to every question about who you are and what strength and abilities and talents you have, what impact you can have on another's life, how you feel about yourself—if He's not the answer, then you'll continue to live a futile, frustrated life. That's not God's will for you. Jesus came that you could have life in abundance. Frankly, as you know, not a lot of people have experienced that.

Your willingness to love the truth is the beginning of your ability to walk in the gospel, the good news of Jesus, and to “taste the powers of the coming age” in this current age. You really can experience that kind of walk! Paul did. He wrote of being “seated with Christ in the heavenly realms.” Did he learn about that in theology class under Gamaliel? What Old Testament passage was he quoting? There isn't one! The

truth was that Jesus had revealed to Paul his position in Christ. As a result, he was living a life seated with Christ, and he simply described what he was seeing. “Best way I can describe it is that it’s kind of like being seated with Christ in the heavenlies. Yeah, that would be a good way to say it.” He was expressing what he was experiencing. That’s the way God wants us all to live. That is your destiny! That’s your place! That’s who you are—as you are willing to accept and believe that God said so, and as you allow Him to write it on your heart.

Announce that it’s true, to the world and to the accuser of the brethren and to your own face in the mirror. Proclaim that Jesus is the fulfillment of God’s every requirement of you, that Jesus is the “Yes” and the “Amen” to every promise and every hope of God—past, present, and future. I don’t know another way to say it—just settle this stuff in your heart! When you look in the mirror and you’ve failed, and you’re frustrated and tempted when the children are crying in stereo, when stuff is happening to you, make sure that you do not falter or waver from this foundational point: Whatever else may be true, Jesus is the answer. The answer has already been given. It’s been spoken. The Word has become flesh. The Father’s every hope and every dream have been fulfilled in you, as you believe on the One He has sent. Jesus is the Way.

“Am I going to make it?”

“Did Jesus make it?”

“I made it! I made it!” Can you believe that? Can you look into the Father’s eye and say, “I made it!” Or are you busy looking at yourself, not believing what God has said and kicking in the dirt, asking, “Am I going to make it or not? I don’t know. I wonder if I can?”

Don’t live that way! God will love you anyway, but He doesn’t want you to live a frustrated, miserable low life. So don’t! And while you are at it, “Encourage one another with these words.” When you see somebody who isn’t seeing things as Jesus would, who is looking at himself in a way not in line with the hope and promise of the gospel, the good news of Jesus, then encourage one another. “Go forth and multiply and fill the earth”—with the good news of Jesus. He has fulfilled Father’s every requirement of you, and He is the answer to every question about your worth, your value, your potential—the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Your Calling is NO ACCIDENT!

Monday Morning, November 5, 2001

Over the years, the prodigious leader Vince Lombardi was often overheard telling his players, “You were chosen to be a Green Bay Packer.”

How much more could that motivate us, if we stopped to ponder—to realize—that the Father of Lights chose us to be washed in the blood of his own Son, filled with the Spirit of His Son, and merged and melted into the Family of His Son!

He chose us! We were *personally selected, hand-picked* by the all-Knowing Creator of the Galaxies, to be His sons and daughters—and co-workers and teammates—to bring satan to his knees and final defeat!

How much confidence should *that* inspire in you, in your workplace and neighborhood??!! *You were chosen to be on this team*—it was no accident! Take courage in that, and GO FOR IT! No fear. No regret. No backing off. No hesitation! You were CHOSEN to be on this Team, and in this Family! And Father knows what He is doing! ☺