

NEW TESTAMENT SURVEY

*Exploring the central messages
of every Book of the Bible*

PETER HAMMOND

NEW TESTAMENT SURVEY

EXPLORING THE CENTRAL MESSAGES OF
EVERY BOOK OF THE BIBLE

by Peter Hammond



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Dedication

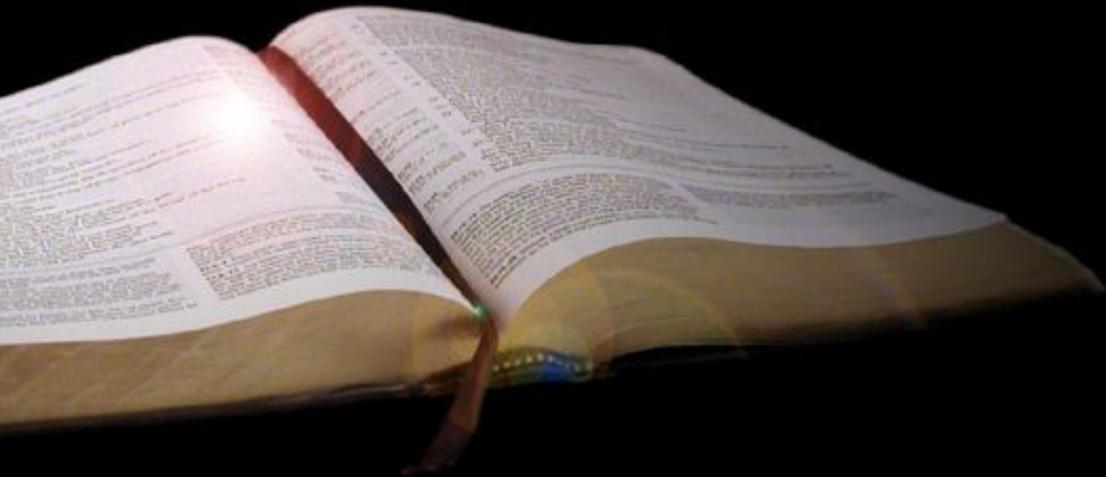
To **Professor Shai Mulder**, Director of **Back to the Bible Mission**, who since AD2000 has trained thousands of pastors, evangelists, missionaries and college lecturers from over 30 countries in Africa, ensuring they are thoroughly grounded in every Book of the Bible.

Dr. Mulder has made Back to the Bible Mission the most effective, Bible based, Christ centered, missionary minded, prayerful and evangelistic training institution for ministry of the Gospel in Africa.

May God continue to use you, your faculty, graduates and students to disciple Africa for Christ.

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INTRODUCTION

JESUS is the FULFILMENT of MESSIANIC PROPHECIES

The Incomplete Old Testament

The Old Testament Scriptures are the Word of God. However, they were definitely incomplete. The Old Covenant speaks of a King from the line of David, whose Kingdom would never end. It spoke of all the families of the nations of the earth being blessed by the Seed of Abraham. It spoke of a Prophet like Moses, arising from among the people, whose teaching would be unparalleled. It spoke of a Servant of the Lord, whose death would atone for the sins of His people. Of One who would make a New Covenant between God and men. One who would put the Spirit of the Lord into the hearts of men, so that they could know God personally and have their sins wiped out. It spoke of a Stone, despised by the builders, which would become the chief Cornerstone. It spoke of One like the Son of Man who would receive authority, honor and royal power so that the people of all nations, races and languages would serve Him. It spoke of a Priest of the order of Melchizedek whom the Almighty would call Lord and welcome to His Throne. It spoke of a coming Messiah who would be born of the tribe of Judah, from David's line, in Bethlehem. He would be despised and rejected by the very people He came to deliver. He would die among wicked men and His tomb would be supplied by a rich man. Yet He would live again, forever, and the Lord's purpose would succeed through Him. All of this was fulfilled by Jesus! Not some of it. Not much of it. All of it! Prophecies made by many prophets over a thousand years and more were all fulfilled in One historical Person.

Identifying the Messiah

There are 333 passages of the Old Testament that make predictions about the Messiah. 451 details are given in these passages. They were all fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth.

Proclaiming the Future in the Past

"Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things that are not yet done ..." Isaiah 46:9-10

"I have declared the former things from the beginning; they went forth from My mouth and I caused them to hear it. Suddenly I did them, and they came to pass, even from the beginning I have declared it to you; before it came to pass I have proclaimed it to you ..." Isaiah 48:3-5

The Old Testament Proclaims Christ

The Lord Jesus Christ, during His earthly ministry, declared: *“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil.”* Matthew 5:17

After He had risen from the dead, Jesus appeared to some of His followers on the road to Emmaus *“and beginning at Moses and all the prophets He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.”* Luke 24:27

To His disciples Jesus explained: *“These are the Words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.”* Luke 24:44

“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me ... if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me ...” John 5:39-47

Again and again in the Scriptures we read of how **Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies.** *“But all this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.”* Matthew 26:56

Jesus began His public ministry by reading a Messianic prophecy from the book of Isaiah and declaring: *“Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”* Luke 4:21

In the book of Acts we read that the Apostles taught that Jesus Christ fulfilled the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. *“But those things that God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled.”* Acts 3:18

“To Him all the prophets witness ...” Acts 10:43

Festivals Fulfilled

The Levitical feasts of the Old Covenant are fulfilled in Christ. For example, The Passover is fulfilled in the death of Christ (1 Corinthians 5:7). The feast of First Fruits is fulfilled in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:23). The feast of Pentecost is fulfilled in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5; 2:4).

Old Testament Prophecies Fulfilled in Jesus

So, what are some of the Messianic prophecies fulfilled in the earthly ministry of Jesus of Nazareth?

After the fall of Adam and Eve into sin, God promised a Redeemer, **born of the seed of woman**, who would suffer but Who would ultimately defeat satan: (Genesis 3:15; Galatians 4:4; Matthew 1:21).

The Messiah was to be **born of a virgin**: (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23).

The Messiah would be **a descendant of Abraham**: (Genesis 22:18; Genesis 12:2-3; Matthew 1:1).

It is most significant that Jesus is called the Son of Abraham, as this points out that He was called to the altar of the Cross. He is also called the Son of David, because He is destined to the Crown and the throne. King of kings and Lord of lords. The first time He came as the Lamb of God, a Sacrifice. God Himself has provided the Lamb: *“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.”* The second time He comes, He will come not as the suffering Servant and the sacrificial Lamb, but as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, King of kings and Lord of lords.

The Messiah was to be born **of the line of Isaac**: (Genesis 21:12; Luke 3:23, 34).

So these prophecies identify that the Messiah would come from the Hebrew race and of the line of Abraham and Isaac.

The Messiah would be **a descendent from Jacob**: (Numbers 24:17; Luke 3:23, 34).

The Scripture prophesied that the Messiah would come from **the tribe of Judah**: (Genesis 49:10; Luke 3:23, 33).

The Messiah would come from **the family of Jesse**: (Isaiah 11:1; Luke 3:23, 32).

The Messiah would come from **the house of David**: *“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, that I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgement and righteousness in the land.”* Jeremiah 23:5 (*“Jesus ... the Son of David...”* Luke 3:23, 31).

So, these prophecies tell us that the Messiah would be born of a virgin, from the line of Abraham, descended from Isaac (not Ishmael), from Jacob (not Esau), from the tribe of Judah (eliminating 11/12ths of the tribes of Israel as possibilities.), from the family of Jesse, and from the house of King David. Now the prophecies become even more specific as to where the Messiah would be born:

The Messiah would be **born at Bethlehem**: (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1; Matthew 2:6)

There are also prophecies that the Messiah would be **presented gifts from kings** (Psalm 72:10 and Isaiah 60:6; Matthew 2:1-11).

The prophecy of lamentation for **slain children** (Jeremiah 31:15) was fulfilled when King Herod ordered that all the male children under 2 years

old in the district of Bethlehem be put to death, in order to murder the prophesied Messiah (Matthew 2:16-18).

Other Messianic prophecies included that: **He shall be called Lord:** (Psalm 110:1; Luke 2:11; Matthew 22:43-45).

He shall be a **Prophet:** (Deuteronomy 18:18; Matthew 21:11; John 1:17).

It can be noted that Christ and Moses were both delivered from a violent death in their infancy, both exercised control over the sea, both fed multitudes of people miraculously, both mediated between Jehovah and Israel and made intercession on behalf of sinful people.

The Messiah would also be a **Priest** according to the Order of Melchizedek: (Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 3:1; Hebrews 5:5-6).

The Messiah would be **Judge:** (Isaiah 33:22; Titus 2:13-14).

The Messiah will be **King:** (Psalm 2:6; Jeremiah 23:5; Zachariah 9:9; Revelation 19:16).

The Messiah would have a **special anointing of the Holy Spirit:** (Isaiah 11:2; Matthew 3:16-17).

The Messiah would be **preceded by a messenger who will prepare the way in the wilderness:** (Isaiah 40:3-5; Matthew 3:1-3).

His ministry would begin **in Galilee:** (Isaiah 9:1; Matthew 4:12-17).

He would work **miracles:** (Isaiah 35:5-6; Matthew 9:35; Luke 7:22).

He would teach in **parables:** (Psalm 78:2; Matthew 13:34).

He would **enter Jerusalem on a donkey:** (Zechariah 9:9; Luke 19:35-37).

The Messiah would **enter the Temple:** (Malachi 3:1; Matthew 21:12).

He would be **zealous for God's House:** (Psalm 69:9; John 2:15-16; Matthew 21:12-13).

The Messiah was to be a **Stone of Stumbling:** (Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 8:14-15; Luke 20:17-18; 1 Peter 2:7).

He would be **betrayed by a friend:** (Psalm 41:9; Matthew 10:4).

He would be **betrayed for 30 pieces of silver:** (Zechariah 11:12; Matthew 26:15).

The money would be **thrown into God's House:** (Zechariah 11:13; Matthew 27:5; Matthew 27:7).

He would be **forsaken by His disciples**: (Zechariah 13:7; Mark 14:50).

He would be **accused by false witnesses**: (Psalm 35:11; Matthew 26:59-60).

He would be **silent before His accusers**: (Isaiah 53:7; *“And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing.”* Matthew 27:12).

He would be **wounded and bruised**: (Isaiah 53:5).

He would be **beaten and abused**: (Isaiah 50:6; Matthew 26:67).

He would be **mocked**: (Psalm 22:7-8; Matthew 27:29).

His hands and His feet would be pierced: (Psalm 22:16; Luke 23:33).

He would be **executed with thieves**: (Isaiah 53:12; Matthew 27:38).

He would **intercede for His persecutors**: (Isaiah 53:12; Luke 23:34).

He would be **rejected by His people**: (Isaiah 53:3).

His friends would stand afar off: (Psalm 38:11; Luke 23:49).

People would shake their heads at Him: (Psalm 109:25; Matthew 27:39).

His garment would be gambled for: (Psalm 22:18; John 19:23-24).

Gall and vinegar would be offered to Him: (Psalm 69:21; Matthew 27:34).

He would cry out: (Psalm 22:1; Matthew 27:46).

He would commit His Spirit to God: (Psalm 31:5; Luke 23:46).

None of His bones would be broken: (Psalm 34:20; John 19:33).

His side would be pierced: (Zechariah 12:10; John 19:34).

His heart would break: (Psalm 22:14; John 19:34).

There would be darkness over the land: (Amos 8:9; Matthew 27:45).

He would be buried in a rich man’s tomb: (Isaiah 53:9; Matthew 27:57-60).

He would rise from the dead: (Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:30-32).

He would ascend on High: (Psalm 68:18; Acts 1:9).

He would be **seated at the right hand of God**: (Psalm 110:1; Hebrews 1:3).

Many Gentiles, including kings, would come to His light: (Isaiah 60:3; Acts 13:47-48).

These are only some of the over 300 Old Testament prophecies fulfilled in the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. The place of His birth

(Micah 5:2), the time of His birth (Genesis 49:10 and Daniel 9:25), the unique manner of His birth (Isaiah 7:14), the manner of His death (Psalm 22:16), and so much more, was prophesied in great detail from 500 to over 1000 years before His birth. All of these prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus Christ and they establish a solid confirmation of His credentials as the Messiah.

“To Him all the prophets witness ...” Acts 10:43

Jesus is the Seed of the woman, born of the virgin, Emmanuel, the Son of God, the Son of Abraham, the Son of David, the Lion of Judah, Prophet, Priest and King, eternal Judge. He made the blind see, the deaf to hear, the lame to walk and the dumb to sing for joy. He cleansed the lepers, healed the sick and raised the dead. He taught in parables. At the appointed time He entered Jerusalem on a donkey and suddenly came to His Temple, cleansing it. He was a rock of offence and a stone of stumbling to the Jews, but He became a light to the Gentiles. He was betrayed by a friend, for 30 pieces of silver, forsaken by His disciples, accused by false witnesses, wounded and bruised, smitten and spat upon, mocked and crucified. Yet He rose from the dead and ascended into Heaven. He is seated at the right hand of God the Father in Heaven and He will come again to Judge the living and the dead.

He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords, the eternal Judge before whom each one of us will stand. Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the Son of the Living God, the fulfillment of all Old Testament prophecies.

Have you surrendered your life to Him?

Are you living in obedience to Him?

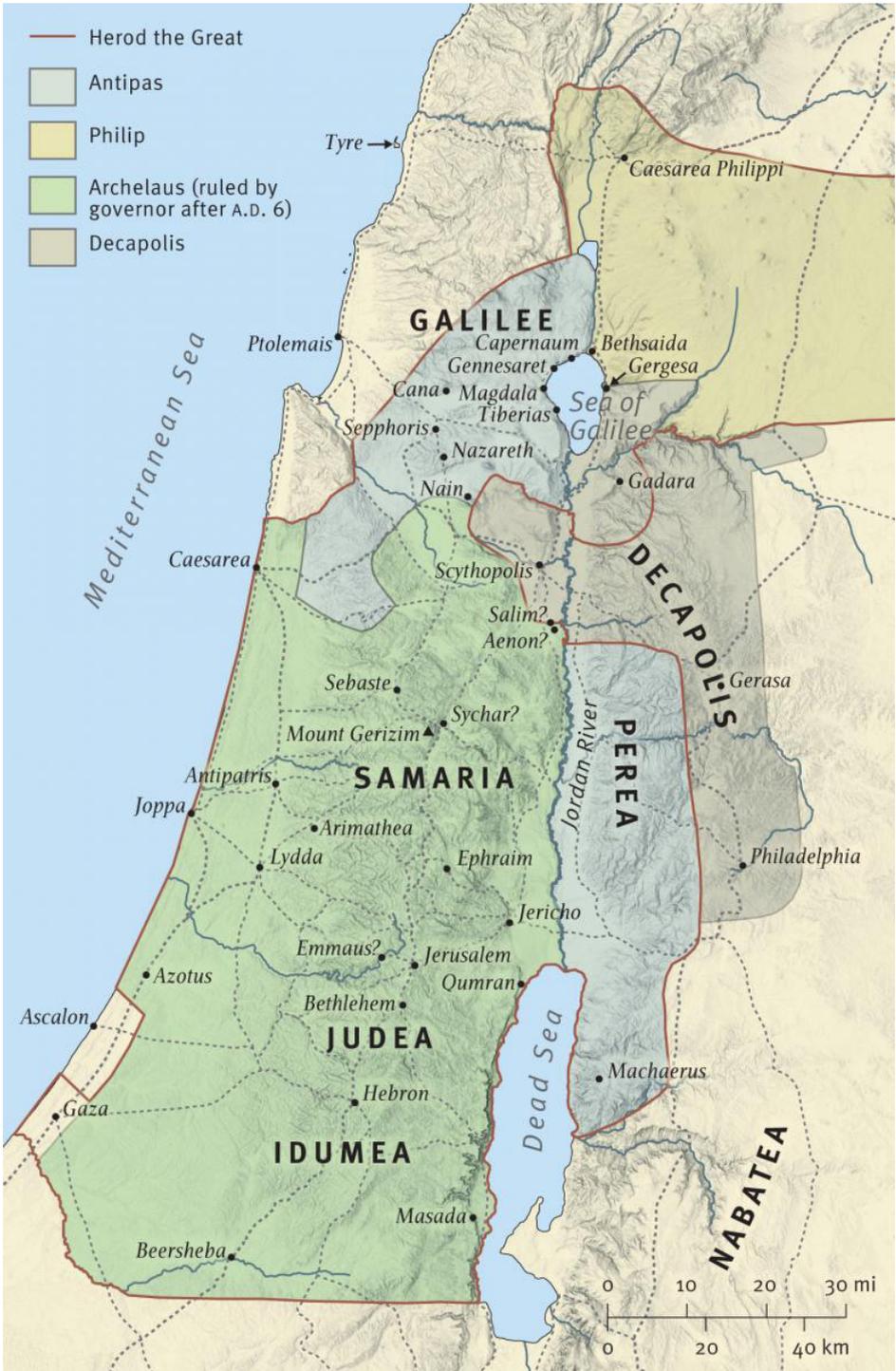
Do you love Him with all of your heart, with all of your soul, with all of your mind and with all of your strength?

Is Jesus Christ your Saviour and Lord, or is He your Eternal Judge?



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CHAPTER 1

MATTHEW

“...And on this rock I will build My Church and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” Matthew 16:18

Who Was Matthew?

Matthew (*meaning gift of the Lord*) was from the tribe of Levi (9:9), a tax collector who left everything to follow Christ (Luke 5:27-28). Matthew describes himself as a tax collector (10:3) who became one of the Twelve Apostles.

A Manual for Discipleship

The Gospel of Matthew is the fullest, most comprehensive, systematic and orderly account of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Matthew is a Manual for Discipleship.

The Four Gospels

Each of the four Gospels provide unique, first-hand accounts of our Lord Jesus Christ, His life and teachings.

Mark is the shortest and most concise, fast-moving, action-packed Gospel, mostly focussing on what Jesus **did** – focussing on His actions, miracles, death and Resurrection. Mark emphasizes Jesus Christ as the **Son of Man**. **Matthew** and **Luke** include far more about what Jesus **said** and **taught**.

Matthew emphasises Jesus as **King**. Luke emphasises Jesus as **Saviour**.

Whereas Mark is plainly an Evangelist to convince unbelievers with the news of Jesus’ remarkable life and actions, Matthew and Luke are more teachers providing the biography and teachings of Jesus to aid in discipling new converts.

John is like the professor, who takes disciples even further. John is mostly concerned with the identity of Jesus – who He is. In John, Jesus is emphasised as the **Son of God**.

Actions, Teaching and Identity

Mark, the Evangelist aimed at reaching unbelievers with: What Jesus **did**.

Matthew and **Luke**, discipling new believers, focus on: What Jesus **said**.

John, as the teacher/professor, focuses on: Who Jesus **is**.

The Hinge of History

The Gospels form the hinge of history, dividing the world into Before Christ (B.C.) and In the Year of Our Lord (A.D.). The world would never be the same again.

Birth and Baptism

Whereas Mark starts with the baptism of Jesus, Matthew starts with the birth of Jesus and His ancestry.

The Genealogies of Jesus

While Luke gives the genealogy of Mary's ancestors, Matthew follows Joseph, the step-father's line. Matthew identifies Jesus as the *Son of Abraham* and the *Son of David*. He records the fourteen generations between Abraham and David and the fourteen generations between King David and the time of the Exile. Then the fourteen generations from the time of the Exile to the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus he covers the times of the prophets, the kings and the priests. Our Lord Jesus Christ is our **Prophet, Priest and King**.

The Structure of Matthew

Matthew's Gospel is structured in five great discourses of the teachings of Christ and four accounts of deeds to illustrate those teachings. These five great teaching discourses parallel the five Books of the Law (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy). Each section begins with: "From that time..." and ends with "when Jesus had finished..."

The Law of the Lord is Perfect Converting the Soul

The Lord Jesus clearly stated: ***"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil. For assuredly, I say to you, till Heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the Law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven."*** Matthew 5:17-19. It is even more serious to teach others to break the Law of God than to actually break it ourselves. Teachers will be judged with greater strictness.

Old Testament Prophecy Fulfilled

Matthew makes 65 references to Old Testament prophecies fulfilled by Christ. There are 29 direct Old Testament quotes and 121 references, or allusions, to Old Testament events and images. Just in the birth of Christ, Matthew quotes from 13 Old Testament prophecies in Micah, Hosea, Jeremiah and Isaiah.

Distinctive Features of Matthew

Only in the Gospel of Matthew do we read about the visit of the wise men from the East, the Magi (2:1), the flight into Egypt (2:13-14), the slaughter of the innocents by king Herod's soldiers in Bethlehem (2:16) and the

return to Nazareth (2:19-23). Matthew alone records the coming of the Pharisees and Sadducees to John the Baptist (3:7), the full Sermon on the Mount (chapter 5 - 7) and the Words of Jesus: **“Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”** Matthew 11:28. Matthew alone records Peter walking on the sea (14:28-31).

Kingdom of Heaven

Matthew’s Gospel refers to the Kingdom of Heaven 33 times. That is a term unique to Matthew’s Gospel. The other Gospels speak of the Kingdom of God. Matthew, being a Levite, was cautious in using the Name of God and so generally chose rather the term *Kingdom of Heaven*.

The Church in Matthew

Matthew is the only Gospel which mentions **the Church**. In Matthew 16:13-19, we read: *“When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, ‘Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?’ So they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in Heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it..”* Our Lord makes clear that there is only one true Church and He is the One who is building it. As the Church advances, the gates of hell itself will not be able to prevail.

If Your Brother Sins Against You

In Matthew 18, we receive teaching on local church discipline. In Matthew 18:15-20, our Lord teaches on the importance of going to our brother and seeking to resolve any issues. If he refuses to listen, take two or three other brothers with you to try to convince him. Only if he refuses to hear them, should you bring it before the Church.

God Resists the Proud But He Gives Grace to the Humble

“Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. Whoever receives one little child like this in My Name receives Me.”

Matthew 18:3-5

Beware of Causing Little Ones to Stumble

“Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were

drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes! If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.” Matthew 18:6-9

Seek to Bring the Lost Sheep Back Into the Fold

We are warned to take heed that we do not despise any of the little ones, ***“For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”*** Matthew 18:11. If one of the sheep go astray, it is better to leave the 99 in the fold and go to the mountains and seek the one who is straying. ***“Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in Heaven that one of these little ones should perish.”*** Matthew 18:14.

The Observant Accountant

Matthew, showing the orderly mind of an accountant, includes the tribute money that the Lord needed to pay in tax and how He obtained the coin from a fish (17:24-27), the 30 pieces of silver which Judas received for betraying Christ (26:15), and the return of the 30 pieces of silver to the Temple (27:3-10). Matthew, alone amongst the Gospel writers, gives the story of the hidden treasure (13:44) the pearl of great price (13:45), and the labourers in the vineyard (20:1-16). Matthew notes how much they are paid.

Additional Details of the Crucifixion

Matthew alone records the dream of Pilate’s wife, warning him not to betray this innocent Man (27:19), and the appearance of the resurrected saints at the time of the Crucifixion and Resurrection (27:53). Matthew also reports a placing of the Roman guard at the Tomb of Christ (27:64-66), and the bribing of the soldiers (28:12-13). Matthew records the earthquake that accompanied the death of Christ (27:51).

The Weeds Among the Wheat

Matthew warns about the wheat and the weeds (13:24-30) and the unmerciful servant, who, although he was forgiven a great debt by the king, went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a very small sum and ignored his pleas for more time, and had him thrown into prison. When the king heard about this unforgiving servant, he declared: *“You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you? And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until*

he should pay all that was due to him. So My Heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.” Matthew 18:32-35

A Light to the Gentiles

Matthew emphasises the importance of reaching the Gentiles for Christ: Wise men from the East travelled a great distance to come to worship the baby born in Bethlehem. They brought **gold** for the King of kings, **frankincense** for the High Priest above all high priests, and **myrrh** for the sacrifice that would end the need for any other sacrifices. In the genealogy of Christ, Matthew includes the Gentiles, Ruth and Rahab. Matthew tells us that Jesus ministered in “Galilee of the Gentiles” as prophesied.

The Faith of the Centurion

In Capernaum, a Centurion approached Christ, pleading with Him to heal his paralysed servant, but he declared himself unworthy to have the Lord enter into his house and requested the Lord to just say the word: “Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, saying, ‘Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘I will come and heal him.’ The centurion answered and said, ‘Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, Go, and he goes; and to another, Come, and he comes; and to my servant, Do this, and he does it.’ When Jesus heard it, He marvelled, and said to those who followed, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel! And I say to you that many will come from East and West, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven. But the sons of the Kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ Then Jesus said to the centurion, ‘Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you.’ And his servant was healed that same hour.” Matthew 8:5-13

The Persistence of the Canaanite Woman Rewarded

Jesus blessed a Canaanite woman: “O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire. And her daughter was healed from that very hour.” Matthew 15:28.

The Chief Cornerstone Rejected

Matthew records that Jesus is the Chief Cornerstone which the Jews have rejected, therefore the Kingdom will be taken away from the Jews and be given to the Gentiles. “Jesus said to them, ‘have you never read in the Scriptures: The Stone which the builders rejected has become the Chief

Cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore I say to you, **the Kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. And whoever falls on this Stone will be broken; but on whomever It falls, It will grind him to powder.**' Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them." Matthew 21:42-45

Cursed Cities

During Jesus' earthly ministry there were 250,000 people living on the shores of Galilee in four major cities. Today only one of those towns remains. Jesus pronounced woes on Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum. All of those towns have disappeared and only remain as archaeological sites. Only the town Jesus never cursed, Tiberias, is still there.

The Two Sons

Matthew alone gives the parable of the two sons. One son disobeyed his father and said: "I will not!" but afterwards he regretted it and went. Another son answered promptly: "I go, Sir.", but he did not go. The Lord Jesus asked: "Which of the two did the will of his Father? Assuredly I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the Kingdom of God before you." Matthew 21:28-31. It is not so much what we say, but what we **do** that counts. It is not only our words, but our deeds and actions which count. Another distinctive of Matthew is the parable of the Wedding Feast (22:1-14).

Woe to You Scribes and Pharisees

Matthew records the relentless denunciation of the Jewish religious leaders, the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23: "*The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat... but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do to be seen by men... They love the best places at feasts... whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves. Woe to you, blind guides... Fools and blind!... neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Blind guides, who strain out a*

gnat and swallow a camel! Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are **full of extortion and self-indulgence...** hypocrites! For you are like **whitewashed tombs** which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are **full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness**. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness... you are sons of those who murdered the prophets... **Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?**" Matthew 23:2-33

Unprepared for Judgment Day

In Matthew 25, the Lord's return and His Judgment of both His people and the wicked are detailed: "Then the Kingdom of Heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight a cry was heard: **'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!'** Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, Lord, 'Lord, open to us!' But he answered and said, **'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.'**" Matthew 25:1-13

The Parable of the Talents

Here the Lord describes the Day of Judgment in terms of productivity. Those who were fruitful and productive were given more talents, and the one who had hidden his talent in the ground was rebuked: "you wicked and lazy servant... take the talent from him and give it to him who has ten talents... **for to everyone who has, more will be given**, and he will have abundance, but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. And **cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness**. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Matthew 25:14-30

Sins of Omission

The Day of Judgment is described by the Lord as a separation of the sheep from the goats. To those on His left, the Lord will say: "**Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in; naked and you did not**

clothe Me; sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.” Matthew 25:31-46. Here the Day of Judgment is described more in terms of good things that we failed to do, rather than than bad things we did, serious as those are.

Prophet, Priest and King

Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the fulfilment of all Old Testament prophecies. He is our **Prophet, Priest and King**.

Son of Abraham

Jesus Christ, as the Son of Abraham, was destined for the **Altar** of the **Cross**, the ultimate sacrifice. *“The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.”*

Son of David

Jesus Christ is also the Son of David, the King, destined for the **Throne** and the **Crown**. He is The Lion, *“King of king and Lord of lords”*.

The Great Commission

“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in Heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’” Matthew 28:18-20



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CHAPTER 2

MARK

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many.” Mark 10:45

Who was Mark?

John Mark was born in Cyrene in Africa, of the tribe of Levi. While John (Johanna) is a Hebrew name meaning The Lord has shown grace, Mark comes from the Latin Marcus. John Mark was a cousin of Barnabas (Colossians 4:10). His mother, Mary, played an active role in the early days of the Church in Jerusalem. John Mark received an excellent education and was fluent in Hebrew, Greek and Latin. He had the privilege of growing up in a God-fearing home and surrounded by the leaders of the early Church.

The Upper Room

His mother, Mary’s, upper room was the venue for the Passover supper, used by the Lord Jesus for His Last Supper with His disciples. It was in the same upper room that the Lord appeared to the disciples after the Resurrection. It was to John Mark’s mother’s home that Peter went, when freed from prison (Acts 12:12).

The Evangelist

John Mark was present at the Wedding at Cana in Galilee (John 2:1-11). He was one of the 70 disciples sent out to proclaim the Gospel (Luke 10:1-17). Mark was the young man, who, on the night that the Lord was betrayed, was following the Lord wearing a linen garment (Mark 14:51-52).

The Missionary

John Mark accompanied the Apostle Peter on his Missionary journeys in Jerusalem and Judea. He was also privileged to be part of the Apostle Paul’s first Missionary journey (Acts 13). Although he failed to complete his mission, he later repented, restored and made restitution to rebuild Paul’s trust in him. So much so, that Paul, in his pastoral letter to Timothy, describes Mark as *“helpful to me in my ministry”* (2 Timothy 4:11). Mark became a co-worker with the Apostle Peter (1 Peter 5:13). Mark established churches in Pentapolis and in Alexandria, Egypt.

The Gospel Writer

It was under the apostolic authority of Peter that the Gospel according to Mark was written. Unlike the Epistles, the Gospels do not name their authors. However, the early Church Fathers are unanimous in affirming Mark as the author of this Gospel. Justin Martyr, in A.D.150, referred to

the Gospel of Mark as the memoirs of Peter and that Mark had written this Gospel under his mentorship. Irenaeus, in A.D.185, described Mark as “*the disciple and translator of Peter.*” And recorded that Mark’s Gospel consisted of what Peter had preached about Christ. Clement of Alexandria (A.D.195) also affirms that Mark wrote this, the second Gospel in our New Testament. Papias, Bishop of Hieropolis, writing A.D.140 stated: “*and the presbyter John said this: Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately whatsoever he remembered. It was not, in exact order that he related the sayings, or deeds of Christ. For he neither heard the Lord, nor accompanied Him. But afterwards he accompanied Peter, who accommodated his instructions to the necessities of his hearers but... Mark made no mistake in thus writing things as he remembered them. For of one thing he took special care, not to omit anything he had heard, and not to put anything fictitious into the statements.*” (From the *Exposition of the Oracles of the Lord*, by Papias).

An Evangelistic Journalist

Mark’s Gospel is the shortest Gospel and it is full of rapid action. Mark’s Gospel is the easiest to read, and it can be read in a single sitting. Unlike Matthew and Luke, Mark omits the genealogies and details about the birth of Christ. He begins with the baptism and temptation of Jesus. The Gospel of Mark is breathless, fast-paced, compelling and effectively builds up the dramatic tension to focus on the climactic last week of the Lord’s ministry on earth culminating in His betrayal, crucifixion and Resurrection. It is presented like news headlines proclaiming the greatest News of all time.

The Structure of Mark

The first two and a half years of Jesus’ public ministry are covered in chapters 1 to 9. Chapter 10 covers the next six weeks, and chapters 11 to 16 cover Jesus’ last week. There are three clear phases in the ministry of Jesus: In the first phase, Jesus was very **popular**, as thousands came to Him to be healed. The second phase is characterised by controversies, confrontation and **conflict** with the Jewish religious leaders. And the third phase, as Jesus concentrated on preparing His twelve disciples for His coming **betrayal** and death.

The Geographic Structure of Mark

The Gospel of Mark begins with the baptism of Jesus at the River Jordan, which is at the lowest point on the earth’s surface, below sea level. Then there is a steady ascent through Galilee to Caesarea Philippi, climaxing at the watershed of the highest point in Israel, Mount Hermon, the snow-capped mountain where He was transfigured.

Caesarea Philippi

At the foot of Mount Hermon is the town of Caesarea Philippi, which was named after Caesar and Philip, one of the sons of Herod the great. Philip built a statue to Caesar and named the town after Caesar and himself, hence the name Caesarea Philippi. This town is located at the source of the River Jordan which emerges at the foot of Mount Hermon. The source of the water is the snow from Mount Hermon, which melts and filters through a crack on the side of the mountain, flowing out through a hole beneath the actual surface of the river.

Who is Jesus?

At this polytheistic town, which also had a statue to the Greek god Pan, the Lord Jesus Christ asked His disciples the critical question: *“Who do men say that I am?”* So they answered, *‘John the Baptist; but some say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.’* He said to them, **‘But who do you say that I am?’** Peter answered and said to Him, **‘You are the Christ.’** Then He strictly warned them that they should tell no one about Him.” Mark 8:27-30

Jesus Warns His Disciples

“And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He spoke this word openly. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. But ... He rebuked Peter, saying, ‘Get behind Me, satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.’ When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, **‘Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the Gospel’s will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My Words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.’**” Mark 8:31-38

Mount of Transfiguration

After this Jesus took Peter, James and John up the mountain by themselves and He was transfigured before them. *“His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus.”* Mark 9:3-4. *“And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a Voice came out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!’”* Mark 9:7

The Lord Predicts His Betrayal and Death

From this watershed, high point, in the Gospel, the story rapidly progresses downhill to the final confrontation with the Jewish religious leaders in Jerusalem and Christ's betrayal, suffering and death. From this pivotal point, the Lord began to speak plainly to His disciples of His coming betrayal and death. *"For He taught His disciples and said to them, 'The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day.' But they did not understand this saying, and were afraid to ask Him."* Mark 9:31-32

John the Baptist

All four Gospels focus on the messenger who prepared the way for the Lord: John the Baptist. Mark's Gospel begins: *"The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the Prophets: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You.' 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make His paths straight.' John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, 'There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'"* Mark 1:1-8

A Baptism of Repentance

Malachi 3 prophesied that a prophet like Elijah would come and prepare the way for the Lord who would come suddenly to His Temple. Here John the Baptist comes dressed like Elijah, preaching like Elijah and calling the people to a baptism of repentance. The Jews required Gentile converts to be baptised in order to symbolise washing away the filth of their past as idol worshippers and Gentiles. Here John the Baptist required them to be baptised. This was shocking and scandalous to them! Was he suggesting that they were like unclean Gentiles and idol worshippers? Yes. John's baptism symbolised death and resurrection. Dying to one's old life and being born again to a new life.

The Baptism of Jesus

In Mark 1:9, the public ministry of the Lord Jesus begins. Although Jesus did not need to be baptised, He chose to identify with John and be an example for us by going through the waters of baptism. *"And immediately,*

coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. Then a Voice came from Heaven, **‘You are My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.’**” Mark 1:10-11

The Trinity

At the baptism of Jesus at the River Jordan, we see a picture of the Trinity (Mark 1:10-11). God the Father speaking from Heaven, the Holy Spirit coming down like a dove and the Lord Jesus Christ coming up out of the water. Three distinct Persons in One God.

The Temptation of Jesus

Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness and He was there forty days tempted by satan (1:12-13). We see baptism and temptation crowded together. Immediately after this anointing for His earthly ministry, He is driven by the Spirit into the wilderness, where He hears whispers from hell. The baptismal benediction from the Father is only a preparation for spiritual warfare in the wilderness with the evil one. **Temptation can be part of our preparation for service.** Suffering, testing and trials are as much a part of God’s plans as success and triumphs. There is nothing wrong with being tempted. The sin comes when we give in to temptation. *“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”* 1 Corinthians 10:13

Power Packed Ministry

Then follows a relentless whirlwind of activity as the Lord teaches those who are in darkness, encourages those without hope, heals those who are sick and suffering, frees those who are under the power and bondage of satan, pardons those who are sinful and repentant, preaches by the sea shore, selects four fishermen to become His first disciples, so that they can learn to be fishers of men. *“And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.”* Mark 1:22.

Called to Service

The Lord does not call people from idleness, He calls busy and successful workers to follow Him. *“Then Jesus said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.’ They immediately left their nets and followed Him.”* Mark 1:17-18. *“And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him.”* Mark 1:20. *“He said to them, ‘Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth.’”* Mark 1:38

Who is the Greatest?

The disciples began to argue amongst themselves as to who was the greatest. The Lord rebuked them: *“And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, ‘If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.’ Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them, ‘Whoever receives one of these little children in My Name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me.’”* Mark 9:35-37

Servant Leadership

Later James and John came up and asked the Lord to grant that they may sit on His left and right hand in the Kingdom. *“But Jesus said to them, ‘You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?’... ‘You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.’”* Mark 10:38-45

The Messianic Secret

Mark is primarily concerned with what Jesus did. Mark makes it clear how the Lord revealed Himself to His followers gradually. Jesus would not let the demons speak because they knew who He was (1:25,34). After having healed the man of leprosy, Jesus sent him away with a strong warning: *“See that you do not tell anyone about this”* (1:44). When speaking to the demons, Jesus gave them strict orders not to tell anyone who He was (3:12). After having raised Jarius’ daughter to life, He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this (5:43). (Numerous other cases where the Lord required silence concerning His true identity are found in Mark 7:24, 7:36, 8:26, 8:30, 9:9, and 9:30). Even on Mount Hermon, the Lord required His disciples to keep quiet about His identity. This Messianic Secret reflects the Lord’s concern to complete His Mission without interruption. His disciples needed to gradually understand who He was, but the Lord desired to keep His identity hidden from the masses. Premature recognition of His Messiahship would lead to intense agitation and a demand that He become some kind of political messiah. While many in Judea were expecting the Messiah to be some kind of military and political deliverer, they were ignoring the Old Testament prophecies of the suffering Servant (Isaiah 53), the Shepherd who would be struck and the sheep scattered (Zechariah 13:7). This would hinder His ministry and hasten His death. He needed this time to train and prepare His Apostles to fulfil the Great Commission after His death.

The Tireless Servant of God

Mark gives us an insight to how crowded the Lord's life was with words and works of mercy, healing the sick, feeding the starving, exercising power over disease, power over nature, authority over demons and authority over death. The Lord cleansed lepers, stilled the storm, delivered people who were demon possessed, healed a paralytic, raised Jarius' daughter, healed a woman of haemorrhaging, healed a man with a withered hand, walked on the sea, healed the gentile woman's daughter, healed the epileptic boy, healed two blind men, healed a deaf mute, and healed the blind man at Bethsaida.

Crowded and Harassed

As a result the Lord was constantly pressed in and harassed by crowds. His devotions were interrupted (1:35-37), there was no time to even finish a meal (3:20), the Lord continually was pressed for help to such an extent that His family and friends said that He was unbalanced (3:21). The Lord was pursued even when He sought rest (6:31-34). The key word that one reads over and over in Mark's Gospel is: immediately.

Overwhelmed by Frenzied Crowds

"When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret and anchored there. And when they came out of the boat, immediately the people recognised Him, ran through that whole surrounding region, and began to carry about on beds those who were sick to wherever they heard He was. Wherever He entered, into villages, cities, or the country, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged Him that they might just touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched Him were made well." Mark 6:53-56

The Suffering Servant

Mark presents the Lord Jesus Christ as the suffering Servant of the Lord. He focuses on the actions of Jesus, particularly emphasising His service, suffering and sacrifice. Mark, along with emphasising Christ's divine power, also demonstrates His humanity: His disappointments (3:5), His weariness (4:38), His compassion (10:21).

Escalating Conflict with Religious Leaders

Early on the escalating conflict with the Jewish religious leaders rears its ugly head. *"When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven you.' And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, 'Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?' But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, 'Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise,*

take up your bed and walk? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins' - He said to the paralytic, 'I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.' Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, **'We never saw anything like this!'**" Mark 2:5-12

The Call of Matthew Levi – The Tax Collector

Jesus called Levi sitting at the tax office: **"Follow Me"** so he arose and followed Him. Matthew organised a feast at his house so that many tax collectors could hear teachings from the Lord: **"And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, they said to His disciples, 'How is it that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?' When Jesus heard it, He said to them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.'**" Mark 2:16-17

Controversies over the Sabbath

Other controversies followed. The Pharisees complained about the Lord attending feasts and not fasting enough (2:18-22). When the disciples ate some grain on the Sabbath, the Pharisees complained that it was not lawful to pluck the heads of grain on a Sabbath. **"But He said to them, 'Have you never read what David did when he was in need and hungry, he and those with him: how he went into the House of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the showbread, which is not lawful to eat except for the priests, and also gave some to those who were with him?' And He said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.'**" Mark 2:25-28

The Religious Leaders Plot to Destroy Christ

When the Lord healed a man with a withered hand in the synagogue, the Pharisees were ready to kill Him. **"Then He said to them, 'Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?' But they kept silent."** Mark 3:4. Jesus healed a man. **"Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him."** Mark 3:6. Out of concern for their traditions concerning the Fourth Commandment, they were willing to break the Sixth Commandment!

Pressed by the Frenzied Crowds

The multitude pressed in around Jesus so that He could not so much as have a meal. **"But when His own people heard about this, they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, 'He is out of His mind.'"** Mark 3:21. When Jesus' family, His brother and mother, came to call for Him, Jesus declared: **"For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother."** Mark 3:35

Accused of Serving Satan

The scribes of Jerusalem accused Jesus of being Beelzebub, the ruler of demons. Jesus answered them. "... *'How can satan cast out satan? **If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if satan has risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but has an end. No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. And then he will plunder his house.**'*" Mark 3:23-27

The Parable of the Sower

In Mark 4, the Lord gives the parable of the sower and warns of those who are so **hard-hearted** that the seed of the Word does not take root in their heart. Those who are of **stony ground**, who hear the Word, immediately receive it with gladness, but have no root in themselves and so they endure only for a time. Afterwards when tribulation or persecution arises, for the Word's sake, they immediately stumble. There are also those who are like **thorny ground**, who hear the Word, but the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the Word and it becomes unfruitful.

All Secrets Will be Revealed

The Lord warned: "*For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light.*" Mark 4:22

You Will Reap What You Sow

"...*Take heed what you hear. **With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given. For whoever has, to him more will be given; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.***" Mark 4:24-25

We Will be Judged According to the Light that we Have Received

When the Lord sent out His disciples, two by two, to Evangelise, He taught: "*And whoever will not receive you, nor hear you, when you depart from there, shake off the dust under your feet as a testimony against them. Assuredly, I say to you, **it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment than for that city!***" Mark 6:11

Hypocrites Condemned

When the Pharisees rebuked the Lord for His disciples not following the traditions of the Jews, Jesus answered and said to them: "...*'Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: **'This people honours Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'***' For laying aside

*the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men - the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do. He said to them, 'All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. For Moses said, 'Honour your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' But you say, 'If a man says to his father or mother, 'Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban' - (that is, a gift to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother, making the Word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do." Mark 7:6-13. Jesus warned His disciples. "...Take heed, **beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.**" Mark 8:15. **"But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea."** Mark 9:42*

The Heart of the Problem is the Problem of the Heart

When He had called all the multitude to Himself, He said to them: **"There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man."** Mark 7:15. **"For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man."** Mark 7:21-23

Confronting Demon Possession

Immediately after coming off the Mount of Transfiguration, the Lord's disciples were confronted with a demon possessed boy, who foamed at the mouth, gnashing his teeth, becoming rigid and convulsing violently. The evil spirit threw him into the fire and water to destroy him. The disciples were unable to cast out this demon. Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it **"Deaf and dumb spirit I command you come out of him and enter no more!"** Then the spirit cried out, convulsed him greatly and came out of him (Mark 9:25-26).

The Pharisees Test Jesus

The Pharisees sought to test Jesus by asking Him under what circumstances it would be lawful to divorce his wife. **"...And Jesus answered and said to them, 'Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation, God 'made them male and female.' For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."** Mark 10:5-9

The Disciples Try to Prevent Children Coming to Jesus

When the disciples sought to prevent parents bringing their little children to Jesus, the Lord was greatly indignant and said: *“...’Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the Kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.’ And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them.”* Mark 10:14-16

What Must I Do to Inherit Eternal Life?

When a rich young ruler came running to Jesus asking Him what he must do to inherit eternal life, the Lord rebuked him. *“Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, ‘Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?’ ‘Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not bear false witness,’ ‘Do not defraud,’ ‘Honour your father and your mother.’ And he answered and said to Him, ‘Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth.’ Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, ‘One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in Heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.’ But he was sad at this Word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.”* Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, *‘How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the Kingdom of God!’* And the disciples were astonished at His Words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, *“Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the Kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God.’ And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, ‘Who then can be saved?’ But Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.”* Mark 10:17-27

Another Prediction

Jesus warned His disciples. *“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again.”* Mark 10:33-34

The Lord Has Need of It

In chapter 11, we read how the Lord approached Jerusalem. *“...He sent two of His disciples; and He said to them, ‘Go into the village opposite you; and as soon as you have entered it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has sat.*

Loose it and bring it. And if anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, **‘The Lord has need of it,’** and immediately he will send it here.” Mark 11:1-3. And so it happened.

Palm Sunday

The Lord rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, as prophesied in Zachariah 9:9. And the people shouted out **“...Hosanna! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord!’ Blessed is the Kingdom of our father David that comes in the Name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”** Mark 11:9-10. And Jesus went into the Temple.

Cleansing the Temple

“So they came to Jerusalem. Then Jesus went into the Temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the Temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the Temple. Then He taught, saying to them, Is it not written, ‘My House shall be called a House of prayer for all nations’? But you have made it a ‘den of thieves.’ And the scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching.” Mark 11:15-18

The Fig Tree Withered

The Lord approached a fig tree which had leaves, but no fruit. In response the Lord declared: **“Let no one eat fruit from you ever again”** (Mark 11:13-14). The next day the disciples saw that the fig tree had dried up from its roots (Mark 11:20).

If You Refuse to Forgive Others

The Lord taught on the importance on forgiveness. *“And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in Heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in Heaven forgive your trespasses.”* Mark 11:25-26

By What Authority Do You Do These Things?

The conflict with the Jewish religious leaders reaches a climax as a series of attacks are launched, attempting to undermine the authority of Jesus before the people in the Temple. The chief priests the scribes and elders came to trick or trap Jesus. *“Then they came again to Jerusalem. And as He was walking in the Temple, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came to Him. And they said to Him, ‘By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority to do these things?’ But Jesus answered and said to them, ‘I also will ask you one question; then answer Me, and I will tell*

you by what authority I do these things: **The baptism of John - was it from Heaven or from men? Answer Me**'. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, 'If we say, 'From Heaven,' He will say, 'Why then did you not believe him?' But if we say, 'From men' - they feared the people, for all counted John to have been a prophet indeed. So they answered and said to Jesus, 'We do not know.' And Jesus answered and said to them, 'Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.'" Mark 11:27-33

The Wicked Tenants

"Then He began to speak to them in parables: 'A man planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a place for the wine vat and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. Now at vintage-time he sent a servant to the vinedressers, that he might receive some of the fruit of the vineyard from the vinedressers. And they took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Again he sent them another servant, and at him they threw stones, wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully treated. And again he sent another, and him they killed; and many others, beating some and killing some. Therefore still having one son, his beloved, he also sent him to them last, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But those vinedressers said among themselves, '**This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.**' So they took him and killed him and cast him out of the vineyard. **Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vinedressers, and give the vineyard to others. Have you not even read this Scripture: 'The Stone which the builders rejected has become the Chief Cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes'?** And they sought to lay hands on Him, but feared the multitude, for **they knew He had spoken the parable against them...**" Mark 12:1-12

Is it Lawful to Pay Taxes to Caesar?

"Then they sent to Him some of the Pharisees and the Herodians, to catch Him in His Words. When they had come, they said to Him, 'Teacher, we know that You are true, and care about no one; for You do not regard the person of men, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?' But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, 'Why do you test Me? Bring Me a denarius that I may see it.' So they brought it. And He said to them, 'Whose image and inscription is this?' They said to Him, 'Caesar's'. And Jesus answered and said to them, '**Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.**' And they marvelled at Him." Mark 12:13-17

What About the Resurrection?

The Sadducees who were the materialists of their day and did not believe in a resurrection of the dead, came up with a ridiculous scenario of a woman who had been married to seven brothers without any offspring. They asked *“Therefore, in the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife.”* Mark 12:23

You Do Not Know the Scriptures

“Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God? For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in Heaven. But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the Book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken.’” Mark 12:24-27

The Greatest Commandment

When a scribe questioned Jesus as to what is the greatest Commandment, Jesus replied: *“And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength... You shall love your neighbour as yourself.”* Mark 12:30-31

Who is the Son of David?

After that no one dared question Him. Then Jesus posed a question of His own to the religious leaders: *“How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the Son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Spirit: ‘The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool. Therefore David himself calls Him ‘Lord’; how is He then his Son?...”* Mark 12:35-37. The Messiah predates King David and is much greater than David.

They Devour Widows’ Houses

“Then He said to them in His teaching, ‘Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, who devour widows’ houses, and for a pretence make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation. Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much. Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood.’” Mark 12:38-44

Funding Corruption and Hypocrisy

Many misunderstand and misapply this passage, teaching that Jesus was commending the example of this poor widow, that we should put everything into the offering as she did. But that cannot be. The entire context is the Lord warning the people to beware of the scribes and Pharisees who devour widows' houses, who for religious pretence make long prayers. They will receive greater condemnation. This widow put in all that she had, all that she had to live on. That is not wise or responsible. And what was that money going towards? Not God's work, but to the very people who wanted to betray and kill the Son of God! If we miss this context we miss the whole point the Lord is making. This is the final condemnation of the great chapter of confrontation with the Jewish religious leaders in Mark 12. They devour widows' houses. They will receive greater condemnation.

The Temple is Doomed to Destruction

As they went out of the Temple, one of His disciples pointed out the magnificent Temple to the Lord Jesus. The Lord responded and said to him; *"...Do you see these great buildings? **Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down.**"* Mark 13:2.

Beware of Coming Deception and Persecution

The Lord warned of deceptions and coming turmoil and persecution, of being delivered up to councils and beaten in synagogues. Brother will betray brother to death. A father his child. Children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. ***"And you will be hated by all for My Name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved."*** Mark 13:5-13

Mistaken

Those, who today, go to Jerusalem to pray at the wailing wall believing it to be part of the Temple, are mistaken. Jesus made clear that not one stone would be left upon another. The over 11,000 stones making up the wailing wall were not part of the original Temple. Josephus in his *Antiquities of the Jews*, makes clear that every part of the Temple was destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70. The Wall that is today being presented as a tourist attraction was part of Fort Antonio, which was built by king Herod the great and named after Mark Antony. The historian Josephus makes clear that only Fort Antonio was left standing after the siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

Malicious Treachery

The prolonged escalating controversy between the Jewish religious leaders and the Lord Jesus Christ reaches its climax in Jerusalem. *"Then Judas*

Iscairiot, one of the twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Him to them. And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. So he sought how he might conveniently betray Him.” Mark 14:10-11

Conspiracy

The Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians and Romans had little in common. However, they conspired and co-operated to crucify Christ. The Jewish religious leaders charged Jesus with blasphemy for saying that He was the Son of God. They demanded the death penalty for Him. Many bore false witness against Him, but their testimonies did not agree. Some rose up and bore false witness against Him, saying, we heard Him say, *“I will destroy this Temple made with hands and within three days I will build another made without hands.”* But not even then did their testimonies agree (Mark 14:55-59).

Are You the Christ?

*“And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, saying, ‘Do You answer nothing? What is it these men testify against You?’ But He kept silent and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, ‘**Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?’** Jesus said, **‘I Am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of Heaven.’** Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, ‘What further need do we have of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy! What do you think?’ And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death. Then some began to spit on Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him, and to say to Him, ‘Prophesy!’ And the officers struck Him with the palms of their hands.” Mark 14:60-65*

Political Intrigue

However, the Sanhedrin could not put someone to death since the land was occupied by the Romans and was under Roman law when it came to the death penalty. They needed Roman approval for this death sentence, but in Roman law blasphemy was not a crime. Therefore the Jewish high priests and Pharisees, when they came before Pilate, did not charge Jesus with blasphemy, but treason. Pilate was not convinced. *“For he knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd, so that he should rather release Barabbas to them.”* Mark 15:10-11

Schemes and Screams

The Lord was tried before the Sanhedrin, before Pilate, the Roman governor, and king Herod, who had killed John the Baptist and whose father had murdered the children of Bethlehem. While condemned by Annas and

Caiaphas the high priests, and by Sanhedrin, Pontius Pilate, on three occasions, declared Him innocent. ***“This Man has done nothing wrong. This man has done nothing to deserve death. I will have him scourged and let Him go.”*** Luke 23:13-16. Herod also dismissed Him. Yet, despite being effectively declared **Not Guilty** three times, the Roman governor, Pilate, bowed before the scheming of the religious leaders and the screams of the mob to release Barabbas and crucify Christ.

Mob Rule

“Pilate answered and said to them again, ‘What then do you want me to do with Him...? So they cried out again, ‘Crucify Him!’ Then Pilate said to them, ‘Why? What evil has He done?’ But they cried out all the more, ‘Crucify Him!’ So Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them; and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged Him, to be crucified.”

Mark 15:12-15

The Worst Crime in History

The greatest sin of any age is the rejection of Jesus Christ. The worst crime ever committed in the history of the world was the betrayal, illegal trial and crucifixion of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Mark’s Gospel clearly presents us with the choice, to follow the world, or the Word of God.

On the First Day of the Week

*“Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they said among themselves, ‘Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?’ But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away - for it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, ‘Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. **He is risen! He is not here.** See the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples - and Peter - that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you.”* Mark 16:1-7

Christ Jesus Has Risen from the Dead

The first sight of the empty tomb and the Angels’ announcement that Jesus had risen, threw the women into wild excitement. They ran to tell the others, in joy, fear, anxiety, wonder and bewilderment. At the Resurrection the Roman guards had fled, frightened and dazed, to tell the priests and seek their protection from the wrath of the Roman governor. Mary Magdalene ran ahead of the group to announce to the disciples that Jesus

had risen. When Peter and John reached the tomb they saw the empty shroud. Mary Magdalene who had followed after Peter and John, returned to the tomb and remained alone outside weeping. She saw the Angels and then the Lord Jesus Himself appeared to her. Jesus later appeared to the other women as they came back from telling the disciples. Jesus then appeared to the twelve (John 20:26-31) and to seven of the disciples by the Sea of Galilee (John 21) and to the eleven disciples in Galilee with 500 others (Matthew 28:16-20). Jesus also appeared to James (1 Corinthians 15:7), Jesus also appeared in Jerusalem (Luke 24:44-49 and Acts 1:3-8).

The Great Commission

“Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen. And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.’” Mark 16:14-15

The Gospel in a Nutshell

Later at Cornelius’ household in Caesarea, the Apostle Peter declared: *“how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, Whom they killed by hanging on a tree. Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly, not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead. To Him all the prophets witness that, through His Name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins.”* Acts 10:38-43

When We Work for the Lord He Works With and Through Us

Mark’s Gospel presents us with a clear picture of the person and work of Christ and the exhortation to respond in Faith and obedience. Trust and obey for there is no other way, to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey. *“And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the Word through the accompanying signs.”* Mark 16:20



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CHAPTER 3

LUKE

“That you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.” Luke 1:4

An Outline of Luke

In Luke we see:

The **Preparation** of the Son of Man (1:1 - 4:13).

The **Teaching** of the Son of Man (4:14 - 8:21).

The **Ministry** of the Son of Man (8:22 - 21:38).

The **Suffering** of the Son of Man (22:1 - 23:56).

The **Victory** of the Son of Man (24:1-53).

Who Was Luke?

Dr. Luke was the “*beloved physician*” (Colossians 4:14), a close friend and travelling companion of the Apostle Paul (2 Timothy 4:11). Paul describes Luke as: “*my fellow labourer*” (Philemon 24). Luke was a scholarly and well-read Gentile author. He has proved to be a meticulous historian, often giving details that helped identify the historic context of the events he described (1:5; 2:1-2; 3:1-2; 13:1-4). Luke is clearly observant, analytical and careful in his records, and one of the finest historians of his day. Luke is the only history writer in the New Testament. He writes in a polished high standard of Greek and shows particular interest in medical phenomena, giving high profile to Jesus’ healing ministry.

Antioch

Church historians Eusebius and Jerome identified Luke as a citizen of Antioch, one of the largest cities in the world at that time. It was at Antioch that the first Gentile church was established and where the followers of Jesus were first called Christians. It is also from Antioch that the first Mission, that of Paul and Barnabas, was launched. Luke was part of Paul’s missionary journeys from the time of the Macedonian call through to his awaiting trial in Rome (Acts 16:10; 20:6; 27:1; 28:16).

When Was Luke Written?

Luke mentions the fulfilment of the prophesy of Agabus (Acts 11:28), but not the monumentally important destruction of Jerusalem prophesied by Christ in Luke 21:20. Nor does Luke mention the severe persecution that broke out under the Emperor Nero from AD64. Therefore both Luke and Acts must have been written before those dates. The most likely dates for Luke and Acts are AD60 and AD61.

Who Was Theophilus?

Luke dedicated the Books of Luke and Acts to the “*most excellent Theophilus*” (1:3; Acts 1:1). Theophilus means lover of God and for this reason many have assumed that this is a symbolic name representative of those who are interested in finding out the truth about God. However, as Luke gives him the title “*most excellent*”, a term used in the legal profession at that time for either a lawyer or a judge, and considering that the Book of Acts concludes with Paul awaiting trial in Rome, it is a strong possibility that both Luke and Acts were initially researched and drawn up as defense briefs for Paul’s trial in Rome. If Theophilus was Paul’s defense lawyer, or even the judge at his trial, it would make sense that Dr. Luke would want to provide full details to the circumstances leading to the trial. How did the new Faith of Christianity begin? Who was the Founder? How did Paul come to be one of its advocates?

A History of the Founding of Christianity

During Paul’s imprisonment in Caesarea, Luke researched the life and death of Jesus from eye witnesses and when Paul was transported to Rome, Luke continued his research and recording of the growth of Christianity, particularly focusing on Paul’s involvement in its Mission. It is noteworthy that the Romans are portrayed as entirely sympathetic to Christianity in both Luke and Acts. Luke includes the three statements by the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, that Jesus was innocent, He had done nothing wrong, He had done nothing to deserve death. Luke also records the Roman authorities in Caesarea who were evaluating Paul’s case, declaring three times that he was innocent and should go free. Luke makes it clear that the troubles surrounding the Christians were caused by jealous Jewish religious leaders.

In Defence of the Faith

A judge would require carefully researched facts, eyewitness testimony, first-hand accounts, presented in an orderly fashion. Certainly Luke’s Gospel and the Book of Acts present just the kind of careful investigation and factual accounts that would be required in a court of law. This would also explain why The Acts of the Apostles barely mentions most of the Apostles, dealing only with the Apostle Peter in the first twelve chapters and then, as Paul is converted, the Book begins to focus almost exclusively on Paul, accounting for two thirds of the Book of Acts. If this was to be presented at the trial of Paul it would make sense. Paul is a Roman citizen, innocent by Roman law, and deserving a “*Not Guilty*” verdict. Similarly the trial of Jesus in Jerusalem was not just irregular, but blatantly illegal. Jesus was crucified only because of malicious manipulations by the Jewish high priests and irrational demands by the mob. Hence Paul had appealed to Caesar to escape from the interference of those who had engineered the travesty of justice which had allowed Christ Jesus to be crucified.

The Ship Wreck on Malta

This theory of Luke and Acts as a defense lawyer's brief also explains why so much detail is given to the ship wreck on Malta. Paul endured three other ship wrecks, which are not described. However, the ship wreck on Malta highlighted Paul's exemplary behaviour in not attempting to escape in the confusion, but saving the lives of all on board, including his Roman captors, who were responsible for delivering him safely to the Roman court. One could imagine a lawyer, after recounting this heroic and patriotic effort of Paul, could conclude: "*I rest my case.*" This would explain why Acts finishes so abruptly.

So Was This Legal Defense Successful?

Yes, the evidence points to Paul being acquitted from his first trial in Rome. His letters to Timothy and Titus were plainly written after that first imprisonment. There is strong evidence that Paul ministered in Spain and even on the British Isles after this first detention in Rome. It was not just Paul that was on trial, but Christianity. Luke was doubtless aware that his work would benefit a wider audience too, so it was not only a defense brief, but a declaration of the Faith.

The Distinctives of Luke

Luke is the longest Book in the New Testament. Luke provides the most complete coverage of the births of both John the Baptist and our Lord Jesus Christ. Luke is the only Gospel writer to give the details of the angel's appearance to Zacharias in the Temple and the unusual circumstances of John the Baptist's birth (1:5-25, 57-80). While Matthew's account of the birth of Jesus focused on Joseph's experiences, Luke's accounts are all from the perspective of Mary. Luke must have known Mary well and had numerous interviews with her, because he gives details of the conception and delivery, even mentioning Mary's visit from the Angel Gabriel (1:26-38), Mary's journey to see her cousin Elizabeth (1:39-56); Jesus' birth in a stable and the visit from the shepherds (2:1-20). Only Luke gives the details of Jesus' circumcision and dedication to God in the Temple (2:21-38). The visit of Jesus to the Temple at age twelve is also only given in Luke (2:41-52). Luke is careful to link events in the life of Jesus with political rulers and world events (2:1-3; 3:1-2).

The Parables of Jesus

We read more of the teachings of Jesus in Luke than in any other Gospel. Only Luke includes the Two Debtors (7), the Parable of the Good Samaritan (10), the Rich Fool (12), the Wise Steward (12), the Great Feast (12), the Prodigal Son (15), the Unjust Judge and the Persistent Widow (18), the

Pharisee and the Tax Collector praying at the Temple (18), the Friend at Midnight (11), the Barren Fig Tree (13), the Shrewd Manager (16) and the Rich Man and Lazarus (although that was probably not a parable, but an actual event, 16:19-31). Other unique incidents only recorded in Luke include: the miraculous catch of fish, the sending out of the seventy to evangelise and extra details about the Ascension.

Unique Incidents in Luke

Luke includes details about the prostitute who anointed Jesus' feet in the house of a Pharisee, the woman suffering from haemorrhaging of blood who touched the hem of His garment in the middle of a crowd, the meal in the home of Martha and Mary, the tax collector Zacchaeus who went up a tree to see Jesus and who ended up hosting Him in his house and doing full restitution. The crippled woman, the ten lepers who Jesus healed, but only one returned to give thanks, the dying thief at the cross asking for the Lord to remember him when He comes into His Kingdom, and the two disciples walking on the road to Emmaus to whom Jesus appeared after His Resurrection.

Shocking Stories and Associations

Many of Jesus' teachings and actions were shocking and scandalous for the Jews of His time. Dr. Luke showed particular interest in those who were regarded as outcasts by the Jews: the Samaritans, Gentiles, children, the poor, tax collectors and harlots. The Samaritans were regarded as outcasts. So Jesus shocked the Jews by telling the story of a man who was attacked by robbers and left bleeding by the side of the road. Both a pharisee and a priest walked by the side of the road doing nothing to help, but a Samaritan stopped and helped the man and transported him to where he could receive care and attention. When Luke speaks of the ten lepers who were healed, he notes that only one, the Samaritan, returned to give thanks.

Fire on the Samaritans

The hostility and prejudice of the Jews against the Samaritans is demonstrated by how James and John wanted to call down fire from Heaven on the Samaritans. In the Book of Acts, we read how John came back to Samaria with Peter to pray that the Samaritans might receive the Holy Spirit and the fire of the Holy Spirit came down upon the Samaritans in Revival blessings! (Acts 8:14-17).

A Light to the Gentiles

Simeon described the Lord Jesus as *"a light to the Gentiles"*. In His sermon at the synagogue in Nazareth, the Lord Jesus mentioned the widow of Zarephath and Naaman the Syrian, who evidenced more faith than the people of Israel and who received God's miraculous answers to prayer. Luke also records the

sending out of the seventy, a number which was regarded as symbolic of the nations as seventy nations were listed in the Table of the Nations in Genesis 10. Luke records that Jesus spent a major amount of His ministry east of the Jordan, in Perea working amongst Samaritans and Gentiles.

A Friend to the Outcasts

Luke records how the Lord Jesus had great interest in outcasts. Those whom others treated with contempt, He went out of His way to bless: the lepers, Samaritans, tax collectors, Romans, shepherds, prostitutes, women and children, the poor, the blind and the beggars. Shepherds were so despised by the Jews that a shepherd's testimony was not regarded as legitimate in a court of law. It was to shepherds that the angels appeared and they were the first to bear the Good News of the Incarnation of Christ. The Lord Jesus used the tears and generosity of the repentant prostitute to rebuke the self-righteous hypocritical Pharisees.

The Women in Jesus' Ministry

Luke's Gospel includes ten women who are not mentioned anywhere else. Martha and Mary are prominent. The healing of the woman who touched the hem of Jesus' cloak is recorded and Luke includes details about the women of Jerusalem weeping for the Lord as He carried His Cross to Calvary. Luke also mentions the wealthy women who supported Jesus' ministry financially. Luke's Gospel greatly honours women who feature prominently and receive the great privilege of being the first to proclaim the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead.

Good News to the Poor

While the Jews despised the poor, Jesus taught "*blessed are you who are poor*" and "*woe to you who are rich.*" In Luke's Gospel poverty is seen as a blessing, in sharp contrast to the way it was regarded by the people of that time. Luke also records that Mary and Joseph brought a pigeon to the Temple, the cheapest possible sacrifice allowed under Levitical Law. At the Parable of the Great Banquet the Lord instructs: "*Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.*" Luke 14:21. In the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus, the Lord Jesus spoke of the time when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. But in hell, where the rich man was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. Luke 16 speaks of a rich man who ended up in hell because of his **indifference** to others, his **indulgence** in himself and his **independence** from God.

Recognising Reality

In the context of the Roman occupation, Jesus taught to give to those who ask of you and if anyone takes what belongs to you do not take it back.

Living as second class citizens under the oppression of the Roman Empire, there was no point in asserting one's rights when the most likely response was flogging, arrest, imprisonment or even execution. Those who ignored this wise warning of Christ perished in the futile rebellion of AD70.

Live in the Light of Eternity

In addition, the Lord taught that when you give a luncheon, or dinner, do not just invite your friends, your brothers, or relatives, or your rich neighbours. If you do they may invite you back and so repay you. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous (Luke 14:12-14).

Angels

Angels announced the birth of John to Elizabeth and told the priest Zacharias what to name his son. An angel announced the birth of Jesus to Mary. When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness Luke records the ministry of angels. When the Lord agonised in prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane we read: *"An angel from Heaven appeared to Him and strengthened Him."*

The Holy Spirit

There is more about the Holy Spirit in Luke than in Matthew and Mark combined. Luke records that the Holy Spirit was responsible for the conception of Jesus: *"The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will over-shadow you."* Both Zacharias and Elizabeth are said to have been filled with the Holy Spirit and John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit within the womb. We read that Simeon in the Temple was moved by the Spirit to encounter the Baby Jesus. The Holy Spirit came upon the Lord Jesus at His baptism. We read that Jesus, *"full of the Holy Spirit"*, returned from the Jordan and was *"led by the Spirit"* into the desert. After the temptation we read that Jesus returned to Galilee *"in the power of the Spirit"*. When Jesus taught on prayer He added: *"How much more will your Father in Heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who go on asking him?"* The Gospel ends with the Lord Jesus commanding His followers to wait in Jerusalem until they are clothed with power from on High (Luke 24:49).

Prayer

Luke writes more about the prayers of the Lord Jesus than any other Gospel writer. Seven of the prayers of Jesus are unique to the Gospel of Luke. Luke records examples of our Lord Jesus Christ praying at His baptism (3:21); in the wilderness (5:16); before choosing His disciples (6:12); at the Transfiguration (9:29); before giving the Lord's Prayer (11:1); for Peter (22:32); in the Garden of Gethsemane (22:44); on the

Cross (23:46). In the Parable of the Persistent Widow Jesus encouraged us to keep on praying and not to give up (18:1). In the Parable of the Tax Collector and the Pharisee (18:9-14) He encourages humility in prayer. God resists the proud, but He gives grace to the humble. *“Everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted”* (18:14).

Joy

Luke has more references to joy, rejoicing and laughter than any other Book in the New Testament. We read that Jesus was full of joy through the Holy Spirit. There is more rejoicing in Luke than in any other Gospel. In chapter 15 we read of the joy of those who find what was lost: lost sheep, lost coin, lost son.

Songs of Praise

Some of the greatest Christian hymns of the Middle Ages are taken from the Gospel of Luke: The *Ave Maria*, from the words of the angel to Mary (1:28-33); The *Magnificat*, Mary’s Song (1:46-55); the *Benedictus* of Zacharias (1:68-79); the *Glory in Excelsis* of the Heavenly Angels (2:13-14) and the *Nuc Dimittis*, the Rejoicing of Simeon (2:29-32).

Let the Earth Hear His Voice

Luke, in his genealogy of Jesus, does not merely go back to Abraham, as Matthew does, but back to Adam. The angel’s song includes the words *“peace on earth, goodwill towards those on whom His favour rests”* (2:14). Luke quotes Isaiah declaring that *“all flesh will see the salvation of God.”* The word *sarx* for all flesh includes all creation, animals included. The seventy are sent out not only to the lost sheep of Israel, as the Twelve were, but *“to every city and place.”* We read that *“people will come from the East and West and North and South and will take their place at the feast in the Kingdom of God.”* Jesus declares that ***“repentance and remission of sins will be preached in His Name to all nations.”*** Luke 24:47. Here we see all nations in God’s purpose.

Salvation

Luke tells us that *“today is the day of Salvation.”* This is said eleven times, compared to eight in Matthew and once in Mark. And *“now Salvation has come”* (fourteen times - compared to four in Matthew and three in Mark). Luke emphasise that Salvation comes through the Atonement on the Cross of Christ. Just as the Hebrews were liberated from captivity in Egypt, so in the Cross God provides a new Exodus for His people, called from all nations.

True Discipleship

“But why do you call Me ‘Lord!, Lord!,’ and not do the things which I say?”
 Luke 6:46

“Then He said to them all, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.’” Luke 9:23

“For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.” Luke 9:24

“For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?” Luke 9:25

“For whoever is ashamed of Me and My Words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father’s, and of the holy angels.” Luke 9:26

“And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.” Luke 14:27

“It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him...” Luke 17:1-3

Jesus declared *“I tell you, no!; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish!”* Luke 13:3

The Fear of God

“And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!” Luke 12:4-5

“These are the Words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.’ And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day. And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold I send the promise of my Father upon you, but tarry in the city of Jerusalem, until you are endued with power from on high.” Luke 24:44-49

CHAPTER 4

JOHN

“These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His Name.” John 20:31

The Purpose of John’s Gospel

“That you may believe.” and ***“That you may have life.”***

The Structure of John

The **Revelation** of Christ (1:1 - 4:54).

The **Rejection** of Christ (5:1 - 12:50).

The **Redemption** of Christ (13:1 - 19:42).

The **Resurrection** of Christ (20:1 - 21:25).

Distinctive Features of John’s Gospel

Over half of the Book deals with the last week of Christ’s life on earth.

The first cleansing of the Temple (2:13-17).

Only in John do we read of the conversation with Nicodemus (3:1-21).

The woman at the well (4:1-26).

Discourse condemning the Jews at the Feast of Booths (7:14-39; 8:3-58).

The parable of the Good Shepherd (10).

The teaching with the Disciples (14-17).

The meeting with the Disciples at the Sea of Galilee (21).

50% of John is direct speech/quotes from Jesus Christ.

105 allusions to the Old Testament.

20 Direct quotes from the Old Testament and 92% unique material.

Major emphases: **Faith** and **Eternal Life**; **I Am**; **The Trinity**; **Salvation**; **Mission**; **Glory**; **Logos**.

Unique to John’s Gospel

The first three Gospels of the New Testament, Matthew, Mark and Luke are called the Synoptic Gospels. They cover much of the same content. Many of the same events, many teachings and incidents, are related in different words and sometimes word for word. Most of John is unique.

In the Gospel of John we have some of the most beloved and familiar Words in all the Bible:

“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.” (1:29).

“Unless a man is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of Heaven. Unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God.” (3:3-5).

“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whosoever

believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (3:16).

“God is Spirit and His worshippers must worship Him in Spirit and in Truth.” (4:23).

“Open your eyes and look on the fields, for they are ripe for harvest.” (4:35).

“Those who have done good will rise to live and those who have done evil, will rise to be condemned.” (5:29).

“How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, but make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the one and only God?” (5:44).

“I am the Bread of Life.” (6:35).

“All that the Father gives to Me will come to Me. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that I will lose none of them that He has given Me, but raise them up on the Last Day.” (6:37-39).

“If any man is thirsty, let Him come to Me and drink. Whoever believes in Me as Scripture says, streams of life-giving water will flow from within him.” (7:38).

“Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more.” (8:11).

“I am the Light of the world, whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness.” (8:12).

“You will know the truth and the truth will set you free.” (8:32).

“I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.” (10:11).

“I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in Me will live even though he dies.” (11:25).

“I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except by Me.” (14:6).

“Greater love has no one than this, than that he lay down his life for his friends.” (15:13).

These and many other passages were first written in the Gospel according to St. John.

Jewish Slander Against Jesus

“Therefore some of the Pharisees said, ‘This Man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath...’ John 9:16.

“The people answered and said, ‘You have a demon.’” John 7:20

“And many of them said, ‘He has a demon and is mad. Why do you listen to Him?’” John 10:20

“...but the Jews cried out, saying, ‘If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar’s friend. Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar.’” John 19:12

Jesus on the Jews

“You judge according to the flesh...” John 8:15

“...You know neither Me nor My Father. If you had known Me, you would

have known My Father also.” John 8:19

“You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. Therefore I said to you that **you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He**, you will die in your sins.” John 8:23-24

“I know that you are Abraham’s descendants, but **you seek to kill Me, because My Word has no place in you.**” John 8:37

“They answered and said to Him, ‘Abraham is our father.’ Jesus said to them, ‘If you were Abraham’s children, you would do the works of Abraham. But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. You do the deeds of your father.’ Then they said to Him, ‘We were not born of fornication; we have one Father - God.’ Jesus said to them, ‘**If God were your Father, you would love Me**, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My Word. **You are of your father the devil**, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because **there is no truth in him**. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? **He who is of God hears God’s Words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God.**” John 8:39-47

“You dishonour Me...” John 8:49

“Yet you have not known Him...” John 8:55

“...a liar like you...” John 8:55

“...I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are **a synagogue of satan.**” Revelation 2:9

“Indeed I will make **those of the synagogue of satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie** - indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. Because you have kept My command to persevere...” Revelation 3:9-10

The “I AM’s” of CHRIST

- | | | |
|----|------------------------------------|---------------|
| 1. | I Am The Bread of Life | John 6:35 |
| 2. | I Am from Above | John 8:23 |
| 3. | I Am The Eternal One | John 8:58 |
| 4. | I Am The Light of the World | John 9:5 |
| 5. | I Am The Door | John 10:7 |
| 6. | I Am The Good Shepherd | John 10:11-14 |
| 7. | I Am The Son of God | John 10:36 |
| 8. | I Am The Resurrection and the Life | John 11:25 |

9.	I Am The Lord and Master	John 13:13
10.	I Am The Way, the Truth and the Life	John 14:6
11.	I Am The True Vine	John 15:1
12.	I Am The Alpha and Omega	Revelation 1:8
13.	I Am The First and the Last	Revelation 1:17

God the Father in John's Gospel

The Fatherhood of God is referred to over 100 times in John's Gospel:

God is the Spiritual Father	John 4:25
God is the life giving Father	John 5:21
The Father is greater than all	John 10:29
The works are of the Father	John 14:10
God is the Indwelling Father	John 14:23
God is the Eternal Father	John 17:5
God is the Holy Father	John 17:11
God is the Righteous Father	John 17:25

The Holy Spirit in John's Gospel

The Incoming Spirit	John 3:5
The Indwelling Spirit	John 4:14
The Overflowing Spirit	John 7:38-39
The Abiding Presence	John 14:16
The Teacher and Reminder	John 14:26
The Testifier/Witnessing Spirit	John 15:26
The Converter	John 16:13
The Glorifier of Jesus	John 16:14
The Discloser of Jesus	John 16:15
The Source of Power	Acts 1:8

Miracles in John's Gospel

John records 9 miracles/signs of Christ.

6 of these miracles are only found in this Gospel:

1. Turning water into wine (2:1-11).
2. Healing the nobleman's son (4:46-54).
3. Healing the crippled man at the pool (5:1-9).
4. Feeding the 5,000 (6:1-14).
5. Walking on water (6:15-21).
6. Restoring sight to the man born blind (9:1-7).
7. The raising of Lazarus from the dead (11).
8. The Resurrection of Christ from the dead (20).
9. The second great catch of fish (21:1-6).

Witnesses in John's Gospel

John the Baptist: <i>"This is the Son of God."</i>	John 1:34
Nathan: <i>"You are the Son of God."</i>	John 1:49
Apostle Peter: <i>"You are the Holy One of God."</i>	John 6:69
Martha: <i>"You are the Christ, the Son of God."</i>	John 11:27
Thomas: <i>"My Lord and my God!"</i>	John 20:28
John: <i>"Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God."</i>	John 20:31
The Holy Spirit (14:26); (15:26).	
The Father (5:37); (8:18).	
Christ's Mighty Works (5:36); (10:25).	
The Scriptures (1:19-50); (5:39).	
Jesus Himself (3:31-35); (4:26); (8:18).	

Salvation is:

"Not of natural descent."

"Not of human decision."

"Nor of the will of man."

"But of God." John 1:13

Who was John?

It is a fascinating fact that, in John's Gospel, he never mentions himself by name. John names the other disciples, without writing his own name, but refers to *"the other disciple"*, or *"the disciple whom Jesus loved"*. Most of the followers of Jesus were not wealthy people, but John was a man who worked in a family business owned by his father, Zebedee, in northern Galilee. They also had a second home in Jerusalem. John had access to the house of Caiaphas, the High Priest.

One day, John was captivated by a Man who spoke like no other man had even spoken before. John was drawn to Jesus. He sensed the Person and the power of God in this Man. When Jesus said, ***"Follow Me and I will make you a fisher of men"***, John trusted Jesus enough to forsake prosperity, comfort and safety.

At the Mount of Crucifixion, at Golgotha, other than the women disciples, John was the only man who stood at the foot of the Cross. All the men had fled. They had abandoned the Lord in fear that their fate would be the same as that of Jesus. He stood there at the risk of his own life. There was every probability that he could be arrested and crucified as Jesus had been.

In Chapter 19 of John's Gospel, we read the last gasping breaths of our Lord, whose excruciatingly painful crucifixion allowed very little breath for speaking. Jesus, in agony on the Cross, said seven phrases from the Cross: *"Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."* *"It is finished!"* *"Into Thy hands I commend my Spirit."*

From the Cross, Jesus gasped out to Mary, *“This is your son.”* Then to John he said, *“This is your mother.”* Jesus entrusted John to fulfil the duties to care for His mother, Mary.

True Discipleship

“Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His Name when they saw the signs which He did. But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men.” John 2:23-24. In Jerusalem, many people believed in Jesus. But He did not believe in them. They trusted in Jesus, but He did not trust in them. Jesus knew their hearts. He knows all men. - He knows our heart motivations. They believed when they saw the miraculous signs He was doing.

Following Jesus

Many followed Jesus when miracles were performed, people healed, food multiplied and when Jesus rode in triumph into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. John, however, trusted Jesus when He was condemned, humbled, stripped, whipped, bleeding and dying a disgraceful criminal's death on the Cross.

How Far Will You Go?

For the multiplying of the loaves and fishes, over 5,000 people turned out. At the Sermon on the Mount, there were several hundred.

When our Lord commanded them to pray day and night, until the power from above came down upon them, there were 120 who gathered in the Upper Room for the Pentecost prayer meeting.

When it came to the first outreach, there were 70 who went out, two by two, to Evangelise, in the highways and the byways.

When it came to daily discipleship, when the Lord wanted men and women to be with Him day and night to follow Him and to be where He was, there were 12 men, and about 4 women.

Of those 12 men, one betrayed Him, one denied Him, one doubted Him, and they all forsook Him.

Only John went all the way to the Cross and stood, with the women disciples, underneath the Cross identifying with the sufferings of Christ.

As the cost of discipleship increases, the numbers decrease.

“Do you love Me?...feed My lambs... do you love Me? ...tend My sheep... do you love Me? ...feed My sheep.” John 21:15-17.



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CHAPTER 5

ACTS

The Church in Action

The Book of Acts is the inspired account of the origin and initial expansion of the Christian Church throughout the Roman Empire. In Acts we see Christianity, full of energy and power, in action conquering the pagan cultures of Asia Minor and Southern Europe. As the sacred History Book of the early Church, Acts is a Missionary Manual. Acts is the second part of a two-volume history. The first part, the Gospel of Luke, tells of all Jesus **began** to do and to teach (1:1) and so the second part, Acts, tells of some of what Jesus **continued** to do through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Culture and Christianity

In recording these beginnings of the cross-cultural Missions of the Church, Acts clearly proves that Christianity is for every nation. It also shows how culture can be both an **obstacle** to, or an **opening** for, the communication of the Gospel.

Sacred History

Luke, the beloved physician (Colossians 4:14; Philemon 24; 2 Timothy 4:11), is the author of Acts. Luke stands out as the only non-Hebrew author in the New Testament and also the author of the largest amount of material in the New Testament. Written before the death of Paul and before the Fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (as it makes no reference to either), this is a powerful account of the Mission *“to the ends of the earth.”* Luke clearly shows how the events recorded in Acts were brought about by the will and purpose of God, in fulfilment of the Scriptures and prophecies of the Old Testament, as directed by God Himself, who confirmed by signs and wonders that this Mission is His work. The Gospel of Luke ends with the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is where Acts begins:

- Acts 1:9 - The Lord went **up**.
- Acts 2:4 - The Holy Spirit came **down**.
- Acts 2:4 - 8:4 - The Disciples went **out**.

The Structure of Acts

Acts 1:8 summarises the progression in Acts: *“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*

From Jerusalem to Rome

Acts records the spread of the Gospel from Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria to the gentiles of Syria, Asia Minor and Greece. The account starts in **Jerusalem**, the **spiritual** capital of the world, and it ends in **Rome**, the **secular** capital of the world.

Five Summary Statements that Mark Sections off in Acts

Acts 6:7 *“Then the Word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the Faith.”*

Acts 9:31 *“Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.”*

Acts 12:24 *“But the Word of God grew and multiplied.”*

Acts 16:5 *“So the churches were strengthened in the Faith, and increased in number daily.”*

Acts 19:20 *“So the Word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.”*

These five statements mark transitions between: ministry amongst the Jews in Jerusalem, the Hellenists and Samaritans, the Gentiles and Antioch, Asia Minor, Europe, and the final section in Rome.

A Book of Transitions

Acts abounds with transitions: from the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ to that of His chosen Apostles, from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant, from Israel to the Church. Acts provides a vital link between the Gospels and the Epistles. Key people and places mentioned in the Epistles cannot be understood without the Book of Acts. While the phrase *“baptised in the Holy Spirit”*, occurs in all four Gospels, and in 1 Corinthians, only in Acts is it explained what really happened and what it means to be baptised in the Holy Spirit. While the Church is mentioned in the Gospel of Matthew, Acts explains how churches were planted, how the Apostles appointed Elders and what the relationship was between the Apostles and the churches they founded. Acts explains how churches conducted their services and outreaches.

An Outline of Acts

Acts 1:1 - 2:47

Preparation of the Disciples for witnessing.

Acts 3:1 - 7:60

Witnessing in **Jerusalem**.

Acts 8:1 - 9:43

Witnessing in **Judea** and **Samaria**.

Acts 10:1 - 28:31

Witnessing to the **uttermost parts**.

The Church in Action

Acts documents what a Biblical Church involves: Bible teaching, worship, intercession, breaking of bread, fellowship, caring and sharing, Evangelism, Missions, caring for widows and orphans, responsive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, transforming lives and communities, applying the Lordship of Jesus Christ to all areas of life.

The Mission

The Christian message is universal. It is for all people, of all generations, of every nation on earth. Christ Himself commanded His Church to cross all boundaries: cultural, religious, geographic and linguistic in order to make disciples of every nation. It is His will that His people “*...be for salvation to the ends of the earth*” (13:47). The word “*witness*” is used more than thirty times in Acts. The Holy Spirit is mentioned over seventy times in Acts. God is named over one hundred times.

Witness and Martyrdom

The Greek word translated witness is martyr. Acts demonstrates how costly witnessing for Christ may be. It cost the deacon, Stephen, his life and was the cause of the imprisonments of both Peter and Paul.

To Every Race and Nation

The hated Samaritans respond to the Gospel (8:5); an African (8:27); an “*unclean*” Gentile (and a Roman soldier at that!) (10:44-48); women turn to Christ (16:14-15) and are used by Him in ministry (21:9). All prejudices are confronted. No one is barred. Everyone is welcome. God’s Grace knows no barriers!

There are **three remarkable conversions** in Acts:

The Sudanese Treasurer (8)

The Persecutor, Saul (9)

The Roman Centurion, Cornelius (10)

These are the descendants of **Ham, Shem** and **Japheth** - the sons of Noah, representing the main races of mankind.

The Message

The message is simple: “*...through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved...*” (15:11), “*Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*” (4:12), “*...Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*” (2:38).

The Messengers

Acts clearly shows that the Church, composed of both Hebrews and Gentiles, is a fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy. The Apostles, in their preaching, often quoted the Law of Moses, the writings of the Prophets, and the Psalms. Peter spoke of: “*The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers...*” (3:13). He quoted the Prophets (3:18), Moses (3:22), David (2:25, 2:34), Joel (2:16) and the Psalms. He preached in the Temple and proclaimed “*the Messiah.*” When Stephen was brought before the Sanhedrin, he clearly showed that Christianity is completely in keeping with the Faith delivered to Abraham, Moses and the Prophets (7:2-53). The disciples addressed the crowds as “*fellow Israelites*” (13:16), and “*descendants of Abraham*” (13:26), proclaiming Jesus as the long-awaited “*Messiah*” (2: 36).

The Method

When Jesus instructed His disciples that they were to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth, He promised them supernatural power to accomplish their Mission. Acts 2 records the fulfilment of that prophecy when God poured out the Holy Spirit upon them. Now, in God’s Sovereign Will, the circumstances surrounding that event underlined the purpose of God’s blessing. The day the Church was born, was Pentecost - the Harvest Festival, held seven weeks after the “*first fruits*” (which was Christ’s Resurrection from the dead), when the wheat was harvested. On that day the great Missionary Psalm 67 was sung:

*“May God be gracious to us and bless us.
 May Your ways be known on **earth**,
 Your salvation among **all nations**.
 May the **peoples** praise You, O God;
 May **all** the peoples praise You;
 May the **nations** be glad and sing for joy...
 Then the land will yield its harvest...
 And **all the ends of the earth** will fear Him.”*

Power from on High

This is exactly what God did on the day of Pentecost: He blessed the waiting disciples. He made them a blessing to the peoples gathered in Jerusalem from the various nations (2:5). The land yielded its harvest, and 3,000 were converted to the Faith (2:4). From that harvest were people from Europe, Mesopotamia, Persia, Asia Minor, North Africa and Arabia. Not only did the Holy Spirit empower the disciples, but they were enabled to miraculously speak in the many Gentile languages represented by that crowd gathered in Jerusalem.

The Great Commission

In the context of the Lord's Great Commission (Matthew 28:19), to take the Gospel "*to the ends of the earth*" (1:8), the giving of that miraculous ability to speak Gentile languages had missionary purpose. The power of the Holy Spirit is given for world Evangelisation. Whenever Jesus promised the power of the Holy Spirit, and whenever that power was given, it was always in connection with proclaiming the Gospel and making disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-20; Luke 24:47-49; John 20:21-22; Acts 1:8; 4:31).

Overcoming Opposition

There was much opposition to the spread of the Gospel to the Gentiles (11:2-3; 13:45; 15:1) and God had to initiate every stage of its early development. An angel of the Lord led Phillip to the Ethiopian Treasurer (8:26). The Lord Himself appeared to Saul to commission him as the leader of the Mission to the Gentiles (9:6; 26:16-18). An angel instructed the Roman centurion, Cornelius, to call for Peter (10:3-5). The Lord gave Peter a vision (three times) to prepare him for the Mission to the Gentiles (10:15-20). The Holy Spirit guided the Church at Antioch to send Barnabas and Saul on the Mission to the Gentiles (13:2-3). God gave Paul a vision to lead him to take the Gospel to Europe (16:9-10). The Lord instructed Paul to testify in Rome (23:11). Unquestionably, God wanted the Gentiles to be Evangelised!

Abundant Blessings

God not only guided the Mission to the Gentiles. He also poured His blessings upon every aspect of it. The Holy Spirit was poured out upon Samaritans (8:15-17). The Gentiles in Cornelius' house received the Holy Spirit in the same miraculous way. The Lord was with the Gentiles in Antioch; a great number were converted, and showed much evidence of the Grace of God (11:20-24). God put His seal of support on the first Mission to the Gentiles by performing many signs and wonders during the outreaches (15:12).

Mission Sending Model

The Missionary sending model of Antioch (13:1-3), is of a praying and fasting congregation, which sends out two of its best leaders - Paul and Barnabas. It was at Antioch that the believers were first called "*Christians*" (11:26). The power base of the church shifts from **Jerusalem** to **Antioch**, from **Peter** to **Paul**, from **Hebrews** to **Gentiles**. The child quickly outgrows the parent.

Advantages

The Early Church's advantages included: a common (lingua franca - Greek) language, Roman peace, good roads and a reliable postal system.

Difficulties to Overcome

Their difficulties included: there were so few of them (only 120 to start with), they had no learning, no organisation, (no printing presses, radio stations, films, tapes, etc. obviously). They had to contend with tremendous racial barriers, class structures, religious pluralism, extreme decadence in society, persecution from the Jews, political suspicion (and later persecution) from Rome and general cynicism of pagan society.

Strategies for Success

Yet, they succeeded in conquering the Roman Empire because: they lived their message and were transformed by it, their dedication and willingness led them to obey no matter what the cost, their obvious love for one another, their enthusiasm and joyful sense of discovery, their endurance, their concern for strangers, widows and orphans, their priorities of “*prayer and the Word*”, were evidence of the overflowing, life-changing, character-transforming power of the Holy Spirit. They exercised an “*every-member ministry*”; they had shared leadership, dynamic, fresh and varied worship; they emphasised teaching and obedience to God’s revealed Word.

Every member was involved in regular Evangelism

There was a spontaneous, natural, **continuous**, joyful sharing of the Gospel (Acts 8:1,4). They worked from where they were (Jerusalem) outwards in ever-widening ripples (Acts 1:8). They started by concentrating on the “*God-fearing fringe*” (e.g. Acts 10; 13). They ran a lot of **home meetings** (Acts 17:5; 18:7; 21:8; 12:12; 20:7; 2:46; 5:42; 28:23; 16:32; 19:22) - informal, relaxed gatherings for Evangelism fellowship, prayer, communion and follow-up.

They often held discussions on **neutral ground** (Acts 3; 22,28).

They wrote and used the **Scriptures** and **literature**.

They engaged in **missionary journeys** (e.g. Acts 13-14; 16-20).

They relied on personal conversations.

Creation Evangelism

As the apostle Paul taught in Athens: God is the Creator of the whole world and everything in it (17:24). God created all the races of mankind (17:26). God now commands all men everywhere to Repent (17:30). God will Judge the whole world (17:31). Clearly, Christianity is also for the Gentiles, because they too must be saved (4:12).

Obstacles to Communication

In order to communicate the Gospel to “*the ends of the earth*” the Christian has to overcome many obstacles. There are geographical obstacles and distances to travel. There are languages to learn, customs to understand

and cultures to penetrate. Racial differences, political divisions and tribal loyalties have to be understood. Cultural misunderstandings have to be cleared up, and confusing aspects of the message have to be explained. In many ways, the greatest obstacle to the spread of the Gospel is the cultural barrier. Acts records the problems caused when people saw the Gospel as a threat to their culture: *“And they brought them to the magistrates, and said, ‘These men, being Jews, exceedingly trouble our city; and they teach customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or observe.’ Then the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded them to be beaten with rods.”* 16:20-22.

Pride and Prejudice

Those people at Philippi saw Paul and Silas as of a different race, with another religion, advocating foreign customs and this they fought against. The charge against Stephen was that he was trying to change the customs of the Jews (6:14). A riot was caused in Ephesus when the people felt that their idol worship was being threatened by the preaching of Paul (19:26-29). The Apostle Paul described some of the cultural obstacles that he encountered in this way: *“For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness.”* 1 Corinthians 1:22-23

Deceivers Damned

In Acts 5, we see the story of Ananias and Sapphira, who engaged in deception to seem more spiritual before the church. *“But Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit...’”* (5:3). Here we see the seriousness of sin. The principle here is not, as some claim, socialism. There is a world of difference between **voluntary** Christian generosity and sharing and **compulsory** socialist coercion and confiscation. As the Apostle Peter declared: *“While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? **You have not lied to men but to God.**”* Acts 5:4. To Sapphira, Peter said: *“How is it that you have agreed to test the Spirit of the Lord?”* (5:9). The Gospel affects every area of our lives, even our money and possessions. The issue in Acts 5 is pride and deception. Peter declares that they have lied to the Holy Spirit. They had lied to God. *“**So great fear came upon all the Church and upon all who heard these things.**”* Acts 5:11

The Sermon of Stephen

The longest sermon in Acts is that of the first Christian martyr, the deacon, Stephen. Acts 7 is not an academic lecture. Stephen was on trial for his life. This records his last earthly opportunity for ministry. Stephen

ignores the false charges placed against him and directly challenges the pride and prejudices of the Jews. He points out that Abraham was still in Mesopotamia when God chose and called him. The Patriarchs of Israel were jealous of their brother Joseph and treacherously sold him to be a slave. But God protected and used Joseph to obtain the good will of the pharaoh of Egypt. Joseph was faithful to God and forgiving to his brothers, saving them from famine through providing sanctuary and food in Egypt.

Moses and Israel

Moses was born outside of Israel, educated in Egypt, exercised all of his ministry outside of Israel, was commissioned by God outside of it, ministered in Egypt, Midian and in the wilderness. Moses never actually stepped foot in the land of Israel. The people of Israel rejected Moses at the start of his ministry and even after the incredible miracles, the ten plagues and the crossing of the Red Sea, they still rejected Moses as leader. They rejected his deliverance from Egypt and they rejected God. *“whom our fathers would not obey, but rejected. And in their hearts they turned back to Egypt.”* Acts 7:39.

Rebellious and Idolatrous

Thus were the seeds sown for future idolatry and rebellion of the children of Israel. The Jews placed great emphasis on the Law of Moses on the Temple and on the land of Israel. However, Stephen points out the limitations of all these. No temple, city, or land, could contain Almighty God. *“However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says: ‘Heaven is My Throne, and earth is My footstool. What house will you build for Me?’ says the Lord, ‘or what is the place of My rest? Has My hand not made all these things?’”* Acts 7:48-50.

Betrayers and Murderers of the Messiah

Stephen exposed the excessive preoccupation of the Jews with their land, their law and their temple. They were blind to the Messiah who had come right into their midst and ministered amongst them, healing the sick, delivering those under bondage, giving sight to the blind, making the cripple walk and the dead to rise. *“You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, who have received the Law by the direction of angels and have not kept it.”* Acts 7:51-53. Despite claiming to be students of the Word of God, the Jews had misunderstood, or ignored, the prophecies and now had missed the Messiah. Worse than that, they had rejected, betrayed and murdered the Messiah!

Murdered by the Mob

“When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, ‘Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!’ Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; and they cast him out of the city and stoned him...” Acts 7:54-58. Stephen died as he had lived - filled with the Holy Spirit, with a prayer on his lips for his killers, committing of himself back to God - a similar death to that of His Lord, with forgiveness, courage, vision, purpose and joy. The councils verdict on Stephen was: Death! But God’s verdict on Stephen was: Glory!

Jewish Opposition to Christianity in Acts

*“But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul. Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, ‘It was necessary that the Word of God should be spoken to you first; **but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.**”* Acts 13:45-46

“But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region.” Acts 13:50

“But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren.” Acts 14:2

“Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.” Acts 14:19

“But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.”
Acts 17:5

“But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the Word of God was preached by Paul at Berea, they came there also and stirred up the crowds.”
Acts 17:13

*“Therefore **bear fruit worthy of repentance**, and do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.”* Luke 3:8

*“**Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as of many, but as of One, ‘And to your Seed,’ who is Christ.**”*
Galatians 3:16

Religious Racketeer

In Acts 8, we read of Simon, the sorcerer of Samaria. “And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the Apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, ‘Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit.’ But Peter said to him, ***‘Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.’*** Acts 8:18-24

Simony is Sin

Here we see the dangers of counterfeit religion. The ‘name it, claim it and frame it’ crowd who proclaim the ‘health and wealth gospel’ are actually guilty of the sin of simony, attempting to buy spiritual power, healing, or wealth, through money. The prosperity cult is a false gospel and needs the firm rebuke that Peter gave Simon: ***“Repent therefore of this your wickedness...”***

The Demands of the Judaizers

Acts records that the main opposition to the spread of the Gospel did not come from the Gentiles, but from Jewish believers. The Apostle Peter was criticized for being a guest in the home of “*uncircumcised gentiles*” and for eating with them when on a mission to Caesarea (11:2-3). Some men from Judea caused division by telling the Gentile Church at Antioch: “*Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved*” (15:1). Some of the believers who belonged to the Pharisees demanded: “... *It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses*” (15:5). These challenges led to the Conference at Jerusalem (15).

Salvation is By Grace Not Race

Peter responded to the Judaizers by reminding them of the time when God had guided him to preach to the Gentiles in Cornelius’ house: ***“So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by Faith...”*** 15:8-9. If God had accepted the Gentiles on the basis of their faith without requiring them to keep the law, then who were they to do otherwise? ***“Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers, nor we, were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they.”*** 15:10-11.

God is Saving Gentiles

For their part, Barnabas and Paul answered the Judaizers by reporting on their work of planting churches amongst the Gentiles. The miraculous results showed that God approved of their direct Evangelism of the Gentiles and of their acceptance - without being required to keep the Jewish ceremonial law (15:12).

Faith Alone

James concluded by showing that the acceptance of Gentiles as God's people was prophesied by Scripture and he quoted from Amos 9:11-12 to show that all mankind will come to God, all the Gentiles whom He has called to be His own. This Jerusalem Conference was of supreme importance as it completely rejected the notion that circumcision was necessary for salvation. It accepted that salvation is by God's grace alone and has nothing to do with observing the Jewish law. The Jerusalem Conference rejected the Judaizers and opened the way for the free access of Gentiles into the Church. A Gentile does not have to become a Jew in order to be a Christian. Acts records how Christianity moved from being a Jewish religion with some Gentile converts to the place where it is unquestionably a Gentile religion with Jewish converts. ***"...God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him."*** 10:34-35.

Conversions in Acts

The Ethiopian treasurer was led to Christ through reading and explaining of the Scriptures ***"...Do you understand what you are reading?"*** (8:30).

Saul of Tarsus was confronted by Christ as a blinding light ***"...Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?..."*** (9:1-19).

Lydia, the first convert in Europe responded to the proclamation of the Gospel ***"...The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul."*** (16:14).

The Philippian Jailer was struck in fear by the earthquake that struck the foundations of the prison. He fell down before Paul and Silas and asked, ***"Sirs what must I do to be Saved?"*** ***"...So they said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, you and your household'"*** (16:25-31).

The Kingdom of God Advancing

The Kingdom of God is spiritual in character, international in membership and relentless in expansion. The Disciples moved out with a zeal that could not be quenched and a courage that was unflinching. Salvation includes: Repentance from sin, Faith and Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, a public confession of Faith through baptism and daily discipleship, following, worshipping and obeying the Lord Jesus Christ.

Roman Peace and Roads

Culture does not have to be the missionary's enemy; it can often be used as an ally. The Roman peace throughout the Empire gave the believers an unprecedented opportunity for cross-cultural Evangelism throughout the Mediterranean world. Under Roman rule, Paul, Barnabas, Silas, Timothy and others could evangelise without the problem of tribal warfare or political borders. Acts also records several instances of Paul being protected from Jewish mobs by Roman officials (18:12-16; 21:31-32; 23:29-30). The Roman civilisation also provided the excellent roads that speeded up the spread of the Gospel message and the postal service that was used for the distribution of the Apostolic Epistles to the churches.

Greek Evangelism

So great was the influence of the Greek culture upon the Roman Empire that believers were able to use the Greek language to spread the Gospel, and other Scriptures, throughout the civilized world. Not only was Greek one of the most widespread languages in the world at that time, but it was one of the best mediums for communicating Theological thought.

Synagogue Evangelism

Much use was made of the synagogues that diaspora Jews had established throughout the Mediterranean world. Paul used them as an initial base for many of his missions (e.g.: Pisidia, Iconium, Thessalonica, Berea, Corinth, Ephesus and others), and the influence of the Hebrew religion prepared many people for the message of God's Salvation through Christ.

Peter and Paul

Luke focuses primarily on the Apostles, Peter and Paul. While both are distinctly different individuals, there are some startling similarities between the Apostles Peter and Paul:

They both were filled with the Holy Spirit.

They both preformed miracles.

They both saw visions.

They both presented powerful sermons.

They both proclaimed the Word of God with courage and boldness.

They both proclaimed the Gospel to Jews and Gentiles.

They both suffered for the Faith.

They were both imprisoned and miraculously set free.

They both healed the sick.

They both cast out demons.

They both raised the dead.

They both declared God's condemnation on false teachers.

They both refused worship.

They both died in Rome.

The Apostle Paul

Paul was ideal for the cross-cultural Mission to the Gentiles. Few men could have been better suited to bridge the gap between the Judaic traditions and the Gentile world. Paul was of the tribe of Benjamin (Philippians 3:5). He was a Pharisee, and the son of a Pharisee (23:6), thoroughly trained in the Law by the famous Gamaliel (22:3), and zealous for religion (Galatians 1:14). Yet he was brought up in the prominent Hellenistic city of Tarsus (22:3) and would have been exposed to its cosmopolitan life and Greek philosophy and literature. Paul's Roman citizenship (22:28) was a tremendous help in his Mission to evangelise and disciple the Gentiles.

Opening for the Gospel

Paul became *"all things, to all men"* in order to win them to Christ. He was a Hebrew to the Hebrews, a Greek to the Greeks, a Roman to the Romans, a Gentile to the Gentiles. Paul turned the **obstacle** of culture into an **opening** for communication. One example demonstrates this very clearly:

The Plague

Three ancient writers, Diogenes Laertius, Philostratus and Pausanias record a plague, around 600 B.C. that struck the city of **Athens**, decimating the population. Even though the people of Athens offered sacrifices to their thousands of gods, begging them to intervene and stop the plague, the people continued to die in their thousands. In desperation, the elders of the city sent for a Greek hero, Epimenedes, asking him to help them.

Admitting Failure

Assessing the situation, Epimenedes concluded that there must be some other more powerful god who did not consider himself represented by the thousands of idols in the city. He also reasoned that any god who is great enough and good enough to do something about the plague would probably forgive their ignorance if they openly acknowledged their ignorance of him. He called the people to bring a flock of sheep to a sacred plot of ground in Athens, called Mars Hill, and there sacrificed the sheep to *"the unknown God."* All three writers confirm that the plague lifted immediately.

God Now Commands Every Man to Repent

"...Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you:" 17:22-23. In effect, Paul was saying 'Foreign gods? No! The God I proclaim is the One who did what none of your thousands of futile idols could do - He saved Athens from that plague.' ***"God... now commands all men everywhere to repent"*** Acts 17:30

Let the Earth Hear His Voice

Acts boldly proclaims that Christianity is for all cultures, every race and nation. It shows how culture can be an obstacle and how it can also provide an opening to the communication of the Gospel across all the various cultural barriers of Samaria, Syria, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, Pamphylia, Crete, Macedonia, Greece, in fact *“to the ends of the earth.”* Luke documents the irresistible force as Christ Jesus builds His Church and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. Acts is an unfinished Book as Christ continues to build His Church by the power of His Holy Spirit working through His disciples. When the Great Commission is fulfilled Christ will return to Judge the living and the dead.

The Gospel in Acts

Peter at Pentecost:

- a. Preached a **Person**: A Christ-centered message, emphasising His death and glorious Resurrection.
- b. Proclaimed a **Gift**: The gift of forgiveness, of the Holy Spirit, of adoption and reconciliation with God.
- c. Looked for a **response**: Repentance, Faith in Christ, and baptism.

Gospel Messages in Acts Include:

- a. The **Incarnation**: *“God has come right into our midst”*. An Historic and unique event.
- b. **Forgiveness** of sins: Striking at the heart of our problems.
- c. The **Cross**: God has acted. The Lord Jesus has been crucified. He is our Atonement, guilt- bearer and propitiation of our sins.
- d. The **Resurrection**: Christ Jesus is alive! He is Lord and reigning on High.
- e. The evangelists preached **Christ**: A Person, not a system. An experience of vital relationship to Christ is needed.

The Gospel in Acts Emphasises:

- a. The **Person and Character** of Jesus Christ as God incarnate.
- b. The **Teachings** of Jesus Christ on God, life, the Kingdom and human destiny.
- c. The **Death** of Jesus Christ as the Atonement for sin.
- d. The **Resurrection** of Jesus Christ. He is our living Lord.

Paul in Athens Proclaimed:

God is the **Creator** of the whole world and everything in it (17:24).

God created all the races of mankind (17:26).

God will **Judge** the whole world (17:31).

God now commands all men everywhere to **Repent** (17:30).



CHAPTER 6

ROMANS

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” Romans 12:1-2

Introduction

In our Bible Survey we come to a major new section. We have surveyed the first five Books of the Bible: **The Law**. We have gone through the twelve **History Books** of the Old Testament and the five **Books of Poetry**. We went through the five **Major Prophets** and the twelve **Minor Prophets**. We have surveyed the four **Gospels** and the one History book of the New Testament: The Book of **Acts**. Now we come to the **Epistles**. There are 21 Epistles written to churches, or individuals. The last Book of the New Testament: Revelation, is in a unique category of its own: Apocalyptic writing. Today we will deal with the first of the Epistles. In so many ways Romans can be regarded as the greatest of the Epistles.

The Epistles

13 of the 21 Epistles were written by the Apostle Paul. These are called the Pauline Epistles. During his Missionary journeys, Paul wrote letters to the Churches at Thessalonica, Galatia, Corinth and Rome. While a prisoner in Rome, he wrote his letters to the Churches at Ephesus, Colossae, Philippi and to Philemon. After his first imprisonment and release, he wrote two letters to Timothy and one to Titus. These are what we often call the Pastoral Epistles, although they were written to Missionaries.

Who Was Paul?

Like his namesake, Saul, Israel's first king, (Saul was Paul's Hebrew name; Paul was his Greek name), Paul was from the tribe of Benjamin (Philippians 3:5). Paul was also a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37; 22:25). Paul was born at the time of Christ's birth, in Tarsus (Acts 9:11). Tarsus is described as an important city (Acts 21:39). Tarsus was in the Roman province of Cilicia, in Asia Minor (modern day Turkey). Paul spent much of his early life in Jerusalem as a student of the celebrated teacher Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). Like his father before him, Paul was a Pharisee (Acts 23:6), A member of the strictest Jewish sect (Philippians 3:5). Present at the stoning of the Deacon, Stephen, the first Christian martyr (Acts 7:58), Saul of Tarsus was notorious for his hatred of Christians and persecution of the Church (Acts 9:13-14).

Converted on the Road to Damascus

On his way to Damascus, on a mission to arrest followers of Christ, the pharisee Saul was confronted by the Risen Christ who struck him blind, off his horse, onto the ground, where the Lord rebuked Paul and commanded him to arise and go into the city where he would be told what he must do (Acts 9:1-8). Miraculously converted and his sight restored, he was baptised and began proclaiming the Gospel of Christ (Acts 9:20).

Preparation for Ministry

After escaping from Damascus (Acts 9:23-25; 2 Corinthians 11:32-33), Paul spent three years in Arabia, South East of the Dead Sea (Galatians 1:17-18) in study and preparation for the ministry. Then after labouring for three years in Tarsus and one year in Antioch, Paul became the great Missionary to the Gentiles.

Missionary to the Gentiles

On three missionary journeys, he founded many churches and wrote his Epistles. The combination of Roman citizenship, Greek education and Hebrew religion, prepared him for his work, but he regarded none of these as qualifications (Philippians 3:8), but trusted in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ alone and the Apostleship he had received from the Lord Himself (Romans 1:1,5). More than any other individual, Paul was responsible for the rapid spread of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire. Paul declared: ***“In mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ. And so I have made it my aim to preach the Gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man’s foundation.”*** Romans 15:19-20

En Route to Jerusalem

Paul had evangelised throughout Syria, Cyprus, Asia Minor and Greece. Now he had collected an offering for the poor in Jerusalem and was about to sail there to deliver it to the starving and suffering believers. ***“But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem.”*** Romans 15:25-26

Rome - Capital of the Empire

Rome was the capital and most important city of the Roman Empire. Founded in 753 B.C. along the banks of the Tiber River, Rome was over 20 km from the Mediterranean Sea. However, until an artificial harbour was built later at Ostia, Rome’s main harbour was Puteoli, over 240 km away (Acts 28:13). At the time that Paul wrote the letter to the Romans,

the population of Rome was over one million people. At least a third of these were slaves. While Rome had some magnificent buildings, such as the Circus Maximus and the Forum, there were vast slums surrounding the city. On the Day of Pentecost there were visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes (Acts 2:10). Many Christians from various parts of the East had also migrated to the capital city, some of them Paul's own friends and converts (Romans 16).

The Greatest Epistle

Despite the ravages of centuries of warfare, over 14,000 letters, dating to the Roman times, have been discovered by Archaeologists. A typical letter ranges from 20 to 200 words. A letter from Cicero of 2,500 words has been discovered and Seneca's 4,000 word letter was an all-time record for the Roman Empire. The Apostle Paul's average Epistle was 1,300 words. However, his letter to the Romans, at over 7,000 words, is his longest Epistle. Indeed the Epistle to the Romans is the longest letter that has been discovered from the ancient world.

The Epistle to the Romans

The Epistle to the Romans reads more like a lecture than a letter. It is remarkable for the exceptionally long opening and closing greetings. Romans is also set apart from Paul's other letters because here he is writing to a church, with whom he had had no previous contact. Not only had Paul not founded the church in Rome, but he had not yet visited it. The Epistle to the Romans is also far more intellectual than Paul's other writings. Some see Romans as Paul's Last Will and Testament. He did not know how much longer he would be free to travel and speak, for he had been warned that persecution and prison would come. Some see Romans as a handbook on objections to the Gospel, faced by the church in Rome at that time. It is recognised as the most concise Theological treatise of the first century.

Strategic Mission Base

Rome, as the capital of the Empire, was a strategic base for the fulfilment of the Great Commission. Paul also saw Rome as the gateway to Spain in the West. Having planted self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating congregations in every major centre of population in the Eastern Mediterranean, Paul was now setting his sights on the Western hemisphere of the Roman Empire. Jerusalem was his first base of operation. Antioch was his second congregation and sending base. However, Antioch was so very far from Spain. Rome would logically be his next base for missionary activity into the unreached mission field of Spain. Paul wrote that he wanted to come and minister to the church in Rome.

The Structure of Romans

The **person** of the Gospel - *Christ*.

The **power** of the Gospel - *the power of God*.

The **purpose** of the Gospel - *for Salvation*.

The **people** of the Gospel - *everyone who believes* (Romans 1:16).

The **plan** of the Gospel - *the Just shall live by Faith* (Romans 1:17).

Sin, Salvation, Saviour

The first three chapters of Romans describe **the hell of sin**.

The last five describes **the Heaven of Holiness**.

The intervening chapters describe **Christ, the Way**.

Sin in the City

Rome was a huge metropolis, a hot-bed of homosexuality. Out of the first fifteen Roman Emperors, fourteen were practising homosexuals. With leaders engaged in depths of depravity and perversion, the court was debauched. Rome was the gilded and haughty cesspool of every foul sin and perversity. The depravity of man, (as pictured in Romans 1:18-32), had reached its depths in Rome. Children were being disobedient to their parents. There was rampant vice and violence. Paul was deeply concerned that the church would become corrupted by the society in which they lived. The Apostle Paul tackles these sins head-on:

“For the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the Creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man - and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonour their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of

their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.” Romans 1:18-32

Ministry to the Romans

Paul was not sure whether he would be able to arrive in Rome, so this Epistle to the Romans is his ministry to the Romans, hopefully in preparation for his arrival there, but if not, the message he would preach and teach, were he able to visit their congregations. The Holy Spirit had revealed to Paul that he may be arrested and put on trial at any moment. He did not know whether he would be able to achieve his ambition to preach in Rome, and so the Epistle to the Romans reflects Paul's determination to communicate with the believers in Rome.

Jews in Rome

The original believers in Rome were probably Jewish pilgrims who had travelled to Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost. However, in AD 49, the Emperor Claudius had expelled the 40,000 Jews in Rome from the city. The Roman Historian, Suetonius, reported that Claudius had expelled the Jews for instigating riots against the followers of “*Chrestus*” (probably a reference to Christ). Throughout the Book of Acts, we read of numerous riots and opposition raised by Jews against the Disciples of Christ.

When Was Romans Written?

Paul wrote Romans shortly before his visit to Jerusalem with the gifts from the Gentile congregations (Romans 15:25, Acts 24:17). Paul wrote the letter to the Romans towards the close of his third Missionary journey, therefore, most likely, in AD56, certainly before AD57.

Where Was Romans Written?

Paul wrote the Epistles to the Romans from the city of Corinth, as evidenced by his reference to the house of Gaius (Romans 16:23) who Paul describes as his host and the home where the whole church of Corinth met, “*Gaius, my host and the host of the whole church, greets you...*” Also in Romans 16:23, Paul refers to: “*Erastus: the Treasurer of the city, greets you...*” The deaconess, Phoebe, is referred to as the messenger entrusted

with delivering this letter to the Romans, *“I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea, that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also.”* Romans 16:1-2. Cenchrea was the nearest port city to Corinth.

Assaulted, Arrested and Accused

After Paul returned to Jerusalem bearing an offering for the needy in the church there, he was falsely accused by the Jews (Acts 21:27-29), savagely beaten by an angry mob (Acts 21:30-31), and arrested by the Romans. *“Now... the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the Temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him, crying out, ‘Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against the people, the law, and this place; and furthermore he also brought Greeks into the Temple and has defiled this holy place.’ And all the city was disturbed; and the people ran together, seized Paul, and dragged him out of the Temple; ... Now as they were seeking to kill him, news came to the commander of the garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. He immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down to them. And when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. Then the commander came near and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and he asked who he was and what he had done...”* Acts 21:27-34. So when he could not ascertain the truth because of the tumult, he commanded him to be taken into the barracks.

Incarceration, Storm and Shipwreck

Two Roman governors, Felix and Festus, as well as king Herod Agrippa, did not find him guilty of any crime. However, pressure from the Jewish leaders kept Paul in Roman custody. After two years of uncertainty, the Apostle exercised his right as a Roman citizen and appealed his case to Caesar. After a harrowing journey (Acts 27:28), including a violent, two-week storm at sea that culminated in a shipwreck off the Isle of Malta, Paul eventually reached Rome. After his release, he ministered widely and was arrested again under the persecution of the Emperor Nero and suffered martyrdom at Rome on the Ostian Way, AD67.

Augustine, Luther and Wesley

The great Church Father Augustine was converted through studying the Book of Romans. It was from studying and teaching through the Book of Romans at the University at Wittenberg, that Dr. Martin Luther was converted to Christ and inspired to launch the Reformation. John Wesley was converted while hearing Luther’s Preface to the Epistle to the Romans read at St. Botolph church, on Aldersgate Street, in London, in 1738. The great Protestant

Reformer, Professor Martin Luther, described Paul's letter to the Romans as: *"The most important Book in the New Testament. It is purest Gospel. It is well worth a Christian's while not only to memorise it word for word, but also to occupy himself with it daily, as though it were the daily bread of the soul."*

The Master Key to Understanding All Scripture

William Tyndale in his prologue to his translation of the Book of Romans into English, quoted from Martin Luther: *"This Epistle is the principle and most excellent part of the New Testament and most Evangelion, that is to say glad tidings and what we call the Gospel and also a light and a way into the whole Scripture... the sum and whole cause of the writings of this Epistle is to prove that a man is justified by faith alone; which proposition, whoso denieth, to him is not only this Epistle and all that Paul, writeth, but also the whole Scripture, so locked up that he shall never understand it to his soul's health. And to bring a man to the understanding and feeling that faith alone justifies, Paul proves that the whole nature of man is so poisoned and so corrupt, yea and so dead concerning Godly living, or Godly thinking, that it is impossible for him to keep the Law in the sight of God."*

God's Great Plan of Redemption

Romans is Paul's fullest, grandest, most comprehensive, panoramic statement of the Gospel. All the Reformers saw Romans as the God-given key to understanding all of Scripture. In the Book of Romans, Paul brings together many of the Bible's greatest themes: Sin, Law, Judgement, Eternal Destiny, Faith, Works, Grace, Justification, Sanctification, Election, the Plan of Salvation, the Work of Christ and of His Holy Spirit, the Christian Hope, the Nature and Life of the Church, Israel in the purposes of God, Church and World History, the Meaning and Message of the Old Covenant, the Duties of Civil Government and Christian citizenship, the Principles of Personal Godliness and Morality. From the vantage point granted by the Epistle to the Romans, the whole landscape of the Bible becomes open to view and Revelation of the parts of the Bible become plain as a whole counsel of God. The study of the Epistle to the Romans is vitally necessary for the spiritual health and understanding of the Christian.

Creation, Conscience and Christ

God speaks to us through **General Revelation in Creation**, through the **conscience**, He has placed in each soul and through His **Special Revelation** through Scripture and in the life and teachings of our Lord, Jesus **Christ**.

Justification by Faith

Paul makes it clear that Justification by Faith is not a new doctrine, because, both Abraham before the institution of the Mosaic Covenant, and David,

who lived under the Mosaic Law, were justified apart from works. Israel has been set aside because of her unbelief. But God has not completely turned His back on the Hebrew. A remnant will be saved and in time all of Israel will return to God. Man's Justification before God rests fundamentally, not on the Law of Moses, but on the mercy of Christ.

Historic Roots of Biblical Doctrine

Although *Romans* is primarily a work of Doctrine, it builds on important Historic material: Abraham (Chapter 4), David (4:6-8), Adam (5:12-21), Sarah (9:9), Rebecca (9:10), Jacob and Esau (9:10-13), and pharaoh (9:17) are used as illustrations. Some of the History of Israel is also referred to in Chapters 9 to 11. Chapter 16 also provides insightful glimpses into the nature and character of the First century Church and its members.

The Themes of Romans

The overarching theme of *Romans* is the righteousness that comes from God alone revealed in His condemnation of the wicked and justification and sanctification of believers by grace alone, received through faith in Christ alone. Chapters 1 to 11 present the great Theological truths of that doctrine while Chapters 12 to 16 details the practical out-workings in the lives of individual believers, the church and society.

Theological Topics in Romans

Spiritual leadership (1:8-15); God's wrath against wicked people (1:18-32); principles of God's Judgement (2:1-16); the universality of sin (3:9-20); Justification by Faith alone (3:21-4:25); Eternal security (5:1-11); the transference of Adam's sin to all mankind (5:12-21); sanctification (chapters 6-8); sovereign election (chapter 9); God's plan for Israel (chapter 11); spiritual gifts and practical discipleship (chapter 12); the role of government (chapter 13) and principles of Christian liberty (14:1-15:12).

The Day of Judgement

The Day will come when God will Judge the secrets of men (2:16). On the Day of Judgement the test will be: not race, but grace - as evidenced in the inner nature of the heart and its attitude towards the practices of daily life.

Salvation is not by race, but by the grace of God alone.

The Law of the Lord is Perfect Converting the Soul

Jews will be judged on the same standard before God as other nations. Except that to whom much is given, much shall be required. Historically, the nation of Israel was entrusted with the oracles of God. But that does not mean that they are intrinsically, within themselves, of any more value in God's sight, than other nations and peoples. Abraham was justified on

the basis of his Faith, while he was still uncircumcised. Abraham's real heirs are those who have the same Faith of Abraham, not those who have been circumcised. The Law was revealed to make man understand the Holiness and Eternal standards of Almighty God. The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul (Psalm 19:7). The Law is the schoolmaster that leads us to Christ, that we may be justified by Faith (Galatians 3:24). Sin must be punished. God is Holy. Christ alone is our propitiation.

Choose This Day

There are essentially two ways before us, the broad way and the narrow way, the way to death and the way of life. We cannot be on both roads at the same time. The Law was given for us to know the difference between right and wrong and to prepare us to see our need for the Lord Jesus Christ as our only Saviour. We are **condemned** by our transgression of God's Law, **convicted** of sin by the Holy Spirit through the Law of God and we are **converted** to Christ by the Gospel which is the power of God unto Salvation to those who believe.

Adam and Christ

Death entered the world through one man, Adam. The second Adam, Christ, has undone what the first Adam condemned the human race to. Christ has redeemed His chosen people.

Salvation from Sin

Christ died to save us from our sins. We must hate and forsake our sins. His forgiveness is not freedom to abuse His grace and delve further into sin. We cannot be both servants of sin and servants of Christ. We must choose either one or the other. It is not possible to please Christ and to continue at the same time living in sin and pleasing the world.

Set Free to Serve Christ

We are **saved** to **serve** God. We are to be living **sacrifices**. For me to live is Christ. We are **separated** from sin, **set apart** for Christ and **sanctified** for His **service**.

Grace, Faith and Works

There is a great struggle between our carnal and spiritual natures. This is a continuous and desperate struggle. The Apostle Paul found unbounded joy when he realised that Christ can do for us, what we can only vainly struggle to do for ourselves. In Christ we not only have our sins forgiven, but the impartation of a new life. The new birth is a reality from God within ourselves. After being saved by grace, received through Faith, we need to walk by Faith. Having been saved through the Spirit we must not seek to

live in the flesh, but rather live in the Spirit. This grace of Christ does not release us from the responsibility of doing everything in our power to live right, in accordance to God's Word. There are some fleshly desires that are perfectly natural and necessary. Others are wrong. Those fleshly desires which are wrong, we must abstain from all-together. Others, like appetite, we may enjoy, but be careful to keep within proper bounds. Food can be a blessing. Gluttony is a sin. Rest is a blessing. Laziness is a sin. We are **saved by Faith**. We need to **live by Faith**.

The Redemption of Creation

The whole of Creation is groaning for deliverance from decay and death, to be revealed in the Day of God's complete Redemption. God works all things together for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. If we belong to Christ, no power on earth, or in Heaven and hell, can prevent His bringing us to Himself in His perfect time.

Disobedient, Rebellious and Antagonistic

One of the greatest stumbling blocks is the unbelief of the Jews. The nation as a whole has not only been unbelieving, but bitterly antagonistic to the Gospel. The Jewish rulers conspired to have Christ crucified. At every opportunity they persecuted the Church. Jewish unbelievers made trouble for Paul in almost every place he went. Paul reveals his sorrow for Judah, but points out that this Jewish rejection has been offset by the adoption of the Gentiles and their enthusiastic embracing of the Gospel. The Jews are themselves to blame (10:1-21). The Jews heard the Gospel, but were disobedient and rebellious (10:18-21). But all Israel shall be saved (11:26). Those who are true children of Abraham, those who are the real Israel, shall surrender to Christ and follow Him wholeheartedly.

Not Conformed But Transformed

Romans 12 is a magnificent chapter of the transformed life, reminding us of our Lord's Sermon on the Mount. As new believers, we need to resist conformity to the world, but be transformed by the renewing of our minds, by the washing of the Word, by the study of the Bible. This will lead to an irresistible urge to good works, transforming our whole outlook on life and society itself. The Christian life includes: Brotherly love, hatred of evil, especially within ourselves, diligence, joyfulness, patience, prayerfulness, hospitality, sympathy, concern for that which is honourable, peaceable, without resentment.

The Duties of Civil Government

Romans 13 tells us what the duties of Civil government are. Civil authorities are to be ministers of Justice, under God. All authority is delegated authority and is accountable to Almighty God. Civil government is to be a

terror to evil, a minister of Justice, executing wrath on those who practice evil. Civil government is not to be a terror to those who do good, but is to protect the Law-abiding.

“Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience’ sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God’s ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour.” Romans 13:1-7

Total Depravity in Romans

“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.” Romans 5:12

“For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the Law of God, nor indeed can it be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.” Romans 8:6-8

“As it is written: There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable. There is none who does good, no, not one. Their throat is an open tomb; with their tongues they have practiced deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.” Romans 3:10-18

Man by nature is corrupt, perverse and sinful throughout. The whole of man’s being has been affected by sin. This corruption extends to every part of man, his body and soul, his mind and will. As a result of this inborn corruption and our sinful choices, the natural man is enslaved to sin, a child of satan, rebellious towards God, blind to truth, corrupt and dead in sin. Consequently, men have cut themselves off from the God of Heaven and have forfeited all rights to His love and favour.

Unconditional Election in Romans

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called; these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.” Romans 8:28-30

“...that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls... I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I have compassion, on whomever I will have compassion. So then, it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.”

Romans 9:11,15

“...I have reserved for Myself 7,000 men who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Even so then, at this present time there is a Remnant according to election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace.” Romans 11:4-6

God was under no obligation whatsoever to provide salvation for anyone. However, by His grace and mercy, God has chosen to save many, by the Father's act of election, by the redeeming work of the Son and by the renewing work of the Holy Spirit. While Christ's saving work was limited in that it was designed to save some, and not all, it was not limited in value, for His Redemption is of infinite worth and is completely effective in securing salvation for all whom the Lord chooses.

Irresistible Grace in Romans

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.”

Romans 8:14. The Holy Spirit never fails to bring to salvation those sinners whom He personally calls to Christ. The work of the Holy Spirit, which is accomplished through regeneration, renews the will so that the sinner spontaneously comes to Christ of his own free choice because of the new nature he has been given. As his mind is enlightened by the effectual call of the Holy Spirit, the renewed sinner freely and willingly turns to Christ as Lord and Saviour. In this way, the one that had been dead in his trespasses and sins is drawn to Christ by the inward supernatural call of the Holy Spirit who through regeneration makes him alive and creates within him faith and repentance. The irresistible call of the Holy Spirit is invincible, in that, it can never be thwarted or refused and it never fails to bring those whom God has predestined unto spiritual, abundant and eternal life and true faith in Christ.

Perseverance of the Saints in Romans

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? ...for I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Romans 8:35-39

The elect are not only redeemed by Christ and renewed by the Holy Spirit, but they are kept in faith by the power of Almighty God. Nothing can separate God’s people from His eternal and unchangeable love. Those who have been predestined unto eternal glory are assured of Heaven.

Key Words in Romans

Law is mentioned 72 times.

Sin is mentioned 48 times.

Faith is mentioned 40 times.

Lord appears 43 times.

Christ appears 65 times.

God is mentioned 153 times.

Forgiveness and Freedom

We have two major problems: Sins and Sin.

I need forgiveness for my **actions** (sins).

I need to be saved from the guilt of my sin for what I have done.

I also need deliverance from my **nature** (sin).

I need to be saved from the power of sin, from what I am.

Justification, Sanctification and Glorification

In the Book of Romans, Paul demonstrates that the Gospel declares unto us a Salvation that is past tense, present tense and future tense.

If we are Christians:

We have been Saved from the **penalty** of sins (our actions).

We are fully forgiven. (Spirit.)

We are also being Saved from the **power** of sin (our nature).

We are daily freed. (Soul.)

We shall be Saved from the **presence** of sin (in Heaven).

We are eternally delivered. (Body.)

Justification

The Son of God died instead of me so that I can be forgiven. This deals with my **guilt**. The legal word, Justification, sums up this past tense aspect of our Salvation. Justification: Just as if I had never sinned.

Sanctification

Jesus Christ lives instead of me, for my deliverance. This present continuous aspect of our Salvation can be called sanctification. This deals with the **power** of sin.

Glorification

One day, our Lord Jesus Christ will return to this world in glory and He will raise the living and the dead. In our new Resurrection bodies, we will be freed from the very **presence** of sin - in Heaven. This future tense of our Salvation can be called Glorification.

“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!”

Romans 11:33

The Blood and the Cross

The Blood of Christ deals with what we have **done** - it cleanses us from our sins.

The Cross of Christ deals with what we **are** - it strikes at our capacity for sin. The Return of Christ will deal our very inclinations and temptations to sin.

Past, Present and Future

So, if we are Christians, we can speak of our Salvation as being past tense, present tense and future tense.

We have been Saved from the **penalty** of sins.

We are being Saved from the **power** of sin.

We shall be Saved from the **presence** of sin.

*“He breaks the power of cancelled sin, He sets the prisoner free,
His Blood can make the foulest clean, His Blood availed for me.”*

“Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my Gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the Faith - to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.” Romans 16:25-27



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CHAPTER 7

1 CORINTHIANS

“Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” 1 Corinthians 10:31

Strategic Sea Crossroad

The city of Corinth is located in Southern Greece, in what was the Roman province of Achaia, about 78km West of Athens. The lower part of Greece, the Peloponnese’s is connected to the rest of Greece by a 7km wide Isthmus, which is bound on the East by the Saronic Gulf and on the West by the Gulf of Corinth. Corinth is near the middle of the land bridge and is prominently situated on a high plateau. For many centuries, all North-South traffic had to pass through, or near, this ancient city. Since travel by sea around the Peloponnese’s involved a treacherous 400km voyage that was dangerous and time consuming, many captains chose to transport their ships on skids, or rollers, across the Isthmus, directly past Corinth. Corinth was a leading Naval power and rich commercial city with colonies in Sicily and Corfu. An attempt to dig a canal across the Isthmus was begun by the Emperor Nero during the First Century A.D., but this was not successfully completed until the end of the 19th Century in 1893. Up to the 12th century, ships were still dragged on rollers across the narrow land bridge.

A Major Sports Capital

The Isthmian Games, one of the two most famous athletic events of the day (the other being the Olympic Games), was hosted by Corinth, a major athletic capital. These Isthmian games were held in the Spring of every second year, beginning in 582 B.C., in honour of Poseidon. At the Isthmian Games in 336 B.C., Alexander the Great was chosen to lead the war against the Persians.

Cosmopolitan and Carnal Corinth

Even by the pagan standards of its time, Corinth was notorious for its moral corruption. The term *“Corinthian girl”* meant prostitute. To Corinthianise came to mean drunken debauchery, moral depravity and gross perversion. The Apostle Paul lists some of the specific sins for which the city was notorious: ***“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the Kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”*** 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Aphrodite and the Acropolis

Corinth had an acropolis (a high city), which rose 2,000 feet and was used both for worship and defence. The most prominent edifice on the acropolis was a temple to Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love. The Temple of Apollo was constructed in Corinth 550 B.C. It was still operating in Paul's time, but was destroyed by an earthquake shortly afterwards. Corinth was one of the largest cities in the Roman Empire with a population of 800,000 and one of the most corrupt.

Wealthy, Worldly and Wicked

The first city of Corinth was partially destroyed by the Romans in 146 B.C. It was rebuilt and repopulated as a Roman colony in 44 B.C. by Julius Caesar. From 29 B.C., it was the capital of the Senatorial province of Achaia. Its cosmopolitan population of Romans, Greeks and Jews were very wealthy, worldly and arrogant. Not many were of noble birth. However, benefiting from this prosperous and strategic cross-roads and host to important athletic games, there was tremendous wealth in Corinth. Along with that new money came a snobbery and arrogance which also infected the church. Idolatry was a central part of Corinthian culture. They worshipped the Roman god, Poseidon (the god of the sea) and the Greek goddess, Aphrodite (the goddess of love). A temple dedicated to the Roman Emperor Octavia (Augustus) was also later destroyed in an earthquake.

Who Wrote the Letter to the Corinthians?

This letter to the Corinthians was written by the Apostle Paul while he was on his third Missionary journey. The church in Corinth was founded by Paul on his second Missionary journey (Acts 18:1-4).

When and Where?

The Epistle to the Corinthians was written in the first half of A.D. 55, from Ephesus (1 Corinthians 16:8: *"But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost."* and in 1 Corinthians 16:19 *"The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house."*

How was the Church in Corinth Established?

When most of the Jews resisted the Gospel, Paul left the synagogue, but not before Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, his family and many other Corinthians were converted (Acts 18:5-8). Paul ministered in Corinth for over a year and a half. *"And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the Word of God among them."* Acts 18:11 *"Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized."* Acts 18:8

Contentious, Carnal and Childish

The Corinthian church proved to be exceptionally divisive, carnal and immature. After the gifted Apollos had ministered in the church for some time, a group of his admirers established a clique which refused to have anything to do with the rest of the church. Another group developed which was loyal to Paul. Another claimed special allegiance to Peter. *“Now I plead with you, brethren, by the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe’s household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, ‘I am of Paul,’ or ‘I am of Apollos,’ or ‘I am of Cephas,’ or ‘I am of Christ.’ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?”* 1 Corinthians 1:10-13

Worldliness, Weakness and Wickedness

The most serious problem of the Corinthian church was worldliness and an unwillingness to divorce from the carnal culture of Corinth. The Corinthian church had failed to mature in its discipleship. Instead it had developed disastrous division, disturbing immorality, disgusting legal attacks on fellow believers, deplorable idolatry, disgraceful gluttony and disorderly practices in worship.

In the World but Not of the World

The two biggest battles for any congregation is how to keep the church in the world, engaged in effective Evangelism and how to keep the world out of the church, so that God’s people can be Holy. This conflict between Evangelism and Holiness confronts us today. Most pastoral problems can be put under one of these two headings. Just as a rescue boat needs to be in the sea to rescue the perishing, the sea must not be in the boat. A rescue boat which takes on too much of the sea will be sunk and of no use to anyone. The church must be in the world, rescuing the perishing. The world must not be in the church.

Compromised and Corrupted

Corinth, as a typical sea port, was a cesspool of sexual immorality. Almost anything was acceptable in Corinth. It would appear almost anything was also acceptable in this new church of Corinth. One can discern how the Greek culture had infiltrated, infected and polluted the church.

Democracy vs. the Rule of Law

Democracy is a pagan Greek concept. Not that many people today would recognise what the Greeks called “*democracy*.” Greek democracy was only

for men of the upper classes. Neither women nor slaves had the vote under Greek “*democracy*” and two thirds of Athens were slaves. Nevertheless, one does not see democracy in the Bible. The Biblical concept is of a representative state based on laws, either a constitutional monarchy, or a constitutional republic. But Law is king. *Lex Rex*. The Biblical principles for government include: separation of powers, checks and balances and the rule of Law - based upon God’s Law.

Lex Rex

For many centuries the prevailing ethos was *Rex Lex*. The king is the law. The king’s word is law. However, the Reformers inverted that term to *Lex Rex*. The Law is king. The king is under the Law. The king is obligated to rule in accordance with God’s Law. Constitutional representative government is the Biblical standard. Not the tyranny of the majority. Not 50% plus one. Because man is depraved, democracy would not solve any problems.

Democracy Chose Barabbas and Crucified Christ

The mob that screamed for the release of Barabbas and the crucifying of Christ may have been democratic, but it was evil. So in the crucifixion of Christ we see democracy in action. The mob chose a murderous terrorist to be released and condemned to death the Lord of Glory.

The Idolatry of Sports

Sport was of supreme importance to the Greeks, as seen in the Olympics and the Isthmian Games. Sports and athletics were effectively the national religion of Greece. Statues of the ideal human form predominated in Greek culture. They worshipped the human body in an idealised, unrealistic fashion.

Separating the Physical from the Spiritual

The worst aspect of Greek thinking was the separation of the physical and the spiritual. To the Greeks the body and soul were entirely separate. The Greeks believed that the body was not really integral to the soul. Their thinking was that when the body decays at death, the soul is set free.

Body, Mind and Spirit

However, that is not the Biblical perspective. The Biblical concept is expressed in the maritime distress signal S.O.S (Save Our Souls). Souls and bodies are firmly attached. To save someone’s soul, in the SOS sense, is to save their bodies from dying, because everybody is a living soul.

Comprehensive Fulfilment of the Great Commission

For centuries, Missionaries understood Missions to be ministering to body, mind and spirit. So Missionaries in the 19th century first established

hospitals, or medical clinics, to minister to the body, schools to minister to the mind and churches, or chapels, to minister to the spirit. This comprehensive understanding of fulfilling the Great Commission has been integral to Christian civilisation.

Indulgence and Idolatry

However, to the Greeks, their distortion of both body and soul led them to do one of three things with their bodies: They either **indulged** their bodies, since what is done to the body does not affect the soul, or they **ignored** their bodies and tried to live an ascetic life, free from physical desires. Or they **idolised** their bodies, making statues of the perfect body and effectively worshipping these completely unrealistic bodies.

God Has a People for His Temple

To these carnal Corinthian Christians, the Apostle Paul reminds them: *“You are God’s building.”* 1 Corinthians 3:9. God used to have a Temple for His people. Now He has a people for His Temple. *“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.”* 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. *“You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.”* 1 Corinthians 7:23.

The Resurrection of the Body

Many religions believe in an afterlife. Only Christianity believes in the Resurrection of the body. That is why Christians have traditionally practised burial, *“in sure and certain hope of the resurrection of the body from the dead”*. Jesus Christ is *“the Resurrection and the Life”*. Hence Abraham buried Sarah. Abraham was buried. Joseph gave instructions that, after his body was buried in Egypt, it was to be carried back to the Promised Land to be buried in the land of his fathers. 400 years later, the children of Israel remembered this and carried the bones of Joseph back to be properly buried in his own land. It is important to note that the children of Israel never became Egyptians, not even after 400 years in Egypt. They were still Hebrews, Israelites. A nation is an ethno-linguistic people group of a shared faith.

Cremation is a Pagan Practise

Today too many Christians have accepted the pagan concept of cremation. The Greeks and Romans cremated their dead. The Ancient Vikings used to practise cremation until they were converted to Christ. From then on the Scandinavians consistently practiced burial. The Hindus cremate to this day. It is deeply disturbing that, in the latter part of the 20th Century and the beginning of the 21st Century, so many in the church have abandoned

over 19 centuries of Christian tradition and adopted the pagan practice of cremation. The burial service is a clear Christian testimony *“in sure and certain hope of the Resurrection of the body.”* ***“But now Christ is Risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the Resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming. Then comes the end, when He delivers the Kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.”*** 1 Corinthians 15:20-26

Heaven

“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” 1 Corinthians 2:9

When Pagan Greek Thinking Infects the Church

We can also see the pagan Greek attitude to the body in how so many Evangelicals today have abandoned the Christian tradition and practise of dressing up in one’s best for worship in Church on Sunday morning. For 19 centuries, Christians have seen the attitude of our body in kneeling for prayer as normal, both for family devotions and at church services. Only in the latter part of the 20th Century and the beginning of the 21st Century has most of the Evangelical church abandoned the practise of kneeling in prayer. Those who have lived under a monarchy know what it is to kneel in submission before their monarch and most importantly before the King of kings and Lord of lords.

To Kneel or Not to Kneel - That is the Question

Today, some kind of egalitarian republicanism has infected the Church where most Christians find no occasion when they need to kneel before the King of kings and Lord of lords, our Creator and Eternal Judge. In Romans 12:1, the Apostle Paul wrote: ***“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.”***

Run to Win

“Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.” 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Catastrophic Carnality in Corinth

The carnal Corinthians had a catastrophic catalogue of crisis. There was division. Cliques had arisen centered on leadership cults. Immorality and immodesty was prevalent within the congregation. This was also seen in hairstyles and clothing. A litigious spirit infected the church, where even church members were threatening law suits and taking fellow believers to court, rather than settling matters amongst themselves in accordance with Biblical principles. Idolatry was infecting church worship. Corinthian Christians were mixing the worship of God with pagan practices. A radical and aggressive feminism was seeking to abolish gender distinctions between men and women. The Lord's Supper was being abused with drunkenness and gluttony. Instead of the Lord's Supper as a **serious, solemn** and **spiritual** ordinance, focussed on Christ's sacrifice on the Cross of Calvary, the love feast had become a farce.

Charismatic but Chaotic

Corinth was plainly a charismatic church, rich in the gifts of the Spirit, but it was also a chaotic and carnal church lacking character and integrity. Paul commented that if any unbeliever came into their service they would conclude that the church members were out of their minds, insane! ***“Let all things be done decently and in order.”*** 1 Corinthians 14:40

Do You Understand What True Love Is?

In carnal Corinth, the concept of love had been disastrously distorted. In Greek there are four words that are translated into English as love. The term love has such a widespread application that its meaning can often be distorted. When you can use the same word for: I *love* ice-cream and God is *Love*, we must know that our language is inadequate to explain the Biblical concept of Love. There are four words for love in Greek: *Eros*, *Philia*, *Storge* and *Agape*:

Eros is lust, infatuation, attraction to the body, an emotional bond, conditional, reactive, dependent on the flesh and temporary (body).

Philia, often described as *Philadelphia*, brotherly love, is an affection, a liking, intellectual, reciprocal, dependant, long-lasting, mental and emotional (soul).

Storge is family affection, service and loyalty (soul).

Agape is a uniquely Biblical word to describe God's Love. *Agape* is spiritual attention, unconditional, volitional, commitment, sacrificial and permanent. Whereas *Storge* and *Philia* deals primarily with the soul and *Eros* with the body, *Agape* is a uniquely spiritual love. *Agape* love is the love of God. It is sacrificial, willing to pay the price for someone you love. Biblical *Agape* love is not a feeling, it is an act of your will (spirit).

Love is Not a Feeling - It Is an Act of Your Will

In 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, the Apostle Paul makes clear what true love is: *“Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.”*

An Overview of the Main Subjects Dealt with in Corinthians

The first chapter deals with division in the church: **Conflict**.

The second deals with wisdom - both human and God’s wisdom: **Confusion**.

The third chapter deals with worldliness in the Church: **Compromise**.

The fourth chapter deals with the mysteries of God, which ministers must teach as servants and stewards: **Contemplation**.

The fifth chapter deals with immorality in the Church: **Corruption**.

The sixth with our bodies as Temples of the Holy Spirit: **Consecration**.

The seventh chapter deals with principles of marriage: **Commitment**.

The eighth chapter deals with idolatry: **Conscience**.

The ninth chapter deals with the Christian pattern of self-denial: **Conduct**.

The tenth chapter deals with victory over temptation: **Conquest**.

The eleventh with modesty and the Lord’s Supper: **Communion**.

The twelfth chapter deals with the gifts of the Spirit: **Calling**.

The thirteenth deals with our motives and attitudes in love: **Consecration**.

The fourteenth chapter deals with prophecies, tongues and order in church services: **Christ-centeredness**.

The fifteenth deals with the Resurrection of the body: **Consumption**.

The sixteenth deals with collections and co-workers: **Co-operation**.

Confronting Contemporary Carnality

First Corinthians is an extremely relevant Book to the problems of our age. It deals with division, leadership cults, worldliness, immorality, marriage, divorce, singleness, gender distinction, gifts and callings, pride, greed, gluttony, lust, idolatry and litigations. It reminds us of the primary tactics of the enemy: *“Corrupt and conquer”* and *“confuse, divide and conquer.”*

Resist Corruption and Refuse to be Confused

We need to resist corruption and refuse to be confused. We need to understand the times and rightly divide the Word of Truth, so that we are not confused, divided or conquered. The Corinthians had become selfish, confused, corrupted and compromised. Their intellect had been perverted. Their conscience had been seared and darkened. Self-indulgence was a result. Christian liberty does not mean the right to do as we like, but the right to do as we ought.

Protect the Family

The family is the basic building block of society. Family is foundational. Corruption and undermining of the family affects the church and all of life.

Respect the Lord's Table

The Lord's Supper was established on the night in which our Lord Jesus Christ was betrayed. It celebrates His undying love for His people. The Lord's Supper is a symbol of the New Covenant in His Blood. The bread is a symbol of His body, which is broken for us. The fruit of the vine is a symbol of His Blood shed for us. A man ought to examine himself and be careful not to eat or drink in an unworthy manner. ***“But let a man examine himself and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.”*** 1 Corinthians 11:28-32

“For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’” 1 Corinthians 11:23-24

Gender Distinctions

“...it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved...” 1 Corinthians 11:6

“Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonour to him? But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her...”

1 Corinthians 11:13-15

Men and Women are Different and Have Different Responsibilities

God has made men and women differently. Women should not be afraid of being feminine. Men should not be afraid of being masculine. Long hair on a man is a disgrace. Long hair on a woman is her glory. Women must have their heads covered when they pray. Men must uncover their heads to pray. Men can be conscripted to the Army. Women should not be conscripted. To women alone belongs the burden and privilege of being pregnant, giving birth to children, being the life-givers and care-givers of babies. Men are called to provide for, guide and protect their family. Men are called to lead in families, church and state. Mothers are to be home makers, shaping and raising the next generation.

War Against the Family

In our godless, rebellious and confused age, there are those aggressively

campaigning for the removal of all gender distinctions. According to them, men should have access to women's bathrooms and showers. Women should be conscripted into the army and serve in combat. There are also those who advocate that women should be ministers of congregations. Sadly, too many males are all too willing to hand over their spiritual and other responsibilities to women.

Eroding Civilisation

Feminism has been catastrophic for civilisation. As women have poured into the workplace, children have been raised by state-run schools and child-care facilities. Unemployment of men has skyrocketed. Taxes have exploded. The cost of living has escalated. Inflation is rampant. Far more seriously most families are now dysfunctional. Many children are born into broken homes. Many children are raised in single-parent homes. Most men have left the church.

Eroding Christianity

Churches have become more feminine. Most men feel alienated from the church. Few males today are real men and few females today are real women. Even less of the males are gentlemen. Sadly, very few females today are ladies. Feminism has actually been waging a war against femininity and the family.

Confusing and Corrupting Children

In this gender confused age, children are the main victims. While women are filling the workplace, children are coming back from state schools, hostile to Christianity, to empty homes, or rather apartments, buildings, even houses, seldom homes. Instead of mothers and fathers raising the next generation in the way that they should go, in the fear of the Lord, the state is indoctrinating, subverting and seducing an entire generation into secular humanism, evolutionism, situation ethics, perversion and debauchery.

Catastrophic

The crime and violence of angry young people in criminal gangs, engaged in substance abuse, drunkenness, drugs and sexual immorality, is catastrophic for society and civilisation. As goes the family, so goes the nation. Strong homes are essential for a healthy society. ***"...Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?"*** 1 Corinthians 1:20

The Message of the Cross

"For the message of the Cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." 1 Corinthians 1:18.
"But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the

Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called... Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 1 Corinthians 1:23-24

“For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” 1 Corinthians 3:11

“Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.” 1 Corinthians 5:7

“Yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.” 1 Corinthians 8:6

“...woe is me if I do not preach the Gospel!” 1 Corinthians 9:16

Strength to Resist Temptation

“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.” 1 Corinthians 10:13

The Gifts of the Spirit

“There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.” 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

Active Members are Essential for a Healthy Body

A healthy church needs those who have wisdom and knowledge to teach. Those who have faith to lead and pray. Some people have a healing gift. From the beginning the Lord commanded His Disciples to go out, preach the Gospel and heal the sick.

Preach the Gospel and Heal the Sick

That is why the healing symbol of a Red Cross is a universally accepted sign of a hospital. Christianity invented hospitals. The nursing profession was founded by Bible-believing Christians in response to the injunctions of Christ. Many Missionaries, such as Dr. David Livingstone and Dr.

Kenneth Fraser, were also medical practitioners. Establishing hospitals and clinics have frequently been an essential part of Missionary strategy.

Body, Mind and Spirit

Schools to minister to the mind, hospitals to minister to the body and churches to minister to the spirit.

Answers to Prayer and Discernment of the Word

The working of miracles and the proclamation of the Word of God is essential to the growth of the Church through the ages. Discernment must be the least popular gift. However, it is absolutely essential, living as we do in the age of confusion and deception. ***“For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.”*** 1 Corinthians 14:33

The Gift of Tongues

From the Day of Pentecost the Gospel was proclaimed in many languages. Learning to communicate in other tongues and being able to interpret from other tongues is an essential part of the fulfilment of the Great Commission. On the Day of Pentecost, this ability was granted, miraculously. For most it is a long and disciplined study to acquire other languages for the purposes of Bible translation and teaching. Some Missionaries, such as William Carey and David Livingstone seem to have had a miraculous gift of tongues and interpretation. They acquired and mastered many languages. David Livingstone preached the Gospel in many languages, which had never before heard the Word of God. William Carey completed the translation of the whole Bible into six languages and New Testaments and Gospels into a further 29 languages! ***“For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.”*** 1 Corinthians 12:12

Your Attitude and Motive is Vital

The gifts of the Spirit have been given to believers to serve God and His creatures. If we use these gifts as ends in themselves and covet the public gifts, such as speaking in tongues, it avails nothing. ***“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.”*** 1 Corinthians 13:1-3. Attitude is everything. Our attitudes and motives are vital.

Three Essentials for Every Church

John Calvin taught that there are three essentials for every church: Faithfully teaching the Word of God, administering the sacraments Biblically and exercising church discipline consistently. If any of those three are missing, it is not a church. ***“Watch, stand fast in the Faith, be brave, be strong.”*** 1 Corinthians 16:13

Solus Christus! Sola Scriptura! Soli Deo Gloria! Sola Gratia! Sola Fide! Christ alone is the Head of the Church. Scripture alone is our ultimate authority. Everything should be done for the glory of God alone. Salvation is by the grace of God alone, received by Faith alone. ***“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.”*** 1 Corinthians 16:23

Belief Affects Behaviour

Wrong living is directly related to wrong thinking. Bad beliefs lead to bad behaviour. Everything has consequences. ***“But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”***

1 Corinthians 15:57-58



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CHAPTER 8

2 CORINTHIANS

“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

Confronting Conflict and Controversy

The Corinthians were Paul’s most difficult church. As a result, his two letters to the Corinthians, which are preserved in the Scriptures, are treasure troves of teaching - rich in relevance for our churches today. The letters to the Corinthians give us practical teaching on how to live in hostile, heathen environments and how churches should regulate their activities and discipline their members. 2 Corinthians also gives us an intriguing insight into how the Apostle Paul dealt with opposition and character assassins. Paul’s teachings in 2 Corinthians provide an excellent model for God’s servants to follow. 2 Corinthians is the least methodical of Paul’s letters and also the most personal.

Comparing and Contrasting the Two Letters

1 Corinthians is aimed primarily at church members. 2 Corinthians is aimed primarily at church leaders and ministers of the Gospel.

In 1 Corinthians we learn what Paul thought about the Corinthians.

In 2 Corinthians we learn what the Corinthians thought about Paul.

The Attacks of the Judaizers

The church in Corinth was extraordinarily divided and divisive. The criticisms against Paul and opposition to him seems to have come primarily from the Judaizers, who were seeking to bring the people under legalism, under their interpretation of mosaic law, including the necessity for circumcision and Saturday Sabbath worship. It was the teaching of the Judaizers that was condemned at the first Church Council in Jerusalem (Acts 15). The Books of Hebrews and Galatians were especially written to refute the heresies of the Judaizers.

False Charges Against Paul

From 2 Corinthians, we learn what some of the accusations against Paul included. Fickleness, of always changing his plans. (Although the Apostle Paul seems extraordinarily disciplined, focused and dedicated.) The Judaizers accused Paul of being cowardly. (Although it would appear that he was extraordinarily courageous and bold. Paul risked his life and liberty repeatedly

in the face of fierce opposition, to advance the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.) The critics accused Paul of being timid! (Yet the Apostle Paul seems to have been one of the most bold and brave preachers in history.) Much of the letter of Corinthians deals with the criticism that he did not come with any letters of recommendation, whereas the super apostles had come with impressive resumes, credentials and certifications from Jewish leaders in Jerusalem. (The Apostle Paul makes clear that the real test of a man's ministry is not his academic qualifications, or formal training, but the fruit of his ministry and the disciples he produces.) The critics accused Paul of being secretive, distant, aloof, unfeeling and uncaring. They accused him of not being a polished speaker and they despised him for the fact that he did not charge any fees for his service!

Defence and Attack

The first nine chapters of 2 Corinthians includes Paul's defence against these many charges and accusations. The last part of 2 Corinthians, chapters 10 to 13, are Paul's attacks on the false apostles.

Living Epistles that Testified to His Apostleship

Paul makes clear that he is "*an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.*" (1:1). Paul points out that he does not need letters of commendation from others to the Corinthians. 2 Corinthians 3:2-3: "*You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.*", the very existence of the Church at Corinth testified to the authenticity of Paul's Apostleship. He was the one who had brought them to Christ and disciplined them in the first place.

Evangelism vs. Subversion

He contrasts his ministry with the subversion of the Judaizers. Their ministry is authenticated by ink, his by the Spirit of the Living God. They are calling people back to the Law that was written on tablets of stone. Paul is a servant of the New Covenant, where God's Law is written on the heart. The result of their legalism is death and condemnation, for "*the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*" (2 Corinthians 3:5-6: "*Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the New Covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*").

Deceit and Death

Paul categorises the ministry of the Judaizers as "*the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones.*" (3:7), "*the ministry of condemnation*" (3:9). He describes the Jews: "*...their minds are blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in their reading of the Old Testament, because the*

veil is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart..." 2 Corinthians 3:14-15.

Blinded by Unbelief

Paul condemns these Judaizers in 2 Corinthians 4:2-4: *"But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the Word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. **But even if our Gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.**"*

Testifying to the Light of Christ

Paul describes his ministry: *"For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."* (2 Corinthians 4:5).

Gospel Treasure in Clay Pots

Paul describes his ministry as: *"**But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.**"*

2 Corinthians 4:7

What are the Marks of True Christian Ministry?

*"**We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.**"* 2 Corinthians 4:8-9. Opposition does not negate a ministry, but is its vindication. For Jesus Christ Himself suffered for us and left us an example that we should follow in His footsteps (1 Peter 2:21).

Personal Insights to the Apostle Paul and His Ministry

In 2 Corinthians we read details about the life and ministry of the Apostle Paul which are revealed only in this letter. This includes Paul's escape from Damascus in a basket. (2 Corinthians 11:32-33: *"In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall and escaped from his hands."*); Paul's experience of being caught up to the third Heaven (2 Corinthians 12:1-4: *"It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord: I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows - such a one was caught up to the third Heaven. And I know such a man - whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows - how he was caught up into*

Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.”); His thorn in the flesh (2 Corinthians 12:7: “And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.”); some of his sufferings in ministry (2 Corinthians 11:23-27: “Are they ministers of Christ? - I speak as a fool - I am more: in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.”).

Sacrificial Service and Steadfastness in Suffering

“We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed. But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in sleeplessness, in fastings; by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, by the Word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report; as deceivers and yet true; as unknown and yet well known; as dying and behold we live; as chastened and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing and yet possessing all things.” 2 Corinthians 6:3-10

True Love is Measured by Sacrifice

Our Lord Jesus Christ, by His great example, showed us that true love is measured by sacrifice. In the words of a famous Christian prayer: *“Teach us O Lord to serve You as You deserve; to give and not to count the cost; to fight and not to heed the wounds; to toil and not to ask for rest; to labour and not to ask for any reward, save that of knowing that we do Your will.”*

Love in Action

Love gives and does not count the cost. Love rejoices in giving and wants to give – not out of duty, but out of a glad and willing heart. Love entails intense enthusiasm, a longing to be near and a desire to serve. As Anselm prayed: *“Let me seek You in longing, let me long for You in seeking, let me find You in love and love You in finding.”* As the Apostle Paul taught: *“...let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.” 1 John 3:18*

True Riches

The wife of Romanian Pastor, Richard Wurmbrand, Sabina Wurmbrand, in her book *The Pastor's Wife*, reveals that before she was condemned to five years hard labour in a communist concentration camp in Romania, she was very poor, but when she was imprisoned, she became very rich. This was because while she was poor in the things of this world, she was rich in her knowledge of the Scriptures, which were the only currency of value in their state of servitude and suffering. Having so much of the Word of God stored up in her heart and mind and memory, she was able to make many other people rich with the Scriptures.

An Aroma of Life and Death

“Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things?” 2 Corinthians 2:14-16. The savour unto life and death is a figure of speech based on the incense scented triumphal processions with which conquering emperors and generals returned to Rome, with long lines of captives. Some of these captives were to be put to death, while others were to be permitted to live. So, here, the Apostle Paul describes the ministries of God's servants as being the fragrance of God, which, depending upon a person's reaction to the Gospel, could mean death or life. Our ministries are, by the sovereignty of God, in a sense, a march of triumph which brings life to those who turn in faith and obedience to Christ and it signals death to those who reject the Gospel, turn their back on the Salvation provided in Christ and offered so graciously by Almighty God.

Comfort in Corinthians

The Epistle **begins** with comfort: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort.”* 2 Corinthians 1:3.

It **closes** with comfort: *“Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.”* 2 Corinthians 13:11.

In the middle we find the **reason** for this comfort: *“And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.”* 2 Corinthians 9:8.

The **source** of this comfort is: *“...‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’...”* 2 Corinthians 12:9.

Enduring Trials and Tribulations is Part of our Job Description

Nowhere does Christ promise that a Christian will be free from suffering or sorrow. Indeed the Lord warned that, *“in this world, you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world”* (John 16:33). Noah was not protected **from** the Flood, but **in the midst of the Flood**. Moses and the Children of Israel were not air-lifted over the Red Sea, but were led by God **through** the Red Sea. Daniel was not saved **from** the Den of Lions, but protected **in** the Lions Den. Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego were not saved **from** the fiery furnace, but preserved **in** the fiery furnace. The Lord allowed Paul to be shipwrecked and saved him **through** that ordeal.

Victory Through Resurrection Power

The Apostle Paul finds comfort for his sufferings in the fact of Christ's Resurrection and His promise that our weak and suffering bodies, like a tent, will one day be exchanged for resurrected and glorified bodies in eternity. For to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8).

Do Not Seek Unity with Those Who Reject or Distort the Scriptures

As the Judaizers were seeking to bring the Corinthian Christians back under legalism, bondage and condemnation, by rejecting the reality and substance that is in Christ and going back to the Old Testament shadows, the Apostle Paul challenged them: *“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the Temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God and they shall be My people.’ Therefore ‘Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean and I will receive you.’ ‘I will be a Father to you and you shall be My sons and daughters’, says the Lord Almighty.”* 2 Corinthians 6:14-18. God does not live in Jerusalem! The Lord no longer has a Temple for His people. Now He has a people for His Temple. There is no Salvation in Judaism. They have rejected Christ.

Resisting Babylon and the Beast

It was this very passage that Rev. Richard Wurmbrand quoted to the Communists when they organised a great public gathering for ministers of the Gospel to announce their support of the Communist Party. As one after the other of these compromisers and traitors stood up and made obligatory statements that Jesus Christ was *“the first communist”* and

Communism is “*Christianity in action*”, “*all true Christians must support Communism*”, etc. Sabina Wurmbrand turned to her husband, Richard and challenged him: “*Go and wipe the shame from the body of Christ!*” Richard Wurmbrand stood up, went onto the platform and quote this very passage: “***Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers... Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean and I will receive you!***”

Tortured for Christ

For this bold and brave Biblical stand, Richard Wurmbrand was condemned to prison. He ultimately served 14 years hard-labour, including many years in solitary confinement, in hideous conditions, as testified in *Tortured for Christ*. But as he pointed out, those traitors who lied and compromised their Faith, bearing false witness, in order to appease their communist masters, ended up in the same prison cells as he did. They just got there a little bit later. However, as he pointed out, the difference was that he was imprisoned with a clear conscience.

In the Light of Eternity

“*Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the Judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men...*” 2 Corinthians 5:9-11. Believers know the healthy fear of God which leads us to please, serve, honour and obey Him. For unbelievers, there is only the fear and terrors of hell and condemnation.

A Ministry of Reconciliation

“***For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them and has committed to us the Word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.***” 2 Corinthians 5:14-21

The Love of Christ Compels Us

We have been entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation, as ambassadors for Christ to implore people, on Christ's behalf, to be reconciled to God. The love of Christ compels us. We should no longer live for ourselves, but for Him who died for us and rose again, has ascended on high and is coming again to Judge the living and the dead.

The Fear of God Inspires Us

This is the greatest story, which we have the privilege to be involved in, of God reconciling His rebellious world to Himself. *"Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."* 2 Corinthians 7:1

The Lamb and the Lion

The first time Jesus came to this earth He came as the Lamb of God, as the Son of Abraham, destined to be the sacrifice on the altar of the Cross. The second time the Lord Jesus will not come as a Lamb, but as the Lion, the Son of David, destined for the Throne, as our Eternal Judge and Sovereign God. Those who have not submitted to Christ as Lord and Saviour, will be forced to bow before Him as the Eternal Judge. The question is, **is Jesus Christ your Saviour, or your Judge?**

Godly Sorrow Leads to Repentance and Life

The Apostle Paul speaks of *"... Godly sorrow produces repentance leading to Salvation, not to be regretted, but the sorrow of the world produces death. For observe this very thing that you sorrowed in a Godly manner: What **diligence** it produced in you, what **clearing** of yourselves, what **indignation**, what **fear**, what **vehement desire**, what **zeal**, what **vindication!** In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter."* 2 Corinthians 7:10-11. Godly sorry which leads to repentance produces diligence, a clearing of ourselves, indignation, fear, vehement desire, zeal and vindication, which proves us to be true Disciples of the Lord. The result is *"we rejoice exceedingly."* True repentance leads to joy.

A Ministry of Faith

The enemies of Paul criticised him for working with his hands and supporting himself with Tent Ministry. They declared that no Apostle would work with their own hands. Paul explains that while he had the right to expect support from the Corinthian church, yet because of money-grabbing manipulators and false teachers, who commercialised the ministry, he preferred not to be a burden to the churches that he founded. *"Freely you have received, freely, freely give."* *"To whom much is given, much is required."* To whom much more is given, much more is required. Paul

responds that he had accepted no payment from any of the churches for his work, except from Philippi. God has promised to reward the generous giver. God is no man's debtor. We should give out of our poverty, generously, willingly, proportionately, cheerfully, bountifully.

Generosity in Giving

*“But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; **for God loves a cheerful giver.** And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.”* 2 Corinthians 9:6-8

Christian Stewardship

In 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 we have the most complete instructions of our church-giving. It is to be **voluntary, proportionate, systematic, regular and generous**. This is called *“the ministering to the saints”*. *“As a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation.”* (9:5). *“Now may He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness, while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God. For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God.”* 2 Corinthians 9:10-12

Systematic Targeting of Paul

At his conversion, the Lord had said of Paul: *“I will show him how many things he must suffer for My Name sake”* (Acts 9:16). The Jews plotted to kill Paul in Damascus (Acts 9:24) and in Jerusalem (Acts 9:29), drove him out of Antioch (Acts 13:50), attempted to stone him at Iconium (Acts 14:5), stoned him and left him for dead at Lystra (Acts 14:19). In Philippi the Jews beat him with rods and put him in stocks (Acts 16:23-24). In Thessalonica, the Jews rioted against Paul (Acts 17:5), they drove him out of Berea (Acts 17:13-14). The Jews plotted against him in Corinth (Acts 18:12), in Ephesus they almost killed him (Acts 19:29; 2 Corinthians 1:8-9). In Corinth, shortly after he had written this Epistle, they plotted his death (Acts 20:3), in Jerusalem, the Jews again attempted to kill Paul. Except for the intervention of Roman soldiers they would have succeeded (Acts 22). Paul was then imprisoned in Caesarea for two years and in Rome for two more years. Besides these attacks and imprisonments, Paul endured other beatings, shipwrecks and privations of every kind.

The Credentials of Paul

*“Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. Are they ministers of Christ? - I speak as a fool - I am more: in **labours** more abundant, in **stripes** above measure, in **prisons** more frequently, in **deaths** often. From the Jews five times I received **forty stripes** minus one. Three times I was **beaten with rods**; once I was **stoned**; three times I was **shipwrecked**; a night and a day I have been **in the deep**; in journeys often, in **perils of waters**, in perils of **robbers**, in perils of my **own countrymen**, in perils of the **Gentiles**, in perils in **the city**, in perils in **the wilderness**, in perils in **the sea**, in perils among **false brethren**; in **weariness and toil**, in **sleeplessness** often, in **hunger and thirst**, in **fastings** often, in **cold and nakedness** - besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.” 2 Corinthians 11:22-28*

Evaluate a Leader’s Track Record and Fruit

Paul goes on the attack against his critics, challenging them to compare themselves with his service and suffering for Christ. True love is measured by sacrifice. The real credentials of a servant of God is his track record, not merely his academic credentials, or endorsements.

Visions and Dreams

It is interesting that the Apostle Paul tells us nothing concerning what he heard or saw, when he was caught up into Heaven. He describes what he heard as: *“...inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.”* 2 Corinthians 12:4. What a contrast this offers to modern day super Apostles who write books, produce films and regale audiences of millions on television with their imaginative descriptions of what they claim they saw and heard when they were caught up into Heaven!

Strength Made Perfect in Weakness

“And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

Exposing False Teachers

From chapter 10 through 13, the Apostle Paul goes on the attack against the false apostles, the Judaizers. He describes them: *“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.”* 2 Corinthians 11:13-15

Tolerating Evil

In a passage dripping with sarcasm, Paul tells the Corinthians: “For you put up with fools gladly, since you yourselves are wise! For you put up with it if one brings you into bondage, if one devours you, if one takes from you, if one exalts himself, if one strikes you on the face. To our shame I say that we were too weak for that! But in whatever anyone is bold - I speak foolishly - I am bold also.” 2 Corinthians 11:19-21

Beware of Your Mind Becoming Corrupted

“But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches **another Jesus** whom we have not preached, or if you receive **a different spirit** which you have not received, or a **different gospel** which you have not accepted - you may well put up with it!” 2 Corinthians 11:3-4

Do Not Despise and Devalue Those Who Live by Faith

“Did I commit sin in humbling myself that you might be exalted, because I preached the Gospel of God to you free of charge? I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to minister to you. And when I was present with you and in need, I was a burden to no one, for what I lacked the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied. And in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you and so I will keep myself.” 2 Corinthians 11:7-9. “For we are not, as so many, peddling the Word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.” 2 Corinthians 2:17

Examine Yourself

Paul condemns the church at Corinth for: “...contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, back-bittings, whisperings, conceits, tumults” 2 Corinthians 12:20.

Paul challenges the Corinthians: “**Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the Faith. Test yourselves...**” 2 Corinthians 13:5. Paul urges them: “...that you should do what is honourable...” 2 Corinthians 13:7. Paul prays: “...that you may be made complete...” 2 Corinthians 13:9. Paul’s prayer for the Corinthians: “Finally, brethren, farewell. **Become complete.** Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.” 2 Corinthians 13:11.

Soli Deo Gloria

The Reformation principle of **Soli Deo Gloria** is emphasised: “But **he who glories, let him glory in the Lord**.” 2 Corinthians 10:17. (Also a quote from Jeremiah 9:24 “But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight...”). “For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may **cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.**” 2 Corinthians 4:15

Take up the Cross of Christ

We are called to have a Christ-centered ministry, taking up our cross, *“Always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.”* 2 Corinthians 4:10.

Christian Liberty

The principle of Christian liberty is taught: *“Now the Lord is the Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”* 2 Corinthians 3:17. True Freedom is a fruit of the Gospel. Freedom from sinful habits and addictions. Freedom from drunkenness and drug addiction. Freedom from the fear of man. Freedom in Christ.

The Suffering is Temporary the Glory is Eternal

“Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” 2 Corinthians 4:16-17

The Testimony of Track Record

Far from the Apostle Paul needing academic degrees and commendations from famous people, his commendations were in the whippings, imprisonments, sufferings and tribulations he had endured with patience and steadfastness. The authenticity of his ministry was evidenced by the sacrifices he had made in the Lord’s service. The authenticity of his ministry was attested to by the Word of Truth that he taught, the power of God that was evident in his ministry, the fruit of the Spirit in his conduct and the fruit of his Evangelism and discipleship as witnessed by the churches he had established and strengthened.

Paradoxes in Christian Service

There are many paradoxes in Christian ministry. There is a certain amount of honour in serving the Lord, but there is also dishonour from those who oppose. Yes, there are good reports, but there are also evil reports. God’s servants are often accused of being deceivers and yet they are true. They can be denigrated as unknown and yet in another sense, they are well-known. Their suffering, rejection and poverty may be sneered at by others, yet, they can always rejoice and make many rich in a true spiritual and eternal sense.

Conduct is More Important Than Human Commendations

The teachers of the Jewish Law in Paul’s day, carried letters of Introduction with them. They were the chief troublemakers of Paul’s ministry. *“Who is this Paul?”* They would ask. *“What letters of recommendation from Jerusalem does he have?”* Paul makes clear that the Corinthian Christians themselves

are his letter, written on hearts, known and read by everybody. The lives of all true Christians serve as communication. Most people may not study the Word of God, but many of them study our lives and conduct. This should inspire us as to the serious and solemn opportunity to lead people to Christ, not only by what we say, but by what we **do**. Not only by our lips, but by our **lives**.

Constructive vs. Destructive Criticism

There is a big difference between being destructively argumentative and divisive and constructive conflict and controversy for the Kingdom of God. If we are criticised, let it be for the stand we make for Christ and His Kingdom in seeking to be Biblical as we apply the Lordship of Christ to all areas of life. Let criticism not be legitimately raised because of bad manners on our part, lack of grace, tactlessness, divisiveness, argumentativeness, or an obnoxious personality syndrome.

Adversity Builds Character

There is no doubt that adversity can build character. A faith that cannot be tested, cannot be trusted. Smooth seas do not make skilful sailors. Such trials should drive us to prayer, humble us and deepen our devotional life as we search the Scriptures and ask: *“What is God saying to me through this?”* It should also enable us to empathise with and comfort others who suffer such injustices. Christians suffering unjust criticism should find opportunities to glorify God and to witness for Christ. Ultimately, God’s opinion and approval is the only one that counts. It is He whom we should continually be seeking to please.

The Grace

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.” 2 Corinthians 13:14



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CHAPTER 9

GALATIANS

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.” Galatians 5:1

Reformation Inspiration

The Reformer, Professor Martin Luther declared that Galatians is the best Book in the Bible. *“This is my Epistle. I am married to it!”* It was Dr. Martin Luther’s study of Galatians, Romans and Psalms that led him to make his bold stand, 31 October 1517, nailing the 95 *Theses* against the false teachings and superstitious practises of the Roman Catholic papacy. In the Psalms, he saw what true worship is. In the Book of Romans, he discovered what the Gospel really is and how we are saved. In the Book of Galatians, he discovered true Biblical Faith.

The Best

The Puritan, John Bunyan, author of best-selling *Pilgrim’s Progress*, wrote: *“I do prefer this book of Martin Luther upon the Galatians, excepting the Holy Bible, before all books that have ever seen as most fit for a wounded conscience.”*

The Author

The very first verse identifies the Apostle Paul as the author (1:1). Paul was born in Tarsus, a city in the Province of Cilicia, not far from Galatia. Paul was trained under the famous Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). Paul was a member of the ultra-orthodox sect of the Pharisees (Acts 23:6) and of the Tribe of Benjamin (Philippians 3:5).

Dating

The Letter to the Galatians was written A.D. 48, or early A.D. 49, after the Apostle Paul’s First Missionary Journey, but before the first Church Council at Jerusalem (Acts 15), as it makes no reference to this pivotal event which directly addressed the very issues he was dealing with. If this Letter had been written after the Jerusalem Church Council of Acts 15, then the Apostle Paul would have certainly referred to it as it decisively condemned the Judaizing cult that Paul’s Letter to the Galatians was dealing with. This makes Galatians the earliest letter of the Apostle Paul. Galatians is the oldest Letter that we have of the Apostle Paul. It is his first Epistle chronologically.

Who Were the Galatians?

The Galatians were a Celtic people who had migrated to that region from

Gaul (modern day France) in the 3rd Century B.C. The Romans conquered the Galatians in 189 B.C. but allowed them to have some measure of autonomy until 25 B.C. when Galatia became a Roman province, incorporating regions not inhabited by ethnic Galatians. This included Lyconia, Phrygia and Pisidia. During his First Missionary Journey, the Apostle Paul founded churches in Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe (Acts 13:14-14:23), in Southern Galatia.

Background to the Controversy

False teachers were undermining central Biblical doctrines including justification by Faith. The Judaizers were spreading the dangerous legalism demanding that Gentiles must first become Jews, submitting to Mosaic Law, before they could become Christians. The Judaizers were distorting the Gospel, agitating among the new converts, perverting the Faith, requiring Gentiles to become circumcised for their salvation. Effectively the Judaizers were seeking to convert Gentile Christians to Judaism.

Character Assassins

Not content merely to preach another gospel, the Judaizers attempted to discredit Paul who had founded the churches in Galatia. They claimed that Paul was a renegade who had defied his superiors and the Apostles in Jerusalem. They claimed that Peter had argued against Paul over the requirement of Gentiles to become Jews in order to be saved. The agitators claimed that Paul had originally preached and practiced circumcision for salvation. Understanding this background is essential to appreciating the meaning of the Book of Galatians.

Thunder Bolts Against False Teaching

“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the Gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from Heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.” Galatians 1:6-10

Too Emotional

Some people dislike Galatians intensely. Some claim that it is too emotional. Galatians is a highly charged Letter. It was clearly written in white-heat and is full of anger against false teaching, which was deceiving new believers, with disastrous eternal consequences.

Too Personal

Some complain that Galatians is too personal. The Apostle Paul speaks of his physical handicaps, evidently an eye-disease as he refers to the large letters he has to use when he writes with his own hand (6:11) and how they did not despise him when he came, but were even willing to give their own eyes to him (4:14-15).

Too Unsettling

He explains his side of the public disagreement with the Apostle Peter. Many are anxious to avoid public differences. However, to Paul, when truth is at stake, one even has to be willing to stand up against those we most love and respect.

Too Confrontational

There are those who complain that Galatians is too combative, too controversial and too argumentative. We live in an age where people prefer to live in comfortable homes, travel in comfortable vehicles, to go to comfortable churches and to hear comfortable messages. Galatians is discomfoting. Some have described a Missionaries Job Description as: *"To comfort the afflicted and to afflict the comfortable!"* Paul certainly afflicts the comfortable in Galatians!

Tactless and Intolerant

Certainly many arguments have been waged over the Book of Galatians. We live in an age when tolerance and tact are considered primary virtues. Not that either is considered a virtue in the Bible! Our Lord Jesus Christ was certainly neither tolerant, nor tactful, especially when He came into the Temple with a whip and condemned the scribes and Pharisees as *"hypocrites, white-washed tombs, a brood of snakes, twice as worthy of hell! Blind guides!"* When the Lord whipped the corrupt Jewish money-lenders out of the Temple, there were probably those who complained that He wasn't being tolerant, or tactful, enough.

Fight the Good Fight of Faith

If Dr. Martin Luther had not been convicted from a study of the Books of Psalms, Galatians and Romans to confront the false teachings and superstitious unBiblical practices of the Roman catholic papacy, then the Reformation may not have occurred. The Scripture commands us to stand firm in the Faith and to fight the good fight of Faith!

Too Intellectual

Some complain that Galatians is too intellectual. Indeed there are subtle historic and Biblical intellectual arguments requiring some hard-thinking.

Paul stretches our minds and requires some serious Bible study and intellectual exercise to grasp the essence of his arguments.

Too Spiritual

There are even those who claim that the Book of Galatians is too spiritual! In Galatians we encounter the sharp double-edged sword of the Word of God that penetrates to bone and marrow, dealing with heart-motivations and inner-attitudes. Galatians strips off religious veneers and strikes at human pride.

Critical Issues

Galatians tackles some of the most fundamental issues of the Faith, which if we misunderstand, or distort, can be fatal to our Faith. God has entrusted to Christian leaders the responsibility of studying and striving for the Faith, contending for the Faith once delivered to the saints. We need to **discern** the truth of God's Word and **defend** it publically.

Internal Subversion Can be Devastating

Generally speaking, attempts to destroy the Church by outside attacks and violent persecution have failed. However, subtle attacks from within the church to pervert, erode or corrupt the Gospel have had far more devastating long-term consequences. Entire denominations have been devastated by the **legalism** or **licence** exposed and countered in the Epistle to the Galatians.

The Unique Qualifications of the Apostle Paul to Deal with These Issues

The Apostle Paul was one of the greatest men who ever lived. One of the most influential thinkers, writers and missionaries of all times. Born in Tarsus, the Roman world's third most important centre of study, after Athens and Alexandria. Trained by Gamaliel, Paul was of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews and a pharisee of the Pharisees. He had achieved a great deal of self-righteousness and had sought to destroy the Christians.

False Accusations

The false teachers who were disturbing the Galatians were claiming that the Apostle Paul was not a true Apostle that he did not understand the deeper teachings of Judaism and had failed to teach them the real way of religion.

Counter-Attack

Paul explains that he understands the teachings and practices of Judaism even better than his critics and that he had done even more to attack the Church. ***“For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the Church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it.***

And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.” Galatians 1:13-14. The accusers were confusing the new converts, entangling them in a web of Jewish legalism and traditions.

The Five Solas

In the Book of Galatians, Paul champions what became known as the five Solas of the Reformation:

Sola Scriptura. Scripture alone is our authority (1:12).

Sola Gratia. Salvation is by the grace of God alone (1:3; 2:21).

Sola Fide. Salvation is received by Faith alone (2:16; 3:9; 3:11; 3:22).

Solus Christus. Christ alone is the Head of the Church and it is through the sacrifice of Christ alone that Atonement is made for our sins (2:20; 3:13).

Soli Deo Gloria. Everything is to be done to the glory of God alone. We must leave no room for human pride and the flesh. Human pride is what is motivating false teachers “*That they may boast in your flesh*” (6:13-14).

Adding and Subtracting from the Gospel Dilutes, Subverts and Corrupts It

As in modern cults, the Judaizers were adding to the Gospel. Cults and false religions often seek to either add to the Gospel, or subtract from it. Christian Science adds Mary Baker Eddy’s *Science and Health*. Mormons add Joseph Smith’s *Book of Mormon* and *The Pearl of Great Price*. The Judaizers claim that you need works in addition to your faith. Circumcision, the Sabbath and all the other rituals and requirements of Mosaic Law are put forward as essential for Salvation.

Salvation by Works

Most religions of the world advocate salvation by works. You must pray in this way, you must fast in this way, you must give alms to the poor, tithe to the church, attend these meetings, complete these rituals, bow down in this way, repeat these words, complete this formula, so that at the end you may be saved. Salvation by works. Do-it-yourself religion appeals to people because it gives us something to be proud of. It is this self-righteousness of the Pharisees that our Lord Jesus Christ condemned so completely in Matthew 23.

Religion vs. Relationship

There are a variety of religious options including: Works Alone save you, or Works Plus Faith save you, or Faith Plus Works save you. This is what the Judaizers of Paul’s time were saying, that you need to complete your salvation by Faith with these Jewish works and rituals. However, Paul advocates **Faith alone**. Salvation is by the grace of God **alone** based upon the Atonement of Christ’s sacrifice, received by Faith **alone**.

Those Under the Law are Condemned

“For as many as are of the works of the Law are under the curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the Book of the Law, to do them.’ But that no one is justified by the Law in the sight of God is evident, for ‘the just shall live by Faith.’ Yet the Law is not of Faith, but ‘the man who does them shall live by them’. Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’).” Galatians 3:10-13

Liberty vs. Legalism and Licence

Liberty is the key theme in Galatians. The Judaizers were promoting **legalism**. Others promote **licence**. Christians stand for Biblical liberty in Christ, led by the Holy Spirit. Christian liberty is not doing what we want, nor is it doing what others tell us to. Christian liberty is not the freedom to sin. It is the freedom **not** to sin. Christian liberty is **real freedom** - To do what we ought, to please God. To be freed from the bondage of the Law and from the curse of antinomian licence.

Only Those Who Are of Faith Are Sons of Abraham

Circumcision is condemned as a slippery slope, the first link in the chain of legalism. It is not part of the Gospel. Paul points to Abraham: *“O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by the hearing of Faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? Have you suffered so many things in vain - if indeed it was in vain? Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the Law, or by the hearing of Faith? - Just as Abraham ‘believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ Therefore know that only those who are of Faith are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by Faith, preached the Gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, ‘In you all the nations shall be blessed.’ So then those who are of Faith are blessed with believing Abraham.” Galatians 3:1-9*

Abraham Was Justified by Faith

Many hundreds of years before the Law was given through Moses, God justified Abraham by Faith. If Faith without works was sufficient for Abraham, why should we apostatize from the Faith and revert to the Law which only brought condemnation?

No One is Justified by Law

The Law cannot give righteousness, but it does bring death upon all those who do not keep it. The Law demands perfect obedience. ***“For as many as are of the works of the Law are under the curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the Book of the Law, to do them.’ But that no one is justified by the Law in the sight of God is evident, for ‘the just shall live by Faith.’*** Galatians 3:10-11

Christ Bore the Curse for Us

A curse is upon all those who break the Law. A blessing is upon all those who live by Faith. ***“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’).”*** Galatians 3:13. Do not turn back to the Mosaic Law from which Christ has redeemed us. Who has bewitched you foolish Galatians that you should turn from the blessing of Faith to the curse?

The Law is Our Schoolmaster to Bring us to Christ

The Law deals with **what we have done** and **who we are**. While grace deals with **who Christ is** and **what He has accomplished**. ***“Therefore the Law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by Faith.”*** Galatians 3:24

The Role of the Law

The Law restrains the wicked, guides our conduct and acts as a school teacher to bring us to Christ that we may be saved, justified by Faith. The Law reveals our sin, our failure, our depravity and our need of Redemption through Christ. The Law reveals to us our spiritual blindness and lost condition. The sharp needle of the Law needs to prick our conscience and carry through the scarlet thread of Gospel Redemption through Christ.

Only Those Who Have Faith in Christ

To those who claim that Jews are the true children of God, Paul writes: ***“Therefore know that only those who are of Faith are sons of Abraham.”*** Galatians 3:7

Legalists Place Themselves Under a Curse

“For as many as are of the works of the Law are under the curse...” Galatians 3:10

There is Only One Way of Salvation

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise.” Galatians 3:28-29. This passage has been abused to suggest that there is no

more distinction between different nationalities, classes, or genders. Indeed, Galatians 3:28 has even been misconstrued to justify women ministers, inter-racial marriage, homosexual marriage and transgenderism, with men having access to women's bathrooms and all manner of other perversions that could never have been imagined by the Apostle Paul, or millions of Christians who have read these passages for nearly 2,000 years!

Distinctions Remain

What Galatians 3:28 is making clear is that there is only one way of Salvation for Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female and that is through Christ Jesus. It is not suggesting that there are no more social, or gender, distinctions. Men may not walk into women's bathrooms quoting Galatians 3:28. We remain of different genders, social and economic classes and nationalities. However, those who belong to Christ are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise.

Ishmael and Isaac

Paul uses the example of Abraham having two sons: Ishmael from a slave woman, Hagar and Isaac from his wife, Sarah. *"For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh and he of the freewoman through promise, which things are symbolic. For these are the two Covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar - for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is and is in bondage with her children - but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all."* Galatians 4:22-26

Those Under Bondage Persecute the True Children of God

"Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? 'Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman.' So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free." Galatians 4:28-31

Only Those Born of the Spirit are Children of God's Promise

The true descendants of Abraham are not those who are born of his flesh and blood, but those who believe in Jesus Christ as Lord. Those born of the flesh are under the condemnation of the Law. Those born miraculously, of the Spirit, are free. Hagar the mother of Ishmael is symbolic of Mount Sinai and corresponds to Jerusalem. The children of Mount Sinai, the Mosaic Law and Jerusalem, are symbolised by Ishmael. The Jews are not true heirs of the promise. Those who seek salvation by Law are not true

sons of Abraham. It is the son born miraculously, as Isaac was, of Sarah, when she was well past the natural age for child bearing, who are the true children of Israel, the true children of Abraham and of the promise.

Legalism Cannot Save

The Judaizers, by promoting circumcision, Sabbath observance on the seventh day and other requirements of Judaism were not adding to anyone's salvation, but taking away their salvation, leading them astray into error and bondage. When you tell people that they must keep the Law of Moses in order to be saved, you are consigning them to hell, because they cannot do it.

Legalism is a Death Sentence

Judaism is not the cradle of Christianity but its grave. Our Lord Jesus Christ was scathing in His denunciation of Judaism and its legalism and the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees. As Moses was raised up to deliver the Hebrews from bondage in Egypt, so the Apostle Paul was raised up to deliver the Christian Church from the bondage of Judaism.

The Charter of Liberty

The Book of Galatians is the Magna Carta of the Christian Church. ***"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by Faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."*** Galatians 2:20

From Persecutor to Preacher

Paul gives some of his testimony ***"...he who formerly persecuted us now preaches the Faith which he once tried to destroy."*** Galatians 1:23. The Apostle Paul has moved from enemy to Evangelist, from opponent to advocate, from the persecutor of the Gospel to preacher of the Gospel. Only God could have changed Paul from being a murderer to being a Missionary. Paul makes it clear that he is an Apostle, not from men, or through men, but through Jesus Christ who personally confronted and called him. He makes it clear that he is a man under authority, accountable, teachable and open to correction.

Under Authority, Accountable and Teachable

"And I went up by revelation and communicated to them that Gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately, to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain." Galatians 2:2. Paul was plainly not a rebel, or a renegade, a law unto himself, refusing to be taught. He was a team-player, under authority, accountable, teachable and open to correction, as we read of the Bereans, who were more noble than the rest, because they studied the Word of God daily, to see if the things that they were taught, were true.

Accepted and Supported by the Apostles in Jerusalem

“And when James, Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.” Galatians 2:9. Paul went up to Jerusalem and submitted his understanding of the Gospel to the Apostles to be evaluated by them. The Apostles, James, Peter and John, the pillars of the Church, gave Paul the right hand of fellowship, indicating their acceptance, support and recognition of the Hand of God and Call of God on Paul’s life. They endorsed his Mission to the Gentiles.

Clarifying the Confrontation

He clarifies that the disagreement with Peter over the legalistic requirements of the Judaizers was one in which Peter acknowledged that he had been inconsistent ***“...If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?”*** Galatians 2:14. It was not Paul who was being subtle and subversive, he had openly submitted his teaching to evaluation by the Apostles. He had been open when he needed to rebuke a fellow apostle over inconsistency and hypocrisy. The friendship and mutual respect between Peter and Paul stood the test of time and conflict (2 Peter 3:15).

No One Can be Justified by Law

“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but by Faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus that we might be justified by Faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; for by the works of the Law no flesh shall be justified.” Galatians 2:16

Those Who Go Back to Judaism Reject Christ

Paul says he is astonished that these new Christians could have given up the Gospel of freedom in Christ to accept a legalistic message that was no gospel at all, but bondage. He twice pronounces a curse upon those troubling them, adulterating the Gospel and perverting the message. Even if an Angel from Heaven were to preach any other gospel, let him be eternally condemned to hell, accursed, anathema (1:6-9).

Why Did Christ Die?

For what possible purpose did Christ die, if we can be saved by keeping the Law? The legalistic Judaizers were effectively denying the Atonement of Christ. How are we justified? Not by works (Galatians 2:16-17). Christ is our sacrifice for sin and He is our sufficiency in the Spirit-filled life.

Relationship Not Religion

The daily life of a Christian disciple is to die to self and sin, to forsake the world and to follow Christ. We are not called to a legalistic ritual, or religion, but to a living Faith in a living Saviour. Christianity is first and foremost a relationship with Almighty God through our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Not a religion. Religion may be the best man can do. Christianity is what God has done in and through His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. How can we be made just? Not through the Law, but through Faith in the shed Blood of Christ Jesus, our Lord. True Children of Abraham are those who believe in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. ***“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us...”*** Galatians 3:13

Is the Blessing in Christ or a Political Entity?

“Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, ‘And to seeds’, as of many, but as of one, ‘And to your Seed’, who is Christ.” Galatians 3:16. Those who claim that the promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 is fulfilled in the present state named Israel, are denying the clear teaching of Scripture. Galatians 3:16 makes it clear that the promise was to Abraham and to his Seed: Christ. We are blessed in accordance with our faithfulness to Christ and we are cursed if we reject Him. Genesis 12:1-3 is a Messianic prophecy fulfilled in Christ.

None Can Claim God’s Blessings without Fulfilling His Conditions

Those who claim that the promise to Abraham is fulfilled in the secular state of Israel in the Middle East, betray a spiritual blindness. For the Scripture is clear that no nation has ever received a blank check from God. All the prophets condemned the nations of Israel and Judah for idolatry, immorality, injustice and ingratitude. God twice condemned Jerusalem to be destroyed and its people sent into exile. How much clearer can it be, that no nation, no people, can ever claim the promises of God without fulfilling His conditions of faithfulness and loyalty to the God who gave those promises.

Blessings of Obedience - Curses of Disobedience

Deuteronomy 28, Leviticus 26 and Jeremiah 18, make it clear that there are blessings for obedience and there are curses for disobedience. To suggest that people’s well-being and blessing before God is determined by how much they support a political state, is unBiblical.

The Wrath of God Comes on Those Who Support the Wicked

When King Jehoshaphat of Judah sought to mobilise in support of the Northern kingdom of Israel, the Word of the Lord came to him. ***“...Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the Lord? Therefore the wrath of the Lord is upon you.”*** 2 Chronicles 19:2. That was in context of supporting the Northern kingdom of Israel.

Unconditional Support for Any State is UnBiblical

Yet, today, some people would have you believe that you will be blessed by God for any and all political and material support for a secular state, which rejects Christ! Jews have not come back into the land in repentance and in Faith in Christ. How then can we expect God to bless anyone for such support? The state of Israel is not a theocratic state seeking to faithfully apply the Word of God to all areas of life. Nor yet a nation that openly worships our Lord Jesus Christ as their Messiah. Judaizers today would have you believe that support for a secular state (which in point of fact denies Christ, legalises abortion - over 2 million babies have been killed so far in the state of Israel, officially and legally, with taxpayers money - a state which legalises pornography, perversion and prostitution) should receive unqualified support from all of God's people! Why?

Promoting Perversion

The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs openly posts videos promoting Tel Aviv as *the gay capital of the world* with vulgar displays of perversion. Homosexual activists have voted Tel Aviv as *the most gay-friendly city in the world!* Yet we are to believe that such a state that denies Christ, persecutes Christians and conscripts women into the Army, while legalising abortion, prostitution, pornography and perversion, should be supported by our taxes and foreign aid?

Why is America Not Blessed?

Judaizers say that those who bless the state of Israel will be blessed and those who curse the state of Israel will be cursed! Yet, the country that has done more to support the state of Israel than any other, the United States of America, seems to have been progressively cursed since supporting the establishment of Israel in 1948. Crime has increased, the U.S. currency has devalued multiple times, natural disasters have increased, political disasters, the paganisation of the schools and the spread of perversion throughout the United States has increased dramatically over the last 70 years, despite consistently pouring many Billions of Dollars into the state of Israel every year.

Israel Worship Has Become Cultic

Yet according to the teachings of John Hagee and other Judaizers, America should be blessed beyond every other nation, in return for having given more Foreign Aid to Israel than to all other nations in the world combined! But surely this is nonsense. People are blessed and cursed in relationship to our Lord Jesus Christ. God is not obligated to bless false doctrines and foolish distortions of His Word. The fact that so many believe it, does not

change the fact that they are unBiblical. ***“You shall not follow a crowd to do evil...”*** Exodus 23:2

Your Relationship to Christ is Critical

Those who bless Christ are blessed, those who curse Christ are cursed. That is the plain teaching of Scripture. To twist, adulterate and pervert Genesis 12:1-3 for any political end is inexcusable and indefensible, especially in the light of the clear teaching: ***“Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, ‘And to seeds’, as of many, but as of one, ‘And to your Seed’, who is Christ.”*** Galatians 3:16

UnBiblical Contradictions of Terms are to Be Rejected

Those who speak of *Judeo-Christian* are confused. Judaism rejects Christ. Christianity is centered on Christ. How did Christians come to put such an unBiblical concept above the clear teachings of Scripture? Nowhere in the Bible will you read of *Judeo-Christian*, yet today all too many Christians repeat this mantra which is an oxymoron. This tells us something about the pervasive indoctrination by modern media.

Conflict of Interest

There is also a tremendous financial incentive for the political entity in the Middle East who call themselves “Israel” to continue to do everything necessary in terms of public relations that the billions of dollars continue to flow in so-called Foreign Aid. (Someone has described foreign-aid as the transfer of money from the poor in rich countries to the rich in poor countries.) In this case it is a transfer of taxes from Christians in America to non-Christians in the state of Israel who buy up huge numbers of agents of influence to indoctrinate Christians with unBiblical theology, such as through the Scofield Bible, John Hagee and many ministries, magazines, pulpits and programmes which continue to propagate the very teachings that were condemned so clearly in the Books of Galatians and Hebrews and by the first Church Council in Jerusalem (Acts 15). ***“Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?”*** Galatians 4:16

An Inversion of Priorities

It is disturbing that many Christians today are more distressed by criticism of Israel, or of the Jews, than blasphemy against Christ and persecution of Christians. It is idolatry, hypocritical and a bizarre inversion of priorities.

Stand for Christ and Resist Those Who Reject Christ

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. And I

testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole Law. **You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by Law; you have fallen from grace.**” Galatians 5:1-4

You Are Either For Christ or Against Him

The Apostle Paul makes it clear that circumcision avails nothing (5:6). **“A little leaven leavens the whole lump.”** Galatians 5:9. Paul makes it clear that if you desert the true Gospel then you are deserting God Himself, falling from grace and losing all hope of Salvation. There is no Salvation in the blood of bulls and goats. There never was and never will be. The sacrifices of the Old Testament were mere shadows to point one to Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Salvation is the gift of God’s grace, unearned and undeserved. Received by Faith alone. Faith itself is God’s free gift. Faith alone is the key because Christ alone is the Saviour. He bore the curse of the Law in our place, upon the Cross.

Woe to You When All Men Speak Well of You

To those who claim that Paul was still preaching circumcision: *“And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the Cross has ceased.”* Galatians 5:11

Scars Testify to Sacrificial Service

If you are not being criticised then you are not doing your job. Paul reminds the people that he bears in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus (6:17). There are scars of service testifying to sacrifices made in the service of our Lord. By implication his accusers have no such scars. What have they sacrificed and suffered for Christ? Sacrificial service is more eloquent than many sermons.

Do Not Return to a Dead and Empty Religion

There are dreadful consequences to abandoning the Gospel of Christ Jesus as the only Saviour for our sins. There is Salvation in no other. Turning back to dry and dead religion is a rejection of a real relationship with our Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

You are Called to Liberty – Not Legalism nor Lawlessness

To those who claim that this Gospel of the grace of God received by Faith alone will lead to lawlessness and licence, the Apostle Paul responds: **“For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For all the Law is fulfilled in one Word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’”** Galatians 5:13-14

Recognise What Your Salvation Cost Our Saviour

The Gospel of God's grace gives us true liberty and true Christians will not despise, or abuse, that liberty because they recognise that it cost so much: the Blood of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. We abuse liberty when we degenerate into licence and lawlessness.

Recognise and Resist the Fruit of the Flesh

“I say then: Walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God.” Galatians 5:16-21

Faith and Freedom

With freedom comes responsibility. Freedom from an addictive habit, such as drunkenness, smoking, drug addiction, or from political oppression, is a glorious experience. Even more exhilarating is the spiritual freedom that comes from the grace of God experienced through Faith in Jesus Christ alone. We are free, not to follow our inward lusts, or the decadence of this world, but free to serve our Saviour and do His will. Free to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength and to love our neighbour as ourselves. ***“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...”*** Gal. 5:22-23

Walk in Step with the Spirit

“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” Galatians 5:25

We learn to walk holding onto a parent's hand. We need to think of walking in the Spirit as walking arm in arm, not running ahead, nor lagging behind. Note the nine-fold fruit or nine graces:

1. Towards God: **Love, joy and peace.**
2. Towards others: **Patience**, or long-suffering, **kindness and goodness** and
3. Towards myself: **Faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.**

As our Lord taught in John 15, if we abide in Christ and His Words abide in us, we shall bear much fruit. To walk in the Spirit means to march in step with the Spirit, to keep in step with the Holy Spirit, to be in harmony with the Holy Spirit.

Sowing and Reaping

“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.” Galatians 6:7. If we sow in the Spirit we will reap a spiritual harvest. If we sow to the flesh we will reap corruption. The harvest will not be so much according to what we **know**, but what and how much we **sow**. This refers to both **attitudes** and **actions**. We may have a large supply of seed in the barn of our heart and mind, but, unless it is planted in suitable soil, it will bear no harvest. We need to sow Scriptural seed in our thoughts and in our deeds.

What You Sow is What You Will Reap

To those who deceive themselves saying it does not matter what I sow, as long as I am sincere... what kind of advice would that be for a farmer? In this instance the Christian life is not likened to that of a used-car salesman, or a politician, but to a farmer. There are agricultural rules and realities to consider here. When it comes to a person's mind: garbage in - garbage out. What we see influences what we think. What we think influences what we believe and what we believe influences how we act. Thoughts easily develop into attitudes, actions, habits, character and eternal destiny. Every choice we make, makes us more a creature of Heaven or hell. Every decision and choice puts us more down the broad road to destruction, or the narrow road to life.

Head, Heart, Hands and Feet

In Romans we find our **standing**. In Galatians we take our **stand**. In Romans we are to use our **heads** to grasp the great facts of the Faith. In 1 Corinthians we are to put out our **hands** to grasp our privileges in Christ. In 2 Corinthians we are to lift up our **hearts** to receive the comforts that are ours. In Galatians we are commanded to **stand** on our **feet** in the liberty that Christ gives us.

What a Saviour

Galatians proclaims our Lord Jesus Christ as a Mighty Saviour. Powerful to deliver us from sin (1:4; 2:21; 3:22); to deliver us from the curse of the Law (3:13); to deliver us from selfishness (2:20; 5:24); to deliver us from worldliness (6:14).

Adoption into the Family of God

In and through the miracle of regeneration, the new birth (4:4-7), we receive the Holy Spirit, we are adopted as sons and daughters and made heirs of God through Christ. In Galatians we are called to *“no longer a slave, but a son”* (4:7).

Apostasy Brings Curse

“But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?” Galatians 4:9. Paul pronounces a curse on the false teachers because they pervert the Gospel (1:6-9). He describes them accursed and false brethren. *“They zealously court you, but for no good; yes, they want to exclude you, that you may be zealous for them.”* Galatians 4:17

Justification and Sanctification is by Faith

Salvation is by Faith alone. We are justified by Faith (justification). Sanctification also is by Faith, walking in the Spirit. The Book of Galatians must have been written before the Jerusalem Church Council of Acts 15, since its decision would have been a powerful point in Paul's argument. The Judaizers were attempting to discredit Paul's authority as an Apostle and to distort his message of grace. In one of the severest statements in the New Testament, the Apostle warned that those who pervert the Gospel of grace are placing themselves under a curse for eternal damnation.

From Persecutor to Apostle

Paul who was once so zealous in his opposition to the Church and violent in his persecution of believers, now finds himself an advocate and Apostle for the Gospel, seeking to defend the Church from false teachers who would distract, distort and corrupt the Church from within.

Jesus is Either Your Lord and Saviour or He is Your Judge

The Law places a curse on all who break the Law in any point. As Christ took this curse upon Himself, those of us who identify with Him and are loyal to Him can be Saved from the curse. Those who reject Christ are taking the curse upon themselves. There is no Salvation outside of Christ.

Help Bear One Another's Burdens and Restore Those Who Fall

"Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens and so fulfil the Law of Christ. For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one examine his own work and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone and not in another." Galatians 6:1-4

Do Not Grow Weary in Your Work for God and His Creatures

"And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of Faith." Galatians 6:9-10

No Room for Pride

"But God forbid that I should boast except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me and I to the world."

Galatians 6:14

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage." Galatians 5:1



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CHAPTER 10

EPHESIANS

“For by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” Ephesians 2:8-10

Prison Epistle

The Epistle to the Ephesians is one of the Apostle Paul’s prison Epistles. Along with Philippians, Colossians and Philemon, Ephesians was composed by Paul while under arrest (Acts 28:16-31) awaiting trial in Rome (60-62AD).

Ephesus

The Church in Ephesus had been planted by Priscilla and Aquila. The Apostle Paul ministered to this congregation in Ephesus on his 3rd missionary journey. Ephesus was a major port city, a centre of commerce, finance and education. Its theatre could seat 24,000 and the town was dominated by an enormous pagan temple (“*one of the seven wonders of the ancient world*”) dedicated to the goddess Diana (*Artemis* in Greek).

Idolatry Industry

A major industry of idol making had sprung up around this temple of Diana, producing idols which travellers purchased to set up in their homes. The preaching and teaching of Paul led many to destroy their idols and occultic books. *“Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them and it totalled fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the Word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.”* Acts 19:19-20

Riotous Commotion Whipped up Against Paul

As a result a great commotion arose about The Way and Demetrius, the silversmith who made silver shrines of Diana, called together other idol makers and declared: *“... Throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying they are not gods which are made with hands. So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship.’* Now when they heard this, they were full of wrath and cried out saying: *‘Great is Diana of the Ephesians!’* So the whole city was filled with confusion and rushed into the theatre with one accord...” Acts 19:26-29

Ephesus Addressed in Revelation

Both Pastoral Epistles, 1 and 2 Timothy, were addressed to Timothy in Ephesus and were about the Ephesian Church. In the Book of Revelation, the first of the seven Churches to be addressed was the church of Ephesus. *“To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, ‘These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: ‘I know your works, your labour, your patience and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not and have found them liars and you have persevered and have patience and have laboured for My Name’s sake and have not become weary.’”* Revelation 2:1-3

The Queen of Epistles

To this exemplary church, which would later be the site of the Council of Ephesus (AD431), the Apostle Paul addresses this Epistle to all Christians. If Romans is the King of Epistles, then Ephesians can justly be described as the Queen of Epistles. It is a defence against syncretism, a clear exposition of Christian belief and behaviour.

Doctrine, Devotion and Duty

Ephesians deals with doctrine, devotion and duty. The first half of Ephesians, Chapters 1 to 3, deals with our **belief**. The last half, Ephesians 4 to 6, deals with our **behaviour**. In the first section the Apostle deals with our **relationship to God**: Doctrine and devotion, adoration, justification and worship. In the second section, the Apostle deals with our **relationship to others**: Duties, responsibilities, sanctification, our **walk**, our **work** and our **warfare**. The first half of the Book deals with what happens **inside the church** and the second half with what happens **outside the church**. The first half deals with the **vertical** dimension of the Gospel and the second half deals with the **horizontal** dimension of the Gospel.

Foundation for Reformation

Ephesians was, along with Romans, a foundational Book for the Protestant Reformation. In Ephesians, one clearly sees the **5 Solas of the Reformation**: **Scripture alone** is our ultimate authority, Salvation is by the **Grace of God alone**, received by **Faith alone**. **Christ alone** is the head of the Church. He is the only Mediator between God and man. Everything must be done **for the glory of God alone**. We also find the 5 points of Calvinism clearly enunciated in Ephesians: Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace and Perseverance of the Saints.

Total Depravity

In Ephesians we learn that outside of Christ, man is dead in his sins and completely incapable of saving himself. We are: “...**dead in trespasses and sins**, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the **sons of disobedience**, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves **in the lusts of our flesh**, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind and were **by nature children of wrath**...” Ephesians 2:1-3

“That at that time you were **without Christ**, being **aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise**, having **no hope and without God in the world**.” Ephesians 2:12

“That we should no longer be children, **tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting**” Ephesians 4:14

“This I say, therefore and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, **in the futility of their mind**, having their **understanding darkened**, being **alienated from the life of God**, because of the **ignorance that is in them**, because of the **blindness of their heart**; who, **being past feeling**, have given themselves over to **lewdness**, to work all **uncleanness with greediness**. But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows **corrupt according to the deceitful lusts** and be renewed in the spirit of your mind.” Ephesians 4:17-23

Fruit of the Unregenerate

Ephesians describes the fruit of the unregenerate life: Lying, anger, theft, corrupt words, grieving the Holy Spirit, with bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour and evil speaking (4:25-31).

“But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and God. **Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience**. Therefore do not be partakers with them.” Ephesians 5:3-7

“And have no fellowship with the **unfruitful works of darkness**, but rather expose them.” Ephesians 5:11

Fruit of the Flesh

These are descriptions of men and women outside of Christ: The unregenerate engage in lying, stealing, corrupt communications, bitterness, evil speaking, malice, fornication, uncleanness and covetousness, filthiness, foolish talking and course jesting. They give themselves over to lewdness to work all uncleanness with greediness. They are consumed with deceitful lusts, ignorance and blindness of hearts, having their understanding darkened and alienated from the life of God. They are tossed to and fro with every fashion and fad and succumb to the trickery of men in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting. The unregenerate are aliens from the people of God, strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, without God, by nature children of wrath, sons of disobedience. We cannot save ourselves.

Unconditional Election

God chooses some people to be saved, not on account of any foreseen merit in them, but only because of His sovereign good pleasure. The longest sentence in the Bible is found in Ephesians 1:3-14: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as **He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself**, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved, **in Him we have redemption through His Blood**, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in Heaven and which are on earth -in Him, in Him also we have obtained an inheritance, **being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will**, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory, in Him you also trusted, after you heard the Word of truth, the Gospel of your Salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.”*

By Grace Through Faith

We did not find God, He found us. God was not lost. We are lost! It is not that we chose God. He chose us! He chose us before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption. *“**For by grace you have been saved***

through faith and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” Ephesians 2:8-10

Created for Good Works

We are not saved by good works, but we are saved unto good works. Our righteousness is as filthy rags before our holy God. There is nothing we could do to make ourselves righteous before God, it is His grace, His undeserved favour that has provided our Redemption through His Blood. There is therefore absolutely no place for pride. Salvation is all of God. To Him alone belongs all the Glory.

What Comes First: Repentance or Regeneration?

One of the first questions Dr. James Kennedy asked me was: “*What comes first: Repentance or Regeneration?*” My answer was “*Regeneration!*” “*Ah!*” he said, “*you must be a Calvinist!*” The Bible makes it clear that Regeneration comes before Repentance, “*lest anyone should boast.*”

God Alone Saves Sinners

God saves sinners. God alone. His mercy, His undeserved favour, is what saves sinners. Faith is the gift of God – lest any man boast. There is no room for pride. I did not find God. God was never lost! He found me. I was lost, dead in my trespasses and sins and by God’s grace and mercy, He regenerated me by His sovereign will. From this work of grace, repentance and faith came into my life. Regeneration precedes Repentance and Faith. Salvation is all of God.

Amazing Grace

“Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.

I once was lost but now I’m found, was blind but now I see.”

All To Jesus I Surrender

We contribute nothing to our Salvation – except the sin that made it necessary. “*Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to Thy Cross I cling.*”

Limited Atonement

Also known as Definite Atonement or Particular Redemption means that “*Christ’s death actually paid for the sins*” of His elect people. “***In Him we have Redemption through His Blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.***” Ephesians 1:7

“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the Blood of Christ.” Ephesians 2:13

Irresistible Grace

“God effectively calls people and also gives them regeneration, both of which guarantee that we will respond in saving faith.” (Wayne Grudem) “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, **even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)** and raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” Ephesians 2:4-6

Perseverance of the Saints

Perseverance: those who are truly saved will be “kept by God’s power and will persevere as Christians until the end of their lives.” Only those who are true Christians will persevere to the end. “That you may know what is the hope...” “the eyes of your understanding[a] being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” Ephesians 1:18-23

The Unsearchable Riches of Christ

In Ephesians, we read of “the riches of His grace” (1:7); “the unsearchable riches of Christ” (3:8); and “the riches of His glory” (3:16). The word riches is used 5 times. Grace is used 12 times, glory, 8 times. Fullness or filled, 6 times and the key phrase: “in Christ”, or “In Him”, 12 times.

Justification and Sanctification

From Ephesians 1 to 3 we read of our Justification. From Ephesians 4 through 6, we read of our Sanctification. Christian **belief** leads to Christian **behaviour**. Christian **doctrine** leads to Christian **duty**. Biblical **truth** requires Christian **integrity**. We do not have a religion, but a vibrant **relationship** with the one true Living God.

Unity in Christ

The Apostle who is described as “the prisoner of the Lord” and an “ambassador in chains,” emphasises the unity of Christ’s Church. “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, **endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit,**

*just as you were called in **one hope** of your calling; **one Lord, one Faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all**, who is above all and through all and in you all.” Ephesians 4:1-6*

Redemption, Atonement and Adoption

There is no room for two people of God. There is no Salvation in Judaism. There is only one Saviour and that is our Lord Jesus Christ. It is only through His Blood Atonement on the Cross of Calvary that Jews and Gentiles, circumcised and uncircumcised, can find Redemption, Atonement and Adoption into the family of God. *“For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one and has broken down the middle wall of separation... having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the Cross, thereby putting to death the enmity..”*

Ephesians 2:14-16

Foundation and Cornerstone

The Church is built on the foundation of the Apostles and the Prophets - and Christ Jesus Himself is the Chief Cornerstone (2:20).

Gifts to Build Up the Body

*“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists and some pastors and teachers, **for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the Faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;** that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the Head – Christ - from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”*

Ephesians 4:11-16

Many Members – One Body

The Church is not an organisation, but an organism. The Church is an *Ecclesia* – an assembly of called out ones. Just as a body has many organs and ligaments which are essential for the healthy carrying out of its duties, so too each one in the church, no matter what our gifts or calling, must work faithfully and effectively together for the growth and edification of the whole body.

Our High Calling

Leaders in the church are not meant to do all the work, they are meant to equip all the members for the work of ministry. The goal is for all those who name the Name of Christ to come to unity of the Faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to the full measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ himself. Christ Jesus left us an example that we should follow in His footsteps. Our example is Christ. Not any human leader. Every member must do their share and fulfil their duties for the Church to be healthy and effective in the fulfilment of the Great Commission.

Apostles

God gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists and some pastors and teachers. While some people today may have an apostolic church-planting ministry, none can claim to be Apostles with a capital “A”, in the sense of the Apostles personally selected, trained and empowered by our Lord Jesus Christ during His ministry on earth. Those Apostles were eye-witnesses of the Resurrection of Christ and they are the foundation of the Church (2:20). Similarly, while some today may have a prophetic ministry, there are no Prophets today with a capital “P” in the sense of the Prophets whom God used to produce the Books of the Old Covenant. Today prophetic ministry needs to be studying, teaching, expounding and applying the written Word of God as found in the Holy Scriptures, the Bible, to all areas of life. **Scripture alone is our ultimate authority.**

Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers

Healthy churches need evangelists, pastors and teachers. The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing. Our highest priority is the fulfilment of the Great Commission of our Lord and Saviour, making disciples of all nations, teaching obedience to all things that the Lord commanded.

Walking in the Spirit

The goal is to help Christians walk in **humility**, in **unity**, in **maturity**, in **integrity**, with **charity** and **love**, walking in **purity** and **mutual submission**, **responsibly**, walking in the **light**, **carefully walking in the Spirit**, “*renewed in the spirit of your mind*” (4:23).

Spiritual Warfare

The prince of the power of the air works in the sons of disobedience (2:2), producing children of wrath (2:3), who are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart (4:18-19), walking in the futility of their mind (4:17). Our priority is to speak the truth in love (4:15), ensuring that the sun never goes down on our wrath (4:26). We are to let no corrupt

word proceed from our mouth (4:29), we are not to grieve the Holy Spirit (4:30). *“And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”* Ephesians 4:32

The Days are Evil

*“See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, **redeeming the time**, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but **understand what the will of the Lord is**. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but **be filled with the Spirit**, speaking to one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, **giving thanks always for all things** to God the Father in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, **submitting to one another in the fear of God.**”* Ephesians 5:15-21

Redeem the Time

We are living in evil times. We need to redeem the time. Some people say that time is money. Time is far more valuable than that! You may get more money, but you will never get more time. Every day, every hour is precious and we will not get another opportunity to live those precious moments. Therefore we need to understand the will of the Lord.

Be Filled with the Holy Spirit

The Scripture commands us not to be drunk with wine, but rather to be filled with the Holy Spirit. It is as much a sin to fail to be filled with the Spirit as it is to be drunk.

We Have a Reason to Sing

The fruit of the Spirit includes: a joyful heart, which shows itself in singing. Christianity is a uniquely singing religion. You do not find such singing in Hinduism, Buddhism or Islam. We have a reason to sing! We are to sing Psalms and Hymns and spiritual songs, making melody in our hearts to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father, in the Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

A Treasury of Excellence

We have a tremendous treasury of worship in the Psalms and in the great Hymns of the Church. It is a tragedy that so many have neglected this great treasure store of Psalms and Hymns for shallow and superficial modern songs that lack the depth and substance of these great examples of excellence. People will be singing *Amazing Grace*, *And Can it Be*, *Jesus Shall Reign*, *A Mighty Fortress is our God* and *Handels Messiah* for centuries to come. (It is questionable as to whether the next generation will even be bothering with much of the fashionable choruses of our day.)

Relationships

Our **belief** affects our **behaviour**. **Doctrine** determines **duty**. Ephesians 5:22 to 6:9 deal with our relationships: Wives are commanded to submit to their husbands as unto the Lord, just as the Church should be subject to Christ. Husbands are commanded to love their wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her. Children are commanded to obey and honour their parents. Fathers are instructed to not to provoke their children to wrath, but to bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord. Servants are commanded to be obedient to their masters, with fear and trembling and in sincerity of heart as unto Christ, not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ doing the will of God from the heart. Masters are commanded to treat those who serve them kindly, knowing that their own Master is in Heaven. *“Masters treat your servants knowing that your own Master also is in Heaven and there is no partiality with Him.”* In a word, do to others as you would have them to do unto you.

Weapons for Our Warfare

Ephesians ends with instructions for warfare. The Christian **walk** and **work** ultimately is a call to **war**. We are involved in a colossal world war of worldviews. The battle for hearts and minds. A battle for the family. There is a clash of civilisations. Ultimately this is a spiritual war. *“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and Blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armour of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with **truth**, having put on the **breastplate of righteousness** and having shod your feet with the **preparation of the Gospel of peace**; above all, **taking the shield of Faith** with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take **the helmet of Salvation** and **the sword of the Spirit**, which is the Word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints - and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the Gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”* Ephesians 6:10-20

Be Armed, Armoured and Alert

Satan deceives, deludes, degrades, doubts, tempts, binds, blinds, ensnares, dulling our conscience and searing our conscience. We are called to battle. We need to be **armed, armoured** and **alert**. We need to recognise the call to fight and we need to understand our enemy. In Ephesians 6, we read of the

full armour of God. The first part of this armour is **Truth**. We are to stand for the Truth. We are to recognise and expose error and deceit. We are not to allow any corrupt words to come out of our mouth. We need the breastplate of **Righteousness**, which is the righteousness of Christ. Our feet need to be prepared to proclaim **the Gospel**. We need **the shield of Faith**, a solid and substantial Faith, which can put out all the fiery darts of the wicked one. We are to take up **the helmet of Salvation** (Note it is not a nightcap, but a helmet). We are called to battle. The Scripture is **the Sword of the Spirit**. The Word of God is an offensive weapon. **Prayer** is also an offensive weapon. We need to pray the Psalms. We need to be alert with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints, boldly proclaiming the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Even if we are in chains. Submit to God, resist the devil and he will flee from you (James 4:7). God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7). I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Philippians 4:13).

Be Prepared

God is generous. We are privileged. We need to be considerate. Satan is real. The warfare is serious. We need to be prepared. Be practical.

To Destroy Evil

Christ came to destroy the works of the devil, to crush satan's head. Do not give any ground to the powers of darkness. Do not play into satan's hands.

Be armed. Be armoured. Be alert.

To Know Him and to Make Him Known

"For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in Heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height - to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." Ephesians 3:14-19

The Benediction

"Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen."

Ephesians 3:20-21



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CHAPTER 11

PHILIPPIANS

“Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Philippians 1:1-2

The Macedonian Call Led to Imprisonment in Philippi

Paul is on his second Missionary journey in Europe, he is writing this letter from Rome where he is literally in chains in prison. He is writing to a church that was born from his earlier prison experience. On his Mission to Europe the first church to be planted was in response to the Macedonian call which he received in Acts 16. Paul's divine deliverance from prison led to the conversion of the Philippian jailer and the beginning of the congregation in Philippi with Lydia and other converts.

A Strategic Roman Colony

Philippi was historically, militarily, economically and spiritually strategic. Philippi was a Roman colony in Northern Greece, linking Italy with Asia Minor (today, Turkey) on a very strategic road between East and West. Philippi is located on the same plain where Mark Anthony defeated the forces of Brutus and Cassius (who had murdered Julius Caesar). Philippi was the church that Paul, Silas, Luke and Timothy had planted. The jailer who had been led to the Lord by Paul is one of the pillars of the church.

Positive Prison Epistle

Written in AD 62 during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome, this letter is a thank you for sending Epaphroditus: Thank you for your encouragement and thank you for your support. It is one of the most positive books in the Bible. Paul is overflowing with joy and gratitude and is rejoicing in how strong they are in the Faith, how steadfast and effective they are!

Epistle of Joy

The church in Philippi was the most faithful and consistent congregation in support for Paul. The Book of Philippians is mostly about rejoicing in the Lord always and again I say Rejoice! Joy is mentioned sixteen times in his short four chapter letter. If anyone is depressed, Philippians is one of the best places to turn to be uplifted. ***“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, for your fellowship in the Gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. just as it is right for me to***

think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the Gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace. For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ. And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.” Philippians 1:3-11

Do Not Settle for Less than God’s Very Best

We should not settle for less than God’s best. Often the world keeps us busy with something that is OK, alright, maybe even good, but meanwhile God has things that are excellent and vastly more important for us.

God is Able to Use our Sufferings for Good

Paul goes into the first theme of his sufferings (being falsely accused in Jerusalem, attempts on his life, imprisoned unjustly, taken across the Mediterranean by sea, shipwrecked, bitten by a snake on the Island of Malta, in chains in Rome, being beaten, stoned, blinded, etc.) in verse 12: *“But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the Gospel.”* Joseph, after being betrayed by his wicked brothers endured 14 years as a slave and in prison in Egypt. Yet Joseph could say: what you meant for evil, God used for good (Genesis 50:20). *“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”* Romans 8:28

We Can Rejoice Even in Suffering

Christians can rejoice in any circumstance, even in the worst of circumstances, even in spite of evil people. Despite their malicious intentions, God has the ability to turn what other people mean for evil for our good (Genesis 50:20).

Evangelism in Chains

*“So that it has become evident to the whole palace guard and to all the rest that **my chains are in Christ**. And most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the Word without fear.”* Philippians 1:13-14. Paul is trying to reach people in Caesar’s court, Nero’s court, even the palace guard and the Roman soldiers who were guarding him. His example is being used for the furtherance and deepening of the people’s boldness, courage and dedication.

For the Defence of the Gospel

*“Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife and some also from goodwill: The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; but the latter out of love, knowing that **I am appointed for the defense of the Gospel**. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes and will rejoice”* Philippians 1:15-18. Some people have bad motives when preaching the Word of God. We are called to defend the Gospel. Preach the Word of God and boldly proclaim it. We also need to define the Gospel and discern, correct and expose those people who are distorting, or trying to hijack and twist, the Gospel. There is a need to defend the Gospel. We need to protect those things that are good from those that corrupt, confuse and undermine. Some people are saying that they are preaching the Gospel who are actually proclaiming *“Health and Wealth”*, *“Name it and Claim it”*. Judaizers, Saturday Sabbath legalists and others are proclaiming *“another gospel”*.

For Me to Live is Christ and To Die is Gain

*“... that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. **For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain**. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, **which is far better**. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you. And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.”* Philippians 1:19-26

Whether in Prison or Paradise – Rejoice!

There is a tremendous insight in the wonderful phrase: *“**For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.**”* There is no suggestion of a purgatory, a pause, or soul sleep after death. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. There is nothing in between. You are for Christ, or against Him. You are alive on earth, or you are alive in Heaven. *“To live is Christ”* whether in prison or in paradise! I choose to rejoice. *“To die is gain!”* We gain eternal life, Heaven, all the promises, rewards and crowns that the Lord has promised. On earth we are privileged to serve the Lord and in death we are privileged to live with the Lord and receive rewards of eternity.

We Serve a Risen Saviour

Death for a Christian is not fatal, nor final. Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life. It does not matter what the enemy does to Paul if he is in the

centre of God's will. God can work all things together for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. He knows that what man means for evil, God can use for good. Our highest motive is to serve the Lord. He is the Way, He is the Truth, He is the Life. He is the Path, He is the Goal and He is the Prize.

Stand Fast in the Faith

*“Only let your conduct be worthy of the Gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you, or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you **stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the Faith of the Gospel** and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation and that from God. For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me.”* Philippians 1:27-30. The conclusion of the first Chapter is to remain steadfast. Let your conduct be worthy of the Gospel of Christ. Remember the great example of Christ and your steadfast goal, which will be proof to your adversaries that they are heading for perdition. They cannot destroy the Church by burning buildings, because the Church is not buildings, the Church is people. People redeemed by the Blood of Christ, transformed by the power of God.

We Fear God Alone

We should never be terrified of our adversaries. Jesus Christ is building His Church and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. It is built on the solid rock of God's Word, not in the sand of human effort. History has proved that every humanistic attempt of man will fail, fall and crumble. The Kingdom of God will continue to grow and expand and the earth will be as full of the knowledge of the Glory of the Lord as the seas are full of water. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father.

The Blood of the Martyrs is the Seed of the Church

As Tertullian wrote: *“For every Christian who died in the arena, another ten were converted on the stands.”* The blood of the martyrs became the seed of the Church.

The Example of Christ

Chapter 2 is the submissive example of Christ. *“Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. **Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.** Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”* Philippians 2:1-4

Self-Sacrifice

A fruit of Revival is *“...let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself...”* It is natural to look after “number one”, to be selfish, to be “Me first”, to be self-absorbed. But to be a Christian is to be self-less, to be sacrificial, to be in attitude of service. To be more concerned for others than for yourself. What built Christian civilisation is that Christians were concerned to be good stewards of public resources. Concerned for the property of their neighbour. *“Do to others as you want to be done unto.”*

Christ our Example of Excellence

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the Cross.” Philippians 2:5-8. We see the humiliation and self-sacrifice of Christ.

True Love is measured by Sacrifice

We can see how true love is measured by sacrifice. The supreme example of humility is given to us by God Himself. Although He is all-knowing and all-powerful. Although He is everywhere-present, yet the second Person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ chose to take upon Himself the form of a man. He emptied Himself of His privileges. God took upon Himself humanity. He humbled Himself, even to the point of death. God Himself should not have to die or be obedient, or in submission to anyone. Yet, for our Salvation, He chose to be born of Mary, to be raised in a household, under parents, to be in a country where He was treated as a third class subject of an oppressed nation. He was willing to be humiliated, slandered, abused, whipped, crucified, killed and buried.

Every Knee Shall Bow

“Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the Name which is above every name, that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in Heaven and of those on earth and of those under the earth and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Philippians 2:9-11

From Humiliation to Exaltation

God resists the proud. He gives grace to the humble. Christ rises from humiliation to exaltation. From the Crib to the Cross to the Crown. The greatest amongst you should be servants, which our Lord modelled, getting

on His knees and washing the dusty, dirty feet of His disciples. If our Master was willing to do this, how can we do less? As a result of this every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

When Will You Bow to Christ?

The question we need to challenge people with is: When will you bow to Christ? Today in the day of grace, when the door to mercy and Salvation is wide open? Or will you bow to Christ on the Day of Judgement, when the door to grace is firmly closed and it is too late for Salvation? The Day is coming when every knee will bow, regardless of who you are. **Is Jesus Christ your Saviour and Lord, or is He your Judge?**

Work Out Your Salvation with Fear and Trembling

Paul rejoices: *“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your own Salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.**”* Philippians 2:12-13. We see our responsibility and God’s sovereignty fit together.

Shine as Lights in the Darkness

The application: *“Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the Word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or laboured in vain.”* (Philippians 2:14). If our Lord endured abuses and injustices, we can too. They are spiritual children of Paul, the fruit of his labour as he sowed the seed, preached the Word and baptised the first members of the church. He reminds them that our generation is crooked and we need to shine as lights in the darkness.

It Is a Privilege to Suffer for Christ

“Yes and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.” Philippians 2:17-18. Do not be sad that I may get executed by order of Caesar, for to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. He will still rejoice.

Our Character Needs to Be Proven in Service

“But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. But you know his proven character, that as a son with his

father he served with me in the Gospel. Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me. But I trust in the Lord that I myself shall also come shortly.” Philippians 2:19-24. Other religious workers seek their own way and are more concerned for their own way than for the way of Christ, they are not being Heavenly-minded. Paul is holding out for an acquittal by the Emperor and that he will be able to return to Philippi himself.

Sacrificial Service is More Eloquent than many Sermons

“Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need; since he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. For indeed he was sick almost unto death; but God had mercy on him and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice and I may be less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness and hold such men in esteem; because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me.” Philippians 2:25-30. He reminds us that we are in a war and it requires hard work. Epaphroditus the messenger gets sent to deliver this message. True love is measured by sacrifice.

Ready to Preach, Pray or Die at a Moment’s Notice

As Hospital Christian Fellowship Missionary, Francis Grim, would say: “A missionary must be ready to preach, pray or die at a moment’s notice.” There is a place for us to be ready at all times, in our work, in our walk, in our warfare and worship, that we will be ready to sacrifice and fight to do what needs to be done. Paul is an example, as he points to Christ as the ultimate example. Paul is able to say he is able to do all things through Christ who strengthens him.

Beware of Those of the Mutilation

“Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe. Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!” Philippians 3:1-2. Paul warns of evil workers (“dogs”). The term dogs does not mean “man’s best friend.” It is specifically used to refer to the Judaizers, false prophets because of their barking, biting, back stabbing and boasting. They are of the synagogue of satan, false brethren and not part of the family of God. Revelation also speak about *the dogs* being outside of the New Jerusalem. It does not mean canine dogs are not allowed in Heaven. This was a term used specifically

for those of “*the mutilation*”, the Judaizers, those who tried to drag people back to the Law of Moses, to the comparatively insignificant old, now abolished, expired, rituals of the Old Covenant, which were only shadows pointing to the reality in Christ.

For the Excellence of the Knowledge and Righteousness of Christ

*“For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh, though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the Law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the Church; concerning the righteousness which is in the Law, blameless. **But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.** Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, **that I may gain Christ** and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; **that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.**”* Philippians 3:3-10

Beware of Those Who Pervert the Gospel

As he speaks about Salvation, he warns of false prophets, how they pervert the Gospel and lead people away from the purity of the Gospel and undermine the foundations of the Gospel. The Judaizers are contending for an abolished, man-centered, legalistic, fleshly form of ritual which can be obtained and boasted about, which is meant to them to mean everything for salvation. Their way is feeling-orientated and exploitative. Self-seeking and self-serving, it leads to pride.

The True Israel Have Circumcised Hearts and Believe in Jesus Christ

Paul calls us to a Christ-centered, spiritual relationship. Not the circumcision of the flesh, but of the heart. It is spiritual circumcision, which is repentance. That is the true Israel of God. Paul speaks about his pedigree and speaks about his faith in the Atonement of Christ. Paul gives a positive proclamation of the pursuit of Christ and says that Salvation is not based upon our works. It is based upon God’s grace. I no longer have self-confidence but Christ-confidence. We are not saved simply by our faith. We are saved by Christ’s merits and by His sacrifice, His propitiation and His Blood shed on the Cross of Calvary. It is Christ who saves. We receive this Salvation by faith.

Relationship Not Religion

Our relationship is important, not our religion. That you may know Him and the power of His Resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings being conformed to His death. This is an inward circumcision, a real personal knowledge of Christ. Some may know **about** Christ, but do they know Him personally? Paul has a personal, intimate, real relationship with Jesus Christ. He knows Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings.

Past, Present and Future Salvation

Justification - I have been saved - past tense.

Sanctification - I am being saved - present tense.

Glorification - I will be saved - future tense.

Press on Toward the Goal of the Upward Call

*“If, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but **one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.**”* Philippians 3:11-14

Perseverance

There is a striving for the Gospel, a perseverance of the saints. It does not mean lying on the couch saying God is going to do all the work. I lay hold of Him because He has laid hold of me. I am pressing onwards and upwards and going forwards, I am not giving up! It's the picture of a race. You cannot afford to get distracted and look around, but rather strain every muscle, keep focussed and look straight ahead. You put every ounce of energy and focus into the race to the end goal. Discipleship and perseverance: onward, upward, further, deeper, higher, not giving up, keeping on keeping on.

A Lifelong Discipleship Marathon

Sanctification is a process. I am being saved. It is not about perfection, it is about direction. I am being saved. I am being delivered from the power of sin. It is a life-long race and will only be complete at the finish line, which is the goal when we are welcomed into Heaven with *“Well done good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord!”* The earthly runners are racing for a gold medal, but we are running for a Heavenly reward, an incorruptible crown.

Do Not Be Distracted

“Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.” Philippians 3:15-16. He refers to those who think they are mature and above everyone else, because they are holding to a legalistic Judaism in how they do religion. Because they had gone back to Moses’ Law eg. worship on a Saturday, circumcision, etc. Paul prayed that God would reveal it to them. We need to have the mind of Christ.

The Mind of Christ

Even though Christ is God of the universe, the Eternal Judge, He emptied Himself of His privileges, came down and endured death on a Cross. We need to have the same mind as Christ. We must not try to lift ourselves up and boast of our achievements. We try to have the same attitude and mind to work together for the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Even though we have different denominational identities backgrounds and convictions, we need to keep the main thing the main thing.

Our Highest Priority

Our highest priority is to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and to love our neighbour as ourselves. We need to have the right attitude, to think of others as better than ourselves, to live a life of service and sacrifice to God and to His people and to seek to fulfill the Great Commission. Let us keep focused on the big picture and on what really matters. Live your life in the light of eternity with the mind of Christ.

Enemies of the Cross of Christ

*“Brethren, join in following my example and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. For many walk, of whom I have told you often and now tell you even weeping, that **they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly and whose glory is in their shame - who set their mind on earthly things.** For our citizenship is in Heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.”* Philippians 3:17-21

Beware of False Teachers

The Apostles, who had been disciplined by Christ and who had apostolic authority, were the foundations that Christ was building His Church on. Their examples, doctrines and sacrifices should lead us. They were eye-witnesses of the Resurrection of Christ. Paul makes it crystal clear that we have a walk, a work, a witness, a warfare. There are those who are enemies

of Christ, such as the Judaizers, who try to take us back to observing the old Law. Jesus said you can judge a prophet by evaluating his fruit.

Know Your Enemy

We must know our enemy, know his tactics, know his weapons. We must also know our weapons and must obey our Commanding Officer. We are in a spiritual war and there are people who are trying to destroy the very foundations of the Faith and distract us from the direction of the Gospel. Keep the main thing the main thing.

Keep Focused

Our authority is God's Word, the Bible. Our Salvation is through Christ, symbolised by the Cross of Christ and His Blood. Our work is for the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Our priorities are loving God and loving our neighbour as ourselves. Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.

Dual Citizens

The people of Philippi were a colony of Roman citizens, but the believers are also citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. The Church is a colony of Heaven here on earth. Paul says we have a dual citizenship and dual responsibilities. We have Christian responsibilities. There are times when we have to obey God rather than man.

Stand Fast

The main emphasis in Chapter 4 is Sanctification. *"Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved."* Philippians 4:1. There are many expressions of affection and endearment for the Philippians. They are his joy and his crown. There will be a crown for those who win souls and a shepherd's crown. Paul encouraged the Philippians not to get distracted and get tossed to and fro, but rather remain grounded on the rock of God's Word. Stand fast is an order in the military. When the enemy rush in and attack, you have to stand fast, dig in, hold the line and not let the enemy past. We have to stand firm in the Gospel.

Rejoice in the Lord Always

*"I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who laboured with me in the Gospel, with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life. **Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!** Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. **Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.**"* Philippians 4:2-7

Unity of Purpose

Euodia and Syntyche were two women in whose homes the Philippian Church gathered to meet at times. These fellow workers were urged to be of the same mind of Christ even amidst conflict. In spite of conflict, Paul instructs us to rejoice in all circumstances as our names are written in the Book of Life. **Is your name written in the Book of Life?**

Unto the Least of These

In spite of conflict, adversity, hunger and suffering, we can rejoice in all conditions and all circumstances. *The Practise of the Presence of Christ* was a well-known devotional book. Christians became aware that we must entertain strangers, as some have entertained angels unawares. We have to be hospitable to strangers and kind to the poor, as Christ could come to us in any of these disguises. He could come amongst the least and poorest. Treat these people as though they are Christ.

Peace Through Prayer

Do not worry about anything, rather, with thanksgiving, pray about everything. The peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your heart and mind through Christ Jesus. When we live in joy the result is peace. **Attitude is everything.** Life is only 10% about what happens to us and 90% of how we react to it. We must choose to respond in a Godly, Christ-honouring, Biblical way.

Focus on the Positive and Excellent

“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy - meditate on these things.” Philippians 4:8. This is a call to live a better life. I can be thankful in all circumstances. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Reject the world’s way, the lies and worldliness, the injustice, the impure and the bad news of the world. Do not listen to the world’s media. We have a more excellent example in Christ. We need to focus on examples of excellence in history, art, architecture, literature, poetry, music and law. Christians have produced the greatest architecture, the greatest literature, the greatest poetry, music and art. That is why we try to focus on Victorious Christians who changed the world, cathedrals and the greatest music and art ever produced. We should lift people up wherever we go. We should focus on the more praiseworthy and excellent things.

Attitude is Everything

“The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do and the God of peace will be with you.” Philippians 4:9. Right thinking and

right attitude are preparation for purposeful actions to fulfill the Great Commission. Therefore we must have the right attitude. Lift people up to excellence. Reject lies and deception. The God of peace will be with you. Apostolic teaching and Apostolic example - that is what we need to focus on. When Paul came to a town and preached, there was either Revival or a riot.

A More Excellent Way

What goes on in much of the church today is not of God, but more of the world. Right thinking and right attitudes are preparation for purposeful action to fulfil the Great Commission, to seek first the Kingdom of God. We need to meditate on examples of excellence and that will lead us to trust and obey. There is no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey.

Contentment Despite Suffering

“But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

Philippians 4:10-13. The financial support, that was brought by Epaphroditus, made Paul happy as it showed good fruit and a maturity and generosity that God will reward. Paul had learned to be happy in plenty or poverty. The main context of “*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*” is suffering.

God Rewards Generosity

*“Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress. Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the Gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities. Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. And **my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.**”* Philippians 4:14-19. There is no condemnation or rebuke for the Philippians. Generosity can be an act of worship to God. He prays for the Lord to reward them for their generosity.

Be Faithful to the Gospel

The Gospel is referred to nine times: *Fellowship of the Gospel* 1:5; *defence of the Gospel* 1:16; *walk worthy of the Gospel* 1:27; *strive for the Faith of the Gospel* 1:27; *service of the Gospel* 2:22; *labour for the Gospel* 4:3 and *beginning of the Gospel* 4:15

The Joy of the Lord is Our Strength

Soli Deo Gloria! Everything must be done to the glory of God alone. The Most Excellent inspires excellence. The emphasis is *“The joy of the Lord is our strength.”* We should travel on Christ’s errands, suffer in Christ’s service, proclaim Christ’s Gospel, declare Christ’s Lordship in all areas of life and teach Christ’s message. Knowing God brings joy in all circumstances.

Summary of Philippians:

Suffering in Chapter 1. **Mind of Christ.**

Submission in Chapter 2. **Knowledge of Christ.**

Salvation in Chapter 3. **Peace of Christ.**

Sanctification in Chapter 4. **Pre-eminence of Christ.**

Christ in Philippians

Example of Christ

Mind of Christ

Knowledge of Christ

Peace of Christ

Pre-eminence of Christ

Redemption of Christ

Righteousness of Christ

Resurrection of Christ

Responsibility in Christ

Exhortation of Christ

Exhortation

The call for us is: to have integrity, to be humble, to be positive, to remember what really matters and to learn to be content in all circumstances and conditions. Press on. Reach forward. Never ever give up. Never go back. Keep on keeping on. Persevere. Run the race of Faith. Keep the Faith. Fight the good fight of Faith.

Benediction

“Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar’s household. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.” Philippians 4:20-23



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CHAPTER 12

COLOSSIANS

“All who dwelt in Asia heard the Word of the Lord Jesus...” Acts 19:10

Colosse in the Province of Asia

Colossians is a prison Epistle written in Rome while Paul was in prison there. The Church at Colosse was founded at the same time as the Church in Ephesus. The Epistle to the Colossians was written at the same time as the Epistle to the Ephesians and the letter to Philemon. Epaphras carried the three letters to each destination. Colosse was a cultural and religious melting pot. There were Greek, Jewish and Oriental religious ideas merging together. Colosse was once an important town, but by the time this letter was written, Colosse had been side-lined and overshadowed by nearby Laodicea, which was receiving far more traffic. Colosse became more of a market place and today is completely uninhabited and does not exist.

Colossians and Ephesians

Both Colossians and Ephesians contain great doctrines of the Gospel, which were read aloud to the churches, but each was written for very different sets of circumstances. Ephesians is calling believers the Body of Christ. Colossians talks about the Head of the Body, Jesus Christ. In Ephesians **the Church of Christ** is the important emphasis, but in Colossians it is **the Christ of the Church** that is emphasised. Both are needed. You cannot have a body without a head.

False Christology is at the Root of all Heresy

Heresy had broken out in the Church of Colosse, misleading the young believers and calling for strict observance of Jewish ceremonies and rituals. Therefore, the message of Colossians was written to counter these false teachers that were leading them away from the pre-eminence of Christ. The place that Christ holds in any religion determines how true or how false it is. Every cult has a false idea of Christ. They either deny His finality, or His divinity. Misrepresenting the truth of who Christ is and what He has accomplished and His person in His work is the root of all heresy.

Fashionable not Faithfull

Paul is warning against the legalism and intellectual arrogance of the Judaizers, being fashionable rather than faithful to God's Word, becoming man-centered and involved in philosophy that is humanistic, rather than being Christ-centered. Colossians speaks about the Deity of Christ, the sufficiency of Christ, the fullness of Christ and our fullness in Him.

Faithful and Fruitful

*“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God and Timothy our brother, to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your **faith** in Christ Jesus and of your **love** for all the saints; because of the **hope** which is laid up for you in Heaven, of which you heard before in the Word of the truth of the Gospel, which has come to you, as it has also in all the world and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth; as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.”* Colossians 1:1-8. Paul, by the Will of God, writes to the saints in Christ. Paul thanks God for the Church of Colosse, which was founded by people who had been converted to Christ by Paul in Ephesus. He hopes to see them if he is released from prison.

Scripture is our Foundation

The Five Solas of the Reformation are repeated in this introduction. *Sola Scriptura*, the hope that you have because of the Word of the Truth of the Gospel. Scripture is our only authority.

Christ Alone

The main emphasis is *Solus Christus* – Christ alone is the Head of the Church. Salvation is through Christ alone. It is through the Atonement of His Blood on the Cross alone.

Knowledge, Wisdom and Understanding

“For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the Kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His Blood, the forgiveness of sins.” Colossians 1:9-14

Renewing our Mind

The Protestant Reformation dismantled the altars which symbolised the sacrifices of the mass and put in its place the Lord's Table and displayed an open Bible, symbolising that access to God comes through the Word of

God alone. Christ has died once for all, a never to be repeated sacrifice. The centrality of the pulpit emphasises the importance of knowledge of the Scriptures. Understanding of God's Word and wisdom is preached and taught as we need to have our minds renewed. Faith comes by hearing and hearing from the Word of God. The Gospel is the power of God for the Salvation of everyone who believes. Our most important priority is worship, that the meditations of our heart would be acceptable in God's sight. We obtain the renewing of our minds through the washing of God's Word, that we might develop the mind of Christ through understanding the Scriptures.

The Pre-eminence of Christ

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in Heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things and in Him all things consist. And He is the Head of the body, the Church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the pre-eminence.” Colossians 1:15-18

Christ Alone is the Head of the Church

While some people were raised from the dead, we speak here about the resurrection to eternal life with a new body. Christ alone is the Head of the Church. All other authority is limited authority. This teaching is clear because the legalism of the Judaizers attempts to bring believers back to the shadows of the Old Covenant. We do not need the circumcision of the flesh when repentance is the real circumcision. We do not need the temple because Christ is the real Temple. We do not need their priests because Christ is the real High Priest. We do not need their sacrifices, because those were only shadows pointing to Christ who is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. We do not need the blood of bulls and goats on altars. We have the Blood of Christ. We do not need sacrifices done every day, Christ is the only perfect sacrifice, once for all, a never to be repeated sacrifice.

Atonement Through the Blood of Christ Alone

“For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in Heaven, having made peace through the Blood of His Cross. And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and blameless and above reproach in His sight - if indeed you

continue in the Faith, grounded and steadfast and are not moved away from the hope of the Gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under Heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.” Colossians 1:19-23

Remain Steadfast in the Faith

We need to live a Christ-centered life. We need to remain steadfast and faithful, to not be moved, to not be distracted, to turn neither to the left, nor right, nor to turn back to fables, myths and legends, nor to the blood of bulls and goats, nor to a human temple, nor to human priests, nor to legalism. Christ alone is our hope and our glory. He is our Salvation. We are not to allow ourselves to be distracted, discouraged, or deviated. Nor to be diluted in our faith and steadfastness.

Christ in You – The Hope of Glory

*“I now rejoice in my sufferings for you and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the Church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the Word of God, the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is **Christ in you, the hope of glory.** Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.”*

Colossians 1:24-29

Suffering Can Aid Sanctification

Paul is not saying that Christ’s suffering is not all sufficient for our Salvation. But rather in our discipleship there is a need for us to suffer. If we share in Christ’s sufferings we will also share in His glory. He is the example for us, we are to follow in His footsteps. The suffering is temporary. The glory is eternal. The suffering is essential in our discipleship, for our sanctification. Without pain there is no gain. We need to learn how to say No to the flesh. To be self-controlled. To suffer for Christ.

A Theology of Suffering

Joseph Tson said: *“You Christians in the West have a theology of prosperity. In the East, we Christians have a Theology of suffering for Christ. We are God’s army of lambs.”* That seems so much more Biblical and Christ-honouring than the self-serving attitude in the West. We need to follow Christ’s example of living a humble life. The health and wealth prosperity preachers are not following the example of Christ and are not teaching the message of Christ.

True Love is Measured by Sacrifice

In Justification, you are saved by grace alone received through faith alone. In Sanctification, true love is measured by sacrifice.

The Mystery of the Word of God Incarnate Revealed

The mystery of God which had been hidden throughout ages and from many generations, has now been revealed to the saints through the New Testament in Christ. The mystery of God in the Old Testament is fulfilled in Christ. The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed. The New Testament is the Old Testament revealed. The mystery is Christ in me.

Our Duty and Responsibility

A very high standard is set. We need to preach Christ and warn and teach every man, in all wisdom and knowledge. We need to strive to present each man perfect in Christ Jesus. The rest in the Lord is work with joy, which we may sow with tears, but we will reap with joy. The labour is fruitful and worthwhile. *“Greater is He that is in me than him that is in the world”*. *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”*. There is a sense that the ability does not come from ourselves. We do everything we can and we trust God to do everything we cannot. We only have the right to ask God to do what we cannot do, once we have done everything we possibly can. We do our duty and then we can trust God to do what is beyond our ability.

All the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge

Chapter 2 is an exhortation to steadfast faith. We do not trust in man-made humanistic philosophy, but in Christ alone. *“For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”* Colossians 2:1-3

Dig Deep into God’s Word

Many Christians are satisfied with a shallow and superficial understanding of God. We really need to understand the knowledge of God, as there is so much more for us to find. As Charles Spurgeon observed: *“No man can ever exhaust the treasury of the Scriptures.”* You can study the Word of God every day and you will keep on finding treasures. The Lord has things hidden in the Scriptures for us to find and it will take persistence and hard work. The more we study the Word the more it comes into focus and the clearer it is and the greater the riches of wisdom and knowledge.

Do Not Be Deceived

Some people think the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found in secular humanist universities and in secular humanist textbooks, in atheism. Somehow many think that the evolutionist, atheist, anti-Christ pagans have more knowledge and wisdom. Such people reject Christ and profess themselves to be wise, but they are fools. Those who claim that there is no God are fools. *“Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words. For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.”* Colossians 2:4-5

Take up the Shield of Faith

Faith is something solid. The Bible is full of warnings about being deceived. Do not be deceived! Christ said there will be many false prophets, many false shepherds. They will be persuasive, even with lying wonders. We have to be discerning. *Sola Fide!* Your faith must be strong and steadfast. We are saved by God’s grace alone received by faith alone. The Bible speaks of the shield of Faith, it is solid and substantial. It can withstand the onslaught of the enemy. It can stop swords, spears and arrows.

Established in the Faith

“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the Faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. In Christ alone.” Colossians 2:6-7

Rooted, Built up and Established in the Faith

You may hear people saying you must “accept” Christ. This is not Biblical. You need Christ to accept you. We need to trust and obey Christ. We need to take up our cross and follow Christ. We need to deny ourselves and reject the world, the flesh and the devil. We need to surrender to Christ and resist evil. Surrender and submit to and follow Christ! You cannot accept Jesus as your Saviour and reject Him as your Lord! We need to maintain daily discipleship. The foolish man builds his house on the sand. The wise man builds his house on the rock. Jesus is the Rock of our Salvation. *“Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee.”* He is the solid foundation. Biblical Salvation is rooted and built up in Christ.

Beware of Empty Deceit

“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the Head of all principality and power.” Colossians 2:8-10. Most of what is going on in our universities is empty deceit, according to the traditions of men and the basic principles of this world and not according to Christ.

Wide Gates to Hell

500 Years ago, Professor Martin Luther warned: *“Beware lest our schools become wide gates to hell.”* He advised no one to place their child where the Scriptures do not reign paramount. Every institution not daily engaged in engraving the Word of God in the hearts of the students must become corrupt. The unregenerate man is being conformed to the world. *Solus Christus!* Christ is not only the Head of the Church, He is the Head of all principalities and power. Our universities and schools have become wide gates to hell. They have allowed themselves to be cheated through anti-secular humanist philosophy and the traditions of men according to the basic principles of this world. They are being conformed to the world and not being transformed by the Word of God and the renewing of their minds. A good school is Bible-based, Christ-centered and Holy Spirit-led.

Christ-Centred

Christ is the Head of all principalities and power. He is Almighty, powerful, everywhere-present. He is not only the Creator, He is the Eternal Judge before Whom we must stand at the last day and give an account of our lives. He is the ultimate Authority. We belong to Christ twice over, first as our Creator the second as our Saviour. All education should be Christ-centered. This has been documented in Dr. James Kennedy’s *What If Jesus Had Never Been Born?* book and film as well as in Professor Alvin Schmidt’s book, *How Christianity Changed the World*. Everything good comes from the teachings and example of Christ and from the faithfulness of followers of Christ. Most universities used to have written over their entrances: *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.”*

Full Salvation Through the Cross

“In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the Cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.” Colossians 2:11-15

Legalism Can Never Save Anyone

The Judaizers were saying that you cannot be a true Christian unless you first became a Jew and that included circumcision, Saturday worship, etc. But these were just shadows, the fulfillment is Christ. They want to go back to empty legalism. You cannot be saved by the blood of bulls and goats! There never was salvation in the Temple. These shadows pointed to Christ.

Life from the Dead

Solus Christus and *Sola Fide*. It is through Christ alone received through Faith alone. Baptism symbolises death. Buried with Christ in Baptism, raised in newness of life in Christ. It is only through the grace of God alone we who were dead in our sins are now alive in Christ. The picture of Salvation in John 11 is when Lazarus was dead in the grave for four days, Jesus came and stood outside and ordered: "*Lazarus come out!*" it seemed unreasonable. How could you ask a corpse to come out of the grave!?! This is the power of God's Word. Through the Word of God the dead can be made alive in Christ.

Turning Defeat into Victory

We have violated God's Laws. These have been nailed to the Cross. He made a public spectacle of the principalities and powers. In what seemed like Satan's victory over Christ, betrayed by Judas, the Jewish Sanhedrin and the chief priests and Pharisees and scribes and king Herod and the Romans. They all worked together to crucify Christ and they thought they had won a great victory through false testimony, an unjust trial and illegal sentence. Yet after all that Jesus rises from the dead! What appeared His greatest defeat was actually His great victory! He has now disarmed principalities and powers. They were blinded by their hatred. What they meant for evil, God turned for good.

Sabbaths are only a Shadow – The Reality is Christ

"So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God." Colossians 2:16-19

Salvation is in Christ Alone

How much clearer can the Apostle Paul put it? The Judaizers want to judge us, but these are all shadows of things to come, the substance is of Christ. Those who bless Christ are blessed. Those who curse Christ are cursed.

Your eternal destiny depends on your relationship with Christ, not some religious ceremony or some pope in Rome. It is in Christ alone that we place our trust.

Reject the False Humility of the Legalists

“Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations – ‘Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,’ which all concern things which perish with the using – according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.” Colossians 2:20-23

Reject Those Who Reject Christ

Paul is demolishing the legalism of the Judaizers. Total depravity is the reality of human nature. Man outside of Christ is utterly lost, deprived, dead in trespasses and sins. Salvation comes by the grace of God alone, received by faith alone. Salvation is on the basis of the finished work, the Atonement of Christ and His Blood shed on the Cross of Calvary. We should reject anything that rejects Christ or which distracts from Christ: secular humanism, Judaism, Catholicism and all the different false religions and cults of the world. Christ is all-sufficient. Christ in you the hope of glory. The fullness of Christ, our fullness in Him, the deity of Christ, the sufficiency of Christ, the pre-eminence of Christ.

Aim Higher

*“If then you were raised with Christ, **seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.** For you died and **your life is hidden with Christ in God.** When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”* Colossians 3:1-4

In Christ

In Christ is emphasised. We are to *walk in Him* (2:6), to *be rooted in Him* (2:7), to *be built up in Him* (2:7), *brought to perfection in Him* (2:10), *united in Christ* (2:2), *complete in Christ* (2:10), *dead in Christ* (2:20), *buried with Christ* (Rom 6:4), *Risen with Christ* (3:1), *hidden with Christ in God* (3:3).

Live in the Light of Eternity

We should be investing our time, our talents, our treasures in that which last for eternity, seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. We should set our minds on things above. So much of the Christian life is avoiding the distractions of the world, recognising the deceits of the world

and refusing to be deviated from the narrow path of following Christ, refusing to be defiled by the world. Refusing to allow the world to defeat our purpose: Christ in us the hope of glory.

Dead to the World – Alive in Christ

*“Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire and covetousness, which is idolatry. **Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds.**”* Colossians 3:5-9

Born Again

These are the vices we need to reject. These are the old deeds we need to put off. We need to put off the old man and put on the new man. We are buried with Christ in baptism and raised to newness of life. Being born again means to die to the old life and being born again to the new life. To follow Christ means to turn away from the world. *“...put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.”* Colossians 3:10-11

Body, Mind and Spirit

These are the virtues we need to put on. Knowledge is important, we are meant to be renewed in our mind, heart, body, lifestyle and habits. We are body, soul and spirit and we need to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. It starts in our heart and mind and is meant to be demonstrated in our hands and feet, with all of our strength. We need to be wholehearted. There is only one way of Salvation for all and the Great Commission applies to us all.

Let the Word of God Dwell in You Richly

*“Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another and forgiving one another. If anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. **And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.**”* Colossians 3:12-17

Set Apart for Worship

Some things are set apart for special purposes. We are set apart for God's use. Christ owns us, He created us. He is our Redeemer and Eternal Judge. Charity is one of the fruit of being in Christ. We need to forgive one another and if you have a complaint against one another, forgive them, even as Christ has forgiven you. Each of us are accountable for our own life, we are not accountable to confess or be responsible for someone else's sins, or even judge anyone else. There needs to be harmony in the home. Let God guide you. We need to let the peace of God rule in our hearts.

We Have a Reason to Sing

Christianity is unique among the religions of the world. Singing is a major part of our corporate worship. We have a singing faith. Sing wholeheartedly. We need to let the Word of God dwell in us richly and with all wisdom and teaching. Be thankful. The central element of the Protestant Worship service is the preaching, teaching, reading, expounding, explaining and education of the Word of God. Singing of the Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs is central. The Protestant Reformation gave singing back to the whole congregation so that everyone could sing, not just the choir. A major emphasis of the Protestant Reformation is that we are a Kingdom of priests. We all have access to God directly through Christ. The Christian's work ethic is emphasised. Do everything unto the glory of God.

All Relationships Must Be God Honouring

“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them. Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done and there is no partiality.” Colossians 3:18-25

Harmony in the Home and in the Workplace

Our relationships in the home should reflect our standing in Christ. Each set of people are addressed in order: Wives, Husbands, Children and Bondservants. This directs towards harmony in the home as well as in work relationships. All this should reflect that we are new creatures in Christ. James Dobson says: *“If your animals don't know you are saved, you are not!”* Your animals should see the change in your lifestyle. (*“A good man is kind to his animals but the wicked are cruel to theirs.”* Proverbs 12:10). If you have

been converted, others should immediately see a change in your relationships. We need to do things for the glory of God, not for the approval of man. We must never give place to the flesh. We are meant to fear God. Our relationship with God should reflect how we behave in all areas of life.

Giving Must Be As Unto the Lord

We need to give as unto the Lord. Yet a lot of people give broken and damaged clothes and toys to Missions, which reflects the mentality of people's hearts. Our offerings unto the Lord is meant to be excellent, it is meant to be a sacrifice. We should give God the first fruits of the harvest. We are not to give him broken, trampled, wrecked goods we cannot use ourselves. This is because most do not have the fear of God. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. We need to give with sincere hearts. You will keep Him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You. To be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Walk in Wisdom

*“Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in Heaven. Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the Word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak. Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. **Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.**”* Colossians 4:1-6

You Have a Master in Heaven

Although we may have people under us, we must remember that we ourselves are under Christ. There are some exemplary Christian leaders in history who understood that they were under a higher authority. We need to have the same attitude. We may be masters, but we are also servants and slaves of God. Our Master is in Heaven. Prayer is to be continuous, earnest, vigilant and be filled with thanksgiving. True love is measured by sacrifice. Paul has been whipped and scourged and is in chains for the Gospel, yet he is still writing letters from prison. He is not concerned for himself, but for the Church in Christ.

Time is Life

Do not waste your time. Time is precious and valuable. Today many people say time is money, but time is far more valuable than that. You might get more money, but you will never get more time. When a person is late or wastes your time, they steal more than money, they steal part of your life. To be punctual is a mark of a thoughtful Christian. It is to respect others

people's time. To be able to be true to our word, to say what you mean, to mean what you say is to fulfill our commitments, to do what we promise to do.

Be Salt of the Earth

We should know how to answer with grace. Salt which loses its saltiness is good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. Today the salt has lost its therapeutic quality and no longer has the ability to heal what is infected. Our speech should be seasoned with salt and we should know how to give an answer to skeptics, for the hope that is within us.

Stand Complete in the Will of God

*“Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me. I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts, with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will make known to you all things which are happening here. Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, greets you, with Mark, the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him) and Jesus who is called Justus. These are my only fellow workers for the Kingdom of God who are of the circumcision; they have proved to be a comfort to me. Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers that **you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.** For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you and those who are in Laodicea and those in Hierapolis. Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you. Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea and Nymphas and the church that is in his house.”* Colossians 4:7-15. This series of greetings to different individuals are examples of fellow people labouring for the Gospel with Paul.

Be Sure to Complete the Task you Received

*“Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea. And say to Archippus, **‘Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.’** This salutation by my own hand - Paul. Remember my chains. Grace be with you. Amen.”* Colossians 4:16-18. Regardless of how well, or not you start the race, it is important that we finish well. We need to fight the good fight, keep the Faith. We need to fight the good fight of Faith.

Christ is Creator and Conqueror

The main message of Colossians is: Do not allow anyone to distract you. Do not allow anyone to cheat you. Do not allow anyone to kidnap you. Do not allow anyone to deceive you, delay you, or lead you astray. You have come to Christ, now continue in Christ. The emphasis is Christ and the pre-eminence of Christ. Christ is the Creator of the universe. He is the Conqueror of all powers and principalities. He is the Controller of the Church. He is the image of the invisible God. He is the first born of all creation. All things were created by Him. He is before all things. In Him all things are held together. He is the Head of the Church. He is the beginning. He is the first born from the dead. Through Him we are reconciled to God. In Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. In Him the fullness of the Godhead lives in bodily form. He is the Head over every power and authority. In Him you have fullness and perfection.

“Christ in you the hope of glory.”



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CHAPTER 13

1 THESSALONIANS

Ministry in the Synagogue

Acts 17 describes how the church in Thessalonica was planted - which helps us to understand the background to this letter. Paul would start to evangelise in synagogues, then go on to God-fearing gentiles. He preferred to first speak to those who had some foundational basis of information with which he could do evangelism. Paul reasoned with them from the Scriptures. He explained and demonstrated from the Scriptures that Christ had to suffer, that the Messiah was coming as a suffering servant and that He would die and rise from the dead. Some of the Jews were persuaded and a great multitude of devout Greeks believed. The unbelieving Jews were envious, gathered a mob and started rioting, continuing to seek to undermine his ministry.

Mission to Thessalonica

*“Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead and saying, ‘**This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ.**’ And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas. But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason and sought to bring them out to the people. But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, ‘**These who have turned the world upside down have come here too. Jason has harboured them and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another King - Jesus.**’ And they troubled the crowd and the rulers of the city when they heard these things. So when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go. Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. **These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent***

women as well as men. But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the Word of God was preached by Paul at Berea, they came there also and stirred up the crowds. Then immediately the brethren sent Paul away, to go to the sea; but both Silas and Timothy remained there. So those who conducted Paul brought him to Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him with all speed, they departed.” Acts 17:1-15.

Scripture Interprets Scripture

We should be like the Bereans, studying and searching the Scriptures to see if the things we are taught are true. All authority comes from God. Any gospel that is not thoroughly Biblical and consistent with all of Scripture is no Gospel at all. The Bereans searched to see that the Messiah is the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy. The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed and that the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed.

One of the Oldest Books in the New Testament

1 Thessalonians is one of the oldest and first Books ever written in the New Testament. These are the earliest writings of the Apostle Paul in the Scripture, written AD 50-AD 51.

Thessalonica – Named after Alexander’s Sister

Thessalonica, the capital of Macedonia, was a wealthy city of 200,000 people with a fine natural harbour, a centre of trade, a city founded in 315 BC by King Gesandra of Macedonia, named after the sister of Alexander the Great. Salonica was the name of Alexander’s sister. This was a free city, a provincial capital.

Grace and Peace Come from God the Father through our Lord Jesus

“Paul, Silvanus and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Thessalonians 1:1. The Deity of Christ is emphasised.

Work of Faith, Labour of Love and Patience of Hope

“We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your **work of faith, labour of love and patience of hope** in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father, knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God. For our Gospel did not come to you in Word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance ...” 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5

A Commendable Congregation

This is a commendable congregation. Paul lists their positive attributes as good examples. Faith without works is dead. Love serves. True love is measured by sacrifice. Hope is patient. God found us. We were the ones who were lost. We have faith in God and repent of our sins because He regenerated our heart. (Not - we repent of our sins and put our faith in God and then He rewards us by regenerating us and putting the Holy Spirit within us.) The Apostle Paul shared the Gospel by what he did, not just by what he said. His example of integrity and Christian work ethic is what he wanted them to follow. We cannot save anyone. It is the Holy Spirit who works within us and saves.

Turning Away from Idols to Serve the Living and True God

*“And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the Word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. For from you the Word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything. For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you and how **you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God** and to wait for His Son from Heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.”* 1 Thessalonians 1:6-10

Joy Amidst Persecution

The Church in Thessalonica was born in persecution, amidst riots and official opposition. They received the Word of God amidst affliction, but with the joy of the Holy Spirit. The joyful endurance of affliction is emphasised. The congregation sends out evangelists and missionaries. The testimonies of their changed lives has impressed many people. They have impacted their community, region and nations. When you are converted, a mark of repentance is to turn from idols and destroy them. In Ephesus they brought all their idols, made a huge bonfire and burned their idols. They chose to serve the living and true God. As the fire of the accursed occultic materials went up, the fire of the Holy Spirit came down in Revival. *“I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back...”*

Dynamic Discipleship

This is a lifestyle, not a ritual, nor a once-off token. They have turned from idols and are now following Jesus. We see pilgrimage, discipleship, ongoing learning, commitment and spiritual warfare. We have a battle between

light and darkness, between the church and the world, between Christ and satan. Here is a clear warning that there is wrath to come. God is not only a God of love, He is a God of light. He is not only a God of Salvation, He is the Eternal Judge. God is not only a merciful God, He is also a God who hates evil. There needs to be balance.

Steadfastness Amidst Suffering

The emphasis on the Trinity. Joyfully enduring affliction. Marks of a commendable congregation, they are evangelistic, they have faith that works, they have a labour of love, they are patient and hope. The theme of Thessalonians is summarised as steadfastness in the face of suffering, being shining lights in the darkness, living holy lives amidst a pagan society. Different from the world, discerning in an age of deception.

Energetic Example

In Chapter 2 we see a defence of Paul against false accusations. Timothy had come to Paul in Corinth during his second missionary journey. On the basis of Timothy's report on this church, which was mostly positive, he hears some disturbing things and writes a response to this and sends Timothy back to deliver it to them. He lists his conduct, which is a good example of how a Christian should conduct themselves. He was courageous, sincere, God-fearing, God-honouring, humble, industrious, hard-working, steadfast, diligent servant of God.

Boldness in the Gospel

"For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain. But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the Gospel of God in much conflict. For our exhortation did not come from error or uncleanness, nor was it in deceit." 1 Thessalonians 2:1-3. As Christians we need to be **bold**. (Job 11:15; Ephesians 3:12; 1 Timothy 3:13; Hebrews 4:16; Hebrews 10:19; 1 John 4:17; Acts 4:13; Acts 4:31; 2 Corinthians 3:12; 1 Thessalonians 2:2.) We cannot do this by ourselves, we receive this boldness from our Lord Jesus. One of the evidences of the Holy Spirit's work is that people go out and evangelise with boldness. It is not natural to want to go and be bold. We see boldness amongst the great servants of God in history, for example, in John Wycliffe, Jan Hus, Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli.

Conflict and Slander is to be Expected

Conflict is part of the refining fires of discipleship. We should not think that conflict and opposition is a sign that God is against us. Our Lord Jesus Christ

is our example. He was opposed, falsely accused, illegally tried, crucified, even though He was innocent. So we need to follow in His footsteps and not be surprised if we experience conflict and injustice. Anyone doing the work of the Gospel must expect to be slandered. Jesus was slandered, accused of being a drunkard and a glutton, a friend of tax collectors, prostitutes and thieves.

Tested and Entrusted

*“But as we have been approved by God to be **entrusted with the Gospel**, even so we speak, **not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts**. For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness - God is witness. Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as Apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased **to impart to you not only the Gospel of God, but also our own lives**, because you had become dear to us. For you remember, brethren, our labour and toil; for labouring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the Gospel of God. You are witnesses and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; as you know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children that you **would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own Kingdom and glory.**”* 1 Thessalonians 2:4-12

People Pleasers make Traitors

We are not to be man-pleasers. People are more concerned about popularity and *likes* from the world, than they are with: *“Well done good and faithful servant!”* from the only One whose Words and whose vote ultimately counts on the Day of Judgement. (John 12:43; Acts 12:1-3; Ephesians 6:6; Colossians 3:22 are examples of people pleasing man and not God.) Integrity is what you are in the dark when no one is watching, except God. Paul reminds them freely he received from God, freely he gives to them, he took nothing from them.

Do Not Be Concerned About the Opinions of the Enemies of God

“For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the Word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe. For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Judeans, who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets and have persecuted us; and they do not please God and are contrary to all

men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up the measure of their sins; but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost.” 1 Thessalonians 2:13-16. Why do you care what they say? They are the enemies of Christ. The full measure of their sins is laying up fire for the furnace, not treasures in Heaven.

Crown and Joy

“But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured more eagerly to see your face with great desire. Therefore we wanted to come to you - even I, Paul, time and again - but satan hindered us. For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? **For you are our glory and joy.**” 1 Thessalonians 2:17-20. Those who have come to the Lord through His ministry, the converts he baptised, the people who are growing in the Lord are his crown and joy.

Stand Fast in Faith Despite Tribulation

“Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God and our fellow labourer in the Gospel of Christ, **to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith**, that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that **we would suffer tribulation**, just as it happened and you know. For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you and our labour might be in vain. But now that Timothy has come to us from you and brought us good news of your faith and love and that you always have good remembrance of us, greatly desiring to see us, as we also to see you - therefore, brethren, in all our affliction and distress we were comforted concerning you by your faith. For now we live, if you **stand fast** in the Lord. For what thanks can we render to God for you, for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sake before our God, night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith?” 1 Thessalonians 3:1-10

The Birkenhead Drill

In Chapter 3, Paul speaks about sending Timothy to help establish and encourage them. The church had gone through a lot of affliction and tribulation. Verse 8 says, Stand fast in the Lord. Like the HMS Birkenhead military command: “Stand fast! Do not attempt to leave the ship. Do not attempt to swim to the lifeboats. Do not endanger the women and children.

Go down with the ship.” Not a man on the HMS Birkenhead attempted to swim to the lifeboats, they obeyed the command. The natural instinct of every human being is to flee, save himself. The Lord is saying to the Church who are facing massive attacks, to **stand fast! Stand your ground.** Do not give in. Take the full assault without wavering. It does not matter how much the enemy may intimidate, or how outnumbered we may be – **stand. Stand fast!** If you flee, you may be speared in the back. There is no salvation from assault by fleeing. That is why the full armour of God does not include any description of armour for your back. Face the foe. **Stand fast!**

Abound in Love, Be Established in Holiness

“Now may our God and Father Himself and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you. And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.” 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13.

Aim to Please God by Living Sanctified Lives

*“Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to **please God**; for you know what Commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus. **For this is the will of God, your sanctification:** that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honour, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.”* 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

This is the Will of God

The Will of God is spelled out in Chapter 4 and emphasises growing, being more productive. Walking with the Lord and seeking to please the Lord. The will of God is more than what am I going to do, where am I going to do it and who am I going to marry. It is more the kind of people we should be, rather than where. Our character of integrity is important. God’s will is more than vocation and location, it is for us to be set apart, to be different from the world. Do not give into the world’s spirit. You must have different standards. We have a higher call to holiness.

Continually Grow, Improve and Increase in Productivity

*“But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you **increase more and more**; that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside and that you may lack nothing.”* 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12

Occupy Until He Comes

We are called to love one another, to increase more and more and not be busy bodies who cause riots. Mind your own business and work with your own hands. Work is spiritual. It is laziness that is unspiritual. To be productive, hard-working, caring for and improving the environment is what God wants us to do. When Martin Luther was asked, *“What would you do if you knew the Lord was coming back tomorrow?”* He replied *“I would plant an apple tree today!”*

Jesus Christ is the Resurrection and the Life

“But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the Word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these Words.” 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. We do sorrow when we lose someone, but we do not sorrow as those who have no hope! Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life. This passage comforts us concerning those who have died in Christ, by reminding us about the Resurrection.

Be Sober and Alert - Putting on the Armour of Faith

*“But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that **the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, ‘Peace and safety’**” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labour pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren,*

*are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but **let us watch and be sober**. For those who sleep, sleep at night and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober, **putting on the breastplate of faith and love and as a helmet the hope of Salvation**. For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.”* 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Live in the Light of Eternity

Chapter 5 contains instructions for us to understand the times, so we know what to do. We need to be cautious and skeptical of all kinds of proclamations of “*peace and safety*”. Do not be gullible. Be like the Bereans, who studied the Word of God daily to see if these things are true. The armour we are given is Faith, which is our shield, a strong substantial solid protection which is able to put out the fiery darts of the enemy. The helmet of Salvation. The Breastplate of righteousness. As we are involved in fighting the good fight of Faith, in a battle between light and darkness. We are not part of the darkness, which is fear, sleep and drunkenness. We belong to the day, which means being alert, awake, vigilant, steadfast and discerning. We should be comforted in expectation of the Day of the Resurrection of the dead, the Day of the Return of the Lord and the Day of Judgement.

Test All Things

*“And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labour among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. Be at peace among yourselves. Now we exhort you, brethren, **warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all**. See that no one renders evil for evil for anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all. **Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks**; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. **Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.**”* 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22

Be Joyful, Prayerful and Thankful

We should be sober and watchful. We should be prepared for spiritual warfare by putting on the armour of God. We should be different from the world. We should rejoice always. We should pray without ceasing. We should give thanks in all circumstances. We should test all things. We should hold fast what is good. Be appreciative.

Be Discerning and Diligent

God's will is more about the kind of people we should be and the kind of attitude you should have than location, vocation or marriage partner. We are taught to be discerning, to be diligent in our duties, to live in a life of eternity. We are



commanded to love God with all of our hearts, soul, mind and strength.

Spirit, Soul and Body

*“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely and **may your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.** He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it. Brethren, pray for us. Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss. I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.”* 1 Thessalonians 5:23-28

Be Discerning in an Age of Deception

This prayer is for us to love God body, mind and spirit. To stand fast in the face of suffering. To be shining lights in a world of darkness. Live holy lives amongst paganism. Be different from the world. Be discerning in an age of deception.



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CHAPTER 14

2 THESSALONIANS

Doctrine and Discipleship Despite Hostility and Persecution

Written from Corinth about AD 51, this book deals with doctrine and discipline. We are called to patient, joyful discipleship in the face of suffering, persecution and abuse. There will be those who are hostile to the Faith and we should expect persecution and abuse from all. Those faithful to the Kingdom of God will inevitably face diabolical opposition and persecution.

Encouragement and Endurance during Persecution

*“...Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, **that you may be counted worthy of the Kingdom of God**, for which you also suffer; since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.”* 2 Thessalonians 1:2-10

The Lord Will Return to Judge the Wicked

Growth is seen in healthy plants. Likewise, a growing Christian and a growing church is healthy. Faith and love go together. Our work is to be excellent. Those who oppose and persecute the people of God will suffer eternal Judgement. You can rest when the Lord comes. The Lord's return should be a great comfort to believers. It will bring condemnation to those who resist and disobey God. Ignorance is not an excuse, it is a sin. Ignorance is condemned. The Lord will judge the wicked with everlasting punishment. They will have to give an account for everything. God will put things right.

God is Worthy of our Very Best

*“Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you **worthy of this calling** and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power, that the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”* 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12. God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ are put together showing the Deity of Christ and confirming the doctrine of the Trinity. *Sola Gratia* – Grace alone, *Sola Fide* – Faith alone and *Solus Christus* – Christ alone, *Soli Deo Gloria* – for the glory of God alone, is emphasised.

Do Not be Deceived

Paul is concerned about the Church’s faulty Eschatology (study of last days) which includes the Lord’s Return, the Judgement and Heaven and Hell. Faulty eschatology leads to faulty conduct, bad behaviour and laziness. *“Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the Day of Christ had come. **Let no one deceive you** by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first and **the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition**, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as god in the Temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”* 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4. Paul authenticates the letter by signing it. He seemed to have dictated it. Someone else wrote the letter, but he signed the end of his letters. Paul seemed to have some sort of eyesight problem. Do not be gullible. Do not let anyone deceive you. Be discerning. The man of sin is also translated as the man of lawlessness. Those who persecute the Church and are against Christ are anti-Christ. Those who create a false christ are anti-Christ. The man of sin and the man of perdition applies to the Jewish high priest sitting in the Temple in Jerusalem.

Those Who Do Not Love the Truth but Take Pleasure in Wickedness

*“Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. **And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.** The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of satan, with all power, signs and lying wonders and with all unrighteous*

deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion that they should believe the lie that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

2 Thessalonians 2:5-12. The coming of the lawless one was according to all the working of satan, with all power and signs and wonders and with all unrighteous deception amongst those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

The Man of Lawlessness

The Jews were persecuting the Christians in Thessalonica. They were so angry that the Thessalonians were receiving the Gospel and were believing in the Messiah whom they rejected. In AD 67, there was a revolt against Rome which was led by the High Priest in Jerusalem. They slaughtered the entire Roman garrison after they surrendered. Once the Roman army had withdrawn from Jerusalem the lawlessness exploded which was described in *The Great Tribulation* by David Chilton. The wrath of the Roman Empire came upon them. The Lord had warned, when you see the armies surround Jerusalem with banners flying, flee. No Christians were in Jerusalem when it was destroyed. The Romans slaughtered over 2 million people. The wrath of God came upon lawlessness. Jerusalem and the Temple was destroyed. The priests and all their records were destroyed. The man of lawlessness here is not the beast, the beast was a political figure sitting on the seven hills of Rome. Caesar Nero was the beast. Then the fulfilment came upon them that was prophesied by Christ in Matthew 24, the blood of all righteous, of all the prophets came upon this generation, the generation which had rejected Christ. The generation that declared: *“Crucify Christ!”* and *“Release Barabbas!”* *“His Blood be upon us and on our children.”* 40 years after crucifying Christ, that generation, including the evil Sanhedrin, Scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees who had not repented and come to Christ, were destroyed. The man of lawlessness in 2 Thessalonians 2 is historically fulfilled in and through the Jewish High Priest.

The Sword of the Spirit

“...the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth...” The Lord will consume him with the sword of the Spirit. The Lord will come with a two-edged sword, which is the Word of God, with the preaching, teaching and proclamation, including printing of the Word of God. The Word of God is the truth that conquers.

Lying Wonders, Deception and Delusion

When one sees miracles, it is not necessarily proof that it is of God. There are false miracles, Satan does have power. Tongues and healing could also be from the devil. Healings that come from God give glory to Christ and you can see positive results.

Deception Brings Bondage – The Truth Sets Free

Jesus said “*You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free.*” We need to love and accept the truth and continually study the Word of God to discover the truth. Those who do not love and receive the truth, will be deceived and destroyed. Deception brings bondage. We need to know the truth of history and of Scripture. Part of the armour of God is the belt of truth. Truth is important. We need to stand for the truth and expose falsehood. Those who believe lies... “*Did God really say?..*” take pleasure in unrighteousness: blasphemy, adultery, fornication, lusts, idolatry, murder, torture and horror. Those who take pleasure in deception will be condemned. Lies always bring bondage. Jesus is the truth who sets us free.

Chosen for Salvation through Sanctification

*“But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning **chose you for salvation through sanctification** by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our Gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, **stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught**, whether by Word or our Epistle. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and **establish you in every good Word and work.**”* 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17

Election, Calling, Faith, Sanctification and Glorification

We need to stand for the truth. The traditions which Paul speaks about are traditions rooted in Scripture: The Apostles Creed, The Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed, the Synods of Dort, the Heidelberg Confession, the Westminster Confession and the London Confession of Faith. There are so many attempts to erode these foundations of the Faith, of Scripture. We do not want to be fashionable, we want to be **faithful** to the Word.

Faith in Action

The chapter ends with a prayer of comfort. Word and work, faith and action, trust and obey. We need a balanced view of Eschatology and a balance and understanding of Christian behaviour.

“Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the Word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith. But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one. And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you. Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.” 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5

Faithful Under Fire

Chapter 3 starts with a prayer and then discipline. We need to prioritise the Word of God. We must expect opposition. If you are being faithful you will be attacked. If you are not being criticised, you are not doing your job. The character of God is shown in how He protects us. We not only believe, but we apply the Lordship of Christ to all areas of life. The Lord will keep you in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Him.

Doctrine Must Determine Discipline

*“But we command you, brethren, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ that you **withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.** For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; nor did we eat anyone’s bread free of charge, but worked with labour and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves **an example** of how you should follow us.”* 2 Thessalonians 3:6-9. After doctrine, we see discipline and warnings against idleness. We need to keep busy with God’s work. Those people not busy and productive, in God’s work, often become busy bodies, gossips and trouble makers.

Practical Holiness is Seen in Our Work Ethic

*“For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: **If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.** For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies.”* 2 Thessalonians 3:10-11. Here is practical Christianity and holiness. Our character is revealed in how we work, our work ethic. God worked to create the world. God gave man work in the Garden of Eden. Work is not part of the curse. Work is good. Those who are not able to work, those who are disabled, must be helped by others. Those who refuse to work, however are lazy and wicked. Some people have a ministry of criticism and a gift of discouragement. The Scripture made provision for the poor, but it always involved work first. No unconditional charity handouts to those who will waste it in vice.

Occupy Until He Comes

Some did not work because they thought the Lord was coming soon. However, before the Lord returns, there is a whole lot more things that needs to happen. Let the Lord find us busy when He comes, not idle. We need to be working to fulfill the Great Commission and to fulfill the cultural mandate, to improve God's earth. We are to **walk** with the Lord, we are to **work** for the Lord, we are to **worship** the Lord and we are to **wait** upon the Lord's perfect timing.

Walk, Work, Worship and Wait

*"Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they **work in quietness and eat their own bread**. But as for you, brethren, **do not grow weary in doing good**. And if anyone does not obey our Word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother."* 2 Thessalonians 3:12-15. We need to work to produce our own food, in order to enjoy the fruit of our own labours. Avoiding keeping company with a person who is lazy, is designed to bring them to repentance. Restore your lazy brother. **Practical holiness is seen in our work ethic.**

Be Discerning Amongst Deception

"Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with you all. The salutation of Paul with my own hand, which is a sign in every epistle; so I write. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." 2 Thessalonians 3:16-18. Do not accept a letter from me unless you see my own hand writing, I will authenticate it by signing my letters.

Be Persistent and Persevere

We are commanded to be patient under persecution and discerning amidst deception. Be productive and be prayerful. Be industrious. Live lives of integrity. Be discerning. Be steadfast. Be diligent. Be disciplined. Be hard working. Be persistent. Persevere. Keep on keeping on. Do not give up. Do not turn back. Be resilient and resourceful.



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CHAPTER 15

1 TIMOTHY

“...I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the Truth.” 1 Timothy 3:15

Pastoral Epistle

This Epistle, written by Paul between AD 62 to AD 64, is one of three pastoral Epistles (1 Timothy, 2 Timothy and Titus), written in a time of persecution to Timothy, a young man, who had been left behind in one of the largest, fastest growing churches in the world at that time, Ephesus, to guide them: to be established, planted, organised, how they were to be governed and how they were to behave.

Ephesus

Ephesus had become the geographic and numerical centre of Christianity in the first generation of Christianity. There were more Christians in Ephesus than there were in Antioch or Jerusalem. Ephesus was the epicentre of Christianity at the time. The church consisted of many house-churches, meeting in homes of believers. The leaders in Ephesus: ministers, elders and deacons, were chosen from among the ordinary believers, who also had their own vocations. As expected with fast growing churches, all kinds of influences easily slipped in, including false teachers and heresies.

Timothy, Co-worker of Paul

While Paul was ministering in Lystra, he led Timothy to the Lord, who was called by God (1:18), then Paul recruited him to join his missionary team. Timothy studied the Word of God daily. He was commended for being a Bible-reading student. Timothy was reliable, responsible, trustworthy, hard-working, devout and diligent. Because he lacked boldness and was timid, Paul kept encouraging him to fight the good fight of Faith, to be bold and steadfast, to expose, rebuke and exhort. Timothy and Luke are Paul's most constant companions. Paul names Timothy as his co-worker in six of his letters: (2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians and Philemon). His mother is named Eunice and grandmother, Lois (2 Timothy 1:5) and were well known for their strength in the Faith. Timothy was converted in Acts 16:1, on Paul's missionary journeys. Paul was on a mission and established the church in Ephesus, where he left Timothy to continue to care for this church.

A Solemn Warning

Paul warned the church in Ephesus: *“For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore, watch and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”* Acts 20:29-32

Missionary Epistle

Timothy is called a pastoral Epistle, but actually it is a missionary Epistle. Most churches see missions as outside of the church. There is no Salvation outside of Christ, or outside of the church. We are believers as a result of Missions. This is a missionary Epistle, written by a Missionary, to a Missionary, about a Missionary Church planting situation. The entire New Testament is a result of missions, written by missionaries in a missionary context.

Missionary Training

Missionaries are trained much the same way as ministers and complete the same subjects and requirements as ministers. They even have to receive additional training, but some people still consider missionaries to be on a lower level to ministers. There is a mentality that missions is for people that are not really as qualified as Ministers, as though you could send your second rate to deal with false religions, like Buddhism, Hinduism, Animism and Islam and minister to hostile audiences. To establish work where the Gospel is not legal is actually more difficult. Somehow being a pastor is considered more demanding than being a missionary. Today missions is often seen as an optional extra. Some people are even told they could be so much more effective as a lecturer at a college than as a missionary in the field.

Structure

- Chapter 1 deals with **sound teaching**.
- Chapter 2 deals with **prayer**.
- Chapter 3 with **good leadership**.
- Chapter 4 **spiritual discernment** - be aware of false teaching.
- Chapter 5 **practical instructions** to respect elders and serve without fear, or favour, separate from those not fully loyal to God.
- Chapter 6 deals with **right attitudes**.

Belief Determines Behaviour

“Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Saviour and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope, to Timothy, a true son in the Faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.” 1 Timothy 1:1-2. Chapter 1 speaks about sound teaching. Your belief determines your behaviour. Your doctrine determines your duty. There is fruit you can see in people’s behaviour and conduct. *“As I urged you when I went into Macedonia - remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith. Now **the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience and from sincere faith**, from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, desiring to be teachers of the Law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.”* 1 Timothy 1:3-7. Those who are faithful in small matters can be trusted with large matters. Those who are unreliable in small matters, cannot be trusted with large matters.

Exemplary Leadership

In Timothy, Paul issues warnings and lists qualifications required for leadership. Here instructions are issued for church organisation. Timothy has been given authority and responsibility and told to remain in Ephesus. He is doubtless feeling intimidated because of his age, so Timothy is told: *“let no one despise you because of your youth, but be an example to the believers.”* (4:12). Ephesus has been infiltrated with false doctrine. The emphasis of Biblical love, to love God with all your body, mind, soul and spirit. Idle talk and greed reigned paramount, so Paul, as a good example, was not concerned with money and asked nothing from them, except good works, good doctrine and fruit that accompanies repentance.

Law and Gospel

*“But we know that **the Law is good if one uses it lawfully**, knowing this: that the Law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, **according to the glorious Gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.**”* 1 Timothy 1:8-11

Saved by the Grace of God Alone

“And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant,

*with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that **Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners**, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.” 1 Timothy 1:12-16*

Set Free to Serve Christ

Ministry is another word for service. Civil government is to be a minister of justice, even as the church is a minister of grace. Being put into ministry is a solemn responsibility. Not many of us should be teachers, as we will be judged with great strictness. To whom much is given, much is required. To whom much more is given, much more is required. There is a great responsibility, solemn duty and even burden upon people who have been called by God to teach. Paul humbly admits that he was the worst of sinners and explains how he received mercy, undeserved favour. He is an example of God's grace.

Wage the Good Warfare

*“Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen. This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may **wage the good warfare**, having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the Faith have suffered shipwreck, of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.” 1 Timothy 1:17-20.* Timothy is more inclined to be non-confrontational, quiet and reserved. Timothy has a timid nature so he is reminded that we are in a spiritual world war. This requires sacrifice, confrontation and an earnest striving, fighting the good fight.

Protect the Body from False Doctrine

Paul names Hymenaeus and Alexander and explains that they are guilty of shipwrecking their faith. A shipwreck would have been the worst thing that could happen in the ancient world. These men have caused so much devastation, that they have been excommunicated by the church. There is a time to be harsh. A doctor must be intolerant of disease. Some things are so bad they need to be cut out otherwise, it will destroy the whole body. If a person does not respect the truth of the Faith after warnings and counselling them, if they are unresponsive, then they need to be excommunicated, put out from the church. Sometimes church discipline needs to name names and go as far as to hand them over to satan.

Faith in Prayer

“Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority,

that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. **For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time, for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle - I am speaking the truth in Christ and not lying - a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.**" 1 Timothy 2:1-7

There is One God and One Mediator

Prayers should include thanksgiving, supplications (requesting what I need) and intercessions (praying for others). We are also to pray for kings and all in authority so we can have peaceful lives. *Solus Christus* – Christ alone is the only Head of the Church. It is through His Atonement on the Cross of Calvary that we are saved.

The Roles of Men and Women in Church

"I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting; in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works. Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love and holiness, with self-control." 1 Timothy 2:8-15

Responsibilities and Duties

God desires that men should the lead and be responsible. Feminism has promised women deliverance from all sorts of oppression by taking the lead, but in the name of feminism, women are more oppressed, more abused, less respected and in more physical danger than ever before. Men need to take the lead, protecting, caring and providing for their women. Some men are willing to let woman take the lead due to laziness. Feminists, claiming to liberate women, have actually liberated men from the responsibility to care for their wives and children and given them the go ahead to live irresponsible lives. Men are meant to take the lead. Just like the socialists claim that they will liberate the poor by advocating socialism, the end result of socialism is more unemployment and more oppression. The poor are even poorer under socialism and then they starve and flee as refugees, as in Zimbabwe. Do not become a slave of fashion and excessive make-up.

Eve and Mary

A woman's primary area of influence is in the home, the basic building block of society, nurturing the family by providing love, compassion and healing. It is a privilege to raise the next generation in the love and fear of the Lord. Sin came through Eve, a woman. Salvation comes through Mary's child, Emmanuel. Sin came through the first Adam. Salvation came through the second Adam.

Division of Labour

The order in which God made Adam first and then formed Eve from a rib of Adam shows he intended man to lead and Eve is to be next to him, a helpmeet, under his arm, protected and cared for. Marriage is meant to be a partnership. Man and woman have their strengths and weaknesses and there is a division of labour and responsibilities and we work best when we follow God's natural creative order.

Qualifications for Good Leadership

*"This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. A bishop then must be **blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behaviour, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence** (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil."* 1 Timothy 3:1-7

Parenthood is a School of Discipleship

A bishop is a pastor, a shepherd, an overseer. The qualifications for a good church leader includes: He is to blameless (not faultless), the husband of one wife. This rules out polygamy. The Reformers believed, if a man is not married, he is not qualified to be a pastor of a church. Martin Luther said: "A man who refuses to get married is guilty, as if he had shed innocent blood." He said: "I learnt more in one year of marriage than I learnt in ten years in the monastery." How can you be a good and effective pastor of God's people if you are not a faithful husband and diligent father?

Trained and Tested

How can we possibly be effective in church leadership if we have not learned to be effective in the home? This re-emphasises the fact that a pastor should be one who has learned how to handle and raise his own children, before he can handle the church. This principle comes out over and over again in the Scripture. It is better to be able to control yourself than to rule a city. A man

who is incapable of ruling himself, practising self-control, cannot be entrusted with any kind of authority in the church. We should not be choosing a Christian who is too young. They need to be tested.

Faithful at Home and in the Church

“Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money, holding the mystery of the Faith with a pure conscience. But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless. Likewise, their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the Faith which is in Christ Jesus.” 1 Timothy 3:8-13. The difference between an Elder and a Deacon, is that an Elder teaches and a Deacon serves in a practical way. Note, the importance of faithfulness, temperance and not being gossips. Not just for the man, but also for his wife. The qualifications for a person in church leadership does not just apply for a man, but for his wife and children. There is a standard for all.

The Purpose of This Epistle

“These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” 1 Timothy 3:14-15

A Hymn of Praise – The Mystery of Godliness

*“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness:
God was manifested in the flesh,
Justified in the Spirit,
Seen by angels,
Preached among the Gentiles,
Believed on in the world,
Received up in glory.”* 1 Timothy 3:16

Firm Foundations

Do not be surprised if God pushes you out of your comfort zone. God can call you to do something that you are not naturally inclined to do. He will push us to do that which is not normal and natural to us. The emphasis here is on the structure of the churches having unity in the Faith, reciting key doctrines, repeating certain prayers together, singing hymns together. The structure of the Church is grounded in the truth. Your doctrine determines your duty. Your belief determines your behaviour. Salvation is by the grace of God alone. Christ is your hope.

A Call for Spiritual Discernment

“Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the Faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer.” 1 Timothy 4:1-5

A Strategic Church

When the Apostle Paul was writing of this church in Ephesus, which Timothy was left behind to care for, it was the largest church in the First Century world, the church that had become the epicentre of Christianity and of Missionary sending in the first century. It was the fastest growing church and consisted of hundreds of house churches around Ephesus. Timothy, a young leader, had been left responsible for overseeing this church.

A Solemn Warning

When the Apostle Paul spoke for the last time to the church in Ephesus, he warned them: *“For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore, watch and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. ‘So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.’”* Acts 20:29-32

Be Prepared to Recognise and Resist Heresy

Paul knew that after he left false prophets would rise up, even from among the congregation. He warned them that the Holy Spirit has expressly warned through the Scripture that there will be times of apostasy, seducing, evil spirits, heresy, false doctrine, false teaching, hypocrisy and attacks. The Nicene Creed, The Apostles Creed, The Athanasian Creed, Westminster Confession of Faith, Synod of Dort, the Heidelberg Catechism and many others, were developed to help define and defend the Faith, so that we can recognise false teaching and false prophets. We need to be grounded in the gold standard of the Word of God.

Deceiving Spirits and Doctrines of Demons

There is a spiritual world war on the go and we are dealing not just with people who have slid away, but with a society that is giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons. The Apostle Paul is specifically speaking against the

Gnostics and Judaizers. He speaks against those who try to promote abstinence of certain foods and those who advocate a Saturday Sabbath.

Strive To Be a Faithful Servant of Christ Jesus

*“If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the Words of Faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed. **But reject profane and old wives’ fables and exercise yourself toward godliness. For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things,** having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. For to this end we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those who believe. These things command and teach.”* 1 Timothy 4:6-11

Scripture Alone is Our Ultimate Authority

The antidote to heresy is faithful instruction in the Word of God. *Sola Scriptura* is emphasised. Your teaching needs to be grounded on the rock of God’s Word. Train the people in the Word of God with Expository preaching, as Ulrich Zwingli launched on 1 January 1519, line-by-line, verse-by-verse from Matthew 1:1 preaching through the New Testament. All Christians claim to believe the Bible, but most Christians have not read the whole Bible. We are to reject fables and profane worldliness. Jesus is the written Word of God and we need to spend more time in the Word of God than listening to dreams and visions of people. We have to come back to the Word of God. Scripture alone is our ultimate authority. Paul is being told if he wants to be a good minister of Jesus Christ, he needs to be nourished in the Words of Faith and good doctrine and instruct the believers in accordance with this Word.

Be Disciplined Like an Athlete, Farmer and Soldier

Some people think bodily exercise profits nothing. That is wrong. As the Scripture uses a lot of athletic imagery. We need to press toward the goal, harden our bodies like an athlete, train ourselves. There are also examples of how a Christian needs to be like a farmer, like a soldier and like an athlete. Bodily exercise and discipline does profit. Godliness is even more profitable for all things.

Body, Mind and Spirit

Spiritual exercise is even more important. We should not neglect our physical exercise. Participating in sports is good for your body, soul and mind. It is good to be disciplined and to exercise our bodies. We are not to make an idol of sports, as a spectator. We are not to make anything an idol. Idolatry is the most condemned sin in the Bible.

Live and Work in the Light of Eternity

Spiritual exercise is profitable for all things in life that now is and of that which is to come. It is good for the present, for the future and for eternity. It is for this end that we need to labour. Spiritual work is hard work. If you are not being criticised, you are not doing your job. Do not seek to please men. The fear of man is a snare and a trap. A missionary must be ready to preach, pray or die at a moment's notice. We are to command and teach these things.

Commissioned

“Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in Word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.” 1 Timothy 4:12-16

Youth Is No Excuse

God calls the young. God called David, the youngest and the least. God called Jeremiah and told him not to say that he is too young, but to go to the people He sent him to and to say the things He commanded him to teach. John was the youngest of the Apostles, yet God gave him great responsibility. Do not let your youth be an excuse for disobedience or for holding back from the field. Be an example.

Give Attention to Reading

If you want to lead, you must read. A reading Christian is a growing Christian. The library is a gym for the mind. We need to exercise and expand our minds. The average person today spends more money on their feet (shoes) than on their brain (books). Our body's muscles can be stretched by exercise the brain can be stretched by reading. We are not just to interest or tickle the minds of Christians, we need to challenge and call people to action. There needs to be doctrine and balanced emphasis on body, mind and spirit.

Do Not Neglect Your Gift and Calling

We are all given a limited amount of time and we have a specific gift, or gifts, that God has entrusted to us. Do not neglect the gift that God has given you. Do not be like the unfaithful servant who buried his talents in the ground. We need to use our talents, not bury them.

Stamina and Perseverance

We need to persevere and to have stamina to pass the baton of Faith to the next generation, which will carry it to the next generation. We need to think multi-generationally. We need to be strict on ourselves. Others may, but you may not. Be strict on yourself. Be more gracious to others.

Be Respectful of Elders

“Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, with all purity.” 1 Timothy 5:1-2. These are practical instructions. This verse speaks about the need to be respectful of elders.

Qualifications for Support

*“Honour widows who are really widows. But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God. Now she who is really a widow and left alone, trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day. But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives. And these things command, that they may be blameless. **But if anyone does not provide for his own and especially for those of his household, he has denied the Faith and is worse than an unbeliever.** Do not let a widow under sixty years old be taken into the number and not unless she has been the wife of one man, well reported for good works: if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints’ feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work. But refuse the younger widows; for when they have begun to grow wanton against Christ, they desire to marry, having condemnation because they have cast off their first faith. And besides they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not. Therefore, I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully. For some have already turned aside after satan. If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows.”* 1 Timothy 5:3-16

Worthy Widows Should be Supported

Charity begins at home. We are not to exercise charity indiscriminately. Charity is to be exercised with wisdom and discernment, in accordance with the standards of the person. These are very specific instructions on how to care for widows and orphans. The widow needs to be worthy and deserving of being helped. Today’s modern mentality of welfare is so different, they give to drunkards and the immoral, rather than to those who deserve it. ***“Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble...”*** James 1:27. Caring

for widows and orphans is a real fruit of genuine Christianity. We are meant to care for those who are worthy, not those who are worldly. It also speaks about those who are not qualified for welfare. The church is to give priority to believers and to worthy widows.

Respect and Protect Your Elders

“Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in the Word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,’ and, ‘The labourer is worthy of his wages.’ Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear. I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality. Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people’s sins; keep yourself pure. No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach’s sake and your frequent infirmities. Some men’s sins are clearly evident, preceding them to judgment, but those of some men follow later. Likewise, the good works of some are clearly evident and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden.” 1 Timothy 5:17-25. This speaks about the importance of respecting and supporting elders who are teaching and preaching the Word of God. There has to be confirmation and proof of any accusation according to God’s Word. We must rebuke false teachers. We must not respect and support false teachers. Do not be a man pleaser. You need to fear God and treat people according to God’s Word. Do not appoint someone as an elder or deacon, or to any position of leadership, without first seeing that they are tested.

Separation

Separate yourselves from those who do not work and walk faithfully with the Lord. Do not share in other people’s sins, keep yourself pure. *“You shall not follow a crowd to do evil.”* Exodus 23:2; *“They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against Me. For if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you.”* Exodus 23:33; *“...those who were registered by genealogy, but they were not found; therefore they were excluded from the priesthood as defiled.”* Ezra 2:62; *“...with all who had separated themselves from the filth of the nations of the land in order to seek the Lord...”* Ezra 6:21; *“...those of Israelite lineage separated themselves from all foreigners...”* Nehemiah 9:2; *“We would not give our daughters as wives to the peoples of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons.”* Nehemiah 10:30; *“...when they had heard the Law, that they separated all the mixed multitude from Israel.”* Nehemiah 13:3. Clearly, we need to be separate from those who are not faithful to the Lord’s work and His Word and those not of our lineage.

Who Is On the Lord's Side?

"Moses... said, 'Whoever is on the Lord's side - come to me!'" Exodus 32:26. The question is not, Is God on our side? The question is, Are we on His side? *"...I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness."* Psalm 84:10. *"...Go out... from the midst of her, be clean..."* Isaiah 52:11; *"If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."* John 15:19. If the world loves you, you must be doing something wrong in God's eyes; *"Therefore, 'Come out from among them and be separate', says the Lord. 'Do not touch what is unclean and I will receive you.'"* 2 Corinthians 6:17; *"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them."* Ephesians 5:11; *"But we command you, brethren, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us."* 2 Thessalonians 3:6; *"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."* 1 John 2:15. Again and again we see the importance of separation throughout the Old and New Testament. Not just that we are faithful in our teachings, but whom we associate with, whom we marry and whom we allow our children to marry.

Be Diligent In Your Duties

"Let as many bondservants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, so that the name of God and His doctrine may not be blasphemed. And those who have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren, but rather serve them because those who are benefited are believers and beloved. Teach and exhort these things." 1 Timothy 6:1-2. Salvation does not change your social status or alleviate you from your duties. We must be respectful and faithful. Christianity does not teach revolutionary egalitarianism. Rather the opposite. Love should make us serve better. We are meant to be diligent in our service.

Beware of Prosperity Preachers

*"If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the Words of our Lord Jesus Christ and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself. Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. **But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare and into many foolish and harmful lusts which***

drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the Faith in their greediness and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” 1 Timothy 6:3-10

Wholesome Words

We start to see the downward spiral of bad leadership. We need to be people of wholesome, whole pure words. ***Sola Scriptura!***

Fruit of False Teachers

We are told to separate ourselves from false teachers. They have a different doctrine which comes from proud hearts. Beware of greed. We need to lay up our treasures in Heaven. Where our treasures are, there our heart is. God promises to meet all of our needs, not our greeds.

Seek First the Kingdom of God

As Joseph Tson said: *“In the West you have a theology of prosperity. In the East we have a Theology of suffering. It is a privilege to suffer for Christ.”* There is a huge difference between these teaching. The Eastern Christians are more interested in seeking first the Kingdom of God than all these things that will be added unto you.

Contentment

“Godliness with contentment is great gain.” “Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure with trouble.” Proverbs 15:16; *“...I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content.”* Philippians 4:11; *“Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have...”* Hebrews 13:5. Contentment is very important. This goes against what the media advertises: “be discontent and covetous!” If we have food and clothing, we should be content with that. We bring nothing into the world and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

Beware of Covetousness

How many people have destroyed their lives and their families due to covetousness? Gambling is theft by consent and is built on greed. That is foolish. A fool and his money are easily parted. If you want to get rich, you will fall into temptation and all kinds of harmful desires that will drown you into perdition and destruction. It will pierce you through with many sorrows and destroy your family and your faith. If you love money, you cannot also love God. You cannot love the things of this world and love the Lord at the same time.

Fight the Good Fight of Faith

“But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of Faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the

good confession in the presence of many witnesses. I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, which He will manifest in His own time, **He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honour and everlasting power. Amen.**" 1 Timothy 6:11-16

Serve the King of Kings and Lord of Lords

How much more solemnly and seriously can the Apostle Paul make it? He charges and commands that Jesus is the only One who has all power. He is the King of kings, He is the Lord of lords. When Jesus came to the earth, He came as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. The next time He will come as Lion. He will come as the Judge. So we are commanded to fight the good fight of Faith, to honour the Lord Jesus. Paul is trying to encourage Timothy, who is more reserved, to be more bold.

Lay up Treasure in Heaven

"Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." 1 Timothy 6:17-19. The rich must not trust in their riches. David did not put his trust in his sling, he put his trust in God. We need to be rich in good works. You may not be able to take the things of the earth with you, but you can send treasures on ahead, for when you give to the poor, you are lending to the Lord. When you give without others knowing about it, as unto the Lord, there is treasure being laid up in Heaven. We can be generous on earth and lay up treasures in Heaven. Where your treasures is, there your heart is.

Contend for the Faith

*"O Timothy! **Guard what was committed to your trust**, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge - by professing it some have strayed concerning the Faith. Grace be with you. Amen."* 1 Timothy 6:20-21. Reject false teachers and false teachings. If we accept what is taught in the worlds' seminaries and colleges, you might depart from the Faith. We should not assume that all professors in Theological Seminaries or Bible Colleges are committed and faithful to the Word of God. We have to guard what has been entrusted to our care. We must avoid the profane and idle babblings and contradictions and what is falsely called knowledge. By professing it, some have strayed. **"Contend for the Faith once for all delivered to the Saints."** *Sola Scriptura.*

Chapters 1 to 3 in Summary

Salvation is by the grace of God alone. Christ is our hope. Avoid Jewish fables and profane babbling. Reject those who cause disputes. Live with a pure heart. Maintain a good conscience and a sincere faith. Men should take the lead and be responsible and prayerful in thanksgiving, supplication and intercession. Stand boldly for the truth. Women should dress modestly with propriety and moderation, in faith, love, holiness and self-control. Church leaders must be faithful husbands and diligent fathers, temperate, sober minded, hospitable, able to teach, blameless, of good behaviour, not double-tongued, not greedy, holding the Faith with a good conscience, tested and found faithful in service. Wives must be faithful in all things, reverend, not slanderers, not gossips, they must be those who serve God and demonstrate boldness in the Faith. The Church is a House of God, the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

Chapters 4 to 6 in Summary

Beware of Apostasy, deceptions and false doctrines. Reject Jewish fables and legalism. Nourish yourself in good doctrine. Work hard and diligently. Be an example in word and deed, in faith and conduct, in love and purity. Give attention to reading. Do not neglect your spiritual gifts. Persevere in the Faith. Provide for your family. Honour the elders who labour among you. Do not receive an accusation against an elder. Be respectful of your elders. Be content with what God has given you. Fight the good fight of Faith. Be rich in good works. Live in the light of eternity. Guard what has been committed to your trust. Reject false teaching. Lay up treasures in Heaven. Christ alone is the Head of the Church. Salvation is by the grace of God alone, received by faith alone. Everything should be done for the glory of God alone. We are more than conquerors through Christ Jesus who loved us. This is a very practical pastoral and missionary Epistle and a manual for all Christian workers.



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CHAPTER 16

2 TIMOTHY

Paul's Last Letter

This is Paul's final Prison Epistle, his last Will and Testament to the Church and to his most faithful co-worker, Timothy. Written in Rome in AD 67, Paul is about to be martyred by Caesar Nero amidst a general time of persecution for all Christians in Rome. The original Prison Epistles were written during Paul's first arrest by the Jews in Jerusalem. He was discharged after two years in Rome. While he was in Troas, he was arrested again, this time by the Romans and brought back to Rome.

The Fire of Rome

Nero, one of the most brutal and evil emperors ever, fancied himself a great poet and singer. During the great fire of Rome, in AD 64, Nero played on his harp. The Roman historian, Tacitus, records that Caesar wanted to demolish Rome and rebuild a grander city. When this was rejected by the Senate, Nero sent his arsonists to burn down the city.

Scapegoats of the Empire

While the city was burning the people were furious with Nero. So to distract the citizens of Rome from his crime, Nero blamed everything on the Christians. They were a mysterious and misunderstood sect so they made a convenient scapegoat. Christians were accused of being "atheists." Rome believed in many gods and the Christians refused to believe in or worship any of them. Christians were accused of "cannibalism" as they ate the body and drank the blood of somebody at their secret services. They also accused Christians of "incest", as they heard that Christians married their "brothers and sisters". Because of this disinformation it was easy to slander Christians who were considered a vile and vulgar sect.

Persecution

Christians were arrested and put to death in cruel ways. They were crucified and doused in pitch and set alight (This is where the term *Roman candle* comes from). Peter insisted that he was not worthy of dying the same death as His master, so on his request he was crucified upside down. Paul was also arrested and brought to Rome. As he was a Roman he was not to be crucified. Paul's sentence was decapitation by a sword.

Duty and Destiny in the Light of Eternity

After the great fire of Rome and the intense persecution, it looked as if Christianity was wiped out. Exterminated. Yet there is no despair, or sense of defeat, in this Book. It is a tremendous shout of victory. The Apostle

Paul was in no way discouraged, even though he was about to be executed. This Book is an extraordinary triumphant Epistle of duty and destiny in the light of Eternity.

Firm and Faithful Amidst Trials and Slander

“Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, a beloved son: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day, greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy, when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and I am persuaded is in you also.” 2 Timothy 1:1-5. Timothy had a great heritage, he had a believing mother and grandmother and he had been brought up in the Faith and had known the Scripture since his youth. Paul seeks to encourage Timothy who thinks himself inadequate because of his young age. The theme here is: Do not be ashamed. Paul is about to die a criminal’s death. Christians are being accused of being traitors and arsonists. Paul says we must glory in our suffering. It is a privilege to suffer for Christ.

We Fear Naught But God

*“Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. **For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.**”* 2 Timothy 1:6-7. You need to keep ablaze, keep stoking the fire, the gift you have been entrusted. Throughout the Scripture you hear warnings. Do not quench the Holy Spirit. Many extinguish the fire, throwing water over the flame. You cannot teach a flame but you can spread it, like one candle lighting another candle. In this time of apostasy, intimidation and terror, any fear we feel is not from God. The reverential awe, respect and worship of God frees us from the fear of man. Fear God and be freed from fear of man. *“We fear naught but God”* should be our attitude.

Steadfast in the Storm

“Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the Gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel, to which I was

appointed a preacher, an apostle and a teacher of the Gentiles. For this reason I also suffer these things; **nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know Whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.**" 2 Timothy 1:8-12. Refuse to be guilt manipulated. Resist psychological warfare. Do not give in to this worldly attempt to make us ashamed of the Gospel and of Christ our Lord. Guilt manipulation paralyzes one into inactivity. We have been predestined before the Creation of the world. Paul is facing condemnation and death but is looking forward to life and immortality, which is a result of the Gospel. The Apostle Paul has a three-fold ministry. He is a Preacher of the Gospel, he is an Apostle (Missionary) and a Teacher. Paul has been falsely condemned and is about to be executed and says he is not ashamed.

Stand Fast to the Pattern of Sound Doctrine

"Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes. The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chain; but when he arrived in Rome, he sought me out very zealously and found me. The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that Day -and you know very well how many ways he ministered to me at Ephesus." 2 Timothy 1:13-18. Your duty is to stand fast in the light of the doctrine. We have been entrusted with a great treasure, to protect the Word of God. Paul names two people who are difficult and dangerous. Another person is named who provided him with hospitality and who was not ashamed of him and the Gospel. Enemies want to defeat you, falsely accuse you, steal your possessions and take away your good name, your peace of mind, good conscience and your joy. Ephesus was the largest growing church at the time and Timothy was left responsible to guide, direct, disciple and train them. Timothy was about to lose his mentor in the Faith, the Apostle Paul. Paul strives to encourage Timothy to stand fast.

Sacrificial Service

"You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. The hardworking farmer

must be first to partake of the crops.” 2 Timothy 2:1-6. We are called to serve God as a **son** (2:1), as a **soldier** (2:3-4), as an **athlete** (2:5), as a **farmer** (2:6), as a **worker** (2:15) and as a **servant** (2:24). The first speaks of relationship and the rest speak of duty, sacrifice, hard work and faithfulness.

A Ministry of Multiplication

God is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. We need a multi-generational vision. Paul entrusts to Timothy and Timothy entrusts to faithful men, who must entrust to other faithful men. Previous generations built cathedrals, universities, Theological seminaries, planted Missions stations and had a vision for future generations. Today most have a bad work ethic and lack of vision. We are to be diligent, present ourselves approved to God as workers who do not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth. **Our doctrine will determine our duty and our destiny.**

Multiply Multipliers

The apostle Paul is saying, take what I have taught you and teach others, train them to teach others also. We read that God not only added to the church, but He also multiplied the church. You multiply through discipleship. So our vision is to train trainers. Each one reach one. Each one teach one. The whole church must take the whole Gospel to the whole world.

Endure Hardship for Christ

On the night of my Baptism in 1977, Rev. Doc Watson gave me this verse as my commission: *“You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please Him who enlisted him as a soldier.”*

2 Timothy 2:3-4. As Christians we are called to commitment and self-sacrifice. A soldier has to be willing to be expendable. In order to obtain your objectives you have to be willing to be expendable. The cause is more important than any individual. You must therefore endure hardship as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. Our Lord led by example. He calls us to do nothing that He has not done Himself. He, Himself, showed us the example. He led from the front, as we need to do also.

Dedication and Discipline

Athletes need discipline, dedication, hard work, repetition, rising early, exercising, limiting one’s diet and saying no to partying late. Christianity requires the same kind of dedication, training, energy and focus. Farmers must get up early, milk the cows, plough the fields, plant the seeds, cultivate, irrigate and harvest, all at the right time, regardless of your state of health.

There is a need for Christians to work diligently. Timothy is to produce people with a real relationship with God, who have the same self-sacrifice as a soldier, the same discipline and training as an athlete and the same hard work ethic as that of a farmer.

In Sure and Certain Hope of the Resurrection

*“Consider what I say and may the Lord give you understanding in all things. Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my Gospel, for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; **but the Word of God is not chained.** Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.”* 2 Timothy 2:7-13. Jesus is not only the Son of Abraham, destined to the Altar of the Cross, but He is the Son of David, destined to the Throne and Crown, King of kings, Lord of lords. Paul is about to be killed for the Faith. He is about to follow Christ in His sufferings on the altar. He looks beyond the Cross, to the Crown. Jesus has been raised from the dead and so will I. Death for the Christian is not the end, it is actually the beginning of eternal life.

Truth Conquers

As he was heading for Worms, for his trial at the hands of the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, Martin Luther said: *“Though there be as many devils as there are tiles on the roofs, I will go. Though the works of Hus were burned, the truth of the Gospel was not burned. Truth conquers!”* You cannot destroy the truth just by burning books. You can put Paul in chains, but you cannot chain the Word of God. Paul recited a hymn for their encouragement.

Be Diligent Building on the Solid Foundation of God’s Word

*“Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers. **Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth. But shun profane and idle babblings,** for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some. **Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands,** having this seal: ‘The Lord knows those who are His’ and, ‘Let everyone who names the Name of Christ depart from iniquity’.”* 2 Timothy 2:14-19. There are some

people who enjoy arguing and picking a fight. Some arguments are important, but there are many that are unnecessarily divisive. Our approval should come God, the Eternal Judge on the Day of Judgement, the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Even if we find disapproval from society, you want to hear from God: *‘Well done good and faithful servant!’* on the last day. You do **not** want to hear, *‘Depart from Me you cursed into the lake of fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’* We need workers who will be diligent in study to show themselves approved unto God.

Cut Out Cancer

We should avoid profane babblings and idle talk. Paul names, names, as they are spreading their message like cancer. Cancer cells do nothing to help the health of the body, but break down the health of the body. Some people do not contribute to the health of the body of Christ to seek first God’s Kingdom, instead they break it down.

Set Apart for the Master

*“But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honour and some for dishonour. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honour, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work. **Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient.**”* 2 Timothy 2:20-24. The Church is depicted like a large house, with all kinds of vessels. There are buckets, used to carry water, there are mugs for tea and coffee, plates to eat off, etc. Some things are made with silver or gold and others are made with clay or plastic. They are not all of the same value or for the same purpose. If you want to be used by the Master, you must be sanctified, useful, prepared for every good work. You are not going to use the bucket used to carry dirty water for eating. What you eat off has a higher standard of workmanship and cleanliness. The Lord will use you for His purposes for the extension of His Kingdom, if you are sanctified, meaning set apart, not available for use by the world. Paul then gives us instructions on how to do this. Your attitude matters to God. We have to be able to teach and not busy quarrelling senselessly.

To Escape the Snare of the Devil

“In humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been

taken captive by him to do his will.” 2 Timothy 2:25-26. Faith and repentance are a gift of God. It is not that we chose God. He chose us. It is not we who found God. He found us. God was not lost. We were. It is not that I believed and repented and then God rewarded me with regeneration. God grants regeneration by grace alone. That enabled me to repent of my sins and place my faith in Christ. There is no room for boasting.

Patient Correction

We were deceived and trapped by the devil. Let us be patient in correcting those in opposition. How long were we in opposition? How long did it take us to get to the point that we were obedient? We should remember that it is God who grants Repentance. Let us be patient and correct those who disagree, that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive. Paul, who was once a persecutor of the Church, reminds us to be patient in correcting those who oppose. They may be our future brothers and sisters in the Faith. We need to recognise that we are in a spiritual war.

The Sword of the Spirit

Spiritual warfare is very real. We must identify false teaching. We must fan into flame the gift that God has given us. We need to hold fast the truth and endure hardship as a good soldier of Christ Jesus, following righteousness, studying the Bible, holding fast to the Scriptures and exposing those who oppose the Word of God.

Perilous Times

“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power.” 2 Timothy 3:1-4. This sounds like a description of our times. It sounds like our country, our continent, our world in the 21st century. Yet this was written almost 2,000 years ago. Human nature does not change and that is why the Bible is applicable and relevant to every time and era. Have we ever been in a time where people are more in love with themselves? Many people are self-centred, self-absorbed and lovers of money. They gamble and partake in the lottery and their families suffer, their children starve, but still they gamble.

Arrogant Entitlement

We are living in a time of extreme boasting, arrogance and pride. We see the worst blasphemy in Hollywood. They hate the Name of Jesus Christ.

Many children are more disobedient now than ever. We are living in one of the most entitled and unthankful ages in history. Many people think everyone owes them something and God owes them so much too. But they do not think they owe God any thanks. Most people have lost natural affection. Millions of mothers abort their own babies. Many people have no sense of their own guilt and are not willing to forgive anyone who may have done them wrong. Slander has become an art form.

Brutal and Treacherous

We are living in an age of brutality, savagery and hatred, of unloving, unforgiving, slanderous people and nations. People of this age have no self-control and nations celebrate it. There is a great despising of holiness. Holy is a four letter (swear) word in many churches today. People are selling out their own family members and don't care what anyone else says. Headstrong they destroy themselves and everyone else around them. This age is very arrogant. We have exchanged the pleasure of worship for the worship of pleasure. This age lives for the moment, for now, for me, myself and I. The attitude of wine, women and song is prevalent. Acts 19:14-16 gives an example of an empty and powerless religion: The sons of Sceva trying in vain to cast out demons who ridiculed them: *"Jesus I know and Paul I know, but who are you?"*

Submit to God, Resist the Devil

"Submit to God and resist the devil, he will flee from you." If the devil does not flee from us, either we are not submitting to God, or we are not resisting the devil, or both.

Depravity and Deserters

This is a description of the depravity of man and of the perilous times in which we live in. A time of imposters and evil men, who both deceive and are deceived. *"But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived."* 2 Timothy 3:13. *"For Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world..."* 2 Timothy 4:10. Demas was one of Paul's co-workers, yet forsook and deserted him. You cannot keep the things of this world. *"Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works."* 2 Timothy 4:14

Rejecting Sound Doctrine for Fables

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth and be turned aside to fables." 2 Timothy 4:3-4. Many seek false teachers to tell them what their ears are itching to hear. False teachers tickle their ears

with fables and myths. Some people hold to an outward form of religion but deny its real power. They do not want to endure sound doctrine. Doctrine is truth. Theology is teaching about God. Why would we not want the truth that sets us free? Yet many do not want the truth. They prefer lies and fables. In many cases they are not victims of false teachers, but are enablers of false teaching.

Always Learning But Never Able to Come to the Truth

*“For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, **always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.**”* 2 Timothy 3:6-7. Paul identifies names when talking about heresy and mentions: Demas (4:10), Alexander (4:14), Phygellus and Hermogenes (1:15), for others to be warned.

Knowledge Should Lead to Action

There are many professional students, always learning and accumulating knowledge. In church history one example is John Calvin. It was as a respected young author that Calvin arrived in Geneva. He never intended to stay. He was heading for Strassburg to avoid a local war. The Protestants in Geneva recognised him and William Farel tried to persuade Calvin to stay. However Calvin had other plans. As he later observed: *“Being by nature a bit antisocial and shy, I always loved retirement and peace...”* Calvin planned a life of seclusion, study and *“literary ease.”* Farel would have none of this. He threatened Calvin with a curse: *“You are following only your own wishes and I tell you, in the Name of God Almighty, that if you do not help us in this work of the Lord, the Lord will punish you for seeking your own interests rather than His.”* Convicted by Farel’s serious threat of imprecations, gripped by the fear of God and ashamed by his selfish plans to avoid controversy and conflict, Calvin agreed to stay. He committed his life to serving the church in Geneva for 26 years. There is a time for us to study and a time for us to put it into practice.

Beware of Darkened Understanding

As far as spiritual ignorance goes, *“Having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.”* Ephesians 4:18. We are living in an age of spiritual ignorance and spiritual blindness. *“The ox knows its owner and the donkey its master; but Israel does not know, My people do not consider.”* Isaiah 1:3. *“The way of peace they have not known and there is no justice in their ways; they have made themselves crooked paths; whoever takes that way shall not know peace.”* Isaiah 59:8. *“...Surely these are poor. They are foolish; for they do not know the way of the Lord...”* Jeremiah 5:4

Ignorance is Condemned

In the Bible, ignorance of the Law is no excuse. Ignorance of the truth is culpable. “Do you not know?”, “The Lord says!” “For they do not know to do right, says the Lord, ‘Who store up violence and robbery in their palaces.’” Amos 3:10. “But they do not know the thoughts of the Lord, nor do they understand His counsel...” Micah 4:12. “For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness...” Romans 10:3. “...another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord nor the work which He had done...” Judges 2:10. This is where we find ourselves today. We have a generation who neither knows the Lord, nor even know about the Lord and what He has done. “...They die, even without wisdom.” Job 4:21. Some people grow old and die, without having ever discovered the wisdom of God. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

Wilful Ignorance

“Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator...” Isaiah 40:28. The Word of the Lord is available in books, on cell phones and on the internet. You should know! Yet many people do not read. “For My people are foolish, they have not known Me... and they have no understanding. They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge.” Jeremiah 4:22. We are in a time when people are very, very wise in how to do evil and very foolish when it comes to doing what is right. “Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also **resist the truth: men of corrupt minds**, disapproved concerning the Faith; but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was.” 2 Timothy 3:8-9.

Truths That Transform

The first weapon in spiritual warfare is the belt of Truth. There are many teachers who have not had their minds renewed and have become conformed to this world, many are leading theological students and future ministers of the Gospel astray. This is why many pulpits are corrupted and neutralised because their ministers do not know the Lord and do not faithfully teach the Word. Many people believe the folly of false teachers. We are in a spiritual war, there is a battle for hearts and minds, for families and Faith, a battle for the Church, for fulfilling the Great Commission.

Learn from God’s Creation

“Even the stork in the heavens knows her appointed times; and the turtledove, the swift and the swallow observe the time of their coming. **But My people do not know the judgment of the Lord.**” Jeremiah 8:7. The birds of the air have more knowledge and are more intelligent and more understanding than a lot of people.

They Are Not Valiant for the Truth

“*And like their bow they have bent their tongues for lies. **They are not valiant for the truth** on the earth. For they proceed from evil to evil and they do not know Me,’ says the Lord.” Jeremiah 9:3. “...because they do not know Him who sent Me.” John 15:21. All these things they do because they have not known the Father, nor have they known the Lord Jesus Christ. Time and again we see condemnation of ignorance, especially spiritual ignorance. It is absolutely vital that we learn and come to the knowledge of truth. Most people are not getting educated, most are being indoctrinated. They are not being taught **how** to think critically, they are being taught **what** to think and to repeat the politically correct fables and myths. After laying out the depravity of man, there is a reoccurring theme: “*But you...*” (3:14; 4:5). “*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge...*” Proverbs 1:7.*

Be Steadfast Despite Persecution

“**But you** have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra - what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yes and **all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution**. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. **But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of**, knowing from whom you have learned them and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to **make you wise for salvation** through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” 2 Timothy 3:10-15. It does not say some, or many, or most, will suffer persecution. It says **all**. It does not say may, or probably will. It says **will** suffer persecution. If you are not being criticised, you are not doing your job. If you are not receiving some kind of resistance, or negative reaction, for your Faith, then you must be compromising. If you are seeking to live a godly life and be a consistent Christian witness in union with Christ Jesus, you will inevitably suffer persecution.

In This World You Will Suffer Persecution

We need to have good mentors. We read when Paul and Barnabas went throughout the churches encouraging them and teaching “... *We must through many tribulations enter the Kingdom of God.*” Acts 14:22. If this was preached today, many would say, “*Get behind me satan! I don’t receive that!*” We must warn people that tribulation and persecution is part of this world, but be of good courage, Jesus said, I have overcome the world (John 16:33). Time and again we see that Jesus suffered for us and left an example that we should follow in His footsteps. Timothy had a Godly grandmother and a Godly mother, he was brought up in the Faith. The Scriptures that he had learned are able to make us wise for Salvation through faith in Christ. *Sola Fide!*

The Solid Foundation for Doctrine, Devotion and Duty

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” 2 Timothy 3:16-17. We see Scripture’s divine origin and its authority. *Sola Scriptura!* Scripture is fully sufficient to equip us for every good work. The first priority of any minister of the Gospel is to know the Scriptures. Many of today’s seminaries are not teaching the Scriptures. No wonder so many denominations are going astray and becoming apostate. The seminaries are where the rot starts. They have corrupted minds and conformed them to this world. Scripture is meant to lead to action, to be put into practise. Our highest priority is to faithfully teach God's Word.

A Solemn and Serious Charge

“I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His Kingdom: Preach the Word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an Evangelist, fulfill your ministry.” 2 Timothy 4:1-5. This is Paul’s last letter, he is about to be put to death. He gives this last command to co-worker, Timothy. He writes about the unchangeable Word of God and the need for us to live in the light of eternity. To live in the light of the fact that the day will come when you will answer for how well you fulfilled your duty, in the presence of God, before His Throne on the Day of Judgement. This is solemn and serious. Lives depend upon your faithfulness to the Word of God.

Walk, Work, Warfare, Weapons and Witness

We are told what to do. Communicate God’s Word, at church, on the streets, at a braai, everywhere. You need to encourage, correct or rebuke. There are different situations that require different types of approach. Like a doctor should not use surgery for every affliction. Sometimes surgery is necessary, other times it is medicine that is needed, or a change of lifestyle in what you eat and exercise. The fact that most people are not interested in good doctrine, does not mean that one must change our message according to the times. False teachers design their churches around what people want, according to the world, to make people feel comfortable and not what the Lord intended and what the Bible teaches. Your walk, your work, your warfare, your weapons, your witness, is the focus of 2 Timothy.

Fight the Good Fight, Finish the Race, Keep the Faith

*“For I am already being poured out as a drink offering and the time of my departure is at hand. **I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the Faith.** Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”* 2 Timothy 4:6-8. Paul explains that he is about to be executed. He is triumphant and victorious in his race. He is anticipating the crown (gold medal/wreath) of victory. He is looking forward to the crown of righteousness, which the Lord will give him. He is about to stand before God, the ultimate Judge.

Bring the Books

“Be diligent to come to me quickly; for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world and has departed for Thessalonica - Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry. And Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come - and the books, especially the parchments. Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works. You also must beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words. At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them.” 2 Timothy 4:9-16. He asked for Mark as he is useful in the ministry, even though he was once a deserter, as he had done restitution and rebuilt the trust of Paul. Mark had become invaluable. John Mark went on to write Mark's Gospel, plant the Church in Egypt and so many other things. It shows us that failure does not need to be final. We may have failed, but in the Lord there is hope and restoration. He speaks of things he still needs to do and asks Timothy to bring his books to him. He then speaks of people who have done him wrong and asks God to judge them. Imprecatory prayers are a great comfort to the persecuted. He also warns of specific people to avoid.

Strengthened

“But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me and that all the Gentiles might hear. Also I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His Heavenly Kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!” 2 Timothy 4:17-18. Paul is encouraged that even though we may be deserted by many in the world, we are not alone. *“For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him...”* 2 Chronicles 16:9. To Him be glory forever and ever – *Soli Deo Gloria!*

Conclusion and Summary

“Greet Prisca and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus. Erastus stayed in Corinth, but Trophimus I have left in Miletus sick. Do your utmost to come before winter. Eubulus greets you, as well as Pudens, Linus, Claudia and all the brethren. The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Grace be with you. Amen.” 2 Timothy 4:19-22. He gives his final farewell. We see that spiritual warfare is very real and continuous. Paul identifies false teaching and false teachers. He commands Timothy to counter false teaching. Be watchful. Be diligent. Beware of false brethren. Endure afflictions. Fulfill your ministry. Complete that which has been entrusted to your care. Fan into flames the gift that God has given you. Stir up and keep ablaze your gift and your talents that God has entrusted to you. Endure hardship as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. Follow righteousness. Study the Scriptures. Teach the Scriptures. Multiply your ministry. Take this teaching which has been entrusted to you and entrust to other reliable men who will be able to entrust to other reliable men after them. Fight the good fight of Faith. Be faithful to the end. Keep the Faith. Persevere. Preach the Word and finish the race.



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CHAPTER 17

TITUS

“For the grace of God that brings Salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.” Titus 2:11-14

Background to the Book

The Book of Titus was written by Paul from Ephesus in AD 63, after Paul was released from his first imprisonment in Rome. On his second visit to Crete he left Titus, a Greek convert, to set in order things that need sorting out.

Understanding Titus

Titus came from a pagan background. He accompanied Paul to Jerusalem (Galatians 2:1). He served in Corinth and was a key messenger of Paul (2 Corinthians 7:6-7). Paul had won Titus to the Lord. He was a trophy of grace to Paul, but he was also a red flag provocation to the Judaizers. Paul appointed Titus, a Gentile, as Bishop over Jews to set in order what needed to be done to deal with false teachers and replace teachers who were not teaching sound doctrine. Titus was commissioned to fight against false doctrines. Titus was used as a pretext for a riot in Jerusalem because he had not been circumcised. Paul steadfastly resisted all pressure by the Judaizers to have Titus circumcised. Titus was a very capable and trustworthy co-worker. He was sent to Crete, one of the most difficult of all places, a stronghold of paganism. Crete was renowned as the birthplace of Zeus on Mount Ida. Titus was a brave, resourceful, reliable man of few words, but was capable to sort things out. Titus was martyred for Christ in the arena, in the colosseum in Durres (Albania), where they fed him to the lions.

Truth and Godliness

“Paul, a bondservant of God and an Apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began, but has in due time manifested His Word through preaching, which was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Saviour to Titus, a true son in our common Faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.” Titus 1:1-4. God

our Saviour is repeated three times and *Jesus Christ our Saviour* is repeated twice. The Truth of God is emphasised, as the people and Greek gods of Crete were liars. Truth and Godliness go together. Our **doctrine** must affect our **duties**. Our belief affects our **behaviour**. Our **creed** affects our **conduct**.

Qualifications for Church Leaders

*“For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you - if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, **holding fast the faithful Word** as he has been taught, that he may be **able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.**”* Titus 1:5-9

Faith, Conduct and Integrity

We see the importance of Godly leadership in the church. It lists the righteous leadership qualifications required for an elder, bishop, or overseer. He deals with faith, conduct and integrity. Conduct in the home is where it starts and this will affect the church. As goes the family, so goes the church and the church will affect society. We need to apply the Lordship of Christ to all areas of life. We are to be salt and light, seeking to fulfil the Great Commission, teaching obedience to all things that the Lord has commanded.

Family is Foundational

The family is the basic building block of society. What we **believe** is going to affect how we **behave**. An Elder is to be married to one wife and bring his children up in the Lord. Martin Luther pointed out that he learned more in one year of marriage than he did in ten years in the Monastery.

Blameless

An Elder is to be blameless, which means he has repented and done restitution in putting things right. No one is faultless. No one is good except God alone. We are to be blameless. Not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent. (Not greedy for money seems to disqualify the *name-it and claim-it* prosperity cults where it seems to be all about money.) Christian leaders are to be hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded and balanced. They must be holy, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful Word of God.

Confront Corruption

Sound doctrine is essential to enable a minister of the Gospel to encourage and convict. Both our Faith and conduct work together to confront corrupt leaders, to expose false doctrine and to resist that which is against the Faith. The context is overwhelming to fight against the main enemies in Crete - the Greek Gnostics and Polytheists of pagan mythology and the Judaizers who were continually trying to drag people back into worthless circumcision, Jewish rituals and arguments about the sabbath.

Recognise, Resist and Rebuke False Teachers

*“For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain. One of them, a prophet of their own, said, ‘Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.’ This testimony is true. Therefore **rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the Faith**, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth. To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. **They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient and disqualified for every good work.**”* Titus 1:10-16. This is a description of the wicked, the fruit of false teachers and of the enemies of the church. Crete was infamous for its deception. They claimed Mount Ida as the birthplace of Zeus. They subverted whole households. They were interested in dishonest gain. They were extortionists. They were defiled by what they saw and did. A good teacher is to rebuke false doctrine and to expose false teachers.

Consistent Christian Character and Conduct

Paul is encouraging Titus: We need consistent Christian character and conduct. Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. God’s Word is Truth. You cannot be a good **servant** of God if you are not willing to be His **soldier** as well. You cannot teach good doctrine without exposing false doctrine. The truth is essential for Godly living. Sound doctrine should lead to good works. We are not saved by works, but we are saved unto good works. We are saved by grace alone.

Doctrine Includes Duties – Belief Affects Behaviour

*“But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: that the **older men** be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; the **older women** likewise, that they be reverent in behaviour, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things - that they*

*admonish the **young women** to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the Word of God may not be blasphemed. Likewise, exhort the **young men** to be sober-minded, in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you. Exhort **bondservants** to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all things, not answering back, not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.” Titus 2:1-10*

Our Creed Must Be Seen in our Conduct and Character

This shows the importance of Godly living in the church. Christianity is not egalitarian. That is unbiblical. Distinctions remain - of age, from older to younger, of male and female and of class, each have specific duties. There are requirements given to employers and others given to employees. Each of us have our duties. Today many are trying to make the church a tool of politicians. We are part of the Kingdom of God. We are to be salt and light to the world. We should not allow ourselves to be polluted by the world. You cannot proclaim the **love** of God without proclaiming the **light** of God. You cannot proclaim the **mercy** of God without proclaiming His **wrath** against sin. You cannot proclaim Christ the **Saviour** without also proclaiming that He is the eternal **Judge**. We need to have Biblical balance. This starts in the home, with male and female, husband and wife, who need one another, to be balanced. Children need both a father and a mother. The Gospel includes both the severity of the wrath of God and the comfort of the Love of God. In Crete they were mixing Greek mythology and Jewish fables with Christianity. Titus was instructed to explain the truth and expose error. To root it out and expel false teachers. Make sure your people have good doctrine and good conduct. Belief leads to Behaviour. Doctrine and duty must go together.

Redeemed from Every Lawless Deed – Zealous for Good Works

*“For the grace of God that brings Salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, **denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.”** Titus 2:11-14*

Salvation, Service and Sanctification

This is an excellent summary of the Gospel. Many important doctrines are emphasised. We are told to **leave** the old life, to **live** the new life, to **look** forward to the glorious return of Jesus Christ. We see **God's generous grace which leads to Godliness**. We are **saved to serve**. We have salvation, service and sanctification. **Hope** should lead to **holiness**.

Sola Gratia and *Solus Christus*

It starts with *Sola Gratia*, salvation is by the grace of God alone. *Solus Christus*, Christ alone is the Head of the Church. Salvation is through the sacrifice of Christ alone. He saved us, redeemed us and purified us. Salvation includes redemption from lawlessness. The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. The Law of God is the schoolmaster that leads us to Christ that we may be justified by faith.

My Utmost for His Highest

Christians are meant to produce excellent work. The Lord deserves the best. He deserves nothing less than wholeheartedness. In Revelation 3, we read that lukewarm Christians make God sick! The Lord wants either hot or cold, but not lukewarm. The Lord requires us to be zealous, enthusiastic and wholehearted.

Rebuke with Authority

“Speak these things, exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.” Titus 2:15. This is one of the first lessons taught to any good leader. You must not let anyone despise you. How can you do your work if people do not respect the authority you represent? It is important to teach obedience and respect for parents and respect for elders. Children should not be punished for making mistakes. They need to be punished for bad attitudes! Titus was going to Crete. Cretans despised authority. Paul gives this final instruction after laying out practical discipleship and the importance of Godly living in the church. If challenged, fight back. When it comes to teaching against false teachers, people's **eternal souls are at stake**. You must be ready to fight and rebuke. Not many of us should be teachers. Teachers will be judged with greater strictness. To whom much is given, much is required. To whom much more is given, much more will be required. This emphasises the importance of Godly witness to the world. It involves social obligations. We need Holy Spirit empowered faithfulness to transform all of life.

Be Prepared to Instruct and Correct

“Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men. For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful

and hating one another. But when the kindness and the love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” Titus 3:1-7

Humble and Teachable

We must be ready for every good work. Be prepared to rebuke and instruct. We must be patient and humble. *Sola Gratia!* Salvation is by the grace of God alone. There is no room for pride. We did not choose God, He chose us. We did not find God, God found us. This will keep us humble. Anything good in us is by God’s grace. Anything wrong in us is our fault. This verse emphasises the Deity of Christ.

Be Careful to Maintain Good Works

“This is a faithful saying and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.” Titus 3:8. We are to be careful to maintain good works. Do not waste time arguing about things that are not important. We need to focus on what is Biblical, relevant and edifying and what is actually going to extend the Kingdom of God. Our priority is to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. Love our neighbour as ourselves. Seek first the Kingdom of God. Make disciples of all nations, teach obedience to all things that God has commanded.

Reject Divisive Individuals

“But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless. Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.” Titus 3:9-11. False teachers are almost always hypocrites. They tend to condemn in others what they excuse in themselves. The divisive have double standards. It is good to receive constructive criticism from a friend trying to help you to be better and succeed. Destructive criticism comes from an enemy who wants you to fail. We must live out our faith in the home, in the church and in the workplace.

Take Initiative, Be Diligent and Productive

*“When I send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, be diligent to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. Send Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey with haste, that they may lack nothing. And **let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful.**” Titus 3:12-14.* When Titus’ replacements come to him, he must come back to Paul. In the meantime, Paul gives him

instructions and says he must use the resources available. Take initiative, work hard and be productive. The Lord made us to be fruitful.

Summary

Descriptions of **the wicked** in Titus: defiled in mind and conscience, unbelieving, liars, lazy gluttons, giving heed to Jewish fables, they profess to know God but in their works they deny Him. They are abominable, disobedient, disqualified, pilfering, slanderers, greedy, living in sin and malice, envious, hateful, divisive and warped.

Descriptions of those people who are **disqualified for church leadership**: those who are self-willed, quick tempered, drunkards, violent, greedy, insubordinate, idle talkers, deceivers, subverters, liars, lazy and gluttons.

Descriptions of **leaders**: character of integrity, blameless, faithful husbands and fathers, faithful stewards of what God has entrusted to them, holding fast to good doctrine, hospitable, a lover of good, sober minded, just, holy, self-controlled, able to exhort, teach and rebuke, convincing those who contradict.

Specific requirements to **men**: to be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, love and patience.

Specific requirements to **women**: to be reverent in behaviour, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things, discreet, chaste, homemakers, lovers of their husbands, lovers of their children, good and obedient.

Specific requirements to **young men**: be sober minded, maintain a pattern of good works, in doctrine show integrity, reverence, incorruptibility and sound speech.

Specific requirements to **servants**: be faithful in all things, not pilfering, be obedient and respectful.

Organisation, Offenders, Operation and Obedience

We have **doctrines** and **duties** which must be done with **dedication** and **discipline**. Qualified leaders of integrity and diligence are needed to confront and counter false teachers.

Unity in the Faith

“All who are with me greet you. Greet those who love us in the Faith. Grace be with you all. Amen.” Titus 3:15. We are reminded to be united with those in the Faith.



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CHAPTER 18

PHILEMON

Short and to the Point

Philemon is the shortest letter by the Apostle Paul. Some may ask what is a personal letter from Paul to an individual, a letter that does not even directly deal with any doctrine, asking a man whose slave, Onesimus, has run away with stolen items, to forgive him and to receive him back as a brother in the Lord, doing in the Bible?

A Prison Epistle

This letter is a Prison Epistle of Paul, sent with Tychicus to Colossae because Philemon was one of the church leaders in Colossae. So along with the letter to the Colossians, went this letter to Philemon, who hosted a church meeting in his home.

A Model Letter

This is a model letter. It deals with a very difficult issue, it is cautious, tactful, thoughtful, inspiring, generous, polite, persuasive and has reasoned appeal. This is an example of the power of the printed page. There is much witness and discipleship that can be communicated through a letter. This is an excellent letter and a good example. This letter is also a picture of how we are saved.

Paul, Philemon and Onesimus

The three people in this letter are: Paul the Apostle, a prisoner in Rome, who writes to Philemon to ask him to do something very difficult. Philemon the church leader, who Paul knows and who he had led to the Lord. Onesimus, Philemon's slave, who also came to the Lord through Paul. Paul asks him to go back to the master he had run away from, whom he had wronged and stolen from and to face up to his responsibilities. Paul said that it was difficult for him to send Onesimus away because he had become beloved and useful.

From Useless to Useful

Onesimus' name means *profitable*, but he was *a good for nothing*. He was a criminal with a bad attitude. Philemon had stolen and fled. A slave who ran away was normally flogged and crucified. If the master was generous, he could just be branded on his face "*fugitive*" in Latin and would have had to bear this disfiguring mark for the rest of his life.

Christian Discipleship in Action

The message is a message of Christian love and forgiveness, applied Christianity, The power of the Gospel to change lives, to redeem slaves, to change hearts and minds. It is a letter that deals with a runaway slave and

a thief, converted and now returning to his master. Once worthless, now valuable. From useless to useful. This book of Philemon is a *magna carta* of liberty. It undermined the institution of slavery, not by revolution, but by **regeneration and redemption**.

Grace, Love and Faith

“Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, to Philemon our beloved friend and fellow labourer, to the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers, hearing of your love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints, that the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus. For we have great joy and consolation in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you, brother.” Philemon 1-7

Regeneration and Redemption

This letter is an appeal to his friend, a man who could justly have Onesimus flogged and branded, even put to death. He also appeals to Apphia, his wife and to Archippus, his son, or a leader of the house church. Every good thing in us is from Christ. There is nothing good in ourselves, it is the grace of God alone. *Sola Gratia!* Philemon is a beloved Christian leader who has brought great joy to the hearts of the saints.

Slavery in the Bible

This letter is not damning Philemon to hell for being a slave owner. There is slavery in the Bible. The Bible forbids kidnapping. The Bible condemns slave traders to death. The Bible, however, provides for slavery as part of a criminal justice system. So one could become a slave by getting into debt and failing to repay one's debts. Chronic debtors were enslaved for the time it took to repay their debt. Then they were set free. Family members could redeem a slave and pay their debt for them. There was a time limit. A believing Hebrew could not be enslaved for longer than 7 years. They then had to be set free. Other Biblical requirements were that the slave owner was required to provide for the slave and his family in every way: food, accommodation, medical needs, etc. He owned their labour, he did not own their body. If a slave owner hurt a slave, the slave had to be immediately set free. Physical abuse was forbidden.

How Did People Become Slaves?

Criminals became indentured servants, as did those who failed to repay their debts. You could also become a slave by choice. Why? Some people did not want all the responsibilities in life, so some chose to become slaves to have their food and accommodation provided, while being told what to do. They

did not have to make difficult decisions. Some people are slaves to sin and vice. How much better is the Biblical criminal justice system of indentured servitude to a believing family than our present prison system, which is abusive and degrading, counterproductive and expensive for taxpayers?

Restitution and Restorative Justice

The Biblical system of slavery is that if somebody has stolen from you, he must repay you double, up to seven times, depending on the aggravating circumstances. How long has it been before being recovered? For example, if somebody steals your cow and it is immediately found in their possession, they must give you two cows back. If he steals your cow and you only receive your cow back a year later, you have lost a year's worth of milk production. They then need to give you up to seven cows back. The Bible provides for restitution for the time and produce you have been deprived of. If the person does not have the means, discipline, or willingness to do proper restitution, he then could become an indentured servant, or slave.

What Could Have Led Onesimus to be a Slave?

The Romans conquered people in war and took many of the brightest and best back to Rome as slaves. He may have been one of these captives of war. He could also have been a criminal and been made a slave in order to pay back his debt.

Paul and Philemon

Paul does not rebuke Philemon for owning a slave, but considers how he treated him. In the Bible, it was more about how you treat your slaves, rather than owning slaves. Were you loving, caring, treated them like members of the family, was there mutual love and respect? Now that Onesimus was converted, it changed the whole relationship.

An Appeal from the Heart

*“Therefore, though I might be very bold in Christ to command you what is fitting, yet for love’s sake I rather appeal to you - being such a one as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ - I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten while in my chains, who once was unprofitable to you, but now is profitable to you and to me. I am sending him back. You therefore receive him, that is, my own heart, whom I wished to keep with me, that on your behalf he might minister to me in my chains for the Gospel. But without your consent I wanted to do nothing, that your good deed might not be by compulsion, as it were, but voluntary. For perhaps he departed for a while for this purpose, that you might **receive him forever, no longer as a slave but more than a slave - a beloved brother**, especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.”* Philemon 8-16

Compassion Rather than Compulsion

Even though Philemon had the right to have Onesimus flogged, Paul is appealing to Philemon through reason, logic and grace to receive him back as a brother in the Faith. Paul is asking him to do this out of love. This is a model of how Christianity should work. There is a huge contrast between how the world operates in compulsion and how Christianity operates in voluntary compassion.

A Picture of our Salvation

*“If then you count me as a partner, receive him as you would me. But if he has wronged you, or owes anything, put that on my account. I, Paul, am writing with my own hand. **I will repay** - not to mention to you that you owe me even your own self besides.”* Philemon 17-19. Paul is not operating with a whip, he is operating with wisdom and love. This is also a picture of Salvation. We are like the slave who ran away from God. We have defrauded and stolen from Him and violated His commandments. We deserve the maximum penalty. We were of no use to God, but then Jesus paid our debts. He redeemed us from slavery. He sets us free and then transformed us from useless to useful, from unprofitable to profitable.

Justification and Transformation

This is a picture of Justification. **Just as if I had never sinned.** Our debt is settled. We are made right in our standing before God. We are not just accepted as a **servant**, but we are received back as a **son** or **daughter of the King. Set free to serve Christ!** Justification and Sanctification. Transformed and now made useful to the Master.

Knowing that You Will do Even More

*“Yes, brother, let me have joy from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in the Lord. Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, **knowing that you will do even more** than I say. But meanwhile, also prepare a guest room for me, for I trust that through your prayers I shall be granted to you. Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow labourers. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.”* Philemon 20-25

Go the Extra Mile

Jesus said, if they ask for your shirt, give them your coat as well. Go the extra mile. Do more than required. Jesus fills our cup to overflowing. Paul is expecting to be set free and he asks Philemon to prepare a room as he will be coming to visit. He then sends greetings from fellow prisoners who also had bad pasts and then were saved by God’s grace and imprisoned for the Faith.

Repentance and Restitution

Onesimus did return to Philemon, willing to be a slave for life and willing to do restitution and repentance. *“Exhort bondservants to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all things, not answering back, not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.”* Titus 2:9-10.

Mercy and Forgiveness

Philemon welcomed Onesimus back without the traditional punishment for desertion and theft and He granted him liberty. Onesimus later became a Bishop of the Church in Berea.

Do Not Run Away from Your Problems

The message of Philemon is that we should not run away from our problems. We need to face up to our failures. We need to resolve to fulfill our duties. We need to be willing to do hard things. Jesus came to set the captives free. He has come to pronounce Release to the captives! We are commanded to forgive as we have been forgiven. To love as we have been loved. To whom much is given, much is required. To whom much more is given, much more is required. Accept others as you have been accepted. As Christ has shown you mercy, show mercy to others.

Ask Yourself:

- What are you running away from?
- To what are you enslaved?
- What hard duty are you avoiding?
- Is there anyone you are indebted to?
- What restitution can you do?
- Is there anyone you need to intercede for?
- Can you help bring about reconciliation?
- Is your home an outpost for the Christian church?
- Do you know about the grace of God?
- Have you experienced peace with God?
- Do you have peace with God right now?
- Do you have great joy in Christ?
- Is there a letter you need to write?
- Is there a letter you need to respond to?
- Is there anyone you need to forgive?
- Are you effective in your work for God?
- Are you refreshing the saints?



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CHAPTER 19

HEBREWS

“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our Faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame and has sat down at the right hand of the Throne of God.” Hebrews 12:1-2

Background

Origen, Eusebius and Clement of Alexandria identify Paul as the author of Hebrews. Hebrews 13:23 mentions Timothy as the author’s co-worker. Hebrew Christians in Jerusalem were still participating in Temple sacrifices and rituals and were tempted to avoid persecution by returning to Judaism. The Book of Hebrews makes it clear that there is no Salvation outside of Christ. The blood of bulls and sheep can never take away sins. This letter is a solemn warning against the Judaizers’ legalism, rituals and sacramentalism. *“Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.”* Hebrews 3:12. As the Book of Romans was addressed to the capital of the secular world – Rome, so the Book of Hebrews is addressed to the capital of the religious world – Jerusalem. There are more than 80 quotes and references to the Old Testament in Hebrews.

The Message of Hebrews – The Supremacy of Christ

1. Jesus is greater than the **prophets**. *“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, **has** in these last days **spoken to us by His Son**, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person and upholding all things by the Word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.”* Hebrews 1:1-3
2. Jesus is greater than the **angels**. *“**Having become so much better than the angels**, as He has by inheritance obtained **a more excellent Name** than they. For to which of the angels did He ever say: You are My Son, today I have begotten You?’ and again: ‘I will be to Him a Father and He shall be to Me a Son?’ But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: ‘**Let all the angels of God worship Him.**’ And of the angels, He says: ‘Who makes His angels spirits and His ministers a flame of fire.’ But to the Son He says: ‘Your Throne, O God, is forever and ever;*

a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Your Kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore, God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness... But to which of the angels has He ever said: 'Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool'? Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?" Hebrews 1:4-14

3. Jesus is greater than **Moses**. "...Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house. **For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses**, inasmuch as He who built the house has more honour than the house. For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God. And **Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant**, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward, **but Christ as a Son over His own house**, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end." Hebrews 3:1-6
4. Jesus leads us into a greater **rest** than Joshua did. "Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: 'Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tested Me, tried Me and saw My works forty years. Therefore, I was angry with that generation and said, 'They always go astray in their heart and they have not known My ways.' So I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest.' Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called 'Today,' lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end..." Hebrews 3:7-14
5. Jesus is a greater **High Priest** than Aaron. "**Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God**, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the Throne of Grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins... He is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer sacrifices for sins. And no man takes this honour to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was. So also, Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: 'You are My Son,

today I have begotten You.’ As He also says in another place: ‘You are a **Priest forever according to the Order of Melchizedek**’ ...He became the Author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, called by God as High Priest according to the Order of Melchizedek.” Hebrews 4:14-5:10

6. Jesus is of a greater **Priesthood** than Levi. “...Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better.... Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the Law), what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek and not be called according to the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the Law.... For He testifies: ‘You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.’... You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek’, by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better Covenant. Also, there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. **Therefore, He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.** For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people’s, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the Law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints the Son who has been perfected forever.” Hebrews 7:11-28. Christ’s priesthood is superior and permanent.
7. Jesus is the Mediator of a greater **Covenant**. “...Now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better **Covenant**, which was established on better promises. For if, that first Covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because finding fault with them, He says: ‘Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new Covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah - not according to the Covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My Covenant and I disregarded them, says the Lord. For this is the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: **I will put My Laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God and they shall be My people....** In that He says, ‘A new Covenant,’ He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.” Hebrews 8:6-13

8. Jesus serves in a greater **Tabernacle** than the Temple. “*Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the Throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true Tabernacle which the Lord erected and not man.*” Hebrews 8:1-2. The Tabernacle is appropriate for people on the march. (The Temple suggests a people who have arrived and settled down.) We are pilgrims.
9. Jesus has offered a greater **Sacrifice**. Whereas in the Old Covenant atonement was made through repeated animal sacrifices, in the New Covenant Christ has offered Himself once for all time. “*Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own Blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal Redemption... how much more shall the Blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*” Hebrews 9:12-14
10. Jesus offers us a greater **Salvation**. “*Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the Blood of Jesus.*” Hebrews 10:19; “*Pray for us; for we are confident that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honourably.*” Hebrews 13:18.

In Christ We Have:

1. A superior **Name**. “*Having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent Name than they.*” Hebrews 1:4.
2. A greater **High Priest**. “*Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better.*” Hebrews 7:7; “*For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, appoints the Son who has been perfected forever.*” Hebrews 7:28.
3. A better **hope**. “*For the Law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.*” Hebrews 7:19.
4. A better **Covenant**. “*By so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better Covenant.*” Hebrews 7:22.
5. A superior **ministry**. “*But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry...*” Hebrews 8:6.
6. A superior **Covenant**. “*...inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better Covenant...*” Hebrews 8:6.
7. Better **promises**. “*...Which was established on better promises.*” Hebrews 8:6.
8. A better **sacrifice**. “*...but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.*” Hebrews 9:23.

9. Better and more lasting **possessions**. *"...knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in Heaven."* Hebrews 10:34.
10. A better **country**. *"But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country... for He has prepared a city for them."* Hebrews 11:16.
11. A better **Resurrection**. *"Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better Resurrection."* Hebrews 11:35.
12. A better **plan**. *"God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us."* Hebrews 11:40.

The Titles, Names and Attributes of Jesus in Hebrews:

1. The **Son – Heir** of all things – **Creator** of the Universe. *"...His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds."* Hebrews 1:2.
2. The **Radiance of God's Glory**. *"Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person..."* Hebrews 1:3.
3. The **exact representation of God's being; Sustainer** of all things. *"...upholding all things by the Word of His power..."* Hebrews 1:3.
4. **God**. *"...Your Throne, O God, is forever and ever... You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness..."* Hebrews 1:8-9.
5. **Lord**. *"...You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth and the heavens are the work of Your hands."* Hebrews 1:10.
6. **Jesus**. *"We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone."* Hebrews 2:9.
7. The **Apostle and High Priest** -the Pioneer, One sent by God. *"...Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus."* Hebrews 3:1.
8. **Christ**. *"But Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end."* Hebrews 3:6.
9. **Our Great High Priest** – Jesus the **Son of God**. *"Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession."* Heb. 4:14.
10. **Sinless**. *"For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin."* Hebrews 4:15; *"For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners..."* Hebrews 7:26.

11. Selected by God to be High Priest forever. “...*Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You.’*” Heb. 5:5.
12. Learned obedience from what He suffered and was made perfect. “*Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.*” Hebrews 5:8; “...*the Son who has been perfected forever.*” Hebrews 7:28.
13. **The Source of Eternal Salvation.** “*And having been perfected, He became the Author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.*” Hebrews 5:9.
14. Jesus **lives forever.** “*But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood.*” Hebrews 7:24.
15. He is **able to save completely** those who come to God through Him. “*For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.*” Hebrews 4:15; “*Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him...*” Hebrews 7:25.
16. **Holy, Blameless, Pure – Set apart, Exalted.** “*For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners and has become higher than the heavens.*” Hebrews 7:26.
17. Made **Perfect forever.** “*Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.*” Hebrews 5:8; “... *the Son who has been perfected forever.*” Hebrews 7:28
18. Seated at the right hand of the Father in Heaven. “*Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the Throne of the Majesty in the heavens.*” Hebrews 8:1.
19. **Mediator** of a Superior Covenant. “*But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better Covenant, which was established on better promises.*” Hebrews 8:6.
20. The **Author and Perfector of our Faith.** “*Looking unto Jesus, the Author and finisher of our Faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame and has sat down at the right hand of the Throne of God.*” Hebrews 12:2.
21. Jesus Christ is the **same yesterday, today and forever.** “*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.*” Hebrews 13:8.

22. The **Great Shepherd of the sheep**. *“Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the Blood of the everlasting Covenant.”* Hebrews 13:20.

Priesthood

Levitical

They were of the tribe of **Levi**

They were **many**

They offered animal **sacrifices**

They **died**

They were **sinful**

They had to atone for their **own sins** first

Priests

Of **Aaron’s** priesthood

Temporary

Carnal

Ineffective

Many sacrifices

All the time

Cleaned the **flesh**

Represented **Israel**

Appointed on **command**

Imperfect

Old Covenant

Weak and useless

Incomplete

Judgement

“And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the Judgment.”

Hebrews 9:27

The Word of God

“For the Word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit and of joints and marrow and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Hebrews 4:12

Christ’s

Christ was of **Judah**

He was **One**

He offered **Himself**

He **Lives**

He is **Holy**

He was **Sinless**

A King and Priest

Of the Order of **Melchizedek**

Eternal

Spiritual

Effective forever

One Sacrifice

Once for All

Cleanses the **Conscience**

Represents **all believers**

On **Command** and **Oath** of God

Perfect

New Covenant

Strong and Perfect

Complete

Result: Access to

God = Sins Forgiven

Holiness

“Pursue...holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.” Hebrews 12:14

Perfect

1. Jesus, the Author of our Salvation, has been made **perfect** through suffering (2:10).
2. He learned obedience through what He suffered and once made **perfect**, He became the source of Eternal Salvation for all who obey Him (5:8-9).
3. The Law made nothing **perfect** (7:19).
4. Jesus has been made **perfect** forever (7:28).
5. The sacrifices made no one **perfect** (10:1-2).
6. God makes us **perfect** (11:40; 12:23).
7. Jesus **perfects** our Faith (12:2).

“How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation...” Hebrews 2:3

Let Us

1. **Let us** fear lest any of you seem to have come short of God’s Rest (4:1).
2. **Let us**, therefore, be diligent to enter that rest (4:11).
3. **Let us** hold fast our confession of the Faith we profess (4:14).
4. **Let us**, therefore come boldly to the Throne of Grace with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our need (4:16).
5. **Let us** go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God (6:1).
6. **Let us** draw near to God with a true heart in full assurance of faith (10:22).
7. **Let us** hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering (10:23).
8. **Let us** consider one another in order to stir up love and good works (10:24).
9. **Let us** not forsake the assembling of ourselves together (10:25).
10. **Let us** exhorting one another (10:25).
11. **Let us** run with endurance the race that is set before us (12:1).

12. **Let us** look unto Jesus, the Author and finisher of our Faith (12:2).
13. **Let us** have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. (12:28).
14. **Let us**, go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach (13:13).
15. Through Jesus, therefore, **let us** continually offer the Sacrifice of Praise to God (13:15).

What We, as Christians, Have According to Hebrews:

1. We are God's House (3:6).
2. We have a Great High Priest (4:14).
3. We have this hope as an anchor for our lives, firm and secure (6:19).
4. We have an Eternal Redemption (9:12).
5. We have complete freedom to enter the Most Holy Place by the Blood of Jesus (10:19).
6. We are receiving a Kingdom that cannot be shaken (12:28)
7. We have an Altar from which those who minister at the Temple have no right to eat (13:10).
8. We are looking for the City that is to come (13:14).
9. We have a clear conscience and desire to live honourably in every way (13:18).

Therefore

1. **Therefore**, we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away (2:1).
2. **Therefore**, holy brethren, consider and fix your thoughts on Jesus (3:1).
3. **Therefore**, since the promise of entering His rest still stands, let us fear lest anyone of you seem to have come short of it (4:1).
4. Let us, **therefore** be diligent to enter that rest (4:11).
5. **Therefore**, let us leave the elementary principles and go on to perfection and maturity (6:1).
6. **Therefore**, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the Blood of Jesus (10:19).

7. **Therefore**, we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin, which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us looking unto Jesus, the Author and finisher of our Faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame and has sat down at the right hand of the Throne of God. (12:1-2).
8. **Therefore**, strengthen the hands, which hang down, and the feeble knees and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed. Pursue peace with all people and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord (12:12-14).
9. **Therefore**, since we are receiving a Kingdom, which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. **For our God is a consuming fire** (12:28-29). Holiness is not an optional extra. Faith is more than belief. It is obedient action.
10. **Therefore**, by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His Name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. Obey those who rule over you and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you. (13:15-17).

Benediction

“Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the Blood of the everlasting Covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.” Hebrews 13:20-21



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CHAPTER 20

JAMES

Practical Christian Discipleship in Action

This is the oldest Book in the New Testament, written by James, the half-brother of Jesus, before the Church Council in Jerusalem, which happened in AD 49, as recorded in Acts 15. James is one of the easiest Books to understand, but one of the hardest to apply. It is no-nonsense, rubber meets the road, practical Christianity in action. This is true practical Faith contrasted with false profession and presumption. In James we see that conversion produces real change in character and conduct. Faith without works is dead. Genuine faith is seen in your actions. We are to endure trials with joy. James could be entitled: Truth in Action, or Faith Works, or the Behaviour of Belief.

Dedicated Discipleship and Daily Duty

Our Lord Jesus gave the Parable of the Two Sons: Two sons were told to do something. One said, "Yes, I will," but did not. The other said, "No, I won't," but later repented and went and did what his father had told him to do. The one who said he would, failed to and the one who said he would not, later obeyed. Jesus was speaking particularly about the Jews who said they would obey God's Law but failed to and therefore lost their place in the Covenant vs. the ones who said they would not, but who later came to the Lord, obeyed and were blessed. They are counted as true sons of Abraham.

Joy Despite Suffering

*"James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings. My brethren, **count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.** But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. **If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach and it will be given to him.** But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways."* James 1:1-8. James address the 12 tribes scattered abroad. As the 10 tribes were taken away in the Assyrian Exile and scattered abroad into Europe, there were only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin left in Judea. True faith produces patience. We need to let it become perfect by seeing that it is put into practise. We see the value of

trials. God works all things together for good for those who love God and are called according to His purpose. What man means for evil, God can use for good. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. All wisdom comes from God. Faith is not presumption. We are meant to be like a tree which puts its roots down beside still waters whose leaves produce good fruit.

Riches are Fleeting and Life is Fragile

“Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away. For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits.” James 1:9-11. This reminds us that riches are fleeting and life is fragile. No one’s life lasts forever. We will be lost if we put all our hope in things that do not last forever. A Christian has to live in the light of eternity. People rise and fall, kingdoms rise and fall, kings rise and fall, presidents come and go. James compares the rich to the flowers of the field, like the grass that withers with the coming of the dry season.

Temptations Come from Within

*“Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. **Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.**”* James 1:12-16. We learn that God cannot be tempted and He does not tempt anyone. God may constructively test us, to make us stronger, to help us succeed, but the devil destructively tempts us, to make us fall. We need to discern the source of criticism. Is it constructive? Or destructive? What you sow is what you reap. Temptation comes from our inward, selfish, carnal and fleshly nature.

God is the Source of Love

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights, with Whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. Of His own will He brought us forth by the Word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.” James 1:17-18. Everything good comes from God. Which is why we can expect to see our furry family members in Heaven, because love comes from God. It is impossible that you could love your pets more than God does, because love comes from God.

Be Swift to Listen, Slow to Speak and Slow to Wrath

“So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.” James 1:19-20. God gave us two ears and one mouth. We must be more ready to listen than to speak. We must not have a short fuse, ready to assume the worst and misinterpret things. We need to be slow to get angry, but quick to learn and to hear. The wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. It is less common to hear of righteous anger, or holy indignation. Although they do exist.

Be a Doer of the Word

*“Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted Word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the Word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the Word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. **But he who looks into the perfect Law of Liberty and continues in it and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.**”* James 1:21-25. Here is a contrast between the fruit of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. Faith comes from hearing, hearing by the Word of God. He speaks of being a doer of the Word and a doer of the work. We need to put our faith into action.

Care for Widows and Orphans

*“If anyone among you thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one’s religion is useless. **Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.**”* James 1:26-27. Evil speaking and self-deception are marks of the unregenerate. They deceive their own hearts, they do not bridle their tongue, they are useless. Pure and undefiled religion before God our Father, is to visit orphans and widows in their trouble and to keep oneself unpolluted by the world. Caring is at the heart of real Christianity. Being practical, putting feet to your faith. There are people who hear the Word of God but do not apply it. We must not be deceived by outward appearances.

The Fruit of Faith

We need to understand what the fruit of faith is. What is the evidence of true Faith? A person of true Faith is not only a hearer, but a doer of the work. He receives the implanted Word with meekness and then puts it into practise. Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and obey it.

Do Not Judge by Outward Appearances

“My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, ‘You sit here in a good place’ and say to the poor man, ‘You stand there,’ or, ‘Sit here at my footstool,’ have you not shown partiality among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?” James 2:1-6. It is so easy to judge by outward appearance, but often things are not the way they look. The Lord has made it clear that many who are now first will be last and the last will be first. The Lord looks at the heart, as only God can.

Rich in the Things of God

Many of the poor are richest in the things of God. Some of the happiest people and most dedicated Christians in the world are poor, have so little and are living under persecution. Sabina Wurmbrand said that before she went to prison she was very poor, but when she went to prison, she became very rich. She was poor in the things of this world, but she was rich in the things of God as she had memorised much of the Scripture. She was therefore able to enrich many people in prison with the knowledge of the Scriptures. A Nuba Evangelist who had no feet, as they were cut off by the Arabs, continued to take the Gospel to his neighbours riding on a donkey. He was destitute, but rich in God. The Bible says: *“How beautiful are the feet of those who bring Good News.”*

Do Not Honour Blasphemers Who Oppress and Ensnare in Court

“But you have dishonoured the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? Do they not blaspheme that noble Name by which you are called?” James 2:6-7. When James speaks about the rich, he speaks about those who dishonour and oppress believers and who blaspheme the Name of God. Such people hate Christ.

The Royal Law

*“If you really fulfill the Royal Law according to the Scripture, ‘**You shall love your neighbour as yourself**,’ you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the Law as transgressors. For whoever shall keep the whole Law and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. For He who said, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ also said, ‘Do not murder.’ Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the Law. So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the Law of Liberty.*

*For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. **Mercy triumphs over judgment.***" James 2:8-13. Do to others as you want them to do unto you. The Golden Rule is to do to others as you want them to do to you. The Royal Law is, Love your neighbour as yourself. The Ten Commandments are God's perfect Law of Liberty. It sets us free. The world's law oppresses. God's Law protects.

Mercy Triumphs Over Judgement

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. We who judge others will find ourselves judged with greater strictness. But those who show mercy can expect to find mercy. Jesus taught us to pray in this way: *'Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Forgive us our debts as we forgive those indebted to us. Forgive us our transgressions, as we forgive those who have transgressed against us.'* Mercy is a fruit of a saved person.

Faith is Seen in Action

*"What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can such faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also **faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.** But someone will say, 'You have faith and I have works.' Show me your faith without your works and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe - and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works and by works faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness.' And he was called the friend of God. You see then that a man is justified by works and not by faith only. Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? **For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.**" James 2:14-26*

Good Works are a Fruit of Faith

We see that faith is shown by works. Presumption is dead. This is not hostile to the teachings of Paul. Some people have said that James was writing against *Sola Fide*, Salvation is received by Faith alone, but he did not. Good works are the fruit of faith. Faith is the root and works are the fruit. The fruit does not bear the tree, the tree bears the fruit. Barren and unfruitful faith is no faith at all. If you find a body and there is no pulse, no breathing,

no heartbeat, then there is no evidence of life. Just as the body without breath, pulse and heartbeat is dead, so faith without works is dead. *“Trust and obey, for there is no other way, to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.”*

Law and Gospel

James mentioned two examples from the Hall of Faith, Hebrews 11, showing that faith is always seen in works. It is bold and active. Feet needs to be put to your faith. This chapter is very important to show the relationship between faith and works, or Law and Gospel. The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. The Law is the schoolmaster that leads us to Christ that we can be justified by faith. We are not saved by the Law. The Law points to Christ. It is by the Law that you realise the character of God, the standards and holiness of God and the depravity of man. We then realise how lost we are outside of Christ. Therefore it leads us to a point where we can actually be saved by faith. Faith and works go together.

Set on Fire by Hell

“My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. Indeed, we put bits in horses’ mouths that they may obey us and we turn their whole body. Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.” James 3: 1-12

Taming the Tongue

Teachers will be judged by a higher standard. To whom much is given, much is required. To whom much more is given, much more is required. James speaks of the tiny tongue and how it can be such a big problem. So we need to be slow to speak, quick to listen, slow to wrath. Be careful what you say, be self-disciplined and restrained in your speech.

Do Not Boast and Lie Against the Truth

“Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” James 3:13-18. Here is a depiction of the wicked through the fruit of the flesh. Here the fruit of the Spirit is also spelled out.

Friendship with the World is Enmity to God

*“Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that **friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.** Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, ‘The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously’? **But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble’.**”* James 4:1-6

It is Spiritual Adultery to Love the World

You cannot be faithful to God while being a friend of the world. This world system is hostile to Christ. If we are friends with the world, then we become enemies of God. To love this world and to love the things of this world is spiritual adultery. We should be faithful to God in all things.

God Resists the Proud But Gives Grace to the Humble

God gives grace to the humble. That is why we have to give Law to the proud and the Gospel to the humble. Grace is for those who humble themselves, acknowledge their sin, mourn and confess their sins. But those who are proud and believe they are a “good person”, need the Law. Those who are justifying themselves are not ready for the Gospel, they still need the Law of God to humble them. Only those who humble themselves before God are ready to receive the Gospel.

Submit to God – Resist the Devil

*“Therefore **submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.** Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. **Humble***

yourselves in the sight of the Lord and He will lift you up.” James 4:7-10. If the devil is not fleeing from us then we are either failing to submit to God, or we are failing to resist the devil, or both. If we are submitting to God and resisting evil then satan has to flee. No power is greater than that of God. We are more than conquerors through Christ Jesus who loves us. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. This is at the heart of the Gospel: God resists the proud, but He gives grace to the humble.

God is Able to Save and to Destroy

“Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the Law and judges the Law. But if you judge the Law, you are not a doer of the Law but a judge. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?” James 4:11-12

Hypocrisy and Judgementalism

This makes it crystal clear that those who speak evil are showing themselves to have the fruit of fake faith, or presumption. If we have received mercy then we will be merciful. He who knows what it is to be forgiven will be more gracious to others. Yet you find hypocrites and Pharisees will damn another person to hell for a minuscule fraction of a sin that they, themselves, are guilty of. Ask an unregenerate person: *“Would you consider yourself to be a good person?”* and they will respond: *“I am a very good person!”* Such individuals are not humble before God. They do not recognise their sin. They do not appreciate the holiness of God. They do not understand the depravity of their sinful nature. We are all well deserving an eternity in hell. We are saved only by the grace of God alone. A person who understand that, one who has been forgiven, will be able to forgive others. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

All Boasting is Sin

*“Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell and make a profit’; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.’ But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. **Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.**”* James 4:13-16

To Know the Good We Ought to Do and Not Do it is Sin

We do not know what will happen tomorrow. When we speak about things planned for the future, we should say: *“God willing,” Deus Volente (DV)*. We need to be humble, as these things are in God's hands. Boasting is evil. To know the good that you ought to do and to fail to do it, is sin. It is the sin of omission. Neglect of duty.

Sins of Omission are Even More Serious

Many people think of sin more in terms of bad things. Some of us can delude ourselves that we are not that bad: *“I do not smoke, I do not get drunk, I do not do drugs, I am not a pervert, I am not like that tax collector, I fast twice a week and give one tenth of my income to the Lord.”* In Matthew 25 the Lord Jesus describes who He will condemn on the Day of Judgement, *“...you did not visit those in prison, you did not care for the sick, you did not give clothes to the naked, you did not give food to the starving, you did not give water to the thirsty, depart from Me you cursed in the lake of fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”* The Lord describes the Day of Judgement not so much in terms of the bad things we have done, but more in terms of the good things we failed to do. He describes sins of omission. By that definition there are a lot of people who are self-righteous and think they are good because they do not do a list of bad things. But what good are you doing in terms of fulfilling the Great Commission? Loving your neighbour? Seeking first the Kingdom of God? Doing the good that you know you ought to do?

Laying up Fuel for the Lake of Fire

“Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are corroded and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days. Indeed the wages of the labourers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter. You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you.” James 5:1-6

What We Sow is What We Will Reap

The wicked are laying up fuel for the fire. The rich who are corrupt, who heap up treasures for themselves by fraud, who live for pleasure and luxury are fattening their hearts and souls for the day of slaughter. They have condemned and murdered the just. The wicked are laying up fuel for the lake of fire.

Patient Perseverance

*“Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door! My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the Name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. **Indeed we count them blessed who endure.** You*

*have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord - that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful. But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. **But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No,' lest you fall into judgment.***" James 5:7-12

Live Productive Lives in the Light of Eternity

The fact that the Lord will return, should be a great comfort to us, because God will ensure that justice is done. The farmer is lifted up as an example of patient, steadfast, hard work, receiving treasures from the earth. The food that comes out of the soil are treasures. Farming requires a good work ethic, patience and faith. A farmer can sow and reap, but he cannot bring the rain. Only God can send the rain. Only God gives the increase. We should live sober, productive, God-fearing lives of good neighbourliness, showing kindness and mercy to others, in the light of the Day of Judgement. We must learn from the perseverance of Job and see the end intended by the Lord. The Lord is very compassionate and merciful. We must say what we mean and mean what we say. Be people of integrity. Be a person of your word. Let your yes be Yes! And your no, No!

Effective Fervent Prayer

*"Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing Psalms. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the Name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. **Confess your trespasses to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.** Elijah was a man with a nature like ours and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again and the heaven gave rain and the earth produced its fruit."* James 5:13-18

A Life-Threatening Situation in a Remote Mission Field

On a Mission to the Nuba Mountains of Sudan, fulfilling the Great Commission, many hours from the nearest hospital, nowhere close to any medical assistance, I was stung by a scorpion. It was a small light-coloured scorpion with a big swollen tail and small pincers. These are the ones that are most poisonous. As I was stung, I could feel the poison working through my hand, up my arm and past my elbow. I could do nothing, but call for our Mission team and others around to pray for me, as I felt the poison heading for my heart. I then had the most extraordinary experience. As they started to pray, I felt the poison going back down my arm, past my elbow, into my hand and out my fingers. It was one of the most extraordinary

quick answers to prayer I have ever experienced. The context of Mark 16, that you may be bitten by snakes and stung by scorpions, yet they will not harm you, is during the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

Confession and Repentance

The great Revival at KwaSizabantu Mission in KwaZulu, was in some ways built around James 5:16. They have a hospital that operates with the knowledge that many illnesses are psychosomatic even though they have physical symptoms. Many illnesses have spiritual, mental and emotional causes. Sometimes when medical science has done everything they can, some doctors send their patients to this Mission, where they counsel the patients, read the Scriptures, encourage them to confess their sins and to make right with the Lord and with others. Many of these people are healed. Not all, but many. While they do not discourage people from taking medication and doing what they can medically, they realise that many patients need spiritual healing first. The effective fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Elijah was called on by God to call for drought as a judgement upon a wicked people who were in apostasy against God. At the contest with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, God sent fire on the altar of Elijah. The people shouted: *“The Lord, He is God!”* Elijah then prayed for rain and it came and the earth produced its fruit.

Truth Sets Us Free

“Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.” James 5:19-20. Truth is key. You shall know the truth and the Truth shall set you free. The first part of the full armour of God in Ephesians 6, is the belt of truth. Truth matters. We should stand for the truth. We should oppose all error and falsehood.

Summary

True faith is tested. True faith is seen in action. True faith includes joy amidst suffering. True faith includes endurance and perseverance. True faith is eager to search for the truth. True faith is teachable, loves the truth and shows itself in love for neighbours and in humility before God. We are commanded to draw near to God, to resist sin, satan and the world, to seek wisdom from God and to seek wisdom from His Word. We need to be focused in our Faith.



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CHAPTER 21

1 PETER

An Epistle of Hope for Persecuted Christians

The First letter by Apostle Peter was written in AD 64 to persecuted Christians. A title could be Grace Under Fire, or A Letter to Persecuted Christians. It is an Epistle of Hope. As John is known as the Apostle of Love and Paul is known as the Apostle of Faith, the Apostle Peter can be known as the Apostle of Hope. Biblical hope means future certainty.

The Apostle of Hope

This is the second of seven general epistles in the New Testament. All of them are titled according to the author who wrote them. They are not addressed to a specific church. They do not have the name of a city mentioned. Peter is the best known of all the Apostles, whom Jesus chose, during His life on earth. Along with Paul, Peter dominates the New Testament. The Apostle Peter's name is mentioned over 150 times in the New Testament. His brother, Andrew, brought Peter to the Lord.

The Great Fire of Rome

1 Peter was written after the Great Fire of Rome. There was a general persecution by Nero, who was seeking to distract people from his crime of having burned down Rome in order to make space for his great building projects. The fire took place on 19 July AD 64. The Apostle Peter speaks about writing from Babylon, which is code amongst Christians for Rome. He speaks about the fiery trial they are facing. In order to distract the people from his own crime, Nero blamed Christians and literally made Roman candles of the Christians, by dipping them in pitch and putting them up on poles in order to light up his garden parties at night, while he rode around in his chariot. Christians were also fed to wild animals in the Colosseum. Peter was awaiting execution, which would be by crucifixion upside down on a cross.

To the Dispersed Pilgrims

Peter wrote an encouraging letter to Christians who were facing persecution, to the pilgrims dispersed throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, all in what is today Northern Turkey. These were churches where he had already laid foundations and ministered to the people. (The Apostle Paul ministered throughout what today is Southern Turkey).

Salvation and Suffering

Peter describes the privileges of Salvation and the blessings of election. He

gives us a Theology of suffering. This is the best Book in the Bible on the relationship between Salvation and suffering, showing that the suffering of Christ under the Law, led to our Salvation and our Salvation now leads to suffering and persecution. It is an Epistle of hope and of certainty. It deals with practical discipleship. It speaks of holiness, humility, submission and service. Suffering is mentioned 14 times. Joy and glory is mentioned 26 times. It speaks about joy amidst suffering and persecution.

Chapter 1 deals with **Salvation**.

Chapter 2 to 3:12 deals with **Relationships**.

Chapter 3:13 on deals with **Suffering**.

Chapter 4 also deals with **Suffering**.

Chapter 5 deals with **Community**.

Saved from Sin, for Service and Sanctification

“Peter, an Apostle of Jesus Christ, to the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the Blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.” 1 Peter 1:1-2. We are strangers to this world, it is not our ultimate home. We are dual citizens, but our real home is Heaven, the Kingdom of God. We see each member of the Trinity - Father, Son and Spirit involved in Salvation. We are not only saved **from** sin and from an eternity of condemnation in hell, we are saved **for** obedience and for sanctification. We see here a greater depth, height and vision. We are saved to be channels of God’s multiplied blessing and to be set apart for service and obedience to the Lord.

Joy Inexpressible Amidst Persecution

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to **a living hope** through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to **an inheritance incorruptible** and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in Heaven for you, who are **kept by the power of God through faith for salvation** ready to be revealed in the last time. **In this you greatly rejoice**, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that **the genuineness of your faith**, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it **is tested by fire**, may be found to praise, honour and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory.”* 1 Peter 1:3-8

A Living Hope Amidst the Fires of Tribulation

We have a living hope and abundant mercy. Many people in Rome lost their homes, churches, possessions and family in the fire. However, Christians

have an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, which will not fade away, as it is preserved safely in Heaven. Preserved is talking of the Perseverance of the saints. We see Salvation by the grace of God. *Sola Gratia!* Salvation through Christ alone. *Solus Christus!* Received by faith. *Sola Fide!* Our faith is tested to see if it is genuine. It is more precious than gold. Gold can perish and is tested by fire. How much more must our faith be tested by fire? We see the genuineness of a person's faith when they persevere through trials and tribulations, through suffering and persecution. Joy inexpressible, genuine faith, tested faith and refined faith.

Our God is Able to Save Us

When we think of faith being tested by fire, we think of Daniel 3, where Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego were commanded by Nebuchadnezzar to bow before his massive gold idol. Everybody bowed, except these three. They stood firm and stood out like sore thumbs. They were given a second chance to bow, or they would be thrown into the fiery furnace. They did not bow and before they were thrown into the fiery furnace they responded: *"Our God whom we serve is able to save us and He will. But even if He does not, we still will not bow before your idols, nor will we serve your god!"* They were not saved from the fire, they were preserved in the midst of the fire. The Lord was with them and they came out unharmed, even without any smell of smoke on their garments. There is joy inexpressible, even under severe persecution.

The Fulfilment of Biblical Prophecy

"Receiving the end of your Faith - the Salvation of your souls. Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the Gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from Heaven - things which angels desire to look into." 1 Peter 1:9-12. Peter writes about a Salvation that was foretold by the prophets for hundreds, even thousands, of years, which is seen in the Salvation of our souls. The Gospel is proclaimed by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Do Not Be Conformed to the Lusts of the World

"Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance." 1 Peter 1:13-14. We are called to walk worthy of our

calling, to gird up the loins of our minds. We are often told not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. We need to be sober minded and think clearly. We have a hope resting fully on the grace that is brought through the Revelation of Jesus. This should lead us to be obedient to God, to be sober. We live in a world where many people are drunk. Not just drunk with alcohol or drugs, but drunk with a spirit of rebellion. This hostility towards God comes through secular education, or rather indoctrination, Hollywood entertainment and the secular news media. There is a lack of soberness, where people scream and shout and throw out slogans and sound bytes without even considering the facts and realities, or the Revelation of God.

Belief Always Affects Behaviour

*“But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘**Be holy, for I am holy**’”* 1 Peter 1:15-16. Because we believe in a holy God, we must seek to be conformed to His character by living holy lives. To be set apart. Like your toothbrush, it is for your personal use. Nobody else may use it. God wants us for His own personal service, not for those of other gods, for the spirit of the age, other religions or worldviews. We are to be loyal to God. Your belief always affects your behaviour. Everybody does live in accordance with their beliefs. Although many are inconsistent with their stated beliefs, you are always consistent with your real belief. If somebody runs in and says: Your house is on fire! Or your car is being stolen! You are not likely to say, “I believe you” and stay seated. If you really believe, you will get up and do something about it. It is impossible to really believe something without it affecting your actions. People may say “I worship a holy God,” or “Jesus died for my sins”. But if they really believed it they would act with a gratitude and with a loyalty and devotion of those who understand the reality. People whose lives do not change, do not really believe.

Redeemed by the Precious Blood of the Lamb

*“And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear; knowing that you were not **redeemed** with corruptible things, like silver or gold, **from your aimless conduct** received by tradition from your fathers, but **with the precious Blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot**. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.”* 1 Peter 1:17-21

Set Free to Serve Christ

We are pilgrims living in the light of the eternal Creator, He who judges impartially. John the Baptist pointed to Jesus, saying **“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!”** Jesus is the Lamb of God. Salvation is *Solus Christus!* Christ alone is the only Saviour and Redeemer, the only Head of the Church. We have been redeemed from our previously aimless conduct. After we were saved the Lord gave us direction. Redeemed suggests that a person who was enslaved was bought out of slavery with a price. We were redeemed from slavery to sin, satan and death, saved from hell. Not with corruptible things like silver or gold. We were redeemed by the precious Blood of Christ, which is far more valuable than all the gold of this world.

Purified by Obeying the Truth of God’s Word

“Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the Word of God which lives and abides forever.” 1 Peter 1:22-23. Faith, Hope and Love is expressed here. Sincere love with a faith and a hope that is secure in God. This love should be fervent, coming from a pure heart. Seed that falls into the ground is corruptible, it will break down and die, but will bring forth a harvest. We have been born again, not by corruptible seed, but by incorruptible seed, the Word of God, which lasts forever. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. God’s Word never returns void, it always accomplishes what it has been sent out to accomplish.

The Word of God Endures Forever

“Because ‘All flesh is as grass and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers and its flower falls away, but the Word of the Lord endures forever.’ Now this is the Word which by the Gospel was preached to you.” 1 Peter 1:24-25. Life on earth is short. It is transient. The glory of man is like the seasons that come and go, like leaves on a tree, that fall, like grass that withers, which is, so to speak, resurrected in spring. In contrast, the Word of God endures forever, in season and out of season, it always produces a harvest.

“Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the Word that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.” 1 Peter 2:1-3. When we become a Christian, we have a new life. Just like a newborn baby, who cannot do much for himself, first feeds off his mother’s

milk. This provides all the nourishment necessary for health and growth. We, as new Christians, need to take in as much of the pure milk of the Word of God. That is spiritual milk and meat for our souls. It is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. It is like a fire that burns within our hearts. It is like a hammer that breaks the rocks into pieces. Jesus says, *“Whoever thirsts, must come unto Me and drink and out of His innermost being will flow rivers of living waters.”*

Christ is the Chief Cornerstone

“Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious.” 1 Peter 2:4. This is a key verse for Livingstone Fellowship. Jesus is the Stone which the builders rejected as worthless, but which God has made the chief Cornerstone. This is also seen in the vision of Daniel 2, the head of gold, the chest of silver, the stomach of bronze, the legs of iron and the feet of iron and clay, representing all the empires of the world from the Babylonian Empire, Persian Empire, Greek, or Macedonian Empire and Roman Empire, which split into two, East and West, as indicated by the two legs. Then the Stone cut out without hands, strikes the base of the statue and the entire statue shatters into dust and the wind blows the dust away. The stone grows to fill the whole earth. A prophetic picture of the triumph of the Kingdom of God. Christ is the Cornerstone.

The Statue and the Stone

Jesus said, *‘If anyone falls on that Stone, he will be cut to pieces. But if that Stone falls on someone, it will crush them to dust.’* Those who attack Christ will be cut to pieces, utterly and completely destroyed. There is a picture of this in Solovetsky Island, the first concentration camp of the Soviet Union, where over 95,000 ministers of the Gospel were murdered by the Bolshevik Communist Party in the first prototype concentration camp, up in the Arctic Circle, in the White Sea at Solovetsky monastery. In Lubyanka Square, the Lubyanka, which used to be a monastery, was taken over by the KGB and turned into a place of terror, where tens-of-thousands of Christians were arrested, tortured and murdered. Outside was a large traffic circle with a statue, a massive idol on it, of Felix Dzerzhinsky, the founder of the Cheka, the Soviet Secret Police, which later became the NKVD and later the KGB. This iconic monument was toppled in 1991, as the Soviet Union was abolished. Christians then brought a stone from Solovetsky Island and laid that stone in Lubyanka square to remind us of the victory of Christ. The statue is gone and the stone remains. *“The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief Cornerstone. If anyone falls on that Stone, they will be cut to pieces. But, if that Stone falls on someone, it will crush them to powder.”* Those who reject Christ will find themselves

utterly defeated, annihilated, absolutely wiped out and only powder will be left that the wind will blow away. Even the memory of them will ultimately be blown away.

Christ is Building His Church

*“You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, ‘Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.’ **Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, ‘The Stone which the builders rejected has become the chief Cornerstone and ‘A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.’ They stumble, being disobedient to the Word, to which they also were appointed.**”* 1 Peter 2:5-8. We are called to be living stones in the Church that God is building, to be part of God’s House. A priest is a bridge builder, he stands between God and man. He speaks to God on behalf of man with intercession and speaks to man for God prophetically. We are meant to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God. Offer up yourselves as living, acceptable sacrifices to God (Romans 12:1-2).

Build Your Life Upon the Rock of God’s Word

The wise man builds his house upon the rock and the foolish man builds his house on the sand. Jesus is the Rock. No other foundation can be laid, except that of Jesus Christ. Christ is the Cornerstone. He is the only foundation (1 Corinthians 3). We read that no other foundation can be laid, except Jesus Christ. We must build with precious stones. Those who build with wood and hay will find that burned up. Only that which is built on the foundation of Christ, the Rock, will stand on the Day of Judgement. Only that which is built with precious stones will endure. This speaks about our motives and the foundation of our life and work. (1 Corinthians 2:11).

Is Jesus Your Saviour or Judge?

1 Peter 2:7 was the text of Charles Spurgeon’s first sermon, aged 15. Is Christ Jesus a stumbling block to you? Is Jesus a rock of offense? Or, is He the Chief Cornerstone and Foundation of your life?

From Darkness to Light

“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.” 1 Peter 2:9-10. This reminds us of the giving of the Law of the first Covenant on the Mountain through Moses to the children of

Israel. The nation was called to be a holy nation and a royal priesthood. Just as the Levites were to be priests to Israel, so Israel was to be priests to the whole world. Now we see that the Lord has transferred this to His chosen, elect, redeemed, regenerate, born-again believers, a chosen generation, holy and set-apart, a royal priesthood, we are to both rule and serve. We are to offer spiritual and living sacrifices. To declare the praise of Him who called us out of the darkness into His marvellous light.

After the Darkness - Light

This has been the history of the Reformation. Out of darkness of Catholic medieval superstition, indulgences and corruption, came the light of the Reformation. This is the motto of Geneva: *Post Tenebras Lux* (After darkness, light!). This was the theme and recurring emphasis in the Reformation. We are called out of darkness to shine the light of Christ. During the Leipzig Prayer meetings and the movement that brought down the communist system throughout Eastern Europe, they used the symbol of a candle. They put candles in their windows to testify that light is more powerful than darkness. Not all the darkness can put out even a single candle. Truth is more powerful than lies, error, propaganda and indoctrination. Our Faith is greater than the power of unbelief. Ultimately it brought down the Soviet Union and opened up the Iron Curtain. It brought down the Berlin Wall. Light is more powerful than darkness. This is our calling. We are saved to serve. We are called to seek first the Kingdom of God. The Apostle Peter cannot keep himself to one point in a verse, every verse has multiple points. Although he was an unlearned fisherman, they perceived that this man had been with Jesus. Peter was transformed.

We Are Called to Be Different to the World

*“Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, **abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul**, having your conduct honourable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.”* 1 Peter 2:11-12. Expect to be criticised, slandered, misunderstood and have evil spoken of you. Jesus said, if they loved Me, they will love you also. If they hated Me, they will hate you too. If you were of this world, the world would love its own. But, you are not of this world and therefore your conduct as aliens, sojourners, pilgrims in this world should show that you are living soberly in a drunken land, that you are living in the light in an age of darkness. You are living in the truth, in an age of deception and deceit. We should conduct ourselves so honourably among the gentiles that even when they speak evil of us, they will have to recognise the good works and, perhaps without intending to, they will have to glorify God.

God and Government

*“Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. For **this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men** - as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. Honour all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the King.”* 1 Peter 2:13-17. This includes a good description of the role of government. Peter deals with all aspects of discipleship, including our relationship to government. Civil government is called to be a minister of Justice, a servant, a minister, a deacon of God to punish evildoers and to praise and protect those who do good. This lays out God’s will, that by our good deeds we put to silence ignorant and foolish criticism. They can say what they like, but our actions should speak louder. We should be free, but not using our freedom as a cloak for vice. We should be bondservants, slaves to God. The Apostle Peter can put more doctrine into less words. Who else can punch ahead with so many important messages in every verse and every sentence? The Apostle Peter’s character comes through. We are set free to serve Christ.

Patient Endurance of Suffering is Commendable

*“Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But, **when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.**”* 1 Peter 2:18-20. We must expect unfair treatment and take it graciously as unto the Lord.

Follow in His Steps

“For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:” 1 Peter 2:21. This is the verse that inspired one of the great Christian novels of all times: *In His Steps*, where the pastor was convicted to challenge his people for one year to do nothing without asking: *“What would Jesus do?”* What Did Jesus Do? What Did Jesus Say? Is even more important than what I think He would do. *In His Steps* was more objective, it was about what Jesus did and what Jesus said and taken from the objective position of Scriptures, we should try and answer our challenges, ethical and moral, on a daily basis. How we order our society should be in the light of Scripture.

Quo Vadis?

There is the story in History that the Apostle Peter, as he was fleeing Rome, after the Fire of Rome, as Nero was trying to wipe the Christians out, he met the Lord Jesus going the opposite way and said: *'Where are you going Lord?'* The Lord answered, *'to Rome, to be crucified again!'* The Apostle Peter was convicted that he should not be fleeing from persecution in Rome. Peter turned around, went back, was captured and ultimately was crucified upside down. This letter is written after he went back to be with his people who were being persecuted. The shepherd chose to die with his sheep.

Christ Died for You – Live for Him!

*"Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; **who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree**, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness - by whose stripes you were healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls."* 1 Peter 2:22-25

Keep Focused on Jesus

Keep your eyes fixed upon Jesus, on whom your Faith depends from beginning to end. Jesus is our example. He is our redemption. His sufferings led to our Salvation and our Salvation also involves suffering. Man's problems began with a tree in the Garden of Eden, the Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil. Eating forbidden fruit. There was the tree of Calvary, upon which Jesus was crucified. There will be the Tree of Life in the New Jerusalem. Sin entered through disobedience at one tree. Salvation was won on another tree. We will again have access to the Tree of Life.

God is Not Egalitarian

There are distinctions between people in Scripture. Servants, masters, wives, husbands, young people, older men, younger men, older women, younger women. There are distinctions in terms of class, age, gender and social status. We are told in Galatians that we are all one in Christ Jesus, neither slave nor free, male nor female, neither Jew nor Gentile. The Scripture here is speaking about the way of Salvation. However, It is not saying there are no more distinctions, that now a man can self-identify as a woman! We see in Scripture that on the last day in Heaven there will be people of every race, tribe, nation and tongue and they will all be singing. Even such national identities and linguistic distinctives will be recognisable in Heaven. Not some genderless, nationless, faceless kind of socialist mass. God has created so much diversity in nature and amongst his people. We are not meant to obscure this.

The Incorruptible Beauty of a Gentle Spirit

*“Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the Word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear. Do not let your adornment be merely outward - arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel - rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with **the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit**, which is very precious in the sight of God. For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.”* 1 Peter 3:1-6. Instructions are given to women about chastity, modesty, humility, fearing God alone. It speaks against an obsession with make-up, jewellery and outward adornment. All of this is a distraction. We need to focus on real character.

Compassion and Courtesy

*“Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honour to the wife, as to the weaker vessel and as being heirs together of the grace of life, **that your prayers may not be hindered**. Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tender-hearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. For ‘He who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. Let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. **For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.**”* 1 Peter 3:7-12

Consideration in Conduct

Our prayer life and devotional life are affected by our relationships and there needs to be respect, honour, submission and consideration. We have relationships and priorities. Our conduct affects our prayers. If we are living evil, rebellious lives against God, we cannot seriously expect grace. Our relationships are the same. If you have a child living in rebellion to their parents, whatever they ask is not likely to be given, until they make their relationships right and get their attitude straight.

Always Be Ready to Give a Defence

*“But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you are blessed. ‘And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.’ But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts and **always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you**, with meekness and fear; having a*

good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.” 1 Peter 3:13-17

The Problem of the Heart

The heart of the problem is the problem of the heart. We often have a cobra heart with snake-like poison. The solution is that we need a new heart through regeneration. We need the peace of God through justification. We need holy lives through sanctification. Always be ready, be prepared to answer skeptics. Josh McDowell’s book, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, or Frank Morrison’s, *Who Moved the Stone?* are examples of challenging people with the facts. Always be ready to give an answer to anybody who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you. Indeed they should be ashamed if they defame us for no good reason. If we suffer it should not be suffering for self-righteousness sake!

The Just Died for the Unjust

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the Ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us - baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into Heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him.” 1 Peter 3:18-22

Saved Through the Waters of the Flood

This passage has confused some people. Peter speaks about the Lord going and preaching to the spirits in prison, to the people who died in the days of Noah during the Flood. Peter mentions that the Flood is an anti-type of Baptism that the people who survived the Flood in the Ark, eight persons in total, were saved through water, which is symbolic of baptism. Not the removal of filth from the body, but the answer of a good conscience towards God through the Resurrection of Christ whose has gone into Heaven and is at the right hand of God, with Angels and authorities in power to be made subject to Him.

God Now Commands All People to Repent

In Chapter four again, it speaks about Christ preaching to those who were in prison and those who died in the Flood of Noah. It does seem Christ preached to the souls in prison. God is a spirit. It specifically says: *‘To those who died in the days of Noah while the Ark was being prepared, while a few were able to be saved.’* It is possible that the Lord actually did preach the

Gospel to those who died in the Flood, who had not had the opportunity of the Gospel? Certainly that seems to be the only interpretation that made sense, that during the time when His body was in the tomb, the Lord's spirit went and proclaimed the Gospel to those, of previous times, who had not had the opportunity to hear the Word. This does not give any hope for our time, for people to suggest that there is a second chance since the Lord has died now. God now commands all men everywhere to Repent! It is appointed unto man once to die and after that the Judgement.

Suffering Can Purge and Purify Us

“Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles - when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you. They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For this reason the Gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.” 1 Peter 4:1-6

Be Sober and Alert

When you are suffering physically, we don't really have time for sin. There is something about suffering, whether it is physical, persecution outside, medical crisis, or disease, it can purify the spirit. We are to live sober lives amongst this dark age, we are to stand out, to be different from the world.

Do Everything to the Glory of God

*“But the end of all things is at hand; therefore **be serious and watchful in your prayers.** And above all things **have fervent love for one another,** for ‘love will cover a multitude of sins.’ **Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.** As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, **that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ,** to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”* 1 Peter 4:7-11

Love Covers a Multitude of Sins

It is true, that love covers a multitude of sin, just like a parent will overlook so many faults of their own children, because we love them. You would not bring up something they did years ago. If there is love, there is mercy and forgiveness. It is no good giving hospitality while worrying about the cost of everything and how much trouble you went through to prepare the

meal. Being told how difficult it was to be prepared for the person visiting is like complaining when you're trying to give a gift. **Attitude is everything.** Do all things with the right spirit. We are all called to practise hospitality, although some may have the gift. We have all been given more than one gift, or talent, of which we are stewards. We are answerable to God for it. We must be faithful. *Soli Deo Gloria!* Everything must be done for the glory of God alone. There is no room for boasting in the Reformed Faith. We did not chose God, He chose us. We did not find God, He found us. God saves sinners. Outside of Christ Jesus, we are lost! Salvation is all of God. All glory goes to Him.

It Is a Privilege to Suffer for Christ

“Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the Name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people’s matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. For the time has come for Judgment to begin at the House of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the Gospel of God? Now ‘If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?’ Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.” 1 Peter 4:12-19

Judgement Begins in the House of God

It is a privilege to suffer for Christ. Let the blasphemers attack you. It is a glory for you to suffer for Christ. Sometimes people say that they are suffering for the Lord, but they are suffering because of the own sin. What you sow is what you reap. You are not suffering for Christ unless you are suffering for righteousness sake. Crucifixion was a criminal’s death, but we should not be ashamed of persecution by the world. If the righteous are scarcely saved, what will happen to the ungodly and the sinner? We who fear God should expect judgement, because judgement must begin in the House of God. The Lord begins with His people. His people are being tested and tried, that we might come out purified, more prayerful, more powerful, more purged and more holy for the Lord. When Judgement comes to the wicked, it will not be for their salvation, it will mean destruction. We are called to be faithful.

Shepherd the Flock Faithfully

“The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.” 1 Peter 5:1-4

Do You Love the Lord?

The Good Shepherd, the Chief Shepherd, is Jesus. Coal fire is only mentioned twice in the Bible. The coal fire is mentioned outside the High Priest’s house, where the Apostle Peter went on the night the Lord was betrayed. The coal fire was mentioned again after the Lord’s Resurrection, by the Sea of Galilee, where the Lord was preparing the fish for His disciples after they had been fishing all night. Jesus said to Peter: *“Peter, do you love Me? Feed My sheep! Peter, do you love Me? Feed My lambs! Peter, do you love Me? Feed My sheep!”* As Peter denied the Lord three times, so the Lord asks Peter three times: Do you love Me? Each time He told him to feed His sheep. 34 years later, Peter says to the elders, shepherd the flock of God. Serve as overseers, not by compulsion, but willingly. Not for gain, but eagerly. Be examples. The Shepherd will appear and judge you. Not many should be teachers, as we teachers will be judged with greater strictness. We have a higher standard to maintain. There is a call to be faithful shepherds, following the Good Shepherd.

God Resists the Proud But He Gives Grace to the Humble

*“Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another and be clothed with humility, for **God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the Faith**, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen and settle you. To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” 1 Peter 5:5-11*

Be Steadfast in the Faith

It is so important that young people do not think too much of themselves, but be humble. God resists the proud. He gives grace to the humble. We are told not to worry about anything, but to cast all our cares upon the

Lord, to pray about everything. Nero saw himself as a lion. A lion was symbolic of the Roman Empire, its legions and particularly of the emperor. Be sober, as your adversary, the devil, walks around like a roaring lion. Although Nero thought he was a lion, he was not. The devil acts like a lion. Jesus is the Lion. Resist satan and be steadfast in the Faith. Faith is a shield - strong like solid metal, substantial. It can put out the fiery darts of the enemy. It is part of the full armour of God to help us to resist the devil.

Love and Grace

“By Silvanus, our faithful brother as I consider him, I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God in which you stand. She who is in Babylon, elect together with you, greets you; and so does Mark my son. Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to you all who are in Christ Jesus. Amen.” 1 Peter 5:12-14. Silvanus is another name for Silas. John-Mark receives a special mention. *Sola Deo Gloria! Sola Gratia!*

Summary

The key themes of 1 Peter are hope, grace, mercy, salvation, love, joy, soberness, fear of God, humility, the preciousness of our Faith and the glory that awaits. Many things are mentioned as precious: Faith (1:7); the Blood of Christ (1:19); the Cornerstone (2:4-6); our Saviour (2:7); the Holy Spirit (3:4); our suffering (ch4); and the Crown we will receive (ch5). We have a living faith, a tested faith and a joyful love. We are part of a spiritual House, a royal Priesthood, a holy nation. We are called to eagerly desire the spiritual milk of God's Word. As living stones, we are being built into God's House, or Temple. As priests offer spiritual sacrifices, as pilgrims we are strangers to this world. We need to recognise that our ultimate home is in Heaven. We are to serve and submit to God and resist the devil. We are to fear God not man. This will involve suffering for Christ. We are called to be faithful stewards of God's gifts and talents that have been entrusted to us by God. We are to speak the very words of God. We are to greatly rejoice, gird up our minds, be sober minded, be obedient, not conforming to the former lusts and ignorance of the world. Be holy in your conduct. Love sincerely and fervently. Lay aside all malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and evil speaking. Offer up spiritual sacrifices, proclaiming the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light. We are called to follow in Christ's steps. To be compassionate and cautious. Always ready to give a defence for the hope that is within us. We are called to arm ourselves with the mind of Christ. To serve for God's glory. To suffer for God's glory. To be serious and watchful in our prayers. To be hospitable without grumbling. To minister to one another. To speak so as to glorify God in all things. To submit to God and to resist the devil.



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CHAPTER 22

2 PETER

Who, When and Where?

This is the last Epistle written by the Apostle Peter, written in haste, in AD 67 from Rome, during Nero's persecution. Written shortly before the Apostle Peter's death by crucifixion, upside down. It is similar to the Apostle Paul's last letter, 2 Timothy, which was also written at the same time period, during the aftermath of The Great Fire in Rome, which Nero blamed upon the Christians, as scapegoats, to distract people from his own evil activities.

Why?

This Book is a reminder of Christian **Doctrine and Devotion**. It is a warning against false Doctrine and false teaching. It deals with worldviews, authority, warnings and threats to the Church. He warns about two types of threats: threats from outside, such as from persecution; and threats from inside, through false teachers, false prophets, false shepherds, those who, through heresy and apostasy, corrupt the church from within. It is the inside threat that is the most serious and dangerous.

Faith and Conduct

To counteract the influence of false teaching, both the Apostle Peter and Paul, recommend to their people sound Biblical teaching. Work your way through the whole Word of God. The Apostle Peter points out that we live in perilous times, when false teaching and apostasy is prevalent. Guard against corruption from within by Biblical Faith and holy conduct. The emphasis is: **Be alert and beware of false teachers!** Live each day in the sight of the Master – the Day of Judgement – live in the light of Eternity. Ethics and Morality in the light of the Lord's Coming, the Day of Judgement. We are to know God and make Him known. We are to know the Word of God and know the God of the Word.

Precious Faith in Perilous Times

*“Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained like precious Faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us **exceedingly great and precious promises**, that through these you may be partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”* 2 Peter 1:1-4. *Solus Christus* is emphasised right from the beginning, along

with *Sola Fide* and *Sola Gratia*. Salvation is by the Grace of God alone, received by Faith alone and it is through Christ alone, through His righteousness alone, that we can be made righteous before God. God multiplies blessings. Our Faith is precious and we come to this Faith through knowledge, knowledge of the Word of God and knowledge of the God of the Word. The divine nature of God is ours through the great and precious promises that we receive in the Word of God.

Practical Discipleship

Peter gives nine fruit of the nature of Christ, or nine steps to Heaven: Diligence, Faith, Virtue, Knowledge, Self-Control, Perseverance, Godliness, Brotherly kindness and love. *“But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness and to brotherly kindness love.”* 2 Peter 1:5-7. These are very similar to the fruit of the Spirit. These are the steps we need to focus on in our practical walk with God, our daily discipleship.

Do Not Be Barren

“For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” 2 Peter 1:8-11

Faithful and Fruitful

We need to be faithful to the Word of God and fruitful in the service of God. To be barren or unfruitful is unacceptable. Just as there must be evidence of life through breathing, pulse rate or brain activity, there has to be evidence of life for Faith to be present. It is not right, or possible, for a Christian to become barren in their faith. If a person says they have committed their life to the Lord, but you see no fruit, no progress, or no life, one has to assume that either there is no faith, or it is stillborn. **Faith** will always lead to **fruit**. Your **creed** should lead to your **character** being transformed, which should lead to your **conduct** being controlled, which should lead to Godly results.

Be Grounded in the Truth of God's Word

“For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing

that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.” 2 Peter 1:12-15

We Are Pilgrims Passing Through

Truth is emphasised. The Word of God is a solid rock foundation for all knowledge. Our body is like a tent. We are pilgrims. We are travelling through. This is not our permanent home. We do not yet have our everlasting resurrected body. Death is putting off this tent, striking camp. At death we move to a permanent Heaven. Everything here is transient. We need to be reminded of these things.

Living Every Day in the Light of His Last Day

In John 21:18-19, Jesus referred to the fact that the Apostle Peter would be taken by others. He would have a violent death, a crucifixion. So for the previous 37 years, the Apostle Peter knew that a violent death was before him. Jesus never told him when. Peter knew he was near to his last day and wrote this letter in great haste. This is a final message, his last Will and Testament to those he has discipled and mentored. We need to be reminded of history, of God's works and Words in providence.

Moved by the Holy Spirit

*“For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were **eyewitnesses** of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honour and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: ‘**This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.**’ And we heard this voice which came from Heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. And so we have the prophetic Word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that **no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.**” 2 Peter 1:16-21*

First Hand Eyewitness Experience

The Apostle Peter had seen Jesus heal the sick. He was there when Jesus raised the dead. He was there when Jesus walked on the water. He heard the Lord calm the storm with a Word. He saw the Lord transfigured on the mountain. He heard the Words of God: *“This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased!”* He had seen our Lord Jesus betrayed, falsely accused, judged, flogged, executed, crucified, dead and buried and he had seen the Lord rise from the dead and resurrected three days later. He saw Him when He ascended and heard the Great Commission. He was not talking

about something that he had heard third hand from someone else. The Lord Jesus Christ personally chose, selected and called Peter, mentored and trained him and had walked with him for many months through Galilee and Judea. He knew these things from personal experience.

On the Mount of Transfiguration

He refers to what is recorded in Matthew 17:1-8, on the Mount of Transfiguration. He heard the voice of God from Heaven as Jesus was transfigured on the Mountain. *Solus Christus* comes out here. Christ alone is the only Mediator. He is the only Saviour. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father, except through Him.

The Day Has Dawned

The prophetic Words were like lights shining in the darkness. Now the day has dawned. The Old Testament prophecies were like candles shining in the dark. Christ has come like the sun rising. He has Risen from the dead. He is ascended on High, He is Alive and He is coming again to judge the living and the dead. Our basis for all knowledge is the revealed Word of God. God's special Revelation. The New Testament has come and it is like the dawn has risen and the darkness has been driven away. We now have the sun shining in all its brilliance.

Built Upon the Rock of God's Word

Chapter 1 is about the need for growth in Faith, the trustworthy prophetic Word, the importance of the Word of God. We need to know the God of the Word, know the Word of God and make Him known.

Beware of Demonic Deception

Chapter 2 is warnings about the hard times, the strong temptations and powerful oppositions, the false prophets and false teachings. Similar to the Book of Jude, in warning about deception from demonic evil sources. *“But there were also false prophets among the people, even as **there will be false teachers among you**, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, **even denying the Lord** who bought them and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle and their destruction does not slumber.”* 2 Peter 2:1-3

Perilous Times and Destructive Teachings

There will be destructive heresies subtly promoted in secret, even within the church. We live in a time of prevalent false teaching: Syncretism, where humanistic ideologies are being merged with Christianity. Some doctrines

and words have been distorted to mean something other than originally intended. Liberation Theology is a classic example. Many pervert the grace of God to encourage immorality, using deceptive words to manipulate and distort Biblical concepts to a new meaning. Blasphemy is rife because many in the church do not fear God. Many people think they can get away with anything because the Gospel has been distorted and diluted. So as not to seem intolerant, sin is excused. So as not to be seen as divisive, heresy is tolerated. So as not to be perceived as unkind, judgemental or legalistic, the Law of God is devalued. Many have given over to a new false gospel: “*God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life. God loves you just the way you are. You don’t need to change a thing. Just pray this prayer.*” There are no Scriptures backing this up.

There are however, many Scriptures stating: “*Repent, prepare to meet thy God. Fear God. Submit to God. Resist the devil. Take up your Cross. Forsake the world. Deny yourself. Follow Christ. Christ suffered for you and left you an example that you should follow in His footsteps.*” Today, you may be condemned for just reading the Law of God - more than you will be condemned for committing any of the sins the Bible condemns. The warning here is of false teachers, who from greed and corruption or covetousness, manipulate the meaning of Scripture to try and justify their actions. An example of this today is seen in the prosperity cults. Covetousness can exploit people with deceptive words.

Examples of God's Judgement

*“For if God did not spare **the angels** who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in **the Flood** on the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of **Sodom and Gomorrah** into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds) - **then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment** and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord.”* 2 Peter 2:4-11

Destined to Destruction

Peter refers to history, when God cast the angels who followed Lucifer in his rebellion out of Heaven. Because they sinned, they were judged and without any opportunity for salvation, and were utterly rejected for all eternity. Lucifer is now satan, and the angels that rebelled are now demons, destined for destruction.

Lawlessness Invites Judgement

God also destroyed the entire world in the Flood and saved only 8 people. The vast majority of people were condemned and died in the Flood. The Scripture speaks against cheap grace and easy believism. The Nicolaitans taught that you can sin in the body and be pure in the spirit. Today this lawlessness is called antinomianism. It encourages people to live in rebellion to God, by tattooing and piercing their body, by abortion, vice and evil; and yet still presume to be right with God!

Do Not Turn Back

God judged Sodom and Gomorrah. He reigned fire and brimstone upon these cities and turned them into ashes, destroying many people. God spared Lot and his two daughters. God warned that if you put your hand to the plough, do not look back. Lot's wife looked back and was condemned. We were taught in motorbike training: *"Look where you are going. You will go where you are looking!"* Look ahead. Plan your way. Keep focused on your goal. Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus.

Do Not Confuse Presumption with Faith

Peter reminds his readers not to be disturbed by all the lawless deeds around us. God knows how to save the righteous. Peter encourages people who are suffering in a world surrounded by all sorts of evil. People presume that God gives us promises without our need to pay any attention to conditions. Everything is about me, myself and I and they speak evil about others.

The Marks of False Teachers

False teachers are characterised by pride, immorality, sensuality, deceptiveness, broken promises and shameful greed. They are corrupt, slaves of depravity, dishonest, proud and deceptive. They are presumptuous, opportunists, covetous, hypocritical, duplicitous, depraved and blasphemous boasters who mouth empty words. *"But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand and will utterly perish in their own corruption and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own*

deceptions while they feast with you, having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, **enticing unstable souls**. They have a heart trained in covetous practices and are accursed children. They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet. These are **wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest**, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever." 2 Peter 2:12-17

A Solemn Warning

Along with the Book of Jude, 2 Peter is the toughest exposé against false teachers, which every pastor and teacher would do well to read carefully, with fear and trembling, lest any of us corrupt the way of God and become false teachers. Our creed should affect our character, which should affect our conduct, which should affect our conversations. Corruption leads to chaos. The wages of sin is death. If this was relevant to the first century church, it is even more relevant to the 21st century church. The prosperity cult is self-centered. Their god is like a magic genie, who pops out and says, "Your wish is my command!" Instead of us being bondservants of God.

When the Donkey Had More Spiritual Perception than the Prophet

Prosperity is taught on Christian T.V. channels, enticing unstable souls and encouraging covetousness. Balaam was the prophet who accepted payment to place curses upon God's people. He was willing to place financial gain above his calling. Balaam went astray to destruction. Balaam's donkey had more spiritual discernment and good sense than Balaam. How often do our pets have more spiritual wisdom and discernment than many people who claim to be Christians? Some animals have more faith than humans. That is why many birds manage to fly long distances on migration, finding their way across oceans and continents to the same area every year. Through the prophet Jeremiah, God said: "*The animals know more than My people do. Learn from the swallow, watch the stork, they know the times and the seasons, but My people do not know.*" Often animals are more wise than people. False prophets are like dry wells in the desert. What a destructive disappointment!

Great Swelling Words of Emptiness

"For when **they speak great swelling words of emptiness**, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. **While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption**; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage. For if, after they have escaped the

pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. **For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.** But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: 'A dog returns to his own vomit,' and, 'a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.'" 2 Peter 2:18-22

The Allure of False Prophets

Peter warns against those with great swelling words that are empty. Those who forsake the Faith, will find their judgement more severe than those who never responded in the first place. Apostasy is a terrible sin. The Lord compares apostates to a dog who returns to its own vomit and pigs going back to roll in the mud after just being washed. We are living in a time of prevalent deception, falsehood, false teaching, great backsliding and apostasy. Many people will gather by the dry wells because they are promised health and wealth, something for nothing, cheap, quick, easy solutions like magic. A Faith that costs nothing is worth nothing.

Stir Up the Fire with the Word of God

"Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Saviour, **knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days**, walking according to their own lusts and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.' For this they wilfully forget: that by the Word of God the Heavens were of old and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the Heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same Word, are reserved for fire until the Day of Judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. **The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.**" 2 Peter 3:1-9. This speaks about the need to gather the coals together and reignite the flame. To stir up our minds and hearts. As John Calvin said: "The church should be the fellowship of the flaming heart. A heart aflame in the hand of God. Promptly and sincerely in the service of My God." We must remember the Commandments of God and the lessons of history.

The World that Perished

The first time God judged the world with water. The next time He will judge the world with fire. The world we live in today is not the world God created. That world was destroyed in the Flood. We are living in a fallen world, which is not anything near as great and wonderful and hospitable as the original world God created. Today there are thorns, diseases, earthquakes, droughts and environmental problems that were not part of the world that God created. The world that we now see, has the elements of the world that perished in the Flood.

Why Does God Not End All Suffering?

Some people ask: Why God does not end all the suffering in the world? He can and will, but to do so, He will have to take all the people out of this world. The fact that God has not ended the world yet is a sign of His patience, mercy, love and grace. He is giving us, and others, more opportunity to Repent and to fulfill the Great Commission.

What Manner of Persons Ought You to Be?

*“But the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the Heavens will pass away with a great noise and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, **what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the Day of God**, because of which the Heavens will be dissolved, being on fire and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new Heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”* 2 Peter 3:10-13

Hastening the Lord’s Return

The next Judgement will not be by the waters of a flood, but by fervent heat, blazing fire and an inferno of God's wrath. We should be living in holy conduct and Godliness in our Faith. God will reward the faithful and judge the wicked. We can speed up the coming of the Lord by fulfilling the Great Commission. The Lord will not return until His Great Commission has been fulfilled. The end will not come until the Church has fully completed the Great Commission. To make disciples of every nation, teaching obedience to all things that the Lord has commanded. There is so much more for us to do by taking the last command of Christ as our first concern. Making Christ’s Great Commission our supreme ambition. We should live in the light of eternity and hasten the coming of the Day of the Lord by getting back to the Bible and getting serious about fulfilling the Great Commission. The delay of the Lord’s return is evidence of God’s patience to us.

Be Steadfast in the Faith and Grow in Grace

*“Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, **be diligent** to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation - as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, **beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness**, being led away with the error of the wicked; but **grow in the grace and knowledge** of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.” 2 Peter 3:14-18*

Paul’s Writings are Recognised as Scripture

Peter refers again to Scripture and mentions Paul as an Apostle, who according to the wisdom given to Him by God, has written, speaking of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. Here Peter recognises the writings of the Apostle Paul as Scripture.

Summary of 2 Peter

Be alert, be faithful and be fruitful. Give all diligence to add to your faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, Godliness, brotherly kindness and love. Do not be barren and unfruitful in your Faith. Do not be shortsighted. Be even more diligent. Do not stumble, make your calling and election sure. Do not be negligent. Know the truth. Be established in the truth of God's Word. Remember the prophetic Words. Beware of false teachers. Be faithful to the Word of truth. Remember the lessons of history. Be mindful of God's Commandments. Live in the light of eternity. Live holy lives with Godly conduct. Grow in grace. Grow in knowledge. Be knowledgeable and be aware. Be steadfast in the Scriptures. Truth conquers. Far more important than how we begin, is how we end, the race of Faith. We need to have our eyes on the goal. Do not neglect studying and proclaiming the Word of God. Persevere faithfully in the Faith. Where there is life, there should be growth. Know God and make Him known. Know the Word of God. Know the God of the Word.



CHAPTER 23

1 JOHN

Author

John was the youngest of the Apostles, the Disciple whom Jesus loved. John was the last living Apostle. In many ways he seems to have been the one Disciple who was Jesus' best friend on earth. He is the only one of the Apostles who did not die for the Faith, but he was persecuted and exiled to the remote island of Patmos. These letters were written by John while in Ephesus, before his exile to Patmos. John also wrote the last of the four Gospels. John's Gospel was written **so that you might believe**. 1 John is written so that **you might know**. 1 John is the fourth of the seven general Epistles. These Epistles are not addressed to any specific church and only known by the name of the author, even though he does not mention his name in it.

Contrasts and Conflict

There are many contrasts: between **light** and *darkness*, between **life** vs. *death*, **love** vs. *hate* and **love** vs. *lust*, **truth** vs. *falsehood* and *lies*, **righteousness** vs. *lawlessness*, **God's Law** vs. *lawlessness*, **Heaven** vs. *hell*. **Children of God** vs. *children of the devil*, **love for God** vs. *love for the world* and ultimately **Christ** vs. *anti-Christ*.

No Neutrality

There is no neutrality. We are either for Christ, or against Him. Choose you this day. The Word of God vs. the world. 1 John was written to counteract false teachers who deny the deity of Jesus Christ, those who deny that Jesus is the Messiah, those who deny that Jesus had come in the flesh. Many people have developed a relaxed attitude towards sin. We must stand firm on **Christian belief** and for **Christian behaviour**, opposing false teaching and enduring persecution.

Eyewitness to the Word of Life

*"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life - the life was manifested and we have seen and bear witness and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us - **that which we have seen and heard we declare to you**, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you **that your joy may be full.**"* 1 John 1:1-4

The emphasis is: Incarnation of Christ. Living in the light, in love and loving the Truth. John starts off with the basis of our fellowship. John is an eyewitness of the Incarnation. He walked with Him, followed Him, ate with Him, touched Him, he heard His teaching. The Gospel is true.

Themes

The key themes are: Life, light, truth, sin, born of God and abiding in Christ. (John 15 also talks about abiding in Christ.) The emphasis is fellowship with God, abiding in Christ, keeping from false teaching, from worldliness and from living in sin, Salvation is by the grace of God through the Blood of Jesus Christ alone. The key word is **know**. It is used over 30 times in this short Epistle.

Walk in the Light

*“This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that **God is light and in Him is no darkness at all**. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But, **if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the Blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin**. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. **If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness**. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His Word is not in us.”* 1 John 1:5-10

Inevitable, Incompatible, Intolerable, Indefensible

We need to walk in the light as Christ did. Sin is a reality. We do sin. It is **inevitable**. We will sin, it is **incompatible**. We should not sin, it is **intolerable**. We must not sin, it is **indefensible**. John gives insights as to who God is and how we need to respond to Him. We are encouraged to right belief and to right behaviour. We need to walk in the light, because God is light, holy, perfect. We should be like God. If we walk in the light, then we should have fellowship with each other and the Blood of Jesus Christ, God's son, cleanses us from all sin. Those who say they have not sinned are self-deceived. Jesus said: *“Only God is good!”*

We Have an Advocate

*“My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, **Jesus Christ the righteous**. And **He Himself is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only but also for the whole world**.”* 1 John 2:1-2. It is an encouragement to have a lawyer who will intercede and speak up for you, someone who knows the law and uses it to its fullest extent to defend you in court. We have the Advocate, who defends us in the Highest Supreme Court in all the universe and in all of history, before the Throne of God.

Propitiation for Our Sins

Propitiation is a powerful word which speaks about removing the wrath of God from above us. Sadly, some Bible translations such as the Contemporary English Version (CEV) claim in the foreword to have removed “*all difficult words*”, such as *propitiation, justification, sanctification, grace, repentance* and *repent*. Grace has been replaced with God's kindness, which does not come close to explain what GRACE is, which is God's Riches At Christ's Expense. Grace is undeserved mercy. How can we understand what it is to be a Christian and behave like a Christian, if we have dumbed down our vocabulary? Here we have war waged on the English language itself, removing those Scriptural words that are powerful. For example: Today we use terms in Evangelism that you do not find in the Bible: We need to “*accept Jesus as our personal Saviour.*” Actually He has to accept us! We need to seek entry into His Kingdom. Yet today with modern Evangelism, we are told that “*Jesus is knocking on the door of your heart.*” We have to open the door to Him? They have made a god like the magic genie, where he says: “*Your wish is my command!*” That is a fairy tale. Some have turned things around where God is now the one seeking us to give Him permission! But, it is us knocking on His door. God is Lord, we are His bondservants, slaves. Propitiation does not just mean that we are in danger of the wrath of God. The wrath of God abides over us already. Those who are not in Christ, who have not Repented and not been Regenerated by the power of God's Word, have the wrath of God over them already. Jesus comes as the Propitiation of our sins and He takes the wrath of God away from over us. He takes our punishment upon Himself.

Those Who Love God Keep His Commandments

“Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in him. But, whoever keeps His Word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the Word which you heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. He who says he is in the light and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.” 1 John 2:3-11

The Marks of a Christian

Antinomians are against God's Commandments and wage war against God's Law. There is a hostility towards God's Law. Many are quick to tell you what you are doing is against the law of the land. There are those who think God's Law is evil and oppressive, but man's law, we must observe! Jesus said His yolk is easy, His burden is light. How do we know that we are in Christ? We start to obey God's Commands! It is easy for people who come from the world to understand this. Those in the world involved in crimes and vices were transformed when they were saved. These converts know what they are saved from. Their lives are transformed. They change for the good. It is harder for people who have been brought up in Christian families to understand. They think they are good people. "*My family is Christian.*" Such people have trouble knowing what they are saved from, because they often do not even recognise that they were sinners in the first place. John is writing to people who know what it is to be converted. By this we know we are in Him, when we keep His Commandments.

God's Perfect Law of Liberty

- Converts have come from breaking every commandment in the Book. Now they worship God alone.
- Once they bowed to idols, now they destroy their idols.
- Once blasphemers, now they do not take God's Name in vain. They sing God's praises and honour Him.
- From not honouring the Sabbath Day, they now keep the day of worship and rest.
- From disrespecting their parents, they now honour and respect their parents.
- From being murderers, even by hating from the heart, now they love their neighbour and even love their enemies.
- From living in adultery, they now live in purity, faithfulness and loyalty.
- From stealing, they now tithe and give with a generous heart.
- From liars, they now apologise and make right their slander.
- From living in covetousness and greed, they now live in generosity and self-sacrifice.

One can recognise the transformation of a person through God's Law. Sin is lawlessness. Loving God is walking in His Commandments. God's Laws are not burdensome. They are God's perfect Law of liberty. They free us from sin's destructiveness. The world promises us Heaven and gives us hell. The Law protects us and spares us from many griefs.

Trust and Obey – Live in Love

Jesus Christ suffered for us and left us an example that we should follow in His footsteps. The Old Commandment which you have had from the beginning, is to obey God's Word. The New Commandment is love. Trust and obey, for there is no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey. We need to walk in obedience and in love. Those who say they are Christians but hate their brother show that they are still living in darkness. If we recognise that God is love and how much God has loved us and forgiven us, then how can we not reflect some of that love in being merciful and gracious to people who have mistreated us, especially brothers and sisters in Christ. People who live in hatred are blind to all reality, logic, facts and history. Hate filled people cannot even think straight. They are also destroying themselves with their hate.

Fathers and Young Men

*“I write to you, little children, because **your sins are forgiven you for His Name’s sake**. I write to you, fathers, because **you have known Him** who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, because you have known the Father. I have written to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong and **the Word of God abides in you** and you have **overcome the wicked one**.”* 1 John 2:12-14. God is not egalitarian. There are distinctions in Scripture, with regard to age, gender and station. Young or old, male or female, servants or masters. God is not egalitarian and the Bible is not antinomian. See how fathers are called to know God. Young men are called to be strong, with the Word of God abiding in them, overcoming the wicked one. Resist temptations, lies, deceit, falsehood, heresies and stand firm for the truth.

You Cannot Love Both God and the World

*“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life - is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away and the lust of it; but **he who does the will of God abides forever**.”* 1 John 2:15-17. Do not love the world, or anything in the world. If you love God you make yourself an enemy of the world and if you love the world you make yourself an enemy of God. The Word and the world are in conflict. God and satan are enemies. As Martin Luther said: *“You cannot pray: ‘Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed by Thy Name, Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven’ without praying that every other name be brought down, that*

every kingdom that is in opposition to God's Kingdom be defeated and removed." When we pray for God's will to be done, we pray for Satan's work to be frustrated, exposed, defeated and annihilated. You cannot be neutral.

The Lure of Lust

The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, sums up Hollywood. Their whole ethos is egalitarian, hedonistic, heathen and pagan. The greatest enemy is within us, because evil comes from within our own hearts. We have to constantly wage war against the flesh. These lusts will pass away with the world. All that is coveted, along with the lusts of the flesh, will all pass away, it will become dust and worth nothing. We are told to work for that which endures. The Word of God will last forever, the Kingdom of God, the people and the creatures of God will last forever. Invest in eternity. Live your life in the light of eternity. Do not live for the passing things that the world is distracting you with, things that tempt us and distract us from what is really ultimately, eternally important.

Many Antichrists Have Come

*"Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now **many antichrists have come**, by which we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us. But, you have an anointing from the Holy One and you know all things. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it and that no lie is of the truth. **Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.**" 1 John 2:18-23*

Those Who Deny Christ Are Antichrist

What is Antichrist? Antichrist is anyone who denies the Father and the Son. Whatever is against Christ and whatever seeks to put itself in the place of Christ. Protestants, in all the great declarations, from the Helvetic Confession, the Synod of Dort, the Westminster Confession of the Faith, the Augsburg Confession, from the 16th century, identify the papacy of Catholicism as antichrist. Jesus used the words "*Holy Father*" only once in the Garden of Gethsemane when He addressed the Father in Heaven. For any human being, sinful and fallible as we are to claim to be "*his holiness*" is outrageous. The papacy is antichrist. They have persecuted the church, they banned Bibles for centuries and burned Bible translators. The papacy decapitated people for the Faith, such as Queen Jane, the nine day Queen

of England. Lady Jane Gray before the Inquisition, refused to denounce her Faith, so she was beheaded. William Tyndale was burned at the stake for the crime of translating the Bible into English. No wonder Protestants have always seen the pharisee popes as antichrist.

Islam and the Papacy are Antichrist

All the Reformers taught that Islam and the papacy are antichrist. We see in the great statue of Daniel 2, as the Roman Empire split into two, one leg was taken over by the Roman Catholic papacy and the other leg was taken over by Islam. Islam is one of the two horns of antichrist and one of the two legs of the beast. Judaism is also antichrist as it denies Christ as the Messiah. The World Council of Churches is antichrist. Humanism is antichrist. The United Nations is antichrist. Hollywood is antichrist. The spirit of antichrist has spread throughout the world. We need to reject anything that is antichrist and everything that seeks to assert itself in the place of Christ. Everything that resists the truth that Jesus is the Christ is antichrist.

Sacred Name and Hebrew Roots

Christos is the Greek word for Messiah. Jesus is from the Hebrew name *Yeshua*. So Jesus Christ includes both Hebrew and Greek Names. Today, many Judaizers see it as a thought crime to use any other language but Hebrew. They claim that God will not even listen to your prayers if you do not pray in Hebrew. He will not even recognise that He is being spoken to, if you do not use the Hebrew name. They reject anybody who does not use the Hebrew term for Jesus. However, the New Testament was first written in Greek. Jesus preached in Greek. The New Testament had to be translated into Hebrew because it was first revealed in Greek. Lack of loyalty and lack of perseverance show that a person did not actually belong (1 John 2:19).

Abide in Christ – Abide in Truth

*“Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will **abide in the Son and in the Father**. And this is the promise that He has promised us - Eternal life. These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you.”* 1 John 2:24-26. Beware of deception. The first two chapters have been dealing with right belief and walking in the light. Now in the second part of the letter, it deals with right behaviour. Walking and living in love.

The Evidence of Salvation is Seen in a Changed Life

*“And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. If you know that He is righteous, **you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him.**”* 1 John 2:28-29. A righteous lifestyle is one of the fruit of a

regenerate life, the fruit of the Spirit. When you see a person's life turned around, you know something has happened because of radical change.

Adopted Into the Family of God

“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.” 1 John 3:1-3.

We are not only forgiven sinners, we are adopted sons and daughters of God! Just like the wicked prodigal son came back saying: *“Father I have sinned against Heaven and against you, I am no longer worthy to be called your son, make me one of your hired servants.”* But the father does more than that. He forgives him, clothes him, puts a ring on his finger, throws a feast for him and makes him a son and heir again, even though he had squandered his inheritance. The Lord's love is so much greater than forgiveness. He adopts us into His family! Because of His extravagant grace, we should be extravagant in our grace to others. We need to live in love.

The Son of God Came to Destroy the Works of the Devil

*“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 sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him. Little children, **let no one deceive you**. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. **For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil**. Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.”* 1 John 3:4-9.

Living in Sin or Falling Into Sin

Antinomianism, the hostility to God's Law is, by definition, sin, it is lawlessness. The first heresy to be condemned by the Apostles. Jesus came to set the captives free. He did not come to make it safe and easy for us to sin and get away with it. He did not come to transfer property ownership from the owner to the thief! Restitution is still required. A change in lifestyle is intended. The Lord came to destroy the works of the devil. We know we all sin, so how can we be without sin? The Word here talks about present continuous tense sin. He who has been born of God does not continue to live in sin, does not continue to practise sin. There is a big

difference between a regenerate person trying to follow Christ who occasionally slips into sin, confesses it, repents of it, does restitution and gets back up and tries to faithfully follow Christ again. The person who wallows in, boasts about and revels in his sin, who does not feel guilty, remorseful, or repentant but champions and parades their sin is unregenerate. The contrast is here colossal.

Hate is Committing Murder in the Heart

*“In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother. For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that **we should love one another**, not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother’s righteous. **Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you.** We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. **He who does not love his brother abides in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.**”* 1 John 3:10-15. True love is seen in action and measured by sacrifice. Christ showed how much He loves us by how much He sacrificed for us. We show love for God by how much we sacrifice for Him.

True Love is Seen in Action and Measured by Sacrifice

*“By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world’s goods and sees his brother in need and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, **let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.** And by this we know that we are of the truth and shall assure our hearts before Him.... And this is His commandment: that **we should believe on the Name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another**, as He gave us commandment.”* 1 John 3:16-23. Sins of omission are important. Its not just bad things we have done, but good things we have failed to do. Matthew 25 describes the Day of Judgement, in terms of the good things we fail to do. We need to abide in Christ, abide in His love and obey His Commandments. This is written not only for us to **believe**, not only to **know**, but to **do**. *“Now he who keeps His Commandments abides in Him and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.”* 1 John 3:24

Those Who Reject Christ are Antichrist

*“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but **test the spirits**, whether they are of God; because **many false prophets have gone out into the world.** By this*

you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming and is now already in the world." 1 John 4:1-3. We are warned against deception, false prophets and false spirits. It is not virtuous to be gullible. Just because something is in the Bible, does not mean it is from God. The Bible quotes things others said. We are told to test all things. By this you know the Spirit of God. Every spirit that confesses Jesus Christ came in the flesh is of God. Every spirit that does not confess Jesus Christ in the flesh, is not of God. This is the spirit of antichrist.

Discern Between the Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Error

"You are of God, little children and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world and the world hears them. We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." 1 John 4:4-6. Christ in you, is greater than he who is in the world. The world listens to its own. When we see a church leader who is popular with the world and they love what he says, this is the spirit of error at work. The world hates Christ. Christ is in opposition to the world. If we put ourselves on the side of the world and are popular, we have aligned ourselves against God. To be a friend of the world is to be an enemy of God.

God is Love

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." 1 John 4:7-11. Love epitomises God and therefore love should characterise His followers. Love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. Love your neighbour with an unwavering, steadfast abiding love. Love is not a feeling. It is an act of your will. Love is an attitude. Love is not sentimentality, it is not fuzzy feelings. Love is patient, kind, polite. Love perseveres, it is beyond deep affection, it is abiding loyalty, generosity and sacrifice. To understand love, we have to understand there are four words in Greek for love: *Storge* (family love), *Philio* (love for your friends), *Eros* (romantic and sexual love) and *Agape* (unconditional, sacrificial God's love). The Greek language had *Storge*,

Philio and *Eros* before, but the Gospels introduced a new word in Greek, *Agape*, which means God's love. When we read God is love, we read: God is *Agape*. It is a sacrificial, giving love.

Perfect Love Cast Out Fear

*“No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us and His love has been perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the **Father has sent the Son as Saviour of the world.** Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. **God is love and he who abides in love abides in God and God in him. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the Day of Judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear,** because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. **We love Him because He first loved us.**”* 1 John 4:12-19

You Cannot Love God, If You Hate Your Brother

*“If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that **he who loves God must love his brother also.**”* 1 John 4:20-21. This is why we are told, if your brother has something against you, leave your gift at the altar and first make right with him. Part of our worship is to make sure we are right with fellow-believers. You cannot just leave it up to the person whom you think is guilty. Even if you see yourself as the victim, you should be making right with them, in so far as it is possible.

Overcome the Hatred & Deception of the World by Being Faithful to Christ

*“Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves Him who is begotten of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His Commandments. And His Commandments are not burdensome. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And **this is the victory that has overcome the world - our Faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?**”* 1 John 5:1-5.

Regeneration Should Lead to Righteousness

We see regeneration should lead to righteousness. Your doctrine leads to your duties. Your belief leads to your behaviour. We are overcomers. We are not called to be victims, but to be victors.

*“This is He who came by water and blood - Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. For **there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one.** And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water and the blood; and these three agree as One.”* 1 John 5:6-8. This references the Incarnation and the Atonement. We are born in water and blood. Jesus was baptised and He died for us – from the Incarnation to the Baptism of Christ and to His Atonement. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are One.

He Who Has Christ Has Life – Those Who Reject Christ Do Not

*“If we receive the witness of men, **the witness of God is greater**; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son. He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; **he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son. And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.** These things I have written to you who believe in the Name of the Son of God, **that you may know that you have eternal life** and that you may continue to believe in the Name of the Son of God.”* 1 John 5:9-13. Perseverance of the Saints. Warning about the sin of Apostasy. Those who reject and turn away from Christ are rejecting life. Jesus is referred to as Christ and Messiah ten times in this letter. We need to walk in the light. To live in Love. To expose falsehood. To oppose error. To resist idolatry. To stand for the truth.

Abide in Truth

*“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us... **We know that we are of God and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.** And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, **that we may know Him who is true**; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. **This is the true God and eternal life.**”* 1 John 5:14-20

Keep Yourself from Idolatry

The last words of this Book are: *“Little children, **keep yourselves from idols.** Amen.”* 1 John 5:21. Idolatry is the sin most condemned in Scripture. We have a true Gospel. We have forgiveness. We have a new life. We have a new way of living. We have the Holy Spirit. We have new love for the brethren. We have fellowship with God. Therefore we are commanded to: recognise false teachers by what they teach and by how they live.

Seven Tests

There are seven tests to see if we are in the Faith: **Walk in the light. Confess your sins. Obey the Word. Follow the example of Christ. Love the brethren. Do not love the world and Persevere in Christ.**

Rich Rewards

We see rich rewards: Assurance of Eternal Life. The Power of Prayer and victory over the world. We see that we are called to know God and to make Him known. To abide in truth and love and therefore to stand fast in Christ and confess our sins. To walk in love and fellowship. To walk as children of God. To walk in love and knowledge.

Know God and Make Him Known

God is **light** (1John 1:5).

God is **righteous** (1 John 2:29).

God is **love** (1 John 4:8,16).

God is **life** (1 John 5:11-12).

God is **truth** (2 John).

God is **good** (3 John).



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CHAPTER 24

2 JOHN

“To the elect lady and her children whom I love in truth, not only I, but all those who have known the truth because the truth which abides in us and lives in us forever. Grace, mercy and peace in truth and love”. John is balancing light and love. The wrath of God and the love of God. Truth and love.

Jesus is The Way, The Truth and The Life

Jesus is the **life** (1 John)

Jesus is the **truth** (2 John)

Jesus is the **way** (3 John)

We are lost. Jesus is the way.

We are deceived. Jesus is the truth.

We are dead in our trespasses and sins. Jesus is the life.

“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through Me’.” John 14:6

Recognise Deception – Resist Antichrists

*“The Elder, to the elect lady and her children, whom **I love in truth** and not only I, but also all those who have **known the truth**, because of **the truth which abides in us** and will be with us forever: Grace, mercy and peace will be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children **walking in truth**, as we received commandment from the Father. And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we **love one another**. This is love that we **walk according to His commandments**. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it. For **many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist**. Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward. Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds. Having many things to write to you, I did not wish to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, **that our joy may be full**. The children of your elect sister greet you. Amen.”* 2 John 1-13

Walk in truth (2 John)

Walk in love (2 John)

We should not invite false teachers into our home (2 John)

Do not reject the truth (2 John)

Walk in truth (3 John)

We should not imitate false teachers (3 John)

Do not refuse love and hospitality (3 John)

Do not be too softhearted (2 John)

Do not be too hard-hearted, do not neglect love (3 John)



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CHAPTER 25

3 JOHN

Helping or Hindering

In 3 John, he speaks of Gaius and Diotrephes. Gaius is helping the Kingdom. Diotrephes is hindering the cause. Are you helping or hindering in the service of God? We are called to be fellow workers for Truth.

Walk in Truth

*“The Elder, to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth: Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers. For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and **testified of the truth that is in you**, just as you **walk in the truth**. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children **walk in truth**. Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers, who have borne witness of your love before the church. If you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well, because they went forth for His Name’s sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such that we may become fellow workers for the truth. I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church. Beloved, **do not imitate what is evil, but what is good**. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God. Demetrius has a good testimony from all and from the truth itself. And we also bear witness and you know that our testimony is true. I had many things to write, but I do not wish to write to you with pen and ink; but I hope to see you shortly and we shall speak face to face. Peace to you. Our friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.”* 3 John 1-14

Love Truth and Stand Up for The Truth

2 and 3 John are two of the shortest letters in the Bible with the simplest of messages, to **love the truth, walk in the truth and stand up for the truth.**



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CHAPTER 26

JUDE

The Author

Jude, the brother of James, was the half-brother of Jesus. *“Is this not the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon and Judas?”* Matthew 13:55. Here Jude is mentioned fourth, so he could be the youngest of Mary’s sons. *“Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary and brother of James, Joses, Judas and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us? So they were offended at Him.”* Mark 6:3. Here Jude is mentioned third, so certainly one of the youngest brothers. Judas, or Jude was a common name, but because of the treachery of Judas the apostle, most people who had the same name, quickly changed it to the abbreviation Jude.

A Stern Warning

This is a general Epistle written before AD 67. It is a letter of warning, very similar to 2 Peter, and written about the same time. Jude is a challenge to action during a time of apostasy. Jude is a strong and sharp letter, a stern rebuke.

Stand Fast

The message is to stand firm, to be grounded and rooted in the Faith, to build up your faith, to grow in your faith, to contend for the Faith, to be loyal to Jesus Christ. Be faithful in fighting for the Faith. Expect opposition. Resist false teachers. Oppose apostasy. Refuse to compromise to the spirit of godlessness in the world. Apathy assists apostasy. Care enough to confront. Truth conquers. Holiness matters. Jude describes false teachers and he calls us to defend the Gospel. Here is an anatomy of apostasy and the antidote to apostasy. *Solus Christus! Sola Gratia! Sola Scriptura!*

Contend Earnestly for the Faith

*“Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, to those who are called, sanctified by God the Father and preserved in Jesus Christ: Mercy, peace and love be multiplied to you. Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to **contend earnestly for the Faith which was once for all delivered to the saints**. For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Jude 1-4. Jude writes to the sanctified, those who are called and preserved in Christ Jesus. The Faith is like solid rock granite foundation. It is settled and we are to fight the good fight of Faith. We are to resist apostasy by being devoted to truth and faithful Biblical exposition.

The Faith is Under Fire

There is a need today to contend earnestly for the Faith. The Faith once delivered to the saints is so clear in the Scriptures and in the Creeds and Confessions of the Church: the Nicene Creed, the Apostles Creed, the Athanasian Creed, the Creed of Chalcedon, the Synod of Dort, the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Heidelberg Catechism, the London Confession of Faith of 1689 and from many other great gatherings of Godly leaders who have put together a clear definition of Biblical Faith. Yet much of this has been neglected or thrown out by some moderns. Some people may say, you do not need to defend the Gospel. However, there are many commands in the Bible to defend the Gospel, to fight the good fight of Faith and to contend for the Faith.

Denied, Defiled and Degraded

We are facing World Council of Churches apostasy, liberalism, skepticism and syncretism in many theological seminaries. There is a corruption and defilement of the Gospel. It has been diluted, distorted and outright denied. In other places it is being undermined. There are certain antinomians who deny the grace of God, pervert it and twist it. There are those who deny the Lordship of Christ. They say that the Law of God does not apply to them. Antinomians despise God's Law, but then make an idol of man's law! They lift it up and demand that the Great Commission must be subject to man's regulations. These men have made man sovereign and lifted up human idols above the Word of God.

Examples of Divine Judgement

“But I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the Judgment of the great Day; as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” Jude 5-7

The Seriousness of Sin Demands Judgement

Jude reminds us of the seriousness of sin and apostasy. After the Lord rescued up to 3 million Hebrews, out of Egypt, to become Israel, God destroyed every one of the adults, as He condemned them to wander in the wilderness for 40 years (1 year for every day they were scouting the promised land) because of their unbelief and rebellion against God. Only two of the adult generation, Joshua and Caleb, entered the Promised Land.

The vast majority of those that God saved from slavery in Egypt were condemned to wander and die in the wilderness. The Lord reminds us, as the people He has saved, that if they were condemned for their lack of faith and for their disobedience, how can we think that we can get away with such blatant apostasy?

The Fallen Angels Are a Warning to Us

God condemned a third of the angels for their rebellion. How can we think He will do otherwise with our apostate generation?

The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah Stands as a Warning

Fire and brimstone came down out of Heaven and annihilated all who lived in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Only Lot and his two daughters survived. Lot's wife, longingly looked back and was turned into a pillar of salt. Only three people were saved. There were violations of God's Laws. Sodom was full of perversion, being sexually immoral and going after "*strange flesh*". We know there was homosexuality and all kinds of vileness, including rape. The "*strange flesh*" refers to people having sexual relations across racial lines, not "*bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh.*" Degenerate, miscegenate and eradicate.

Defiled and Disrespectful

"Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority and speak evil of dignitaries. Yet Michael the Archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!' But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves. Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit and perished in the rebellion of Korah." Jude 8-11

Dreamers and Character Assassins

Those who have a dream which is not from God, need to keep it to themselves. Some people have a ministry of criticism, they slander and are defiled and degrading. Those who venture into gossip and character assassination speak evil of others. The people of Israel wanted to have a funeral ceremony and burial for Moses when he died, in such a way that the people could make a pilgrimage to his gravesite, but God hid his body, so that the people were not able to idolise Moses' grave. Joshua was commanded to bury him quietly without anyone knowing where, but the devil was trying to obtain the body of Moses to return to the people of Israel. Even the most exalted Archangel, Michael, dealing with the most degraded creature imaginable, the devil, did not lower himself to a reviling

manner. There are many who speak evil of those in authority, speaking about things they do not know. They damn to hell great people of the past, about whom they actually know nothing.

Cain, Balaam and Korah

False prophets are compared to the way of Cain who presumptuously thought that his grain offering was good enough for God. When God was pleased with Able's blood offering, which was not the fruit of his own hands and labour, Cain's jealousy and hatred lead him to murder his brother, Able. People who are greedy for profit, who prophesy things for financial profit are like Balaam. Balaam's donkey had more spiritual discernment than the prophet did. Balaam's donkey saw the danger and saved the life of the wicked prophet who was willing to take money to place a curse on God's people. Korah was the rebel who gathered many people of Israel to protest against Moses as chosen one to lead. So, God sent an earthquake and Korah and his followers disappeared into a crevice in the ground. Clearly, God judges false teachers. Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft. Envy results in destruction. What you sow is what you will reap.

Clouds without Water

*“These are **spots** in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, **servicing only themselves**. They are **clouds without water**, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees **without fruit**, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; **wandering stars** for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.”* Jude 12-13

Unfruitful and Unreliable

This describes false teachers. They promise so much and deliver very little. What good is a Christian who does not have the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Those who are not born again will not only die a physical death, but an eternal death in the lake of fire on the Day of Judgement. Those who are born again will only have to die once, a physical death, not a spiritual or eternal death. Twice dead is unregenerate. A human being who is cut off from his roots, his history, ancestry, genealogy, past, nation, people, denomination, all the different things that make us what we are. Being rootless will kill any tree. The sea foams and has crashing waves round a barrier or stone edifice. Many people have shipwrecked their faith like stormy waves on the rocks which foam up to their own shame. The Southern Cross star is something that you can bank your direction and life on, in the blackness of a dark night in the wilderness. But, a shooting, or wandering, star is unreliable for finding direction.

God Will Judge Those Who Speak Evil of Him

“Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, ‘Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute Judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.’” Jude 14-15.

How often have we come across people speaking evil things of God? God judges false teachers, idolaters and blasphemers. They are dangerous and useless. The Lord will come in Judgement. It may sometimes look like evil is succeeding and people are getting away with murder, heresy, deceit, falsehood, scams and enriching themselves in corruption. You may ask: Where is the Justice? God is giving themselves enough rope to hang themselves.

Great Swelling Words of Boasting and Flattery

“These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage. But you, beloved, remember the Words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts. These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit.” Jude 16-19.

There have been many examples and many descriptions and warnings of different kinds of false prophets. We need to be aware and avoid false prophets. We need to resist false teaching and false teachers, by remembering the teachings of the Apostles contained in the New Testament and the writings of the Prophets as contained in the Old Testament. This is the rock solid foundation we need to build upon. The day will come when the rain will fall, the floods will rise and the storm will rage. Any house that is built on sand will collapse. The house built on the Rock will stand! In Eternity, we will find out how good our foundation has been. We need to remember the Words and promises of Jesus and His warnings against false prophets.

How to Identify False Prophets

The first 19 verses is an exposé of false prophets. They can be identified by the fact that they are proud, boastful and self-serving. They lack the fear of God. They are selfish, full of grumbling, complaining and scoffing. They denigrate and slander God's servants who were faithful in years past. They are flattering, divisive, worldly and display pretended spirituality. They are fruitless, they claim special revelation but lack Biblical fruit. They are faultfinders, lawless hypocrites. They claim authority but they are not submitted to God. If you are not under God's authority, you have no authority. They are short-lived and unreliable. You cannot make life decisions based on a wandering star. They are dangerous and useless.

Christian Duty

*“But you, beloved, **building yourselves up on your most holy Faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And on some have compassion, making a distinction; but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.**”* Jude 20-23

Balanced Discipleship

It is important that we build our life and work on the solid rock of God's Word. Praying in the Spirit. Be Bible-based. Good, balanced Christian discipleship can be seen in the shape of a Cross: The vertical beam of the Cross symbolises us speaking to God in prayer and Him speaking to us through the Word of God. The upper beam represents praying to God in prayer and praise. The lower beam symbolises being rooted in the Word of God, both the Old and the New Testament. The horizontal beam can represent responsibility for believers in fellowship and relationship, our responsibility to unbelievers in evangelism. We need to be involved in Bible study, building up our holy Faith, in prayer in the Holy Spirit. We need to have fellowship with believers and we need to evangelise, rescuing the perishing. We need to be discerning. Some will only come to the Lord because of the terrors of hell and fear of the God. Others may need a more compassionate approach.

He is Able to Present You Faultless

“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Saviour, Who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.” Jude 24

The Ultimate Inspection in Eternity

The ultimate inspection is the Day of Judgement. In military training, we completed the obstacle course over and over again. When the day came that you were being watched by the Commanding Officer, you did not want to stumble or slip. You wanted to be flawless and make the best time ever, bearing in mind the whole team. If the Army was that strict, what will the Day of Judgement be when the Lord comes and inspects our life, faith and works?

Summary

Be diligent. Be faithful. Be courageous. Contend earnestly for the Faith. Expose false teachers who turn the grace of God into godlessness and lewdness. Refute those who deny the Lord Jesus Christ. Fear God alone. Remember that our God is a righteous God. Remember the wrath of God

against Egypt, against rebellious Hebrews, against Sodom and Gomorrah and against fallen angels. Those who go after strange flesh and practise sexual immorality, will suffer vengeance and eternal fire, like Sodom and Gomorrah did. Those who defile the flesh, reject authority and speak evil of what they do not know corrupt themselves, they are defiled and are defiling. Beware of false teachers who go the way of Cain, who run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit and perish in rebellion. Beware of the self-serving. The Lord will come again in wrath to execute vengeance on the wicked and on those who have spoken evil of His Name. The grumblers, complainers, boasters, mockers, the lustful and divisive, will face Judgement. Build yourself up in the most holy Faith, on the rock of God's Word. Pray in the Spirit. Keep in the love of God. Have compassion. Make distinctions. Be discerning. Be a soul winner. Rescue the perishing.



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CHAPTER 27

REVELATION

Author

John, the author of the fourth Gospel and the three Epistles, was the last surviving Apostle. While in exile on the small, barren island of Patmos, located in the Aegean Sea, John received a series of visions from our Lord Jesus Christ.

Dating the Book of Revelation

Revelation 2:9 and 3:9 also indicate that the book of Revelation was written prior to the Jewish War of AD 67-70, because Christian Jews and unbelieving Jews were still intermingled at the time of writing. A sharp religious, cultural and legal division between Christians and unbelieving Jews ensued after AD 70. Therefore the Book of Revelation had to have been written prior to the destruction of the **Temple** in August AD 70; before the death of **Nero** 8 June, AD 68; before the **Jewish War** began in AD 67, but after the outbreak of Nero's persecution of Christians in November AD 64.

When Was Revelation Written?

Revelation was written by **AD 65** and it speaks to the first century Church concerning the tribulation which they were entering: "*I, John, who also am your brother and companion in the tribulation and in the Kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ...*" Revelation 1:9. Revelation 11:1-2 indicates that the Temple was still standing in Jerusalem when the book of Revelation was written. Luke 21:5-7 and Luke 21:24 were fulfilled in the Jewish War with Rome, from Spring AD 67 to the destruction of Jerusalem in August AD 70, a period of 42 months - which fits the precise measurement of the prophecy in Revelation 11:2.

The Theme of Revelation

The judgement of God upon the generation that had committed the greatest crime in history, the betrayal and murder of the Messiah. They had rejected and crucified the Lamb of God. **Jerusalem** is depicted as a **harlot** and **Rome** as a **beast**. The wrath of God was poured out on Jerusalem with the destruction of the Temple in **AD 70**. (See *Before Jerusalem Fell – Dating the Book of Revelation* by Ken Gentry)

The Historic Context of Revelation

The Revelation of Jesus Christ: "...*To the seven churches in the province of Asia...*" Revelation 1:4. "...*to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.*" Revelation 1:11. Real first century Christians, in actual churches, in historical cities, were addressed.

What Must Soon Take Place

The first century Christians were meant to read and understand the message of Revelation as most relevant to themselves. "...*what must soon take place...*" Revelation 1:1. "...*the time is near.*" Revelation 1:3. "*Look He is coming with the clouds and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him...*" Revelation 1:7. "...*I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth...*" Revelation 2:16. "*I am coming soon...*" Revelation 3:11. "...*the things that must soon take place. Behold I am coming soon.*" Revelation 22:6-7. "*Behold I am coming soon!*..." Revelation 22:12. "...*Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near.*" Revelation 22:10 (Compare with Daniel 12:9, where the prophecies were sealed because the time was a long way off).

Coming with the Clouds

Compare the apocalyptic language of "coming with the clouds" with: "... See, the Lord rides on a swift cloud and is coming to Egypt. The idols of Egypt tremble before Him and the hearts of the Egyptians melt within them." Isaiah 19:1. "...He makes the clouds His chariot and rides on the wings of the wind. He makes winds His messengers, flames of fire His servants." Psalm 104:3-4. (Also Psalm 18:7-15; Joel 2:1-2). Christ's hearers understood His coming to be in Judgement upon their own generation. (Matthew 21:40-45). "*I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.*" Matthew 24:34.

Identifying the Harlot in Revelation

"Therefore I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berakiah, whom you murdered between the Temple and the altar. I tell you the truth, **all this will come upon this generation.**" Matthew 23:34-35. "All the people answered, 'Let His blood be on us and on our children!'" Matthew 27:25. "Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city, which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, **where also their Lord was crucified.**" Revelation 11:8. "Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns... This title was written on her forehead: **Mystery Babylon the Great, The Mother of prostitutes and of the Abominations of the Earth.**" Revelation 17:3, 5. "In her was found the blood of prophets and of the saints and of all who have been killed on the earth." Revelation 18:24 (Leviticus 20:10; Leviticus 21:9; Isaiah 1:21; Jeremiah 3:14; Jeremiah 22:8; Lamentations 1:1; Ezekiel 16:8-

59; Hosea 4:1; Acts 7:51-52; Revelation 16:13-14 & 19; Revelation 17:16). Who is the **harlot** referred to in Revelation? **Jerusalem.**

Identifying the Beast in Revelation

Revelation 17:7-14 clearly identifies Rome and the emperor Nero. Rome was built on 7 hills and Nero was the sixth emperor of Rome, who reigned after the deaths of his five predecessors and before the brief rule of the seventh emperor. Josephus, the first century historian, listed the first emperor of Rome as Julius Caesar, followed by Augustus, Tiberius, Caius/Calligula, Claudius and Nero. Revelation 17:10: “...*Five have fallen...*” the first 5 emperors are dead; “*one is...*” the sixth emperor, Nero, was reigning as John wrote. Nero reigned from October, AD 54 until 8 July, AD 68; “*the other has not yet come, but when he does come, he must remain for a little while.*” The seventh emperor Galba reigned only six months, until 15 January, AD 69.

The Message of Revelation

Revelation means unveiling. God is in sovereign control of all the events of human history. Even during times of violent persecution when evil seems pervasive, Christians can be encouraged that our Lord Jesus Christ will ultimately frustrate, confound and conquer all His enemies. Christ will come again in glory to Judge and to rule.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Revelation is first and foremost a Revelation of Jesus Christ (1:1):

He is “*the faithful Witness, the Firstborn from the dead and the Ruler over the kings of the earth.*” (1:5);

“*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end... Who is and Who was and Who is to come, the Almighty.*” (1:8);

“*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last.*” (1:11);

“*The Son of Man.*” (1:13);

Whose eyes are “*like a flame of fire.*” (1:14);

Whose voice is “*as the sound of many waters.*” (1:15);

Who has in His right hand “*seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.*” (1:16);

“***I am He who lives and was dead and behold I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of death.***” (1:18)’

“*The Son of God who has eyes like a flame of fire and His feet like fine brass.*” (2:18);

“He who is holy, He who is true, He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts and shuts and no one opens.” (3:7);

“The faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the Creation of God.” (3:14);

“The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David.” (5:5);

“The Lamb who was slain.” (5:12);

“The Lamb who was in the midst of the Throne, who will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters.” (7:17);

“The kingdoms of this world have become the Kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ and He shall reign forever and ever!” (11:15);

“You are righteous, O Lord, the One who is and who was and who is to be, because You have judged these things.” (16:5);

“After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in Heaven, saying, ‘Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honour and power belong to the Lord our God! For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her.’ (19:1-2);

“And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, ‘Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!’” (19:6);

“Now I saw Heaven opened and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire and on His head were many crowns. He had a Name written that no one knew except Himself.” (19:11-12);

“He was clothed with a robe dipped in Blood and His Name is called the Word of God.” (19:13);

“Now out of His mouth goes a sharp Sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.” (19:15);

“And He has on His robe and on His thigh, a Name written: King of kings and Lord of lords.” (19:16);

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.” (22:13);

“I am the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning Star.” (22:16);

Cosmic Conflict

The Kingdom of God is in conflict with the forces of satan. Revelation 13 describes a beast with many heads and horns. The dragon gave the beast power, a throne and great authority. The beast mouthed blasphemies against God, blaspheming His Name, His Tabernacle and those who dwell in Heaven. The beast made war with the saints and gained authority over every tribe, tongue and nation. *“All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”* Revelation 13:8

Religious Deception

The beast will capture and kill the people of God. There will also be another beast, a religious beast, who will have worldwide authority and who *“causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast... he deceives those who dwell on the earth...”* Revelation 13:12-14

Globalism

This Scripture makes clear that this devilish power will work to bring about a one-world government, a one-world religion and a one-world economic system. Those who refuse to follow this one-world religion will be persecuted and killed (13:15).

Hostility to God and Blasphemy

The Word of God warns us of a devilish system that seeks to impose a one-world government, a one-world religion and a one-world economic system. It will be further identified by its blasphemies and hostility towards God and His Name. As well as by its hostility towards believers of the past, those who are in Heaven now.

War Against God

Throughout history there have been those who have attempted to impose their political and religious will on the world, such as Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Caesar Nero of Rome, commanded everyone in the Empire to worship him. They were to place the ashes of the incense they had burned before his image on their forehead, before they were allowed to trade in the marketplaces. From Babel to Babylon, from Rome to the French Revolution and from the Soviet Union to Red China, those who seek to impose a one-world government and a one-world religion, also seek to control the economy. They pour out blasphemies against God and His people, persecuting those who refuse to bow to their political and religious will. They make war on the saints and attempt to stamp their mark on all that they have power over.

The Martyrs' Prayer

"When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the Word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?' Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed." Revelation 6:9-11

The Mark of the Beast

"He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand, or on their foreheads and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666." Revelation 13:16-18. Many Bible scholars have focused on how the mark would be placed on the right hand, or on the forehead, perhaps by tattoo, or more recently, as the technology has become available, by a microchip. These methods may be possible, but the emphasis in the Scripture is on our way of thinking and on our actions. We are commanded in the Word of God to bind His Law on our hands and on our foreheads. This is speaking about having our way of thinking governed by the Word of God and having our actions governed by the Law of God (Deuteronomy 6:5-8). Many people have the mark of the beast, without any tattoo or microchip. When one allows one's way of thinking to be conformed to the world and one's actions to be in conformity to what satan wants, then one has the mark. *"You shall not follow a crowd to do evil..."* Exodus 23:2

Satanic Counterfeits

The beast described in Revelation 13 is a counterfeit of Christ, an antichrist. Just as Christ is the exact image of God, begotten of the Father (Psalm 2:7; Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3); the beast is an image of satan whom satan brought forth (13:1).

Christ has many Crowns and worthy Names (19:12), the beast has ten crowns and blasphemous names (13:1).

Christ has power (5:12-13), the Throne (3:21) and authority (12:10) from the Father (John 5:21-23); the dragon gave the beast his power, throne and great authority (13:2).

Counterfeiting the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, the beast recovers from a seemingly fatal wound (13:3).

We are to worship both the Father and the Son (John 5:23), worship is misdirected to the dragon and the beast (13:4)

Christ alone is worthy. *"...For You were slain and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation."* Revelation 5:9. The beast seeks the worship of the whole world.

Christ declares the praises of God (Hebrews 2:12), the beast utters blasphemies (13:5).

The beast makes war against the saints (13:7), Christ makes war against the beast (19:11-21).

The worship given to the beast in 13:4 counterfeits the song to God in Exodus 15:11.

The Fake vs. The True

Satan is a counterfeit warrior *"...behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it and it had ten horns."* Daniel 7:7. Satan attempts to counterfeit the creation of God, bringing forth his image out of chaotic waters (13:1). A false prophet, or religious beast (13:11-18) attempts to counterfeit the work of the Holy Spirit deceiving nations to worship the beast (13:13-14). As Christians are sealed with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13), so satan seeks to impose his mark on his subjects (13:16); satan, the beast and the false prophet form a demonic triad (16:13) attempting to counterfeit the Holy Trinity. Satan is a deceiver (2 Corinthians 11:14-15), he deceives nations, the whole world. (12:9). God is the Creator. Satan is an imitator. Babylon, the harlot attempts to counterfeit the bride of Christ (17:1-18). Ultimately, this is a battle between Christ and satan.

Mystery Babylon – Religious Prostitution

"Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, 'Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.' So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marvelled with great amazement." Revelation 17:1-6

Stand Fast Against Deception and Defilement

Satan attacks the saints with persecution and through deception and disinformation attempting to seduce and defile the servants of God. Revelation depicts an evil state and a whoremongering false religion, which together blaspheme God and persecute the faithful people of God, through heretical teaching, threats and violence. God's people are assailed and afflicted. We are called to stand fast against all temptation, to endure all suffering and to remain faithful to our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

God Will Judge Babylonian Idolatry

“And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, ‘Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury.’ And I heard another voice from Heaven saying, ‘Come out of her, My people, lest you share in her sins and lest you receive of her plagues. For her sins have reached to Heaven and God has remembered her iniquities.” Revelation 18:2-5

The Lamb and the Lion

The first time our Lord Jesus Christ came as a Saviour, **the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world**. The second time, He will not come as a lamb, but as the Lion, as the King of kings and Lord of lords, as the Eternal Judge, to conquer and to defeat all His enemies.

There are Seven Sevens in Revelation:

Seven churches;
 Seven seals;
 Seven trumpets;
 Seven signs;
 Seven last plagues;
 Seven dooms and
 Seven new things.

A Vision of Christ

In Revelation 1, John is granted a vision of Christ. On earth, John was comfortable enough to lay his head on Jesus' shoulder, during the last Supper. Yet, when the Apostle John saw the Risen, Ascended Christ, he fell on his face as a dead man. Jesus is the Light of the world and we are called to be lights to the world. The churches are depicted as lampstands and Christ stands in the midst of the lampstands. He is described as majestic and awesome. Clothed with a garment down to His feet, girded around

His chest with a gold band, His head and hair white as snow, His eyes like a flame of fire, His feet like fine brass, refined in a furnace, His voice like the sound of many waters. In His right hand are seven stars and out of His mouth comes a sharp double-edged sword. His countenance is like the sun shining in all its strength. He is The Ancient of Days. He is from the beginning to the end. He is all knowing, everywhere present and all-powerful. He is the Eternal Judge (1:12-16).

Transformed by Christ

When Moses saw the Lord, his face shone. Job abhorred himself and repented in ashes. Isaiah saw himself as unclean. Thomas bowed and declared: “*My Lord and my God!*” Saul the persecutor, fell down and worshipped Him and rose up to become the Apostle Paul, His Missionary. It is impossible to see Christ and not be utterly transformed.

Apocalyptic Symbolism

The visions, symbols and numbers used in Revelation all carry special meaning and bring to mind similar images and symbols from the Old Testament. It is most constructive to study the Book of Daniel and Revelation together.

Numerical Significance

Four usually refers to the earth or to a place, such as the four horseman of the Apocalypse (6:2-8).

Six falls short of perfection, the number of man.

Seven means perfection, or completeness.

Twelve, the number of tribes, speaks of God's people.

A hundred and forty four (12x12) is the whole host of God's people.

A thousand stands for a great number.

The Four Living Creatures

We also read of the four Living Creatures around God's Throne (ref: Ezekiel 1): Animal-like angels with features like that of a lion, a bull and an eagle (4:6-9).

The Seven Letters to the Seven Churches

Each letter refers back to an aspect of John's vision of Christ. Each contains a **command**, a **commendation** and/or **condemnation**, a **correction** and a **challenge**.

Commendations

In the Letters to the Seven Churches, the Lord **commends**: hard work, patient labour, refusing to tolerate those who are evil, testing those who claim to be apostles and exposing the false, persevering in service for the Lord and not becoming weary, hating the deeds of the Nicolaitans,

enduring tribulation and poverty, resisting the blasphemies of the synagogue of satan, resisting Babylon and the beast, holding fast to the Lord's Name, refusing to deny the Faith, despite persecution and the threat of martyrdom, patient love, service and faith, keeping God's Word, being faithful to Him and overcoming the world.

Condemnations

In the Letters to the Seven Churches, the Lord **condemns**: those who have left their first love, tolerating the doctrines of Balaam and the heresy of the Nicolaitans, tolerating idolatry and immorality, allowing Jezebels who call themselves prophetesses to teach and seduce God's people to commit immorality and idolatry, being spiritually dead, tolerating the synagogue of satan, being neither hot nor cold, but lukewarm, being spiritually wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked.

Commands

To the Seven Churches the Lord **commands**: Remember, repent and repeat. Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Be faithful unto death and I will give you the Crown of life. Hold fast what you have until I come. Keep My works. Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain. Remember what you have received and heard. Hold fast and repent. Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. I counsel you to buy from Me gold, refined in the fire, that you may be rich and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed and anoint your eyes with eye salve that you may see. Be zealous and repent. Hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Overcome the world.

The Message of Revelation

In Revelation we see every creature in Heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea and all that is in them worshipping the Lord together (5:13).

We see that satan hates the people of God and will persecute them.

We see that woe will come upon the whole earth because of those who refuse to repent of their murders, their sorceries, their sexual immorality and their thefts (9:21).

God will destroy those who destroy the earth (11:18).

The people of God will triumph over their persecutors. ***“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the Word of their testimony and they did not love their lives to the death.”*** Revelation 12:11. Those who have suffered for Christ and been faithful will reign with Christ (20:4).

All those who worship the beast and his image and whoever receives the mark of his name will be tormented with fire and brimstone forever and ever (14:10-11).

Everyone will stand before God and be judged according to their works, as recorded in the books in Heaven (20:12).

God will condemn *“the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters and all liars...”* to the lake of fire (21:8).

From Genesis to Revelation

Genesis is the Book of beginnings (Genesis 1:1).

Revelation is the Book of consummation (Revelation 21:5-6).

In Genesis, the heavens and the earth are created (Genesis 1:1).

In Revelation, a new Heaven and a new earth (Revelation 21:1).

In Genesis, the sun and moon appear (Genesis 1:14-19).

In Revelation, there is no more need for sun and moon, for Christ is the light of the new Heaven and the new earth (Revelation 21:23).

In Genesis, God plants a garden (Genesis 2:8).

In Revelation, He unveils the Holy City (Revelation 21:2).

In Genesis, there is the marriage of the first man, Adam and the first woman, Eve (Genesis 2:22-25).

In Revelation, the marriage supper of the Lamb, the second Adam (Revelation 19:6-8).

In Genesis, you see the beginning of sin (Genesis 3:6-7).

In Revelation, the end of sin (Revelation 21:3-4).

In Genesis, we are introduced to the great adversary and enemy, satan, the accuser of the brethren.

In Revelation, satan is finally and completely defeated and judged (Revelation 20:7-10).

In Genesis, tears and sorrow, pain and death are introduced as a result of sin.

In Revelation, God wipes away all tears and there will be no more pain, suffering, or death (Revelation 21:4).

In Genesis, man is banished from the Tree of Life.

In Revelation, the Tree of Life is in the centre of the City (Revelation 22:1-2).

Is your life marked by the world or the Word?

Is your name written in the Book of Life?

Is the Lord Jesus Christ your Saviour? Or your Judge?

Are you resisting Babylon and the Beast?

Are you faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ?

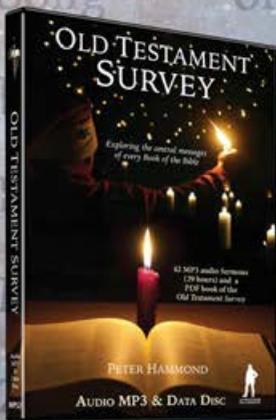


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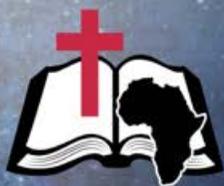
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Dr. Peter Hammond is a Missionary who has pioneered Evangelistic outreaches in the war zones of Mozambique, Angola and Sudan.

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For over 38 years, Peter has been dedicated to assisting persecuted Christians and working for Reformation and praying for Revival in Africa. Peter developed the **Biblical Worldview Summit** and **Great Commission Course** to mobilise Christians to apply the Lordship of Christ to all areas of life and effectively to fulfil the Great Commission.

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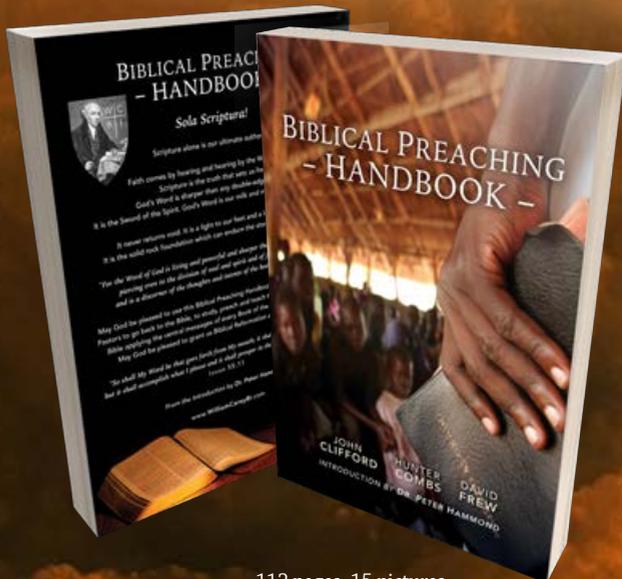
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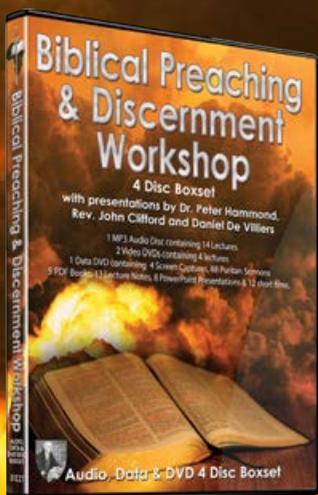
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