

PURPOSED GENERATION

Your Purpose, Identity, and Mission

Elijah M. Rodgers

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Introduction

In a world where so many people have lost sight of their God-given purpose, identity, and mission, it is my desire that individuals would take the message of this book to heart and find their purpose, identity, and mission in Christ. I pray that you will read this book with a spirit of prayer, surrender, and a desire to know Christ more.

- Elijah Rodgers

Chapter 1

The Aimless Life

The ultimate tragedy of life is an aimless life that was led astray by vanities: a life with no understanding of its purpose, a life with no guide, a life with no fulfillment, a life that was centered on self alone, and a life without a Savior.

Life is compared to “...a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.” (James 4:14). Life is short and moves swiftly along the busyness of toil day by day, month by month, year by year, and as the wind, it vanishes away. Time moves on. “One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh.” (Ecclesiastes 1:4). The cycles of Creation faithfully continue throughout the centuries. “The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirlleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.” (Ecclesiastes 1:7,8).

Your life is only a moment in the context of time. There is only one life you have to live which will determine your eternal destiny. Living a life without fulfilling your God-given purpose is like a boat without oars drifting down the river of time.

We see this very distinctly in the life of Solomon. Solomon was blessed with wisdom by God, but sadly, he went astray from God. Even though he had all that he desired, later in life, when he repented, he described his life as one of vanity. He sought peace in pleasure, but only found vexation (longing). He sought joy in wine and drunkenness, yet joy was very distant from his heart.

Solomon said, "I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits: I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees: I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me: I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts." (Ecclesiastes 2:4-8). He became the most powerful man of his time. Whatever he desired, he obtained. Yet none

of this satisfied the longing of his soul. In all his labor he only saw “vanity and vexation of spirit.” (Ecclesiastes 2:11).

He came down to the point of despair where he hated his life that was being wasted with vanities. His labor became grievous. He said “Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me. And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity. Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun.” (Ecclesiastes 2:18-20). He came to the realization of life. He had amassed great wealth, but none of it would follow him to the grave. The wealth and things, in which he sought to find fulfillment and peace in life, would in death be passed on to another. Everything he had was only temporary. He had come to realize that peace, satisfaction, and joy were not found in anything this world could offer.

In contrast with his life of vexation, Solomon saw that God honored the labor of the just who labored “in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity.” (Ecclesiastes 2:21). He said, “There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink,

and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God. For God giveth to a man that is good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God...". (Ecclesiastes 2:24,26).

Even in his rebellion, Solomon retained his wisdom. He "...had great experience of wisdom and knowledge." (Ecclesiastes 1:16). Yet his wisdom lost its power because he had left the source of his wisdom. His wisdom became vanity, vexation, grief, and sorrow. He saw that wisdom without God is worthless and described it as "...weariness of the flesh." (Ecclesiastes 12:12).

Wisdom is not "found in the land of the living", or in the depths of the sea. "It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof." "For the price of wisdom is above rubies." "Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding?" Wisdom only has one source. "God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof." "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." (Job 28:12-20,23,28).

In warning to coming generations Solomon said, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of

thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them". Coming to "the conclusion of the whole matter," he found that the highest obligation of mankind is to "Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." (Ecclesiastes 12:1,2). This is the whole of your being. This is your life, the entirety of your existence. This is only where wisdom, understanding, and the aim of life can be found.

Living Water

Many people are living an aimless life, chasing the vanities of life to find peace and satisfaction, as did Solomon. They try to find fulfillment in the material things of life, in friends and relationships, in self, in pleasure and drunkenness, only to be left with a heart that is longing for something more. Peace and satisfaction seem like a distant dream. They thirst for satisfaction and run to the waters of peace and fulfillment, only for it to flow out of their broken cisterns hewed from the quarry of the world.

Humanity was created to have a personal connection with our Creator, but sin destroyed that connection. It left a void in the heart that longs to be filled. But nothing in this world will fill that void in your heart. Many labor for what they will never receive without coming to

“the fountain of living waters.” (Jeremiah 2:13).

Christ is the living water that longs to fill the void of the heart. He gives the invitation, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.” (John 7:37). “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?” (Isaiah 55:1,2).

You can only find fulfillment, purpose, and satisfaction in a personal relationship with Christ, the Living Water. Notwithstanding how low you have been, or how great the desperation you have experienced, Christ stands ready to satisfy the longing of your heart. This living water will be a spring of life within your soul, “springing up into everlasting life” and eternal salvation. (John 4:13,14).

Chapter 2

A Mission and Purpose

We live in very challenging times. Immorality pervades society. We live in times like the days of Sodom and Gomorrah. In such challenging times, how can we live lives worthy of our high calling in Christ? How can we be true, steadfast, and loyal to God and a blessing to society? How can we live lives of purpose, faith, and courage?

God has called you for this moment. You have been given a mission and purpose by God Himself. Understanding your God-given mission and purpose in life is very essential. It creates your identity and drives everything you do in life. You are therefore enabled to move forward in life with confidence and not uncertainty because your life has a reason and a purpose for living.

The devil does not want you to fulfill your God-given mission and purpose. To prevent you from understanding this, he tries to distract and preoccupy the mind from comprehending it.

When you understand your mission and purpose

in life and fulfill it in the power of Christ, evil loses its power over your life. You live a new life of freedom and direction in Jesus Christ.

You are described as “...a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” (1 Peter 2:9). Peculiar means “purchased.” You were chosen by God and purchased by His redeeming blood to show forth in your life the excellence of Christ and the power of His transforming grace that changed you from being a child of darkness into a son and daughter of God.

Our Creator says, “Even every one that is called by my name... I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.” (Isaiah 43:7). You were created to show the glory of God in every aspect of your life. Even more specifically, the Scriptures teach that “whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” (1 Corinthians 10:31). In whatever you do, you are asking, will this honor God? Will this glorify God? Will your actions show to the world the praises of Jesus Christ?

Jesus refers to this when He said, “Ye are the light of the world.” (Matthew 5:14). When you are fulfilling your God-given mission, the abiding

Light of Christ will flow from you to a dark world. When you are fulfilling your purpose in life, you become ambassadors to reveal Christ to the world in everything you do.

Your purpose and mission in life are foundational to your whole existence. It is the foundation of all success. It will be the foundation of whatever calling you will take up in life. It will become the very fabric of your being. And it is only through the fulfillment of this mission and purpose that you will be able to succeed as a follower of Christ in such a challenging society.

Two Foundational Principles

There are two foundational principles to fulfilling your God-given mission. The first is to love God supremely, and the second is service to mankind. We find these two great principles in Matthew chapter 22 when Jesus revealed the highest injunction to mankind. Jesus said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Matthew 22:37-40).

Foundational Principle 1: Love to God

First, you are to love the Lord your God with all of

your being—your heart, soul, and mind. We are to love God supremely above all else. After His resurrection, Christ asked Peter, who had denied Him, if he loved Him. Jesus asked, “...lovest thou me more than these?” (John 21:15).

Those who do not love God supremely are not worthy of Christ’s eternal kingdom. Jesus says, “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.” (Matthew 10:37-39). Above all else, above life itself, we are to love God.

We love God because of who He is as our Creator and His unending love for us. A love that loved us and gave everything to redeem us from everlasting death. “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” God did not love us because we loved Him. “We love him, because he first loved us.” (1 John 4:9,10,19).

God loves us with everlasting love. He has an

intense desire for our very best. (Jeremiah 31:3). He loves us with infinite love that chose to love us when we were trapped in sin and enemies against Him. “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:6-8). God’s love towards us surpasses any love that we could experience from any other source.

Ultimately, humanity is very undeserving of God’s love. We chose to rebel against our Creator. When infinite love came down from heaven in Jesus Christ, humanity despised, rejected, and crucified Him. Yet though undeserving as we are, God chose to offer Himself as our atonement even when we offered only a cross to Him.

We show our love to God through obedience and loyalty to Him. Jesus says, “If ye love me, keep my commandments. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings...”. (John 14:15,21,24). This love that we are to have for God is not to be given in words alone. If we love God, we will follow Him in obedience in

everything. We will be obedient and conform our lives to all of His precepts. “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” (1 John 2:4). This loyalty and obedience mean that no matter what every other authority in the world says or does, our highest loyalty, commitment, and obedience is to God.

Foundational Principle 2: Service to Mankind

True “love is of God” and “herein is our love made perfect”. (1 John 4:7,17). The Bible reveals that we can only truly love others when we love God supremely and Christ’s love is abiding in the heart. “If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.” (1 John 4:12). In our natural sinful nature we cannot truly love others. God is the only source of love and our love is only made perfect in Him.

When we love God supremely, His divine love will dwell in our hearts and will flow out to others, therefore you will love your neighbor as yourself. This means that you are not living a life that is centered on yourself. You are living a life of service.

These are the fundamental principles and the foundation of your life purpose and mission.

Chapter 3

The Infallible Guide

If you were sent out on a mission by someone, what would you be given? You would be given specific instructions on what you need to accomplish the mission and directions to reach the place you need to be to fulfill your mission. What if you were sent on a specific mission, but you were not given instructions on what needed to be done? What if the mission required you to be in a specific location, but you were not given directions? You would not know what you needed to do to accomplish your mission or how to arrive.

God has given you a mission and He has also given you a guide. For a guide in life, God has given you a road map to guide you in the path of life and righteousness. That map is God's Holy Word.

In the Holy Scriptures, God communicates to us His will and purpose for us. It is not a fiction nor a novel book. It is neither just an ordinary story book. It is a book that has living power—power to transform. When a sinner reads the Bible, its words, with the power of the Holy Spirit, goes to the heart

of the reader doing a work of transformation on the heart.

The Bible has also, unlike any other book, gone through centuries of persecution. It is a book for which thousands of people have been imprisoned, beheaded, burned at the stake, their possessions destroyed, all because they just owned it. Its translators were hunted, and many killed. But in vain did its adversaries seek to destroy it. After centuries of battle, it has stood like a mighty conqueror still preaching its mighty message that offers life, peace, and salvation to the world.

God's Word is a light to guide us in the path of righteousness. Psalms 119:105 says, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

What would you do in a cave with no light? You would absolutely not know where to make the next step. The next step in darkness could be your last. You will need a light to safely guide you.

Just like if you were in a dark cave, you need the light of the Scriptures to safely navigate this treacherous world full of the darkness of sin. The Scriptures reveal the only safe path to travel.

This guide you have been given for life was given by the inspiration of God Himself. According

to 2 Timothy chapter 3, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God...”. (2 Timothy 3:16). “...Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” (2 Peter 1:21). The inspiration of God means that the Holy Spirit “divinely breath in” every word. The breath of God creates life, therefore the Scriptures is a book with living power.

God gave you the Scriptures “...for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works”. (2 Timothy 3:16,17). The word “doctrine” means learning. The Scriptures are the foundation of all learning. “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.” (Proverbs 9:10). The beginning of wisdom is to reverence the Lord. In the Bible, we gain a “knowledge of the holy”. Through the Scriptures, we get an understanding of God and who He is. We learn our purpose and mission in life. We learn of the fall, the plan of salvation, and the atonement that God has offered for our redemption. Without an understanding of these things, you are living an aimless life.

Because of sin, we naturally only have an understanding of evil. In the flesh, we “are wise to do evil, but to do good...” we “have no knowledge.” (Jeremiah 4:22). When our first parents sinned, the

knowledge of sin destroyed the knowledge of good. Without the fear of the Lord and an understanding of holiness, you will not obtain good knowledge and understanding.

God gives you a promise that if you search for heavenly wisdom that you will find it. In Proverbs chapter 2 He says, "So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path. When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee." (Proverbs 2:2-6,9-11).

With the fear of the Lord, the knowledge of God, an understanding of righteousness, your understanding of the universe, nature, the human body, every other science and knowledge of everything else in life will find a purpose, and a mission.

God's Word makes you perfect; it completes you. The Bible also says that the Scriptures thoroughly furnishes you meaning that you become fully equipped for life through an understanding and application of its principles. It will build your character to become one that glorifies God and is a blessing to humanity, teaching principles of complete reliance on God, self-denial, self-discipline, integrity, and patient endurance, all of which are essential to the fulfillment of your purpose and mission.

Chapter 4

The Ultimate Victory

Humanity is in a great controversy. According to Revelation chapter 12, there is a battle between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness. A battle between right versus wrong, truth versus lies. Ultimately, it is a battle for your soul. Forces of evil are seeking to overcome your soul and keep you trapped in the snares of darkness and sin.

In this battle, “...we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” (Ephesians 6:12). This is a spiritual battle that has eternal consequences for everlasting life or eternal death. The only way you will be able to fulfill your God-given purpose is to be an overcomer in this great battle.

When sin came into our world through the violation of God’s Moral Law, humanity’s spiritual nature became corrupted and marred by sin. Because of the Moral law, the desires of sin were forbidden. According to 1 John 3:4, “Whosoever

committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.” The law defines sin. Paul says in Romans 7:8, “Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.”

Therefore “...sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence [forbidden lust]. For without the law sin was dead.” (Romans 7:8). Sin molded into Paul’s life all manner of forbidden lust, desires that were forbidden because of God’s moral Law. Without the moral Law, sin would not be sin, therefore Paul says that “...without the law sin was dead.”

Continuing in Romans 7:9 Paul says, “For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.” He was alive without the law in the sense of lawlessness. (Read 1 Corinthians 9:21). Then the commandment came, and he saw himself as he was, a sinner under the condemnation of eternal death. He says, “...the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.” (Romans 7:10). God’s moral law is for the benefit of the entire universe. It is a commandment ordained to life. But when sin is present, the law ordained to life becomes a law of condemnation and death because “...the wages of sin is death”. (Romans 6:23). “For sin, taking

occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.” (Romans 7:11). Sin, which deceived him, through the penalty of the Law slew him.

In Romans 7:13, Paul then asks the question, “Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.” The law was not sin, and the law was still a law ordained unto life. But the penalty of the Law showed the reality of what sin really was—death. Therefore, through the law, the nature of sin is clearly revealed. The law only forbade the things that would lead to death. It was for our highest good. “Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.” (Romans 7:12).

Disobedience and rebellion deformed us into the mold of sin, and we became its captives. We became incapable of fulfilling the requirements of God’s Moral law. Romans 7:14 says, “For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.” Transgression took all that was heretofore good from the human soul. In our flesh “dwelleth no good thing”. (Romans 7:18). When a sinner sees God’s Moral law, they see their wretched condition, but humanity has no power to conform to its precepts. In our wretchedness, there is no

strength to withstand the hold of sin on our lives.

The sinful flesh wars against righteousness. "...The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." (Galatians 5:17). This war of the sinful flesh against righteousness holds us in the captivity of sin. "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." (Romans 7:18). In our human power, we cannot break free from the chains of this captivity. Seeing the reality of his condition, Paul exclaimed, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:14).

This is where the power of Christ is remarkably displayed in the gospel, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." (Romans 8:3,4). All the Moral Law could do is show the sinner their sinful condition. The Law had no power to change that condition because of the captivity of sin. Humanity needed Divine power to overcome the captivity of sin on the soul. In Christ we receive power "...both to will and to do

of his good pleasure.” (Philippians 2:13).

Because of sin, humanity came under eternal condemnation and was separated from God with no light or hope. But God didn't leave us alone. Infinite love, mercy, and truth was manifested to the world in Christ Incarnate. Righteousness came down from heaven to grant us righteousness we didn't deserve. Christ came and dwelt with humanity to transform our sinful hearts into His sacred dwelling.

Jesus came to this earth with a mission to “...save his people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:21). Our Creator came to deliver the people whom He had created, yet rebelled against Him. Christ took the reproach that was against us upon Himself. He came to break the power of sin from the souls of humanity.

When there was no hope, Christ's sacrificial love heard your cry. He sacrificed everything, gave His life, shed His blood, and overcame the world to give you the victory. Jesus gives you the promise, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” (John 8:34,36). This freedom is guaranteed in Christ. This freedom and deliverance cannot be found in any other source. Jesus is our only hope for deliverance from

the captivity of sin.

Jesus defeated the sinful flesh and broke its power. To the despondent trapped in the cords of sin, Jesus gives a message of victory, "...be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." In Christ, His victory can be your victory. 1 John 5:4 says, "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Through faith in the atoning blood of Christ, you will receive omnipotent power to fight the fight of faith and overcome the world. Clothed with the armor of God, you will stand. In Christ, you will pull down the strongholds of sin and become "more than conquerors through him that loved us." (Romans 8:37).

Many precious promises are given in the Bible to those who overcome in Christ. "...To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new

Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.” (Revelation 2:7,11; 3:5,12).

Chapter 5

Crucified with Christ

In Isaiah chapter 7, a prophecy was given concerning the coming Messiah: “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” (Isaiah 7:14). Immanuel means “God with Us.” Here, a prophecy was given that the Messiah would be God Himself in the flesh who would come and dwell with us.

We see the fulfillment of this Old Testament prophecy concerning the Messiah, known as Christ in the New Testament, in Matthew chapter 1: “Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.” (Matthew 1:22,23). God came to dwell with humanity in Jesus Christ. He wanted to dwell with us, but this abiding presence meant much more than Christ living amongst society. Christ came to dwell within the sanctuary of our very hearts. Christ says, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any

man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” (Revelation 3:20). He wants to come in and have a personal relationship with you. “...Ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” (2 Corinthians 6:1).

Jesus stands at the door of your heart and knocks. He does not force His way in, but gives the invitation “if any man hear my voice... open the door”. You must open the door of your heart to Jesus. Opening this door is compared to a surrender. It is a surrender of the entire life to Christ. It is a surrender of the mind, body, and soul; a surrender of all our thoughts, actions, and emotions. Christ is given full control of every aspect of your life to begin His work of transformation. Romans 6:13 says, “Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God...”.

This surrender is compared to a living sacrifice in which you “...present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” (Romans 12:1). Christ made the ultimate sacrifice to redeem us, but there is a sacrifice we must present, yielding our lives to Him.

This sacrifice is compared to a crucifixion. Paul

says, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20). There must be total self-renunciation. This crucifixion we must make is a death of self. Self must be crucified. The old life of sin must die and you must yield to Divine Authority, allowing Christ to take full control. Crucified with Christ, you make a full and complete surrender of the life and will.

We have nothing good in ourselves. Everything we have is compared to "filthy rags". In our own strength, we are powerless to work the will of God. Every bone, muscle, and organ has no strength. We are spiritually wretched, poor, miserable, blind, and necked, "dead in trespass and sins". There is nothing you can do to save yourself.

We have no righteousness and you cannot obtain righteousness by your works or the good things that you do. Without the righteousness of Christ, you have no hope. You must fall down at the feet of the cross. You must repent of everything you have naturally according to the flesh and allow Christ to clothe you with His righteousness, which we receive by faith. You must be found in Christ, not having your "...own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of

Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith". (Philippians 3:9). Paul says, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." (Galatians 6:14).

When you are crucified with Christ, the old life of sin dies and you are buried with Christ. In this spiritual crucifixion, you "mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience" (Colossians 3:5,6). You no longer live in sin. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:" (Romans 6:3-5).

When a believer goes under the watery grave of baptism, they make a proclamation to the world that they have renounced self and have been crucified with Christ. They are Christ's sons and daughters and have therefore "...crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." (Galatians 5:24).

The believer rising from the watery grave of baptism proclaims to the world that they have risen with Christ in the newness of life. Romans 6:6-10 says, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God." There is a spiritual death and resurrection. The body of sin is destroyed. It is crucified with Christ. But death had no dominion over Christ. He rose with glorious power on the third day. In like manner, the one who has died to sin will rise in new life with Christ!

When you have been crucified with Christ, the old man of sin is dead, but nevertheless, you live. How can this be? Self is not alive. Where is this life coming from? This life comes from Christ. The life you live is no longer your own. Christ lives within you. Christ becomes everything in your life. He becomes your wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

In Christ, the resurrection and the life, there is a new life. A new man is created. "Therefore if any

man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” (2 Corinthians 5:17). You become a new creation! “...Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.” (Romans 8:9-11). The old life that is now dead is replaced with the life of Christ. You are alive in Christ alone. This is why Paul says in Romans chapter 6, “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 6:11). In Jesus Christ, you are made to “sit together in heavenly places” in full communion, unity, and fellowship with God. (Ephesians 2:5,6).

Sin no longer has dominion over your life because you have yielded everything to Christ. Romans 6:12-14 says, “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not

have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” You are no longer under the law because Christ has saved you from the condemnation of the law. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” (Romans 8:1-4).

Christ has set you free from sin. “Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.” (Romans 6:18). Christ cleanses the life completely. You are justified in His atoning blood. You become a servant of Christ. Your inheritance becomes eternal life: “For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 6:20-23).

Christ is the Lamb of God who made atonement for sin through His infinite sacrifice, but Christ is also our High Priest. When Christ ascended to Heaven and sat down on the right hand of the throne of power, He began His work as our High Priest. "We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens". Christ is "a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." (Hebrews 8:1,2). "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." (Hebrews 9:11,12). As our High Priest, Christ is our advocate and intercessor. As our advocate, Christ stands in the presence of God making intercession for us. (Romans 8:34).

Our faith in Jesus Christ gives us hope. By Jesus Christ as our High Priest, we receive access to the Throne of Grace and Mercy. Through Jesus Christ, we receive justification by faith and then can live a life of sanctification which in the end will lead to glorification, eternal redemption, and immortality at the Second Coming of Jesus, and the grand consummation of the everlasting covenant, which will be the new heaven and earth.

Christ will finish the work of redemption that He has begun. Every promise will be fulfilled. One day soon, Christ will come again in all His glory to take us home to forever dwell with Him in eternal peace, repeating the resounding joys of salvation and eternal redemption throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity.

Chapter 6

Total Transformation

Once you have surrendered everything to Him and He has become your life, Christ transforms your life. It is a total transformation of the mind. We know that because of sin, we are naturally sinfully minded. We have no natural desire to follow the path that leads to eternal life. The Bible reveals in Romans chapter 8 verse 7 that “the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” The Bible also reveals that “...to be carnally [sinfully] minded is death... Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” (Romans 8:6-8).

Our actions are the fruits of our hearts. “A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.” (Matthew 12:35). Without Christ transforming the mind, we can only bring forth corruption. When Christ transforms the mind, there is a total replacement. Christ says, “And I will give them one heart, and I

will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh.” (Ezekiel 11:19). Christ takes out the stony heart and replaces it with a heart of flesh. He creates a totally new and transformed heart. In the prayer of David in Psalms 51, he prayed, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.” (Psalms 51:10).

You are molded and recreated into a new likeness and renewed. You are no longer “conformed to this world: but... transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” (Romans 12:2). It is only through Christ that we can spiritually receive a transformation of mind. “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” (Philippians 2:13). We receive a mind that is “...renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.” (Colossians 3:10).

You no longer live to the will of sin but to the will of God. The Bible says in 1 Peter chapter 4, “Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. For the time past of our life may

suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you: Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.” (1 Peter 4:1-6).

When the flesh is crucified with Christ, when the flesh has suffered with Christ, when Christ transforms the life, we no longer live in the flesh, we no longer walk with the world in rebellion against the government of God, we no longer work the will of the flesh but the will of God. The world looks at you and thinks that you are weird; they think you are strange, they say, “Why are they not doing the same things we are doing?” They no longer see you participating in their abominable works, they no longer see you at their nightclubs, they no longer see you joining them in their sinful deeds, you no longer drink with them, you no longer smoke with them, you are no longer their party friends, you no longer participate with them in their evil works. You have been transformed. The old ways of sin have died. You have been crucified with Christ, and the life you live is no longer your own, but Christ lives in you!

“For for this cause was the gospel preached also

to them that are dead [spiritually dead in sins and trespasses], that they might be judged according to men in the flesh [they think you are weird], but live according to God in the spirit.” (1 Peter 4:6).

At one time, you fulfilled “the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved).” (Ephesians 2:3-5). You “...were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.” By nature you were children of disobedience. “But after that the kindness and 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, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” (Titus 3:3-7).

When you are transformed by Christ, the trajectory of your life changes. You no longer set your eyes on the world, you no longer set your eyes on others. Your eyes are wholly set on Christ. Risen with Christ, you “seek those things which are above,

where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.” You “set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” (Colossians 3:1-4).

You no longer walk in the path of darkness but in the way of light that leads to eternal life. You “walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying” and have put on “the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” (Romans 13:13,14).

Many people in our world today do not have life and peace. They are constantly stressed and are on the verge of despair. The Bible tells us where true peace and life are found: “For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.” (Romans 8:6). This is the only way one can have true life and peace. The promise of peace is given, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.” (Isaiah 26:3).

In summary, when you are crucified with Christ, there is a complete death of the old spiritual life and a resurrection. There is total destruction of the flesh, which is followed by a full replacement with

the life of Christ and total transformation to His will. Your “sufficiency is of God”. (2 Corinthians 3:5). You are only alive through and by the life of Jesus Christ. Christ lives within you. Christ has total dominion over your life. You “have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.” (Colossians 3:10,11).

When Christ is living in you, when Christ has transformed you, his life will “be made manifest” in your “mortal flesh.” (2 Corinthians 4:11). The light and life of Christ will flow from you and through you to a wounded world. Every act will bear witness that Christ is living in your life. It will be living proof that you love God supremely and your neighbors as yourself. Your life will daily be a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.

No matter how low you have been, Christ’s life can become your life. You can be justified, sanctified, and transformed into Christ’s likeness. Romans 5:20 says, “...But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound”. In the Divine, transformative power of Christ, you can live a life of fulfillment and purpose.

Chapter 7

Born Again

One night there came to Jesus a Pharisee named Nicodemus. He was a ruler of the Jews and a member of the national council. His heart was drawn to Christ and he desired to hear more from Him. “The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.” (John 3:2). Jesus knew that this man was truly searching and He went straight to the heart of the matter. “Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3).

Salvation was not automatically granted because Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews. He had to experience a rebirth. Startled, Nicodemus asked, “How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?” “Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that

which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.” (John 3:5-7).

It was not that Nicodemus had to enter a second time into his mother’s womb, but that he needed a spiritual transformation. The birth of water represents the cleansing power of the blood of Christ which He gave: “That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” (Ephesians 5:26,27). The birth of the Spirit represents the sanctification of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit dwells in the heart that has surrendered to Christ. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians chapter 6, “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). You “...are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” The Holy Spirit sanctifies us and creates our hearts into “...an holy temple in the Lord”. (Ephesians 2:20-22). We are born again to produce the fruits of the Spirit.

This unified work of justification and sanctification on the heart causes the new birth. Paul in Titus chapter 3 gives an amazing description of this work of transformation: “For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and 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, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” (Titus 3:3-7). At one time your life was held under the captivity of sin but because of the love of God you were washed and renewed and made heirs of eternal life. You are “...born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” (1 Peter 1:23).

This rebirth experience signifies the creation of a new heart and spirit. God gives the promise to those who have yielded control to Him, “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my

judgments, and do them.” (Ezekiel 36:26,27). God then engraves His law in the tables of our hearts, enabling you to delight in and follow the will of God in your life alone. (Read Hebrews 10:16,17, Psalms 40:8).

What does this rebirth look like? Jesus says, “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” (John 3:8). You can feel the wind, you see the leaves on trees moving, you hear the sound of the wind, but do you see the wind? No. So when Christ transforms the life, others can see the changes taking place in the life, but though unseen, it is the supernatural movement and transformation of the Holy Spirit on the heart that is surrendered to Christ.

Chapter 8

Dwelling In Christ

After you have surrendered your life to God and have experienced a rebirth, you must daily abide in Him. Christ uses a vine to illustrate the abiding relationship we are to have with Him. Jesus says, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.” (John 15:1,2,4). When you are connected to the Vine, which is Christ, you will spiritually bear fruit.

Jesus says that the branches that do not abide in the Vine are “...cast forth as a branch, and is withered”. (John 15:6). Branches that don’t abide in Christ will wither because Christ is the life of the branch. You must be connected daily with Christ. Those who are connected with Christ, the Vine, will bear fruit. You will not be able to bring forth fruit without being connected to the vine. Jesus continues in John chapter 15, “I am the vine, ye are

the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.” (John 15:5,8,16).

The fruit that Jesus wants us to bear is the fruit of the Spirit: fruits of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. Paul says in Galatians chapter 5, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.” (Galatians 5:22-23). Connected to Christ, the Vine, we will bear much fruit.

This abiding relationship we are to have with Christ is a daily walk with Him. “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord,” so will you also “walk ye in him: rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.” (Colossians 2:6,7).

Though sin has separated humanity from God, Jesus has made provision for that lost connection

to be restored. (Isaiah 59:2). God wants to dwell with you in the temple of your heart. Christ wants to have a personal and living relationship with you.

How do you have a close relationship with Christ? In any good relationship, there must be communion and communication. You must come close to the heart of Christ in prayer in a spirit of total surrender to Him, dying anew to the flesh. Don't leave His presence in prayer until you have tasted of His living water of life. Read the scriptures till it speaks to your soul. Let nothing take that sacred space. Then continually stay with Christ and abide in Him. All Satan wants to do is distract us from dwelling in Christ where he can easily destroy us. Put away every potential distraction to your connection with Christ and determine in your heart to know Christ and the power of His transforming grace.

Moses had an intense desire to know God. He prayed, "See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight. Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people." (Exodus 33:12,13). God promised that His presence would

go before them. Moses now wanted to know the God who was leading them for himself personally. He pleaded, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory." (Exodus 33:18). Of Moses, the Bible says, "there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face". (Deuteronomy 34:10). Moses walked with God and communed with Him.

Enoch and Noah were also men of faith who had a personal living connection with God. They walked and talked with God as a personal friend. Paul counted all things lost to know Christ. This connection he had with Christ was so deep that Christ's life was manifested in his entire life. (Philippians 1:20,21). In joy and sorrow, in word and deed, in labor, in persecutions, in life and death, Christ was magnified in his life.

You too must have a personal connection with Christ and a continual desire to know Him more, just as Enoch, Noah, Moses, Paul, and other men and women of faith in the Scriptures. You must count everything lost to pursue a knowledge of Christ.

Christ is knocking at the door of your heart. Christ says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

(Revelation 3:20). If you hear the voice of Christ, open the door. He doesn't force his way in. You must make that surrender. You must open the door of your heart and allow him to take full control of your heart.

Chapter 9

Self-Denial and Surrender

When God created the earth, nothing in creation was made to center on self; everything takes to give. There is a continual outflow and receiving of blessings. Everything in life was created on the principle of unselfishness. When everyone is looking at the things of others instead of themselves, their life of service becomes a current of life that flows from one to another throughout society.

Because of sin, we all naturally have a spirit of selfishness and pride which can only be broken by the power of Christ. It is a spirit that desires to elevate oneself over others. It is against our sinful spiritual nature to deny self for another.

Selfishness is the principle of the world. The spirit of selfishness enables people to trample over and wrong their neighbor, no matter the consequences. It is really a foundational principle of sin.

Self-denial is the principle of heaven. It is an essential principle that Jesus requires of all his followers. Jesus said in Matthew 16:24, "...If any

man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”

Jesus Himself gave a perfect example of this principle. In the life of Jesus Christ, we see that self-denial was humility, service, and sacrifice. Mark 10:45 says, “For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” Jesus is King of kings, and Lord of lords, Almighty God, yet He chose to humble Himself to save humanity. Philippians 2:5-11 says, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Jesus is the greatest example of humility this world has ever seen. Christ emptied Himself for you. He did not take the form of angels, but the nature of frail, fallen humanity, prone to temptation. The only object in His mind was your salvation. He came to earth not to be ministered to nor receive the praise of the world. He came to serve, and ultimately, He paid the highest price of service, which is sacrifice, when He gave His life to give you life.

The disciples of Christ were slow to understand

the principles of self-denial, therefore Jesus taught these principles to them in word and deed. Traveling to Capernaum, the disciples were debating who would be the greatest among them in Christ's kingdom. Jesus asked them, "What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest." Knowing their hearts, Jesus said, "If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all." (Mark 9:33,34 ,35). The highest calling of mankind can only be found in service.

In Matthew chapter 18, Jesus said, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:3,4). Humility is a requirement for heaven. The spirit of success is a spirit of humility. When we deny self and humble our hearts like unto a little child we allow God to work on our hearts and to use us.

Right before His crucifixion, the disciples were debating who would be the greatest in Christ's kingdom. "But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall

not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” “For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth.” (Matthew 20:25-28; Luke 22:27). Though Jesus was their Master, yet He was their Servant.

On the night of the Passover supper, “Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God... riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.” (John 13:3-5,12-15). Here again, Jesus taught the importance of self-denial and humility, with His very life being the supreme example.

You are not living for self. Your entire life is dedicated to living and serving for Christ. Your entire being belongs to Him and is committed to His service. You no longer look at how you can take and please yourself, but in every situation, how can I give and serve in a way that will honor and glorify God and be a blessing to others? (Acts 20:35, Romans 15:1-3, Philippians 2:2-4). As a servant of Christ, you serve humanity with His divine love in your heart. Paul said, "For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more." (1 Corinthians 9:19). The graces of charity, longsuffering, kindness, benevolence, and righteousness will flow through you to the world.

Self-denial is a surrender to the will of God in your life. It is a surrender, allowing God to use you according to His Divine will. Like Isaiah said when God was calling him, or when Gabriel came to announce to Mary that she would conceive and birth the Messiah, you will say, "Here am I, send me" "be it unto me according to thy word." (Isaiah 6:8, Luke 1:38).

Self cannot be in the way in the service of Christ. Self and pride get in the way of God being able to use us. That is why self-denial is a requirement of all His followers. You must lay self aside to be enabled to serve Christ unreservedly. The principle of self-denial enables you to live a life of

consecrated, unselfish service to humanity. You become an instrument in the hand of the Master to be used according to His perfect will.

This principle of self-denial puts into perspective the things of life. Luke 9:25 says, "For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?" What if you were to gain the entire world? What if you obtained all the power and riches possible to mankind, but all that came at the cost of eternal salvation? This is the decision that Moses had to make. "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward." (Hebrews 11:24-26).

Moses recognized the reproach of Christ as more valuable than all of the power and riches he would have received in Egypt. Though the world offered self a lot, Moses saw that it all was temporary and that he would rather suffer persecution with the people of God than to enjoy sin for a season.

When self is crucified with Christ, self is replaced with the life and power of Christ. In a time of utter weakness, Paul was given the promise, "...

My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore he said, “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.” (2 Corinthians 12:9,10).

Here Am I

God is calling each one of us. This surrender to Christ and self-denial enables us to answer the calling of God on our lives and say, “Here am I, Lord”.

We see examples of God calling individuals to total surrender to His Divine will throughout the Bible. While Moses was shepherding a flock of sheep in the mountain wilderness, God called him.

Moses saw a burning bush. The bush was engulfed in flames but not consumed. Moses drew near the bush to admire this wondrous scene when “God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses.” Moses, in words of surrender, said, “Here am I.” (Exodus 3:1-4). He surrendered to the will of God in his life. He was willing to be used by God. God then committed to Moses His will and purpose for him.

God gave him the mission, “Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.” Moses recognized that this was a very large task and responsibility and said, “Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?” (Exodus 3:10,11). Moses was an exile from Egypt. A humble shepherd. What would qualify him to fulfill such a large task committed to him by God Himself?

God revealed to Moses that his qualification would not come from his ability and power but in total surrender and faith in His Divine power. God gave Moses the assurance and said, “Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.” (Exodus 3:12).

God called him, and Moses surrendered. God committed a mission to him, and He gave Moses the positive assurance that He would be with him in the fulfillment of that mission. A very powerful part of this story is that the very mountain that Moses was standing before in that present moment, God promised that he would worship God upon that same mountain with the people God had delivered from bondage, which was fulfilled at Mt Sinai.

God's call also came to Samuel. In the night when Samuel was asleep, "...the LORD called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I." (1 Samuel 3:4). Searching for the One who had called him, he ran to Eli, but he had not called him. When Eli realized that the Lord was calling the child Samuel, he said, "Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth. And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth." (1 Samuel 3:10). Here we see a surrender to the will of God in his life and a willingness to follow that will. Samuel's heart was prepared to hear God and follow Him with his whole heart. Throughout his life, he remained faithful to that call.

Isaiah also received this call from God. He said, "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me." (Isaiah 6:8). God was looking for someone to use. God was looking for someone willing to be sent. Isaiah surrendered his entire life to God. He gave God permission to use him according to His Divine plan and to send him wherever He would send him.

When God called Mary, the mother of Christ, she had to make a surrender to the will of God in her life. The message was given to her by the

angel Gabriel, "Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Her response was, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." (Luke 1:30,31,35,38). Here she surrendered her heart to the will of God in her life, and God was able to use her to fulfill His promise to mankind.

In Philippians chapter 3, Paul speaks about the surrender he made for Christ. "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death" (Philippians 3:7-10). Paul counted everything else, even the things that would give him all the earthly gain and power he could desire, as rubbish to win Christ.

You don't have to be the greatest, the most intellectual, the most powerful; all God needs is a surrendered heart where you allow Him to fulfill His will in your life.

Everything must be counted loss for Christ. When you have died to self, surrendered your life, and live a new life "hid with Christ", Christ becomes your highest interest, your highest motivation, and you pursue Him with all your heart and all of your soul. You "...set your heart and your soul to seek the LORD your God" and you devote your entirety to His service. (1 Chronicles 22:19).

God is calling you. "But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine." (Isaiah 43:1). God has called you by name. He longs to fulfill His Divine will in your life. God's will for your life is the best and highest, stronger than anything you could ever imagine or accomplish in your power. He says, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:8,9). But in order for God's will to be fulfilled in your life, you must say "Here Am I". You must surrender your heart, your body, and your soul to

God. You must commit your heart fully to God and allow Him to work His will in your life. Then you must trust that God will give you the power to fulfill His Divine will in your life because “it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13).

As you go forward in the fulfillment of your purpose, mission, and calling, Jesus gives you the promise just as He gave to Moses, “Certainly I will be with thee”, “I will be with you always”. He will never leave you. Though you may not understand everything, you must rest your heart and have complete confidence in Christ as you follow Him wherever He leads.

Chapter 10

Perfect Trust

Complete reliance and perfect trust in God are essential to fulfilling your God-given purpose and mission in life. When you need guidance, when you don't understand, when you need grace to endure, when there seems to be no way, and the situation appears hopeless, you are instructed to "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding." (Proverbs 3:5).

Trusting in the Lord is living a life of surrender to God. It is a complete surrender of the mind, body, and spirit. It is a surrender of the will, desires, thoughts, and emotions. Your entire life is committed to the control of God's will. You are completely reliant on God and understand your utter inability. It is a total distrust of your own understanding and total faith and trust that God has the best and highest desires for your life. In that faith, you rest your heart, casting your burdens to God because he loves you with infinite love and cares for you. (1 Peter 5:7).

Psalms 37:7 says, "Rest in the LORD, and wait

patiently for him...". In that perfect trust, you will rest in the Lord in the good times and even when everything seems to be falling apart. As Isaiah 30:15 says, "...in quietness and in confidence (trust) shall be your strength...". In that perfect trust, your heart is held in His perfect peace and love. Your mind is stayed on God because you trust in Him. (Isaiah 26:3,4). You "lean not unto thine own understanding" because you totally distrust self, and self has been crucified with Christ. You know that "...with God all things are possible." (Matthew 19:26). Faith in Christ is alone and supreme in your life. In all the paths of life, you bring your heart before God because you are acquainted with Him and know Him as a personal friend. The Scriptures give you the sure, precious promise, "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." (Proverbs 3:6).

This faith gives you confidence in life because you trust that no matter the storms of life, no matter what comes your way, whatever the circumstances may be, the Lord will hold you by His side. Christ becomes your confidence. Your heart becomes fixed, "trusting in the Lord". (Psalms 112:7). The Lord becomes your hope in every situation. (Jeremiah 17:7). In holy confidence you will say, "The LORD is on my side; I will not fear..." "Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear..." (Psalms 27:3; Psalms 118:6).

Christ's perfect love "casteth out fear". (1 John 4:18). Christ delivered us from the powers of sin that we "might serve him without fear". (Luke 1:74). We become His sons and daughters. He holds us in His perfect love. We need not fear because we trust Him. Those who entrust their entirety to the Living Stone and Sure Foundation, Jesus Christ, will not be confounded. (1 Peter 2:6).

When you look back in life, you will be reminded of all the times that God's love held you through the storms of life. Even when everything fell apart, in times of fear, loss, sorrow, disappointment, and despair, Christ was by your side and brought you through. You will see how the promises of the Scriptures were in special ways fulfilled in your life. As you look back, your faith grows, and your trust deepens. In that faith, day by day, you will renew your strength and "mount up with wings as eagles", you will "run, and not be weary" "walk, and not faint." (Isaiah 40:31).

This trust becomes your life. You live by faith. You find rest in Christ by casting all your burdens and worries upon Him, because you trust Him. You have faith that just as He provides for the needs of creation, He will supply your needs.

This faith completes you. It brings the promises of God into fulfillment in your life. We receive the

promises through faith. According to Hebrews 4:2, the promises of the gospel are received by faith. We are justified by faith, and by faith we receive the promises of salvation. By faith, we receive access to the Throne of grace and mercy. You live and walk by faith. By faith you stand “grounded and settled” in the power of Christ. (Colossians 1:23). In this faith, you rest your salvation.

We must have faith that God is able to fulfill His promises before we can receive them. Hebrews 11:6 says, “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” There are many stories of people who came to Christ for healing and were made whole by faith. When Christ healed the two blind men, He asked them, “Believe ye that I am able to do this?” In declaration of their faith, they said, “Yea, Lord”. According to their faith, they were healed. (Matthew 9:28-30). The woman with an issue of blood came to Christ with faith that He had the power to heal her. “...She said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.” (Matthew 9:21). That faith enabled her to move on that faith and come to Christ for healing. According to her faith, she was made whole.

In complete faith and trust, we must come to God and ask Him to intervene on our behalf. One time,

Christ and His disciples were crossing a lake, and a tempestuous storm came upon them. The disciples fought with all their power to keep the boat afloat. In the midst of the storm, Christ was “asleep on a pillow”. The waves beat upon the ship so vehemently that it filled it to the point of sinking. They lost all hope. In desperation, they cried, “Master, carest thou not that we perish?” (Mark 4:38). In tender pity, Christ said, “Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?” (Matthew 8:26). Jesus was in the ship, but they did not have complete faith in His power. They only came to Him once they had given up all hope and were certain they would perish. Jesus knew what they were going through, but he did not work for their salvation until they cried out to Him for help. Christ will not work on our behalf if we do not desire Him to and seek Him.

Faith and trust in God allow us to move out and act on that faith, just like Noah, “being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house”. (Hebrews 11:7). Abraham’s faith in God enabled him to leave his native country and become a stranger and sojourner in the promised land, “For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” (Hebrews 11:10).

Faith is like a plant. Jesus compares it to “a grain of mustard seed”. (Matthew 17:20). Prayer grows our

faith in God. Day by day it grows and strengthens until in faith, you behold the Invisible. Faith becomes "...the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1).

You will behold the invisible as Job did when in faith he said, "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me." (Job 19:25-27). Or as Jacob beheld the invisible when he prophesied of the Messiah before his death. (Genesis 49:9,10). Abraham in faith saw Christ's day and rejoiced in that faith. (John 8:56). "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." They died in faith "...as seeing him who is invisible." (Hebrews 11:13,27).

Jesus is the Divine Author and Finisher of faith. As the Divine Author, He creates it. He turns unbelief and doubt into faith and trust. (Read Mark 9:23,24). Steadily, He will grow your faith and refine it until He brings it into perfection. You will rest in confidence knowing "that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of

Jesus Christ". (Philippians 1:6).

According to 2 Corinthians 5:7, "...We walk by faith, not by sight". We move forward in life by faith and not by the things that are seen. We move forward in faith even when we cannot see the path forward, even in the face of apparent obstacles to every advancement.

God is all knowing and all powerful and could reveal all the paths of life very clearly at once. (Isaiah 46:9,10). But He doesn't, because He wants our life to be one of total faith and trust in Him. God uses the moments of uncertainty and waiting, where faith is required, to draw us closer to Him. In the process of uncertainty, waiting, and trusting, Christ is refining and preparing the heart to receive the blessings He has prepared for you. These moments strengthen our faith and trust in Him to believe that no matter the circumstances of life, His presence will dwell with us and that His perfect plan will be accomplished in our life.

Chapter 11

Resting Your Confidence

Throughout the Bible, we read of many examples when God's people had to rest their confidence in the Lord for their deliverance. Situations where no human ability or power could avail. But these individuals of faith rested their confidence in God, knowing that He would work for their best and highest good. In these stories, we see miraculous displays of God's Almighty power.

Throughout history, God's people have always been required to walk by faith and not by sight. If they had walked based on the things that were seen, they would have never advanced.

Their paths were not always clear. Many times, there were obstacles to their path. Think of Noah in building the ark. If he had moved forward based on the things that he saw, he would never have built the ark. They had never seen a flood or even rain. Noah had to have faith in the word of God and trust that in faithful obedience to His word, his family would be saved.

Abraham was called to leave his family and go to a land where he would dwell as a sojourner. God promised this land to Him and his descendants. But, Abraham would not receive the promised land in his lifetime, and at the time of this promise he had no descendants. His wife Sarah could not have children though it was promised by God that the promised heir would come from her. Sarah had to have faith that God would give her the promised son even though it was, to all human appearances, an impossibility. They had to walk by faith alone.

Moses at the Red Sea

Moses had complete faith in God and moved forward even when the way was not clear. In faith, he led the Children of Israel towards the Red Sea, knowing that this was where God was leading them while also knowing that they had no human possibility of escape. But Moses had total faith and trust in God that he would make a way even when only darkness and uncertainty stood before them.

He had faith because God had promised, and in faith He believed that God was going to fulfill His promise even when he did not fully understand or see how God would work to fulfill it. Moses just listened to God for guidance and followed His leading. When God commanded Moses to move forward, he obeyed in total faith and trust.

When they arrived at the Red Sea, the children of Israel came into a situation that seemed hopeless. There were mountains on both sides, a great sea in front, and an army of Egyptians behind. In all human appearances, there was no way out. The people were sore afraid and cried out in fear, but Moses faith in God's leading held him. Before God told Moses exactly what to do, he had faith in the salvation of the Lord. "Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." (Exodus 14:13,14).

The Lord worked and fought for their deliverance. The "pillar of the cloud" divided "the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel." To the children of Israel, this cloud gave them light. To the Egyptians, it was a cloud of darkness.

God commanded Moses, "lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea." (Exodus 14:16). In faith, he went forward and did as God had commanded him. "...The LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were

divided.” (Exodus 14:21). The children of Israel walked on dry land, but the pursuing army of the Egyptians perished.

Esther and the Jews

When Queen Esther became queen of the Median-Persian kingdom, trying times were soon to break upon the Jews living in the empire. King Ahasuerus decided to promote a very wicked and prideful man named Haman. He was set above all the princes of the kingdom. The king commanded his servants to bow and reverence Haman.

But there was another man who worked in the palace of the king named Mordecai. He was a Jew, and he worshiped the true and living God “that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.” (Revelation 14:7). Mordecai could not worship Haman because he was simply a human that had no power, even though he wanted to be worshiped. If Mordecai would be faithful to God, he could not worship Haman, though it could cost his life. Like the three Hebrew boys before, Mordecai decided to keep his integrity.

It was reported to Haman that Mordecai did not bow to him. It was also reported that he was a Jew. When he saw that Mordecai did not bow before or show him reverence, “Haman was full of wrath”. He decided that to kill Mordecai was not enough,

but that he would also kill all of the Jews in the kingdom.

What had they done to deserve such treatment by the nation? They were not violent. They were loyal to the kingdom and were an integral part of the empire. But to Haman, their humble life and their belief in and obedience to the true God of Heaven were a constant rebuke to him. To satisfy his pride, Haman was willing to shed innocent blood. (Read Esther 3:5,6).

He was determined to destroy them and would use his authority and connection to the king to fulfill his dreadful purpose. In prideful rage, Haman went to King Ahasuerus to request that he issue a decree to kill all of the Jews. Haman said, "their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws: therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them. If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed." (Esther 3:8,9).

A death decree was issued and sealed by the king's ring. The king gave everything to Haman to carry out his heinous plan. Each province was given the order "to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day." Their belongings would be taken as spoils. (Esther 3:12,13).

After issuing the decree, the king and Haman sat together while the capital Shushan received the news. “The city of Shushan was perplexed.” This message was translated into the different languages that were spoken in the kingdom. Messengers hastened quickly to spread the dreadful news throughout the empire from city to city. It was to be “published unto all people.” Many were appalled at the news. Though not Jews, many people of the nation sympathized with them. (Esther 3:14,15).

“When Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry.” “There was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.” (Esther 4:1,3).

The news quickly spread to Queen Esther. She sent a messenger to Mordecai to learn more of the matter. Mordecai sent Queen Esther a copy of the decree to destroy the Jews. Everything was at stake now. To all human appearances, destruction and death seemed to be looming over all the Jews. But God saw all of the evil that His enemies were planning, and ultimately he would destroy their plans and turn the tables of destruction upon their own heads.

God had begun to work for the deliverance of His people before the atrocious plans of Haman had been issued in an imperial decree. God had set Esther, who was a Jew, to be the queen of the empire. Though unknown then, now was the most pivotal moment for her that she had been called to. Standing for the lives of her people would not be an easy task and very well could have cost her life.

Mordecai pressed the importance of standing for the deliverance of the Jews. He told Esther, “Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king’s house, more than all the Jews.” Mordecai also understood that God alone was their Deliverer and that He would use whoever was willing to work for the deliverance of His people. Mordecai continued, “if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father’s house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:13,14).

In human eyes, there was no way out. Their only hope was in the Lord. Understanding this Esther said, “Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law:

and if I perish, I perish.” (Esther 4:16). Mordecai gathered the Jews together, and they pleaded with God for the deliverance of His people.

On the third day, Esther “put on her royal apparel” and stood before the king. The king held out the golden scepter in a sign of acceptance. The king asked, “What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom.” (Esther 5:3).

Esther requested that the king and Haman come to a banquet. They had the banquet, but Esther had not yet spoken about Haman’s plot of destruction. Esther requested another banquet the next day with the king and Haman.

Haman was delighted at the news of another banquet with the king and queen. No one else had been invited. But when leaving the palace, he again saw Mordecai at the king’s gate. His hatred toward Mordecai revived, and “he was full of indignation”.

When he arrived home that night in desperation and anger, he called his wife and friends together to talk to them about the matter. He thought that all the riches, honor, promotions, and a banquet with the king and queen availed nothing as long as Mordecai sat at the king’s gate.

Haman's wife and friends advised him to build a gallows fifty feet high and to request that Mordecai be hanged on it the next day. With Mordecai out of the way, they said that he would happily go to the banquet with the king. His pride was pleased with this advise and he commanded that a gallows be built. (Esther 5:9-14).

These plans seemed to be unstoppable. The gallows had been built. Mordecai was apparently doomed to the fury of Haman. But while Haman was working for the destruction of Mordecai and the rest of the Jews, God was working for their deliverance.

The very night that Haman had been given the wicked counsel from his wife and friends, the king had trouble getting rest. He could not sleep. He had a burden on his heart. He called for the records of the kings to be brought. While going through the records, he found something about Mordecai, the same man that Haman wanted to kill.

In the record, the king found that Mordecai had saved his life from an assassination attempt. Two men who were keepers of the door had planned the assassination. Mordecai got knowledge of the threat to the king's life and promptly reported it. The king asked, "What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Then said the

king's servants that ministered unto him, There is nothing done for him." (Esther 6:3).

The king was determined to honor Mordecai for his actions in saving his life. In the morning, when Haman arrived in the court of the king, the very morning Haman planned to asked the king to hang Mordecai, the king asked, "What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour?" Who did the king want to honor? Haman thought to himself, "To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself?" He was excited!

Haman said, "For the man whom the king delighteth to honour, Let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head: And let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man withal whom the king delighteth to honour, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour." The king thought that this was good and appropriate to honor the man whom he delighted to honor. He gave Haman the order, "Make haste, and take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said". But who was to be honored? To his utter surprise, the king commanded, "Do even so to Mordecai the Jew, that

sitteth at the king's gate: let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken." The very man he had come to condemn, he would be leading through the streets of the city, clothed in royal apparel. (Esther 6:6-10).

After Haman had fulfilled the command, he hurried home in abhorrence, mourning, "having his head covered." Haman told his wife and friends of the events that had just taken place. They said, "If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him." I am sure they had heard stories about the power of the living God of the Jews. It was obvious that Haman was fighting against God. (Esther 6:12,13).

While Haman was talking to his wife and friends, messengers from the palace came bidding him to the banquet. (Esther 6:14). He hurried to the banquet with the king and queen.

While at the banquet, the king asked Esther, "What is thy petition, queen Esther?" Queen Esther laid out the matter before the king. She said, "For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish." "Then the king Ahasuerus answered and said unto Esther the queen, Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so?" "Esther said, The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman." Haman was very surprised

and afraid. He knew his fate was sealed. "Haman stood up to make request for his life to Esther the queen; for he saw that there was evil determined against him by the king." The final straw for the king was when Haman "...was fallen upon the bed whereon Esther was". Then said the king, "Will he force the queen also before me in the house? As the word went out of the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face." (Esther 7:2,4-6,7-10).

The king was told of the gallows that he had made for Mordecai. The king then commanded him to be hanged on the very gallows he had built. He made the pit, dug it, and fell into the pit he made for another. (Psalms 7:15,16). The enemy of Mordecai and the Jews had fallen.

Mordecai took the place of Haman and the queen asked the king to reverse the decree of destruction that Haman had championed. This decree was reversed and a new message spread throughout the empire. The Jews throughout the empire were given the ability to "stand for their life, to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish, all the power of the people and province that would assault them" on the appointed day from the former decree. (Esther 8:11).

On the day appointed for their destruction, God worked mightily for their deliverance. It was

evident to all that God and God alone had wrought for the deliverance of His people in a time when their destruction seemed certain. He alone was glorified. The people of the land saw the power and might of the God of Israel. "Many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them." (Esther 8:17).

We see many other examples in the Bible of times where God displayed His power in times when His people were in situations of utter helplessness. We see this when the Syrian army surrounded Elisha and his servant, the three Hebrew boys, Daniel in the lions' den, Nehemiah building the wall, Peter rescued from prison, the spread of the gospel throughout the world in the New Testament times, and the Protestant Reformation. "And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of

bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise". (Hebrews 11:32-39). God was the hope of their lives. Faith was the support and assurance of their hope.

When we are in utter despair, when we see no way out, when we acknowledge our inability, when we see our weakness, when we come to God in total faith and plead with Him in humility, that is when God shows His Almighty power on behalf of His people. When we fully surrender our weakness to God, our weakness is replaced with the Almighty power of Christ. Just as God worked mightily on behalf of the men and women of faith in times past, in these final times, God is still willing to display His power in an even more glorious manner for His people.

Chapter 12

A Chosen Generation

As Christians, we are called to reflect Christ in everything that we do. Christ abiding in the heart enables His life and character to flow out to the world. As a Christian, you are a representative of Christ in everything you say, think, and do.

Christ “...gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” (Titus 2:14). Christ has redeemed us with His blood and has chosen us out of this world to be a peculiar people. The word peculiar in the Strong’s Greek definition means “being beyond usual.” In the eyes of the world, the Christian is to be seen as beyond usual. We are called “...a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people...” (1 Peter 2:9). As a chosen generation, we are called to live lives that are in contrast to the world.

This really goes back to Genesis 3:15 when God said that there will be a distinction between the people of God and worldliness. God was going to have a people who would have enmity against sin. Since

God's people are to have enmity against worldliness and sin, there will be a difference between God's people and the people of the world.

The principles of the gospel affect this difference. The grace of God transforms the life. "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared [God's grace], Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." (Titus 3:3-7). Because of Christ's grace, we are justified and renewed by the Holy Spirit. This renewal by the Holy Spirit transforms the life.

In this process of renewing we are taught principles that are totally different from our old life. The grace of Christ teaches us to deny "ungodliness and worldly lusts" and "live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world". (Titus 2:11-15) The life that was in times past "foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy" and hateful becomes one that

is kind, loving, understanding, and filled with the knowledge of God.

Christ fulfills all of the good pleasure of His grace in your life, which work you receive by faith and is accomplished by His infinite power. (Read 2 Thessalonians 1:11). Because of Christ's grace, you are a new creation "...renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." (Colossians 3:10). You are recreated "in righteousness and true holiness." (Ephesians 4:22-24). Every aspect of your life changes. Your life will then "bear the image of the heavenly." (1 Corinthians 15:48,49). You no longer work the works of the world. Because of Christ's righteousness, you have "...cast off the works of darkness" and have "put on the armour of light." (Romans 13:12).

As you dwell with Christ and behold God, you "...are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Corinthians 3:18). As you follow the footsteps of Christ, you will walk as He walks. (1 John 2:6). Christ's character will be made manifest in your life.

Your life will show "a pattern of good works", works that are not the works of your own doing. "...It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." (Philippians 2:13). These works

are the fruit of the work of the Holy Spirit on the heart. The Holy Spirit is the power of godliness. In word and deed, your life will be molded to adorn the principles of the gospel. (Titus 2:10). Through the Almighty power of the Holy Spirit, you will produce the fruits of the Spirit in your life.

As a chosen generation, we are called to holiness. We are commanded, "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." (Peter 1:15,16). This holiness is the righteousness of Christ, purity and freedom from sin. In Christ's righteousness, you are made blameless. In Christ, you can be found "...in peace, without spot, and blameless." (2 Peter 3:14).

This phrase, "be ye holy, for I am holy," comes from the Old Testament when God told the children of Israel, "Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy." (Leviticus 19:2). Why are we told to be holy? Because God is holy. Jesus says, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matthew 5:48). God desires that the people that He has rescued from the world should be consecrated in holiness to Him. "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3). If we want to walk with a Holy God, we must also be holy. God wants to dwell in the temple of the heart, but God cannot dwell in a corrupt and

defiled life. God cannot have communion with the heart that wants to hold on to sin.

We are told to be holy in all manner of conversation which is our “manner of life.” Holiness and godliness are to be the essence of our life, because Christ is our life. This perfect and holy life we are called to live is not our life. Christ is our life and perfection. Therefore, through Christ, the call to Christian perfection can be realized. We are mortal humans who are prone to erring, but as we continually abide in Christ and allow Him to live out His perfect life within us, we will be made perfect and complete in Him.

As Christians, we are commanded to walk as Christ walked in His life among us. (1 John 2:6). What does this mean? Christ, while on earth, left an example of a character of righteousness, holiness, and purity. Christ’s life on earth was a pattern which He left to His followers as an example. (1 Peter 2:21). Jesus said, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” (John 10:27). The word Christian means that you are a follower of Christ. As a follower of Christ, you will follow Christ wherever His footsteps trod, in word, deed, truth, character, and life. His life will be your great pattern. You will “walk even as He walked.” In short, you are living out the life and character of Christ in everything that you do.

Chapter 13

The Biblical Standard

The principles of Christ and the principles of the world are totally opposite to each other. The principles of the world are founded on lust, pride, and selfishness. The principles of Christ are founded in His life, love, and sacrifice.

The Christian is to live out the principles of Christ in their life. 1 Timothy 6:11,12 says, “But thou, O man of God, flee these things [worldliness, pride, lust] and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.” These are the principles and standards of Christ: righteousness, holiness, faith, love, patience, meekness, to be cleansed “...from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” These are principles of life and peace. Principles that perfect individuals, build families, and ennoble society. Imagine if everyone in society followed these principles? It would be heaven on earth. But even though society as a whole is following a totally different set of principles that are against the Biblical standard, God is telling you personally to stand as a light in the midst of a godless society.

“...In the midst of a crooked and perverse nation...” we are called to “...shine as lights in the world” “holding forth the word of life...”. (Philippians 2:15,16). As Christians, we are to shine our lights and show forth the word and principles that God has given us to the world through our lives.

Light and darkness contrast one another, but darkness cannot prevent light from shining. Because worldliness is against Christ, it will also be against His followers. But in the life of a devoted Christian, the world will recognize the light of Christ’s life shining through your life. (Read 1 Peter 2:12). In your life, you will show to the world “...a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.” (Titus 2:7,8). Your words and deeds will be whole and healthy, a savor of life unto life.

You will serve Christ in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. (Romans 14:17,18). These virtues will flow out to the world in your daily life. Kindness and faithfulness will become the essence of your life. Thus, you will move forward in life on a foundation of favor and good success in the sight of God and mankind. (Proverbs 3:3,4).

Seeing the condition of society and the urgency of

the times, an appeal is given to all who believe in Christ: "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." (2 Peter 3:11-14). Understanding the times, we are to live out a life of holiness and godliness in all manner of life. We are to be without spot, "hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." (James 1:23).

As a chosen generation, we are called "...seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." You must "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." (Colossians 3:1,2). When you have died to self and live a new life "hid with Christ", you will set your affection on Christ. In Christ, you have become spiritually minded and are no longer carnally minded. This means that Christ becomes your highest interest, your highest motivation, and you pursue "Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul." (Deuteronomy 4:29). You "...set your heart and your soul to seek the LORD your God" and devote

your entirety to His service. (1 Chronicles 22:19).

“Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table, and of the table of devils. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?” (1 Corinthians 10:21,22). There can be no mixing; love the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul, and mind, or love worldliness.

Today, the line that separates professed people of God from the world has been blurred. Many professed Christians have become like the world. They watch, like, and listen to what the world watches and likes. They dress like the world dresses. They participate in the things that promote the lust of the flesh, sin, and rebellion against God. The music and dancing of the world even finds its way into the church. This is conforming to the standards of worldliness and is why Christ warns all of His followers to “...be not conformed to the world.” (Romans 12:2). We as Christians are still living physically in the world, but are called to be apart from worldliness.

Your affection must be set wholly on Christ. You cannot share this affection with worldliness. You cannot pursue Christ and pursue the things of the world. We are commanded as Christ’s followers to “Love not the world, neither the things that are in

the world.” Furthermore, we are told that “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” (1 John 2:15). There can be no mutual friendship being a friend of Christ and a friend of the world. If you love the world, the love of the Father will not dwell in your heart.

In a more profound understanding, the Bible reveals that “friendship of the world is enmity with God” and that “a friend of the world is the enemy of God.” (James 4:4). Worldliness is comprised of the sinful desires of the heart, the “lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life”. (1 John 2:16). These works of the flesh are manifested in “...adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like...” things that violate God’s Moral Law and will “...not inherit the kingdom of God.” (Galatians 5:19-21). As a friend of the world, you become an adversary of God. You are, by your friendship with the world, fighting against Christ.

The Standards of Christ

The Bible has standards that we as followers of Christ must follow. These standards are to guide our daily life in everything we do, in what we think upon, set our eyes upon, and associate with.

First, we are commanded to glorify God in everything that we do. “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” (1 Corinthians 10:31). In every action of life, including what we eat and drink, we are doing it for the honor and glory of God. This means that everything you do in life should be pleasing to God. We are enabled to glorify God in our life through the abiding presence of God in the heart, enabling us to fulfill the Biblical standard.

Sinful things will not glorify God. Saying that you are a Christian and living a life totally contrary to the principles of the gospel will not glorify God. Things that will harm the physical body that God has given you will not honor and glorify God.

A guiding principle for what we are to listen to, set our eyes upon, and think upon is found in Philippians chapter 4 verse 8: “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” These are principles that should be remembered as the commitment of your heart to Christian virtue. Whatever you think, do, say, or listen to should be in unity with the Biblical standard. Whatever does not comply with this

Biblical standard must be rejected by the follower of Christ. If it is not true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, or does not have any virtue, it must be cut off.

Psalms 101:3 says, “I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me.” We are not to set wickedness before us. We are to hate the works of wickedness. This is really the foundational principle of Christian integrity.

The entertainment of the world does not fit these Biblical standards. The worldly movies and worldly music, such as rap, hip hop, rock, jazz, and R&B, promote all of the things God hates. Therefore, I cannot watch and listen to these things as a follower of Christ.

Why are Christians not to behold these things? The Bible teaches us that in beholding, we become changed. That is how we were created. When we behold God, we become more like Him. The same is true when we behold things of the world. The more we behold and listen to sinfulness, the more we will be molded into the likeness of sin. When you watch and listen to sinful things, the devil is gaining a strong foothold in your life. Thus, many are held in the captivity of Satan.

The more we set wickedness before us, the less evil it will appear. Over time, the soul becomes desensitized to the repulsiveness of sin. This is what has unfortunately dragged down society as a whole to the lowest levels this earth has seen. It is estimated that by the time a person is 18 years old, they have seen around 200,000 acts of violence, including murders, through media. Our generations have become desensitized to blood shed through those avenues. Therefore, violence, crime, and murder are prevailing throughout the earth at levels not seen before, and life is not respected.

On another note, think about your time. Your time is actually God's. How does God feel when you watch ungodly things that will prove detrimental to your soul? According to Ezekiel 16:49, one of the main reasons why Sodom was destroyed was because they wasted their time in idleness, which led them into abominations. Today, we see that society as a whole is wasting the short time God has given them in this life, engrossed in social media, the latest shows, and music of the world, which proves to be detrimental to their soul.

The world dresses according to lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. The Biblical standard is modesty. The Christian is to dress with reverence for God as their highest motive. Even

more importantly, they adorn the inner life with Christ's righteousness and purity "...which is in the sight of God of great price." (1 Peter 3:4).

In regard to our associations, the Bible teaches us that we are to "...have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness..." (Ephesians 5:11). In 2 Corinthians chapter 6 verses 14-16 we are told to, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." We must not unite ourselves with, participate in, or have fellowship with darkness.

What does this practically look like? Psalms chapter 1 gives us great wisdom: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." (Psalms 1:1,2). This means that you are not to listen to or follow the advice of the wicked. You are not to dwell in the path or have fellowship with the wicked and mockers of God. These are

not to be your companions. Psalms 101:4 says, "A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person."

If these are your associations, if you enjoy the company of the wicked and scornful, you are placing yourself in a position of compromise. Psalms 26:4,5 says, "I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers. I have hated the congregation of evil doers; and will not sit with the wicked." This has to be your determination.

As followers of Christ, we are called to integrity. Integrity is a steadfast principle for righteousness. Integrity is standing for right though the heavens fall. It is when one, who is under the control of God, determines and purposes in their heart to do what is right, no matter the consequences.

We learn lessons of integrity from the life of Job, Joseph, and in the life of Daniel and his three friends, individuals who even in the face of utter loss and death held fast their integrity.

Job lost everything he had, his family, his possessions, his health, yet he said in faith, "...till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live." "...the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away;

blessed be the name of the LORD.” (Job 1:21; 27:5,6). And God’s record of Job was that there was “...none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil.” (Job 2:3).

In the face of great temptation, Joseph determined in his heart that he would not sin against God even when it meant losing the authority he had and being a prisoner.

Joseph was able to stand because he knew his identity. He was God’s and God was his Father. From a very young age, he had been circumcised which was a sign of the covenant that God had made with Abraham. As God’s son, he was called to righteousness and integrity. Understanding this, he said, “How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Genesis 39:9).

When the defiled meat of the kingdom of Babylon was set before Daniel and his three friends, “Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank”. (Daniel 1:8). In the face of a death decree, Daniel maintained his faithfulness and prayed to God even though, to all human appearance, it meant certain death at the hands of lions. In the face of a fiery death, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to worship the

golden image of Babylon. They told the king in Daniel 3:16-18, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.”

These men were enabled to stand with purpose and courage in the power of God because they understood their God given identity and calling.

Your identity is who you are and how you identify yourself. We all have an identity that is either founded in Christ or in the sinful world. Understanding your identity is very important because it identifies where your loyalty stands. Is your identity founded in Christ, or is it founded in the evil passions of the sinful heart? Is your loyalty given to Christ or the world?

Our identity naturally is founded in the sinful flesh. “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.” (Psalms 51:5). Therefore, our natural identity must be recreated. In Christ, we must be born into a new identity that is founded in His life.

The circumcision of our heart is a sign of the

covenant we make with God when we yield our lives to him. This is a covenant of a new creation, the creation of a new identity. It is a covenant that God is your Father, and you are His sons and daughters. Your identity that was once a child of darkness is then recreated into being a son and daughter of God. Your identity becomes founded in Christ. Your life is surrendered. Your life belongs to Him and you are not your own. As a child of God, you are a chosen generation called to live a life of righteousness and holiness in Christ. Your new life and purpose in Christ creates this new identity.

When you are faced with evil, your identity in God enables you to reject evil in the power of Christ. You reject it because your life is not your own, because you are a son and daughter of God, because you are called with a righteous and holy calling. You stand with integrity because your identity is founded in Christ.

Like the men and women of times past, you must be purposed in your heart. In the midst of a godless society, you must be the one who will hold fast to righteousness though the heavens fall. You must be the one who will stand for Christ, though His cause is reproached, though everyone else around you is bowing, though your life is threatened, and the only things before you is a fiery furnace. You

stand "...strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." (Ephesians 6:10). And just as Jesus was with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, God will stand next to you.

Do not set yourself in a position of compromise. You must hate evil, therefore you must not place wickedness before your eyes. Psalms 101:3 says, "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me." There must be a resolute determination in your heart to always walk with integrity.

If what you are beholding and surrounding yourself with does not fit with the Biblical standards, you must let it go. You must determine, as did Joseph, Daniel, and his three friends, that you will not play or associate with wickedness. If you do not purpose this in your heart, you are placing yourself on the grounds of the enemy of your soul.

We are admonished, "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." (2 Timothy 2:22). There must be no curiosity or familiarity with the world. In the power of Christ, you must reject ungodliness and "fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." (1 Peter 1:11). You must flee from it and run to the path of righteousness, faith, charity, and peace.

As a son and daughter of God, you live a life that is pleasing to Him. You live a life that reflects the value of your soul, a life that was redeemed with the “precious blood of Christ.” (1 Peter 1:17-19). As a follower of Christ you walk a walk that is “worthy of the vocation [calling] wherewith ye are called.” (Ephesians 4:1). You will walk in righteousness and godliness, abhorring “that which is evil” and cleaving to “that which is good.” (Romans 12:9). Daily abiding in Christ, you will perfect “holiness in the fear of God.” (2 Corinthians 7:1).

The Divine power of Christ supplies all of the necessities pertaining to our spiritual life and godliness. (2 Peter 1:3). We receive this divine power because we know Christ and have a living connection with Him as a branch is connected to a living vine.

Through Christ, we are given “exceeding great and precious promises.” (2 Peter 1:4). What are these promises? These are promises of transformation and cleansing. Promises of freedom from the filthiness of sin and the creation of a new spirit within the heart. God gives these promises in, Ezekiel 36:25-27, “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the

stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.”

When we come to God with faith in these promises, we receive them. Through these promises, we are enabled to be “partakers of the divine nature” because we are a new creation, purified, and sanctified. Then to our faith is added the graces of the Christian walk. Graces that add and multiply. Graces of virtue to which it adds knowledge, “And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.” (2 Peter 1:5-7).

Virtue is the excellence of Christian morals. Virtue is a commitment to honesty, truth, purity, and righteousness. It is described in Philippians 4:8 to be comprised of “whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report”. Furthermore, we are told that “if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” Only things of virtue are to compose the Christian life.

Christian virtue lays the foundation for knowledge,

temperance, patience, godliness, kindness, and charity. With these graces we will live a fulfilled life as a Christian: “For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 1:8).

The calling of Christ is a noble calling. The Biblical standard is high and impossible to reach in your own strength. But God is doing the work of perfection. “Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.” (1 Thessalonians 5:24). Christ calls you to holiness and godliness, and He Himself will fulfill this calling in your life. This fruit of godliness is the result of His Divine grace. Christ is purifying “unto Himself a peculiar people.” You as the clay and Christ as the Divine Potter, He is shaping your life to reflect His perfect image. As a Refiner, Christ refines your character to reflect His Divine character. As you daily yield your life to His control, you are changed from glory to glory. This is not a result of your efforts. It is the effect of a surrender to the power of God’s transforming grace. It is the work of faith enabled by Christ’s Divine power. You can rest in faith and confidence that He will refine and complete His work of sanctification and perfection in your life. (Read Psalms 138:8, Philippians 1:6). Christ will “fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness” until His life is “glorified in you, and ye in him.”

(2 Thessalonians 1:11,12). By the Holy Spirit, Christ's character is engraved in the tables of your heart. Your life becomes a living letter representing Christ to the world to be "known and read of all men." (2 Corinthians 3:2,3). You are made complete in Christ. (Colossians 2:10). Your identity becomes founded in Him alone.

Chapter 14

Salt and Light

Jesus compares His followers to salt and light. Jesus says, “Ye are the salt of the earth”. (Matthew 5:13). Salt is a very important seasoning. As salt in the world, we are to impart the influence and savor of Christ in our lives. This salt represents the graces of Christ that are to be lived out within the Christian’s life. Sodium is a very essential mineral for life. The salt of Christ is a healing influence in the world that counteracts the lifeless influences of evil. Our entire lives are to be seasoned with the grace of Christ.

Now, Jesus also gave a warning about the salt losing its stimulating power. “But if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.” (Matthew 5:13). The literal salt could lose its power as a seasoning when it becomes diluted and corrupted by other minerals. The salt became useless and good for nothing. In the same way, the salt of the Christian’s life will lose its power when it becomes corrupted and polluted with worldliness and

sin. There is no longer a difference between the elements of their life and the elements of the world because they have corrupted the salt of Christ with the minerals of worldliness.

Our Christian witness is also compared to light. Jesus says, "Ye are the light of the world." (Matthew 5:14). As light dispels darkness, so will the light of Christ reflected in the life of the Christian counteract the darkness in the world.

The "light of the knowledge of the glory of God" in Christ is placed as "treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." (2 Corinthians 4:6,7). We are those earthen vessels. Vessels that are subject to human weakness. God takes these weak earthen vessels and fills them with infinite treasure and power. The earthen vessel has no power of itself, but God has "chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty". God uses these vessels, which are considered to be the "base things of the world," to "bring to nought" the powers of evil which are. (1 Corinthians 1:27,28).

The excellence of this power in our life is not of our own making but of God. The oil of the Holy Spirit enables the heart to reflect the light and life of Christ to others. Our sufficiency to reflect the light of Christ in our lives is of God. (2 Corinthians

3:5). Through this power, the life of Jesus is “made manifest in our body,” and we become lights in the world for Him. (2 Corinthians 4:10).

This Light shining in our hearts from Christ cannot stay contained within the heart. Through this Light “your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.” (Romans 1:8). Jesus says, “A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.” (Matthew 5:14,15). We are set as a light upon a hill to be seen by all around us. This light from Christ is to be reflected in our entire life in what we say and in what we do. You are living for and serving Christ. Continuing, Jesus says, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16). The light of Christ dwelling in the heart will enable these good works to be produced in the life that will glorify God and be a blessing to mankind.

Though the world will see the light, darkness does not comprehend light. (John 1:5). Sin blinds the heart from accepting and comprehending it. Nevertheless, the hope for the sinner in this condition lies in Christ. Christ can open the eyes of the blind so they will be able to comprehend the light. To those dead in trespasses and sin

unresponsive to the stimulating influences of Christ, the message of hope is given, "...Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." (Ephesians 5:14). Jesus gives all trapped in the shadow of death the promise, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8:12). Those that were a child of darkness, diffusing the influences of darkness, can become "light in the Lord." (Ephesians 5:8) In Christ, you no longer will walk in darkness. Christ will be your light in all the paths of life. In Christ, there is a resurrection from spiritual death and a new life granted that now comprehends the light. You become "children of light" who reflect the new abiding light of Christ in your heart to the world.

In the world, light and darkness are two opposing influences. The darkness tries to conceal the dreadfulness of sin. It tries to keep its prisoners asleep in their spiritual state of blindness and death. Darkness tries to blind the eyes of its captives from seeing and understanding the truth. The light, on the other hand, exposes the darkness. The light shows a contrast between holiness and worldliness. The light reveals truth. It exposes the reality of what sin is. The light is a rebuke to evil. The light makes manifest the condition of the heart. It shows the sinner that they are trapped in the darkness of transgression and held in the bondage of sin. This

is why “...every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.” (John 3:20). Those in darkness love the darkness because it keeps them in a position of comfort that does not call for change. They cannot see the need for change.

The light puts the prisoners of darkness in a moment of decision. It calls for a change. It puts them in a place where they will either surrender to the light of Christ and allow Him to revive them from their spiritual state of darkness and death, or if they will reject the light.

Those who have the light of Christ abiding in their heart will love the light. They come to the light and abide in the Light—Christ Jesus. They have fellowship with the Light. They commune with the Light. They seek the desires of the Light contained in His Scriptures. The Word of God is a lamp to their feet and a light in their path. (Psalms 119:105). They allow the Light to make manifest their heart. They come before Christ asking Him to search them, try them, purify them, and lead them “in the way everlasting.” (Psalms 139:23-24). In the Light, their deeds are “...made manifest, that they are wrought in God.” (John 3:21).

This generation is the darkest this world has ever seen. The world is engrossed in sin, and because

of the darkness, it does not comprehend its true condition. This darkness is described as a state of gross darkness that covers the people. But in the darkest hour of this earth's history, God's light will arise upon this world in the most powerful illumination this world has ever seen. The entire earth will be enlightened with the glory of His light.

The prophecy is given, "For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee." (Isaiah 60:1,2). The light of Christ will rise upon the lives of His followers who will then reflect this light. The light of the glory of the Lord will be seen upon them by the world. Thus the light that will enlighten the entire world will be reflected to this dark world through the lives of those who have accepted the Light and yielded their entirety to Him, allowing His light, life, and character to shine forth to the world through their lives. The light of Christ reflected in our lives will move the world, and many people will come to the brightness of Christ. (Isaiah 60:3).

God is calling you as His follower to arise and shine because "...the glory of the LORD is risen upon" your life. (Isaiah 60:1). God longs to arise upon the lives of His followers so they can shine and reflect that light. God is calling for people who will reveal the light of Christ's light to others practically in

their lives. He is looking for a generation of people who will allow His light to dwell in their hearts, a generation who will be ambassadors of His light to the world.

In every aspect of life, you will show yourself to be servants of God. During the good times and in the hard times, “...In much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left”. (2 Corinthians 6:5-7). Christ will live out His life within you. You will live for Christ. When the others see you, they will see the light of Christ in your life. Your life will be a living testimony to the world for Him.

Chapter 15

Unshakable

In this life, we will face fierce storms. Trials that will bring you to your knees. Storms that will rock your faith and test your foundation to see if it will stand unshaken or if it will be swept with the current of the storm.

These storms will reveal what foundation you have been building your life upon. What is your foundation? Have you been building your house upon the unmovable foundation of the rock, or have you built your house upon the sands of the world? Your decision will determine your fate in the storm. Those whose house is founded upon the rock will stand when the rain descends, when the violent winds blow, and the floods beat upon the house. (Matthew 7:25). Those who have built their foundation upon the sand will be swept away in the violent storm.

Jesus is our solid rock and unshakable ground. Another “foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 3:11). He is “a tried stone”, “a sure foundation” for His

church. (Isaiah 28:16). Jesus Christ is the “chief cornerstone” that holds up “the household of God.” (Ephesians 2:19-22). You can rest your confidence in this sure foundation.

Those who are founded upon the foundation of the rock, Christ Jesus, apply His teachings to their lives. They have a dwelling and abiding relationship with the Rock. Those who build their foundation upon the sand hear the warnings of the storm and the need to build upon the solid, unmovable foundation, but they do not prioritize and follow these instructions. They know of Christ, but they do not have a deep abiding relationship with Him. They have allowed worldliness, the cares of this world, the busyness of life, the deceitfulness of wealth, the distractions of the world, to take the place of Christ in their lives and they build their lives upon its sandy foundation, seeking its short-lived honor and pleasure. These things will choke out their spiritual life making it unfruitful. When the storm comes, their house falls and is swept away.

Another illustration of this teaching is found in an analogy of fire. The structure in life that you build will be tested and tried by the refining fires of trials. These trials will manifest if you have constructed it with “gold, silver, precious stones,” or wood, hay, and stubble. (1 Corinthians 3:12,13).

Trials of fire and floods will come no matter what your foundation is built upon and how you have constructed your spiritual house. The trials of the storm and fire will refine you if your foundation is founded on the Rock. (1 Peter 1:7). If you are not founded in the Rock and have built a structure with stubble, the refining fire and flood will become a consuming fire and overwhelming flood. You must be founded in the rock and must wisely build your life upon this foundation.

We are in a great controversy. The devil desires to destroy your faith. Only those who are founded in the unshakable rock, Christ Jesus, will be able to stand in the closing hours of earth's history. Having a real and living connection with Christ is the only way that we can stand unshaken.

Throw yourself in the arms of Christ and surrender your entire life to Christ. Pour out your soul to Him and Christ will give you power to overcome. Without this daily surrender and connection to Christ, you would be nothing and easily overcome by the world.

When you are founded in the rock, Christ Jesus, nothing in this world will move your faith. Christ will stand as your solid ground amidst the fiercest storms of life. You will be founded in Christ's grace, His life, and His love. You are founded in His grace

through His gift of salvation. You are founded in His life by his life becoming your life. Christ will hold you fast in His love.

All the powers of evil will be powerless to pluck you from His tender hand of love. "...Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature" will be able to separate you "...from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38,39). In all of the trials of life, you will be "...kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation...". (1 Peter 1:5). Christ will be your rock, your refuge, defense, and salvation. He will not "suffer thy foot to be moved." (Psalms 121:3). You will stand steadfast and unmovable through your faith in Christ. The Lord will be your keeper and preserver.

He gives you the promise and assurance that in all of the storms and trials of life, no matter how severe they may be, He will be right by your side and that His right hand will hold you. (Psalms 139:10). In the midst of the fiercest storm, when you pass through the cold waters of pain, sorrow, and tragedy, Christ says, "I will be with thee." "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him." (Isaiah 59:19). Christ will carry you "...through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest

through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.” (Isaiah 43:1-3). In the valleys and on the mountain tops, in the rough and narrow roads, in despair and disappointment, when you are forsaken and left all alone, when the storm breaks you and all your strength has failed, in each and every moment, Christ will stand by your side. You will rest your heart in His heart of infinite love. By faith, you will stand complete in Him. In and through the storms, He will safely guide you. Instead of these storms consuming you, in the midst of these storms, Christ will mold and perfect your character into His perfect likeness.

Chapter 16

Called to Service

Throughout His ministry on earth, Jesus fought a battle to redeem the souls of men. Our Creator left heaven and came to earth to give us abundant life both spiritually and physically. The mission of Jesus was very different from that of Satan's mission "to kill, steal, and destroy". Christ came that we "might have life" and "have it more abundantly." (John 10:10).

Jesus went throughout the land "...teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people." (Matthew 4:23). He went to the poor and suffering that were about to die and offered them life. He came to heal the brokenhearted and to free the prisoners of sin. The blind who had no hope of ever seeing the light of day had a new fire kindled within them when Jesus came near. When the hopeless cried out and sought Christ for help, from His hand of mercy flowed a life-giving current that restored the sight of the blind, healed the sick, and raised the dead. Daily Christ went about to relieve the sufferings of

humanity which were caused by the curse of sin.

Right before leaving this earth, Jesus commissioned this work to His followers. He said, "...as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." (John 20:21). You are sent forth into the world as an ambassador by God Himself. As Christ continues His mediatorial work in the heavenly sanctuary, He is leading His people onward to continue the work He did while on earth. Jesus has sent all of His true followers out on the same mission He did while on earth.

God could have used angels to do the work of relieving suffering humanity, but He has committed this work to other human beings who are in the same condition as their fellow men. You have been transformed by Christ into His likeness. Your life becomes a living example of His life. You deny self and live out Christ's life of service to mankind. You are sent out on a mission of mercy and grace. You become His hands and feet in blessing others. Service is a teaching tool that God uses to transform selfish human nature into a life of selfless loyalty to God and service to mankind.

You are living your life as an ambassador for Christ. You are living for and serving God in everything you do. You are a representative of Christ in the home and society, in the toils of home life and in the workplace. Your entire life is devoted to Christ's

service in bringing hope to the hopeless and life to the dying. You become a laborer together with Christ.

Christ has committed to His followers the “word of reconciliation”, to call upon others to be “reconciled to God” through His atonement. (2 Corinthians 5:19,20). This is the message of your life. You are working with Christ to point people to the Way, Truth, and Life.

Right before leaving this earth, Christ commissioned His followers to, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...”. (Matthew 28:19,20). “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” (Mark 16:15). In summary, you are called and sent forth by Christ to continue the ministry that He did: teaching others of Christ, making disciples, preaching the gospel, and healing the wounded.

In fulfilling this command, you are answering the call that Christ gave to His disciples saying, “follow me”. This was a call of sacrifice and commitment. It involved a cross. The first requirement to follow Christ is self-denial. Jesus said, “...If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up

his cross, and follow me.” (Matthew 16:24).

This is what the disciples of Jesus had to do. When Jesus was walking by the sea of Galilee, Jesus saw Peter and Andrew. He “...saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.” (Matthew 4:19,20). When Peter and Andrew were called, they were fishermen. Even though they were not wealthy men, they had enough means to sustain themselves and were living well. When called to follow the humble Nazarene, they could have worried about how their needs would be met. Jesus did not have earthly wealth. When a “...a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest,” Jesus revealed to him, “...The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.” (Matthew 8:19,20). If this was the lot of their Master, what would be their lot? What would they eat and where would they sleep? But, they had seen the baptism of Jesus and heard John declare Him to be the Christ, and this they believed with their hearts. Answering this call to follow Christ required complete faith and trust in God that He would be with them and that He would provide. The disciples forsook all and followed Christ. They pursued Christ as a pearl of great price. They had faith that God, who had called, would supply their needs. In faith, they

took up their cross and followed Christ. With self put away and their hearts humbled, they could be taught by Christ as His disciples.

Right before His crucifixion, Christ asked His disciples, "When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing." (Luke 22:35). They went forward in faith, and Christ proved Himself faithful to them.

To all who answer Christ's call to follow Him on the path of self-denial and service, Jesus gives the promise, "Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life." (Mark 10:29,30). This is God's promise to you. In order to experience this promise, you must step out in faith as did the disciples and follow Christ in His service, yielding, forsaking, and surrendering everything to Him. Just as God proved Himself faithful to His disciples, Christ will prove Himself faithful to you.

There was another man who received the same call that Christ gave to His disciples, but he did not want to make this sacrifice. He was a ruler of the

people and was very rich. He came to Christ asking, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 18:18). Jesus revealed to this man the standards of righteousness found in the Ten Commandments. (Matthew 19:17-19). This young man was confident, according to his standard, that he had faithfully kept these commands. He said, "All these things have I kept from my youth up," yet he still felt empty inside and asked Christ, "what lack I yet?" (Matthew 19:21). He was lacking something. His ceremonial obedience did not satisfy the soul.

Revealing to the young man what he was lacking Jesus said, "...If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me." (Matthew 19:21). The rich young ruler's faith and confidence was in the material things of life and wealth that he had obtained. When you place your hope and confidence in anything other than God, you deny Him and commit idolatry. (Read Job 31:24,28). Covetousness was the idol of his heart. Earthly things occupied the place of Christ in his life. He had to learn to have faith in God and trust in Him. He needed to make a sacrifice and surrender to God. Just like the other disciples, he had to take up his cross and follow Jesus. He would then be in a position to learn of Him who would satisfy the longing of his soul with Living Water.

The call Jesus gave to the other disciples was given to him, “follow Me,” but he was unwilling to make a sacrifice and surrender. When he thought of all the possessions he had, all the praise and worldly honor he would lose if he decided to follow the humble Jesus of Nazareth, who was despised and rejected of men. He thought that all this was too much for him, and “he went away sorrowful.” (Matthew 19:22). The young rich man just looked at the present earthly things, his position, honor, and wealth, which he could only enjoy in this short life. Jesus offered Him eternal treasures that would produce fruit for eternity.

Jesus calls all who would follow Him to count the cost. Comparing this to building a tower, Jesus said, “For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?” Before embarking on such a great task of building a tower, the cost had to be counted. Did the builder first have the money to get the materials? Would he have enough materials to finish the building? All these things had to be counted and considered “Lest haply,” says Jesus, “after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.” (Luke 28-30). Then Jesus reveals the cost of being His disciple. “So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he

cannot be my disciple.” “And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.” “And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.” (Luke 14:27,33; Matthew 10:38). This cost is the price of surrender and sacrifice. In order to be a follower of Christ, you must forsake all, laying it upon the altar of sacrifice and surrender, taking up your cross on which self is crucified to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. Are you willing to answer Christ’s call of sacrifice and service?

Chapter 17

Wholeheartedly Committed

Back in the colonial days, for the defense of the American colonies, there were men who volunteered to be ready to fight in at a moment's notice in the case of war. The volunteers were civilians who were known and chosen for their enthusiasm, strength, and their capability to be ready at all times for service, even on a minute's notice, hence they earned the name "minutemen." These minutemen played a major role in the American Revolution as a highly mobile, rapidly deployed force, ready to vigorously fight for the independence of the United States.

Today, God is calling for minute men and women for His service. These are chosen from the common people who have a love for the truth and have a desire to share it with others. They are filled with enthusiasm and power to share the gospel. They are prepared for any call to be ready for service.

These soldiers who follow Christ have on the full armor of God that they may withstand the attacks of Satan. They are girded with truth. The

righteousness of Christ is their breastplate. Bound on their feet is the gospel of peace, which they present to the world. In order to withstand the temptations and doubts that Satan hurls at them, they have the mighty shield of faith, which is implanted in the solid rock of Christ. For a helmet, they have the hope of salvation. In order to expose and destroy the lies of the devil and to shine light on the path of those in darkness, they hold the Word of God. This armor of the Lord is activated by prayer. Without it everything else has no power. (Ephesians 6:13-18).

These have put “on the Lord Jesus Christ,” and while in Jesus Christ, in order to be faithful to Him, they make no provision for the flesh. (Romans 13:14). These soldiers, while on the battlefield of the great controversy, remain vigilant because they know that they have a great adversary, Satan, who is constantly seeking to destroy their souls. But, in order to always keep that watch, they must be sober. (1 Peter 5:8). They do not let their appetite, the lustful desires of the flesh, rule their bodies. They understand the importance of temperance and bring their body into subjection to God’s standards.

To fight against these soldiers, Satan puts out traps, snares of error and sin in their way, but as long as they constantly follow the General and His great

instruction map, the Bible, the soldiers of Christ will detect and escape these traps.

In the midst of the persecution that Satan brings against them, the soldiers of the cross stand “bold as a lion.” (Proverbs 28:1). Boldness is what the early church prayed for when Satan began to bring his fury against them. They prayed, “And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.” (Acts 4:29-31). This gift of boldness was sent by the Holy Spirit in a time of need, and they became bold in speaking the truth. While in bonds for Christ’s cause, Paul prayed for boldness. He said, “And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.” (Ephesians 6:19,20). We must give the gospel of Christ to the world without fear, in the boldness and strength of the Holy Spirit.

These faithful men and women “...endure hardness,

as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” (2 Timothy 2:3). They will not compromise with any threat even to life itself knowing that “whosoever will save his life [give up the truth for His life] shall lose it and whosoever will lose his life for” Christ’s “sake shall find it.” (Matthew 16:25). They “fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather” they “fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” (Matthew 10:28).

These are the true, ardent, wholehearted soldiers of Jesus, who are filled with the Holy Ghost and have become “...a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.” (2 Timothy 2:21). They go forward wherever the Lord sends them, lifting up Jesus and His word.

In an attempt to stop the advancement of the truth in the world, Satan has from the very beginning sought to place obstructions in the way of God’s people. To accomplish this, he used people who had yielded to his satanic control to try to thwart the work. Satan also used governments and kings to make laws and decrees to cause God’s people to stop the work by force and power. But regardless of the powers that opposed them, God’s people have steadily moved forward despite the challenges until the truth triumphed.

We see a remarkable story of determination and commitment in the story of Nehemiah and the rebuilding of the wall. When Nehemiah heard reports of the condition of the city of Jerusalem and the people, he felt a heavy burden for the present state of his people. He saw his inability and came to God in prayer. He claimed the promise that God promised to the repentant that "...though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there." (Nehemiah 1:9). He had faith but did not know how God was going to answer his prayer.

At this time, he was still working as cupbearer for the king of the most powerful nation on earth. As he was fulfilling his duty, the king noticed a sad countenance on his face and asked, "Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? This is nothing else but sorrow of heart." (Nehemiah 2:2). Nehemiah did not know what this questioning by the king could lead to. Writing of that experience, he said that he "was very sore afraid."

Revealing the cause of his grief, he said, "Why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?" In response, the king asked, "For what dost thou

make request?” God had given Nehemiah the burden, and now he was opening before him a way to fulfill the mission to rebuild the walls and uplift the people of Jerusalem.

As he prepared to answer this question, he prayed for the wisdom of God to direct his path. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he did not let this opportunity pass. He requested the king to send him to Judah to restore it. They created a plan and set a time. God was using Nehemiah as an instrument to accomplish the work He desired to be done in Jerusalem.

The king did not just send Nehemiah to Jerusalem; he sent him with governmental authority. All the supplies, including the timbers needed to build the gate and the walls, were provided.

Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem ready to fulfill the mission committed to him. Keeping his intentions hidden for the moment, he went out at night to view the destruction and the work that had to be accomplished. The walls were broken down, and the gates were burned with fire.

Nehemiah called the attention of the people to the work that had to be done. In response, they said, “Let us rise up and build.” “...The people had a mind to work.” (Nehemiah 2:17;4:6). In Nehemiah

chapter 3, you will read of all the various families that faithfully did their portion of the wall. The willingness of the people to work and the synergy of action were major factors that advanced the work.

A great work was being done, but the enemies of the Jews would not let the work continue unopposed. When they heard that someone had come for the benefit of the people of Jerusalem, they were angered. They immediately stood in opposition to hinder the work at every step of its progress.

They sought to use every means in their power to stop the rebuilding of Jerusalem's wall. They tried to use fear to cause Nehemiah and the people of Jerusalem to cease building. Traps were laid out for his destruction. In the midst of this opposition, Nehemiah went to God for help and prayed, "O God, strengthen my hands." (Nehemiah 6:9). Among the leaders of the opposition, the most prominent were Sanballat and Tobiah. They conspired together with other enemies of the Jews to "come and to fight against Jerusalem" and hinder the work. (Nehemiah 4:7).

Speaking to a band of armed men from Samaria, Sanballat mocked the Jews and began preparation to attack those building the wall and force it to cease. This was a very serious crisis for Nehemiah, and after seeking counsel from God in prayer, they set a

watch day and night to defend the builders and the city of Jerusalem. They continued to build “every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon.” (Nehemiah 4:17). In the face of many obstacles, they continued to build, and the wall was finished in fifty-two days. Even their enemies saw that the “work was wrought of our God.” (Nehemiah 6:15,16).

Nehemiah could have yielded to the opposition of those who wanted to prevent the work that God had called him to do, but he was wholeheartedly committed to God and His cause. Nehemiah went forward in faith, knowing that the Lord was with him.

Just as the people of God throughout the ages have had to take a stand for truth and remain faithful to the mission that God has committed to them, we must remain faithful to the calling of Christ on our lives and the mission He has committed to His church, no matter the opposition that comes against it.

Against this movement, the gates of hell will not prevail. Under the guidance of our great General, Jesus Christ, the church will at last triumph. The everlasting gospel will be carried to every living person on the planet. We must advance in faith for “The LORD of hosts is with us.” (Psalms 46:7).

Chapter 18

The Key to Success

After the death of Moses, when Joshua was about to lead the children of Israel into the Promised Land, God promised to be with him. God said, “I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.” (Joshua 1:5). Just as God had been with Moses, God promised to be with him. But there was a requirement for success. That requirement was faithful obedience to God in everything He had commanded. Joshua was given the command, “Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.” (Joshua 1:7). As long as Joshua and the people remained obedient, God would be with them and fight their battles. The success of their mission was not in their numbers or weapons of war. Their success was entirely reliant on God. We see this very evidently in the first battles that took place as Joshua led the children of Israel into the Promised Land.

The Lord of Hosts Himself came to Joshua

personally to give him the plans for the accomplishment of the mission. Before entering battle at Jericho, the soldiers had each been given a command concerning the things in the city. The city and everything within the city were accursed. They were forbidden from taking anything from the accursed city. The command was given, "...keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it." (Joshua 6:17,18).

Each day for six days, they marched around the city once. On the seventh day, they marched seven times around the city. After the seventh march, the priests sounded with a long blast from ram's horns, and the men of war shouted with a great shout, and the mighty wall of Jericho fell. A great victory had been won that day.

God used this to show that it was the "Lord of Hosts" that fought their battles. The success of the mission did not depend on the ability or power of Joshua, neither the size of his army, but on obedience.

The whole congregation of Israel rejoiced at this great victory. They were ready to take on the next city, Ai. This city was smaller than Jericho. When Joshua sent spies to Ai, they came back with the report, "Let not all the people go up; but let about

two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; and make not all the people to labour thither; for they are but few.” (Joshua 7:3).

According to the suggestion of the spies, they only sent out 3,000 soldiers to take Ai, “and they fled before the men of Ai.” “...The men of Ai smote of them about thirty and six men...”. This was an unbearable defeat for the children of Israel. “...The hearts of the people melted, and became as water.” “...Joshua rent his clothes” and in utter despair “...fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the LORD until the eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads.” (Joshua 7:4-6).

“And the LORD said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed...”. (Joshua 7:10-12).

Sin was in the camp. Sadly, a soldier took of the accursed thing. The Lord plainly told Joshua, “...neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you.” “...There is

an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you.” (Joshua 7:12,13). They had lost the power that gave them the victory at Jericho. Unless the accursed thing was removed from the midst of the camp, they would not be able to stand.

Joshua arose from the ground to meet the crisis. The guilty one was searched out and found. His name was Achan. After he had been caught he confessed, “When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it.” (Joshua 7:21).

Just as the Lord commanded, the Children of Israel took Achan and all that he had and stoned him and laid a heap of stones upon him.

With the accursed thing removed, “...the LORD said unto Joshua, Fear not, neither be thou dismayed: take all the people of war with thee, and arise, go up to Ai: see, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land.” (Joshua 8:1). A great victory was gained, and the city of Ai fell.

This story has many lessons for the church today. As we enter the final battle of the great controversy between Christ and the Devil, his attacks on God's church will only become more fierce. The Bible says, "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." (Revelation 12:17).

In these times, we must realize that our success as God's people does not depend on our ability and power, our talents, degrees, the number of schools, universities, and hospitals. Just as with Israel when entering the Promised Land, our success depends on faithful obedience to "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4).

After His resurrection, Jesus gave His disciples a promise of "power from on high." He said, "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." (Luke 24:49). Jesus gave them the assurance, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8). This promise of power is for the church today.

What Satan fears most is a church filled with the power of the Holy Spirit to move the world. His power over many souls would be broken. Therefore, in the last days, the devil will use his utmost power to destroy the church and its power.

To accomplish this, he uses the most successful tactic and tries to destroy us from within. He uses sin, disobedience, and worldliness to blind our eyes and remove our power. This is the reason we must continually stay in Christ and be "...sober, and watch unto prayer." (1 Peter 4:7).

The controversy we are engaged in is fierce. You cannot stand and remain committed to the cause of Christ in your own power. Yield yourself completely everyday to the control of the Holy Spirit and pray for His power to enable you. As you are completely surrendered to God, the Holy Spirit will continue to lead and guide you into a deeper and fuller understanding of the work and mission God has committed to you and give you the power to fulfill His Divine will.

Our world is in a crisis. Immorality is reaching heights surpassing that of Sodom and Gomorrah. The cries of suffering humanity ascend before God. Our time is now. We can no longer sit idly by while the cries of suffering millions ascend before God. We must be the hands and feet of Jesus Christ,

showing to the world His transforming love.

As the Devil intensifies his destruction, the followers of Christ will only oppose it with even greater intensity. Through faith, we must move forward. In times of peace and adversity, we must dedicate our lives to serving Christ and blessing humanity, following in His steps of self-denial, humility, service, and compassion.

We repent of our backsliding, our rebellion, and neglect. We plead the blood of Christ to cleanse our hearts, revive our souls, and reform our ways. We plead for the outpouring of the Divine power of the Holy Spirit. Our mission will be accomplished through and in the name and the Almighty power of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Christ and His followers will be victorious!

Chapter 19

God's Positive Assurance

As you go forward in the world to fulfill Christ's calling on your life, always remember that when God gives you a command, He will also give you the strength necessary to accomplish that command. Speaking to Joshua, God said, "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." (Joshua 1:9). God promised to be right by his side as he went forward to fulfill the command. The Lord was leading and guiding the mission. Moses and Joshua were individuals who allowed God to use them to lead the people to cooperate with God's leading. They obeyed the command and went forward. The Lord fought for them.

This command and assurance is given to you. God commands you to move forward with divine courage and strength because He Himself has commanded you. He commands you to "fear not, nor be afraid... for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee." (Deuteronomy 31:6). God

will be with you as you move forward to fulfill His command. The Lord will be with you to guide you and bring your mission to completion.

When God calls you to accomplish a specific task, take courage and move forward despite the appearances. God is faithful. He will not leave you on this mission alone. He will lead and hold you. (Psalms 139:10). He promises to never “fail thee, neither forsake thee.” (Deuteronomy 31:8). This promise enables you to advance with divine courage and confidence.

This promise gives you the courage to stand when the cause of Christ is reproached by the world, and you are called to stand alone in the power of God's strength. You fear not the reproach of mortal men and are not moved by their insults. (Isaiah 51:7). In the midst of opposition you stand with courage and loyalty as did Peter and John when they were brought before the council and said, “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.” (Acts 4:19,20). You fear not the opposition of the adversaries of Christ. You stand with courage for Christ and are not moved by their threats, even to life itself. You are willing to live and die for Christ for “...to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” (Philippians 1:21). Your confidence is founded

wholly in God. You know that with the wicked is the “arm of flesh,” but you have the assurance that the Lord God Almighty is right beside you to help you, to fight your battles, and guide you safely to the heavenly Promised Land. (Read 2 Chronicles 32:6-8).

This promise gives you the courage to serve wherever God calls you to serve and to lead in whatever capacity he calls you to lead. It gives you assurance, divine confidence, and courage to fulfill each specific task that God calls you to accomplish. You move forward in total faith and trust in God. You move forward in confidence, without indecision, uncertainty, and fear. You know who you believe in and are persuaded that He will be faithful to you. (2 Timothy 1:12).

By this promise, you are thus enabled to move forward no matter the trials and obstacles that stand before you. You commit your way to God and lay it fully in His hands. You trust that he will fulfill the highest good in every situation that you have committed to His trust. When the circumstances seem insurmountable, you trust that Christ, who has called you to this mission, will use these situations to show the wonders of His power to accomplish His purposes for His people.

As you thus move forward in faith, God will give

you the power and strength to endure. You will "...be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." (Ephesians 6:10). When you are weak and in a valley of utter helplessness, God, in His grace, will supply your need and strengthen you.

As you step out in faith, God will sustain you. Since our heavenly Father supplies the needs of all creation, He knows you personally by name and can count the number of hairs on your head; He most assuredly knows your needs. He will provide for your needs just like He provided for the children of Israel in the desert or Elijah in the wilderness. Jesus says, "And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind." (Luke 12:29). Fully have faith in God's promise. Christ will uphold you in His hands of infinite love and care. David said, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." (Psalms 37:25). You can rest your heart in this assurance.

The world lives for the material things of life. Christ calls you as His follower to live for Him alone, and He promises to provide your daily provisional needs and clothing. Jesus says, "seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matthew 6:33). Pursue Christ with your entirety and trust in His promise that he will provide.

These promises free us from fear and give us courage to step out in faith when God calls, even when we don't understand the details. You move forward not because the path before you is clear and the means for the accomplishment of the mission are abundant. You move forward in faith because you believe in Christ and trust in His promises. You move forward step by step. As you take each step in faith, you will see that God will provide miraculously with each step.

When people don't have complete trust in God, they limit themselves with the limits of what they see through their human limitations. When individuals step out in total faith in God, they allow God to fulfill His plans for their lives, which are higher "as the heavens are higher than the earth." (Isaiah 55:9).

In words of comfort, Jesus says, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." (Luke 12:32). As a Shepherd, Christ will gently lead you into green pastures. He will "...feed his flock like a shepherd." (Isaiah 40:11). He will comfort and restore your soul. Through the valleys of fear and death, He will guide you. He will keep you "in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." Surely His "goodness and mercy" will follow you all the days of your life. (Psalms 23:2-6).

You are never left alone on your mission as you follow God's leading. Christ promises to be with you always, "even unto the end of the world." (Matthew 28:20). When you feel all alone, when discouragement arises, and difficulties seem insurmountable, always remember the promise Christ has made to be with you always. Have total faith and trust in God. "...Follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth" with all thine heart and soul. (Revelation 14:4). Move forward with divine courage. In everything you do, do it with all of your heart, mind, and ability, because of your love for Christ. Service and love for God will be your motivating factor. Serve for the honor and glory of God and not for the praise and approval of others. Fear not. Christ will never fail you. He will never leave nor forsake you.

No matter the calling or task God has given you in life, Christ gives you the positive assurance that His presence will go with you. Wherever you go, He will be with you. As you are going forward to fulfill God's calling on your life, Jesus is right beside you, leading, guiding, and comforting you. He says, "...He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me..." (John 13:20). As you go forward, Christ says, "My presence shall go with thee." (Exodus 33:14). "The LORD, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed."

(Deuteronomy 31:8). What precious assurance! With Christ right by your side, you need not fear. Only trust Him. Have faith in His promises.

God is calling you. He longs to fulfill His perfect plan in your life. Surrender your entire life to God's purposes and plans for your life. Surrender your plans, your desires, your hopes and dreams, your aspirations to Him. Lay your life fully in Christ's hands. Say, "Here am I, Lord. Thy will be done in my life." Jesus will prove Himself faithful to you. He will enable you to live a life worthy of your high calling in Christ to be true, steadfast, loyal to God, and a blessing to society. In Christ, you will live a life of purpose, faith, and courage, and through Him, you will be victorious.