

The Law  
of  
Jesus Christ  
for  
Salvation

**The Law of Jesus Christ  
(The Son of God)**

**for**

**The Body of Christ  
(The Church)**

**from**

**The Word of God  
(The Holy Bible)**

**for**

**Eternal Life  
(Salvation)**

This Book is Dedicated to God,  
The Father,  
God, The Son, and  
God, The Holy Spirit,  
for the Children of God  
who yearn to have a loving  
relationship with Our Father,  
His Son, Jesus Christ,  
and The Holy Spirit.  
A relationship that satisfies  
our greatest desire  
for fulfilment.  
To know God's love,  
and be with Him forever!!!

“ ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’

**This is the first commandment.**

**And the second, like it, is this:**

‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’

**There is no other commandment greater than these.”**

**Jesus Christ**

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## **1. Introduction - The Purpose of Life**

If we have been created, or if we have evolved, is a question that every person needs answered.

If we believe that there is a creator, then we will believe in a supreme God, or Father. If we believe in evolution, we will tend to believe in mother nature.

If we believe in a creator, we believe that this universe was the result of personal choice. If we believe in evolution, we will tend to believe that it just happened by chance.

If God exists, then the universe is a supernatural production. If we have simply evolved, the universe is a natural process.

If we have been created, we can know who created us, and for what purpose. If we have evolved, we don't know how we got here, or, if there is any purpose.

With creation, the universe is under the sovereign control of its creator, who operates it, and allows involvement of created people to manage and maintain the earth; to sustain it, or spoil it. With evolution, nature is a system that somehow operates itself.

With creation, we are expected to co-operate with God, who cares for His creation, and provides for it. With evolution, it could just be co-incidence; if anything good, or bad, happens, it is merely good, or bad, luck; fortune, or misfortune.

If we believe in creation, we believe that our creator gave us a conscience; a sense of knowing right from wrong. If we believe in evolution, we don't know how we got a sense of good and evil.

With creation, we are under the divine authority of God and His morals. With evolution, we are independent human beings who can decide what is best for ourselves, and are free to make up our own morals, according to our own standards. Over all of His creation, God is Lord. With evolution, mankind is lord.

If we accept the God of the Bible as our Creator, we accept that there are absolute standards of right and wrong, where we are held accountable. Without any existence of God, there are no standards for right or wrong, and no accountability. If we believe in evolution, we may believe in the natural laws of the universe, or karma; you get what you give out to the universe, or what goes around, comes around. Whereas, the Bible teaches the principles of reaping and sowing, telling us that we reap whatever we sow.

Under God's laws, we have a duty and responsibility, to love and serve God, and love and serve one another. With evolution, we have demands and rights, with no responsibilities.

According to the Bible, mankind has fallen, because of our sin, and we are powerless to reverse its affects without God's help. According to evolution, there is no such thing as sin; mankind is all powerful, and the world is constantly progressing.

Bible truth preaches salvation for the weak. Evolution theory presumes survival of the strong. With evolutionary philosophy, you need to look after number one, because in the end, only the strong will survive. In the Bible, God's wisdom instructs us to love Him, and love, and serve, and look after one another, if we are to have eternal life. A limited worldly view leads us to war. God's eternal perspective leads us to peace.

Evolution speaks of fate, and destiny, whatever, or wherever, that may be. The Bible speaks of faith, hope, and love, with the greatest of these being love. It tells us that loving God, and loving one another, will lead us to our eternal destination.

People believe theories about evolution, because it is the only alternative, if we don't believe that God exists. With creation, we have faith, based on fact. With evolution, we have fate, based on fiction. If we accept creation, we know that God is our Creator, who has specially made us for a specific purpose.

If we accept evolution, we don't know why we exist, or how we were made, and we can make a god out of anything, in whatever image we want, out of our own imagination.

If there is a God, how do we know who it is? And how can we be certain that it is the one true God? If we believe in the God of the Bible, we will believe that He is our Father, and we are His children, and that we exist because of His power, and His purposes, and for His good pleasure. Just as a husband and wife seek to have a family, so that they can have a fulfilling relationship with their children, love them, and delight in them, the Bible tells us that God created us, so that He could have a fulfilling relationship with us, love us, and delight in us; and that we may have a fulfilling relationship with Him, love Him, and delight in Him; and love one another, as He loves us.

In the God of the Bible, we have infinite dependence upon our Father, as a child, seeking His help in the present, healing from the past, and hope for the future, as we live life in relationship with Him, and with one another; knowing Him, sharing His love, and enjoying His presence. With evolution, we are proud and independent people, who have no need of God, no need of help, having no hope, and knowing nothing about our future.

If we don't know what to think about creation or evolution, or, what to believe about God and the Bible, wouldn't it make sense to seek God, and see what His Word says? Wouldn't it make sense to study the Bible, to know if God exists, and to see if the Bible is truly His Word to His people? The Bible tells us that God rewards those who believe that He exists, if they will seek Him:

“Without faith it is impossible to please God. The one approaching (drawing near) Him must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder to the ones seeking Him out.”

No one can truly answer questions about life, other than our creator, because our creator is the one who knows everything about creation. If we believe that God is our Creator, and that the Bible is God's Word, we can find life's meaning, we can discover our life's purpose, and we can be assured that we are significant. We can know what will happen when we die, where we will spend eternity, and what we will be doing when we get there. We can know these things to the extent that we want to know God, and believe what He says in His Word, the Holy Bible.

There can only be one way to know, with absolute certainty, that God exists, and that is to go to God Himself. There can only be one way to find the answers to life's questions, and that is to go to the One who has the answers. The only way we can know these things is by getting to know God, and His Word, and find out the truth about Him for ourselves.

God's Word tells us that life does have meaning. He tells us that there is a purpose for every person who has ever been created. We can know what our purpose in life is, and we will not experience real fulfilment until we know what that purpose is, and commence fulfilling it.

God can give us understanding about the past, strength for the present, and a confident assurance for the future. We can know and understand these things to the extent that we want to understand and know God, and believe what He tells us in His Word, as we seek Him and His purposes, and His plans for us.

Accepting creation or evolution is a personal choice; a personal choice that has great significance. It has great significance, because it is a personal choice that has eternal consequences. If we believe in the God of the Bible as our Creator, then we will believe that we can have a personal relationship with God, our Father, through His Son, Jesus Christ, with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Through our relationship with God, we will believe that our lives have a significant eternal purpose. If we believe in evolution, we have no significance, and no one to turn to for answers, which ultimately leads to uncertainty and doubt about the future, with no purpose, or any assurance about our eternal destiny.

Countless books have been written about the existence of life, the meaning of life, how to succeed in life, how to maintain a positive attitude towards life, how to get rich, or how to get a better life. They seek to provide answers to how we may find happiness. The word “happiness” originally comes from a word that means “happenings”. It means that we get happiness when things happen. In other words, when something good happens, we have happiness, and when that source of happiness runs out, we need to look for something else to happen, to be happy again.

There is nothing wrong with happiness; however, it is a state that cannot be constantly maintained because it relies on things to happen that may not happen, or when we want them to happen. We have no control over outcomes for happiness that anyone can guarantee. Strategies for finding happiness, one way or another, always look to our own self-effort to come up with the answers. Even though claims are made that happiness can be found through various ways of self-help, self-discipline, and self-empowerment, the reality is, that no matter what we do, no one can guarantee that our actions, regardless of what they are, will make us happy.

We cannot satisfy a constant need for happiness, or for that matter, any kind of lasting fulfilment, from our own efforts. Whatever means we rely on to obtain happiness, we will not find any lasting fulfilment from it, because happiness alone does not provide fulfilment. There is a difference between being happy and being fulfilled. We will always fall short of finding the happiness and fulfilment that we desire if we rely on ourselves to find it.

God is the source of lasting fulfilment, and He does not always allow us to be happy, in order to have that fulfilment. God does not guarantee that we will always be happy in this life, but He does guarantee that we can have peace in our life, and everlasting peace and happiness for eternal life. It is peace and happiness from God that brings fulfilment. Fulfilment comes from knowing God, and fulfilling His purposes and plans for us; and we cannot experience peace, any lasting happiness, or eternal fulfilment, until we know God, and know His purpose and plan for our lives, and we commence, or continue, fulfilling it with His help.

There is no greater goal in life than to know God, and know His purpose and plan for our life, and unite with Him to fulfill it; because our eternal purpose is more important than anything.

Every person has purpose in life. There is a general overall purpose for all of our lives, and there is a specific individual plan for each one of our life's.

Our overall purpose is to understand and know God, to love Him and be loved by Him, and love one another as He loves us, being healed and made whole, as we obey Him, fulfill His will, and get ready for our future with Him in His eternal kingdom.

Our individual purpose is to know the specific plan that God has for our own personal life, and co-operate with Him to fulfill it.

Just as parents want what is best for their children, our Father wants what is best for His children; both generally and specifically. As God's children, He wants us to fulfill His general overall purpose for all of our lives, and fulfill His specific individual plans for each one of us. Most of all, He wants to fulfill His ultimate purpose; for us all to be one, to be one in Him, to be one as He is one, and be made perfect into one. This is God's ultimate desire; for us to be united with Him, and united with one another, being perfected into one, according to His will:

‘That all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in you; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You have given Me, I have given them, that they may be one as We are one; I in them, and You in Me; that they may be perfected into one, and that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You loved Me.’

In the Bible we are told that God created us to have a relationship with Him that is deeply intimate; a personally satisfying relationship that we can have here and now for eternity. He wants us to glory in understanding and knowing Him:

“Thus says Jehovah (the Lord):  
‘Do not let the wise man glory in his wisdom;  
do not let the mighty man glory in his might;  
do not let the rich man glory in his riches.  
But let him who glories glory in this,  
that he understands and knows Me, that  
I am Jehovah (the Lord), doing lovingkindness,  
judgment, and righteousness, in the earth.  
In these I delight,’ says Jehovah (the Lord).”

God wants His children to seek Him, understand Him, know Him, and follow Him. Seeking Him means wanting Him. Understanding Him means hearing from Him, making sense of what He is saying, and responding to Him. Knowing Him means being connected with Him. Following Him means obeying Him:

‘This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.’

The Bible tells us that Jesus Christ is the shepherd of God's children; the shepherd of His sheep. He knows His sheep, and His sheep know Him. His sheep hear His voice, know Him, and follow Him. There is nothing more important than for every one of Jesus' sheep to hear His voice, know Him, and follow Him:

**'My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.'**

Having a fulfilling relationship with God, and with one another, for eternity, is the purpose of life; loving God, and loving one another, forever. However, it is a personal choice. Love cannot be forced. God does not force His love on us, nor does He force us to love Him, or to love one another.

Whether we have been created, or whether we have evolved, is therefore a personal question that needs to be answered, as well as being a personal issue that needs to be addressed, because it has eternal consequences that must be resolved.

God guarantees eternal life to those who seek Him, understand Him, know Him, and follow Him. There is no way that we can seek God, understand Him, know Him, and follow Him, without reading, studying, and obeying His Word, the Holy Bible.

The Bible is a book of recorded history, as well as God's book of instruction for eternal life. It is a book of God's laws which are required to be obeyed by God's children. Our eternal destiny depends on how we respond to God and what He says in His Word. The Holy Bible is the Word of God; and it is His Word; the words of Jesus Christ, that will be our eternal judge:

**'I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world.  
The one who rejects Me, and does not receive My  
words has that which judges him. The Word that  
I have spoken will judge him in the last day.'**

## **2. The Word of God**

### **The Holy Bible**

We can seek to understand God, know Him, and follow Him, through His Word. We can understand God by hearing from Him, and responding to Him, through His Word. We can know Him by connecting with Him through His Word. And we can follow Him by learning to obey Him through His Word. We can seek to understand God, know Him, and follow Him through His Word, because the Word of God is filled with the Spirit of God.

The word “Bible” comes from a latin word “Biblia” which means a collection, or library, of books. This collection of writings were authored by God and compiled by people. Over a time period spanning hundreds of years, God wrote the pages of each book through numerous people, who recorded His words. We know it is the written Word of God, because only God could author a book about the past, present, and future, that is precisely accurate down to the finest detail; and when put together, all of the books are in perfect harmony with one another, from beginning to end.

The most remarkable aspect of the entire Bible is that all the people who God inspired to compile its pages align with all the major aspects recorded in it, in particular those relating to the Saviour of the world,

### **‘Jesus Christ’.**

Jesus Christ is the central figure in the Bible, from beginning, through to the end. He is the beginning:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.”

Jesus will return at the end:

‘I am coming soon!  
Blessed is the one who obeys  
the words of the prophecy of this scroll.’

He is the beginning and the end:

‘I am the Alpha and the Omega,  
the First and the Last,  
the Beginning and the End.’

The Bible is the most well known book ever written. It was the first book to be printed, and one of the first books to be translated into another language. It has been translated into more languages than any other book, is more widely distributed than any other book, and is the greatest selling book ever. Millions of Bibles are sold, or given out, around the world in hundreds of different languages and dialects. It is the most popular book ever published.

Many people think that the Bible is not God’s Word and is full of stories that have been made up. However, as archaeologists continue to investigate the places that the Bible speaks about, and historians examine traces of family trees of the people spoken about in the Bible, information contained in God’s Word has proven to be a historical record of events that are entirely true.

Other people think that the Bible has been changed so many times from its original text, because there are so many different translations, which make it unreliable, inaccurate, and impossible to understand its true meaning.

So how do we know that copies and translations of the Bible are accurate? The older the manuscript, the more accurate it is.

If it has been copied fewer times, then there are fewer chances of mistakes. When manuscripts are taken from the earliest times, from many different places, that all say the same things, it shows that they are accurate. The earliest manuscripts in the Old Testament were written in Hebrew. The earliest manuscripts in the New Testament were written in Greek. All of the earliest manuscripts have been proven to be true and accurate. When the Bible is translated into English, we can verify if the translation is genuine by comparing it with the earliest manuscripts of the Bible in the original Hebrew and Greek language. The information contained in the translation can be compared with the Hebrew and Greek text to confirm its accuracy. Translations of the Bible, in particular, the many English translations, can therefore be checked for authenticity simply by comparing them with an Old Testament Bible written in Hebrew, and a New Testament Bible written in Greek.

The aim is to know what God is saying to us through the Bible. This can only be done when we have translations that are verified as being authentic, and the words used throughout the translation provide the reader with the proper interpretation that can be applied as God has intended.

Many people think that even if the Bible is from God, it is no longer relevant to us, or our needs. The Bible is about the eternal relationship between God and His children. It is God's book of instruction on how to understand Him, know Him, obey Him, and follow Him, to eternal life. It is the revelation of God's plans for His family, and is relevant to every one of His children.

The Bible has recorded over 700 prophecies, or predictions, as most people would call them, of which approximately 600 have all come true to date, including the coming of the Messiah,

**Jesus Christ.**

This is all the more incredible, as every one of these prophecies has been fulfilled with complete accuracy, and the remaining ones are yet to occur. What makes this relevant to us, is that the remaining prophecies relate to events leading up to “the end of the age” or “the end times”, recorded in the Bible, being the times which we now live, leading up to the Bible’s final conclusion:

**“The Revelation of Jesus Christ”.**

This is how we know the Bible is from God. It would be impossible for anyone else to predict, with the precise detail, exact timing, and total accuracy, all that the Bible has contained within its pages.

If the Bible has predicted, with complete accuracy, the things of the past, up until the present, we can be assured that what it says about the future, will happen. It would be wise for us to know what God has to say about these future events, and in particular, how they affect our eternal destiny.

These facts, together with a believing faith, are why millions of people believe that the Bible is the Word of God:

**“All Scripture is God-breathed, and is profitable for teaching, conviction, correction, and for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect and complete for every good work.”**

God’s Word teaches us; convicting us of the truth, helping us to correct what is wrong, and instructing us to do what is right:

**‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’**

‘A sower went out to sow his seed. As he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside, and it was trampled down; and the birds came and devoured it. Other seeds fell on rocky places where it did not have much earth, and it immediately sprang up, because it had no depth of earth. But when the sun came up it was scorched; and because of having no root, it dried up. Others fell on thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them. Others fell on good earth and gave fruit; one indeed a hundred, one sixty, and one thirty. The one having ears to hear, let him hear!’

‘You, therefore, hear the parable of the sower: Everyone hearing the Word of the kingdom and not understanding, the evil one comes and seizes that which was sown in his heart. This is the Word sown by the wayside.

The Word sown on rocky places is the one who hears the Word, and immediately receives it with joy, but has no root in himself, and is only temporary. When trouble and persecution comes because of the Word, he is immediately offended.

The Word sown in thorns is the one who hears the Word, but the anxiety of this age (the worries of this world), and the deceit of riches, choke the Word, and it becomes unfruitful.

The Word sown on good earth is the one hearing the Word and understanding it, who indeed bears fruit, and produces truly a hundred, one sixty, and one thirty.’

‘If you remain in Me, and My words remain in you, you will ask whatever you desire, and it will be done for you.’

The Bible tells us that there is one God, who is three persons:

- God the Father, “**Abba**”, which means “**Father**”,
- God the Son, “**Jesus Christ**”, meaning the “**Anointed One for Salvation**”, and
- God the ‘**Holy Spirit**’, who is our ‘**Helper**’.

“**There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father, who is over all, and through all, and in all. And to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift.**”

### **The Father**

There is only one Father for the children of God:

‘**Do not call anyone on earth ‘father’, for there is only One Father; He who is in heaven.’**

He wants an intimate relationship with every one of His children:

‘**The time is coming, and now is, when the true lovers of God will worship the Father in fullness of spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such ones as these to worship Him.**’

The word “worship”, in its simplest terms, means to pay our highest respects, by bowing down to someone in honour of them.

The wider application of how we can worship God, by bowing down to Him, and honouring Him, can be expressed in many different ways, ranging from submission (subjecting ourselves to Him and His mission), reverence, respect, thanksgiving, praise, obedience, self-lessness, through loving and serving one another, and most importantly, prayer and intimacy with Him.

We can only, really, genuinely worship God in fullness of spirit and truth, with complete reverence, awe, adoration, admiration, love, and respect for Him. And we can only truly do these things to the extent that we know Him, and know His love for us.

When we come to know our Father and how much He loves us, we cannot help but truly love Him. This is why it is so important to seek to know Him, because as we get to know Him personally, then we can truly know His intimate love for us. Worshiping God in fullness of spirit and truth happens by getting to know Him personally, and knowing His love intimately.

Our Father is seeking those who want the fullness of His love, so we can truly love Him, and truly love one another. Only those who truly know God can really love Him, and really love one another, as He loves us. This is what it means to worship Him in fullness of spirit and truth. We know our Father, because the Son has revealed Him to us, and told us about Him:

“The Word became flesh and lived here among us,  
and we have seen His glory, the glory as  
of the only begotten from the Father,  
full of grace and truth.”

“No one has ever seen God; the only begotten  
Son who is in the bosom of the Father has  
declared Him, making Him known to us.”

## The Son

The Bible has numerous prophecies providing great detail about the coming of the Messiah, who is the Saviour of the world. All of these prophecies were fulfilled during the life of Jesus Christ.

We know this is true, due to the mountain of evidence that proves their fulfilment. Jesus Christ is the only person to ever actually prove that He was sent to us by God, and is God. Everything from Jesus' birth, to Him being tortured to death and resurrected, has been foretold in the Bible, and by Jesus Himself.

To further support the proof of what the Bible says about Jesus, and what Jesus said about Himself, there were literally hundreds of people who were eye witnesses to everything that Jesus said and did. One of the most amazing testimonies of Jesus providing unquestionable proof that He is God, came from the many people who saw Jesus after He was crucified, and was resurrected from the dead, and saw Him ascend to heaven:

“I declare to you the Gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the Word which I preached to you; unless you believed in vain (not really believing its importance and purpose). For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Peter, then by the twelve disciples. After that, He was seen by over five hundred of His followers at once, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. After that, He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all, He was seen by me also, as if to one born out of time.”

‘No one has gone up to heaven except He who came down from heaven; the Son of Man.’

“He was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see Him. As they were looking up towards heaven, two men suddenly appeared next to them dressed in white clothing, and said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand here gazing up into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come back in the same way as you saw Him go to heaven.’ ”

Even with the weight of evidence proving that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God, it is not enough to just believe in who He is. It is not enough to know the facts. We must know Him, if we are to truly believe in who He is; and we must know Him, if we want to know the Father. We must know Him, if we want to have life, that only He can give:

‘This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.’

‘I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’

‘All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and whomever the Son wills to reveal Him.’

“You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe and tremble.”

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For in Him all things were created, the things in the heavens and the things on earth, the visible and the invisible (things we can see and things we cannot see); whether thrones or lordships (kings or kingdoms) or rulers or authorities, all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and all things consist (exist) in Him.

He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He be pre-eminent (first in everything). For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, making peace with the blood of the cross, whether the things on the earth, or the things in the heavens.

And you, who once were alienated and enemies in the mind by evil works, He has now reconciled (brought peace and unity), in the body of His flesh, through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and without charge (free from accusation) before Him, if you continue in the faith, founded and steadfast (firmly grounded and established), and are not moved away from the hope of the Gospel which you heard proclaimed in all creation under heaven.”

‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My Word, and My Father will love him; and We will come to him and make Our home with him.’

‘When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.’

## The Holy Spirit

The prayer for the Holy Spirit to be with us, and in us:

‘I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive because it does not see Him nor know Him. But you know Him because He lives with you, and will be in you.

‘I will not leave you orphans; I am coming to you.’

‘The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I have said to you.’

The promise of the Holy Spirit for us:

“Repent (turn to God, and transform your lives), and be baptised, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”

‘I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone asking receives, and the one seeking finds, and to the one knocking it will be opened. For what father is there among you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead of a fish? And if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father of heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!’

The power of the Holy Spirit within us:

‘The kingdom of God is within you.’

“The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking,  
but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

“The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death. For the law (the Old Testament law of Moses) was powerless, in that it was weak through the flesh (because of our sinful nature). But God, by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, as an offering for sin, condemned sin in the flesh (destroyed sin’s control over us, by giving His Son as a sacrifice for our sins) so that the righteous requirement of the law would be fulfilled (fully satisfied) in us who no longer walk according to the flesh (following our sinful nature), but according to the Spirit.”

“You are not in the flesh (controlled by your sinful nature), but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

So then, brothers, we are under obligation; not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh (not doing what our sinful nature urges us to do). For if you live according to the flesh (doing what your sinful nature urges you to do) you will die.

But if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body (put the sinful nature to death), you will live.

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

‘Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone practicing sin is a slave to sin. But the slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever.

Therefore, if the Son sets you free, you are really free.’

“If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us His Spirit.

And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Saviour of the world. Whoever confesses (acknowledges allegiance) that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and the one abiding in love abides in God, and God in him.”

“And hope does not put us to shame, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit given to us.”

“There are three witnesses in heaven who testify to the truth; the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are One.”

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the presence of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.”

## The Children

God's children believe that Jesus is the Christ; the chosen one for salvation. They love their Father, and obey His commandments, by loving one another:

“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the Father, loves whoever is born of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments.

For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not heavy.”

Jesus tells us, we must become like little children, and be born from above, if we are to enter into God's kingdom:

‘Truly, I say to you, unless you turn, and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.’

‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’

God's children trust in the Lord to guide their life:

“Trust in Jehovah (the Lord) with all your heart; and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him (seeking, understanding, knowing, and obeying Him), and He shall direct (make straight) your paths.”

God's children turn away from sin:

“Now little children, remain in Him, so that when He is revealed we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. If you know that He is righteous, know that everyone practicing righteousness has been born of Him.

See what manner of love the Father has given us, that we may be called children of God.

For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, it has not yet been revealed what we shall be. But we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is.

And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. Everyone practicing sin practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. And you know that He was revealed to bear our sins, and sin is not in Him. Everyone remaining in Him does not sin. Everyone sinning has neither seen Him nor known Him. Little children, let no one lead you astray. The one practicing righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous.

The one practicing sin is of the Devil, because the Devil sins from the beginning. For this (reason) the Son of God was revealed, to undo the works of the Devil. Everyone born of God does not sin, because His seed remains in him, and he is not able to sin, because he has been born of God. By this the children of God and the children of the Devil are revealed. Everyone not practicing righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother, because this is the message you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.”

God's children have their needs provided:

‘Do not be anxious, saying, ‘What may we eat?’  
or ‘What may we drink?’ or ‘What may clothe us?’  
For the nations seek after all these things. Your heavenly  
Father knows that you have need of all these. But seek  
first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness,  
and all these things will be added to you.’

As God's children, we are all individual members of His family. He wants us to meet with each other; connecting us together, showing our love for Him, and for one another, in His presence.

Where the children of God meet with one another, in the presence of God, is generally known as church. When we meet together in this way, we worship Him, by praying to Him, singing praise to Him, receiving teaching from the Bible; learning how to apply His Word to our lives, and fellowshiping with one another, while enjoying being in His presence. Wherever people meet together in God's presence, whether they meet in church buildings, private homes, or public places, all over the world, they are all God's children, and part of His family.

God's children are the body of Christ:

“For, even as the body is one and has many members,  
all the members of the one body, being many, are one body;  
so also is Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptised into one  
body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, all were  
given to drink in one Spirit. For the body is not one member,  
but many. If the foot says, ‘Because I am not a hand, I am not  
of the body,’ does that make it any less a part of the body?

And if the ear says, ‘Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,’ does that make it any less a part of the body? If all the body was an eye, where the hearing? If all hearing, where the smelling?

But now God set the members, each one of them, in the body, as He desired. If all were one member, where would the body be? Now, indeed, many are the members, but one body.

The eye is not able to say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you,’ or again, the head say to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’

But much more the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those of the body we think to be less honourable, around these we put more abundant honour. And our unpresentable members are given greater modesty, which our more presentable members do not need.

God has blended the body together, giving greater honour to the member lacking it, that there be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.

If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it.

If one member is glorified, all the members rejoice with it. You are the body of Christ, and (individual) members in part.”

There is no greater joy for parents than having their children living together; loving them, and loving one another, in peace and harmony. On the other hand, there is no greater sadness for parents than having their children divided against them, and each other. It is the same with our Lord. There is no greater joy for Him than having His children united together in peace and harmony; loving Him, and loving one another. On the other hand, nothing grieves Him more than having His children divided against Him, and against one another:

“Now I urge you, brothers, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all say the same thing, and there not be divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and in the same judgment (opinion and purpose).”

“Beloved, remember the words spoken before by the apostles of the Lord of us, Jesus Christ, because they told you, that at the last time there will be mockers (false teachers) according to their own lusts, going after ungodliness.

These are ones separating themselves apart, worldly people, not having the Spirit.

But you, beloved, building yourselves up by your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, awaiting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. And pity some, making distinction (clearly separating them).

But save others with fear, seizing them out of the fire, hating even the garment having been stained from the flesh.

Now to Him being able to keep you without stumbling, and to set you before His glory without blemish (without fault), with great joy; to the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory and greatness and might and authority, both now and to all the ages (forever). Amen.”

God’s children will be unified:

‘I do not pray concerning these only, but also concerning those who will believe in Me through their word; that all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in you;

that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You have given Me, I have given them, that they may be one as We are one; I in them, and You in Me; that they may be perfected into one, and that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You loved Me. Father, those whom You have given to Me, I desire that where I am, they may also be with Me, that they may behold My glory which You gave Me, because You loved Me before the foundation of the world. Righteous Father, the world does not know You, but I know You, and these know that You sent Me; and I made known to them Your name, and will make it known, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.'

God's children will inherit the kingdom:

'Fear not, little flock, because your Father was pleased to give you the kingdom.'

"Now I commend you to God and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those having been sanctified (made holy)."

God's children will never perish:

'My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. I give eternal life to them, and they shall not perish unto the age (never be destroyed), and no one shall seize them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all, and no one is able to seize them out of My Father's hand. I and the Father are one.'

## **The Devil**

Satan, or the Devil, as he is commonly known, was originally an angel of God, called Lucifer. Lucifer caused a rebellion against God, wanting to take over the kingdom of God for himself, and live independently apart from God. Because of Lucifer's sin, God condemned him to the pit of Sheol:

“O shining star (Lucifer), son of the morning, how you have fallen from the heavens. You who weakens the nations; you are cut down to the ground. For you have said in your heart; ‘I will go up to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit in the mount of meeting in the sides of the north. I will rise over the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High’. Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol (the place of the dead), to the sides of the pit.”

Lucifer, now called Satan, or the Devil, which means false accuser, deceiver, adversary, and enemy of God, was cast out of heaven, to earth, along with his angels:

“And there came war in heaven; Michael and his angels made war with the dragon. And the dragon and his angels made war, but they did not have strength, nor was place found any more for them in heaven. And the great dragon was cast (thrown) out, the old serpent called the Devil, and Satan; the one deceiving the whole habitable (populated) world, was cast (thrown) onto the earth, and his angels were cast (thrown) out with him.”

The Devil, being cast to earth, has been allowed to remain here until God condemns him to the lake of fire for eternity:

“The Devil deceiving (misleading) them was cast (thrown) into the lake of fire and brimstone (burning sulphur) where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night to the ages of the ages (forever and ever).”

Lucifer lived in God’s presence, and beheld His glory, but was thrown out of the kingdom, because he took pride in himself. Lucifer fell to the sin of pride, wanting to be independent of God:

‘He who is not with Me is against Me.’

Pride is self-centredness in oneself; self-focused, self-reliant, self-sufficient, self-confident, and self-satisfied, ultimately leading to being self-deceived. Pride is the most evil and deceptive sin, because we can justify ourselves, presume upon God, and even be in His will, and still be cast away from Him, just like Lucifer.

The Bible tells us to beware of pride. That means being on our guard against anyone, or anything, that separates us from God, and causes us to be independent from Him, including all forms of self-centredness. Instead, we are to be totally dependent on God, being humble before Him, and humble towards one another:

“Younger ones be subject (submissive) to older ones; and all to one another. Clothe yourselves with humility, because God sets Himself against the proud ones, but He gives grace to the humble ones. Be humbled, then, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in time, casting all your anxiety (worry) onto Him, because it matters to Him concerning you (He cares for you). Be sober (keep sensible); watch, because your adversary (your enemy) the Devil walks about like a roaring lion seeking someone he may devour.”

Ever since the first human beings were created, the Devil has been roaming the earth, seeking to deceive anyone who belongs to God, tempting them, and influencing them, to sin against God.

The Devil does this, because he hates God, and anyone who is born of God, which means the children of God; and he wants to condemn us, just as he has been condemned.

Jesus refers to the Devil as a liar, and a thief, who wants to steal our life with God; whereas, Jesus wants to give us abundant life:

**‘He (the Devil) is a liar and the father of it.’**

**‘The thief does not come, except that he may steal, and kill, and destroy. I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly.’**

Ultimately, the only way to avoid being deceived by the Devil is to obey God’s greatest commandments:

“ ‘You shall love the Lord your God  
with all your heart,  
with all your soul,  
with all your mind,  
and with all your strength.’

This is the first commandment.

And the second, like it, is this:

‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.”

“Be subject (submit) to God.  
Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you.  
Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.”

## The World

The meaning of “the world”, as described in the Bible, is the present condition of human affairs because of the rule of mankind, which is in opposition to God, and His Word. The Bible tells us that the whole world, under the rule of mankind, is evil:

“We know we are of God,  
and the whole world lies in evil.”

The Bible tells us that the world will become more evil:

“And know this, that in the last days perilous (difficult) times will be at hand. For men will be self-lovers, money-lovers, boasters, proud, blasphemers (speaking evil against God), disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholly, without natural affection (heartless), implacable (unpersuadable), slanderers (false accusers), without self-control, savage, haters of what is good, betrayers, reckless, puffed-up (full of pride), pleasure-lovers rather than God-lovers, having a form of godliness (appearing to be godly), but having denied the power of it.

Turn away from these!”

Jesus promises us peace, encouraging us to take heart, because even though we have trouble, He has overcome the world:

‘These things I have spoken to you,  
that in Me you may have peace.

In the world you have tribulation (trouble),  
but be encouraged, I have overcome the world.’

“This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not heavy.

Everything having been born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory overcoming the world, the faith of us.

Who is the one overcoming the world, except the one believing that Jesus is the Son of God?”

‘Peace I leave to you; My peace I give you; not as the world gives, I give you. Let you not be troubled in your heart, nor let it be fearful.’

The evil in the world will continue until such time as God intervenes, and brings the rule of mankind to an end, removing everything that opposes Him, and His Word; everything that causes sin, and all who practice evil:

‘The kingdom of heaven is likened to a man sowing good seed in his field. But while the men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed darnel (grain that looks like wheat when full-grown, but the seeds are black, and poisonous to man) in the midst of the wheat and went away.

And when the herb sprouted and produced fruit, the darnel also appeared. And the servants, coming near to the master of the house, said to him, ‘Lord, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where has the darnel come from?’

He said to them, ‘An enemy, a man, did this.’

And the servants said to him, ‘Will you then have us go out and gather them?’

But he said, ‘No, while gathering the darnel you may uproot the wheat with them. Allow them both to grow together until the harvest. And in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, ‘Gather first the darnel, and bind them into bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my storehouse.’ ’ ’

‘The one sowing the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world; the good seed are the sons of the kingdom; the darnel are the sons of the evil one; the enemy who sowed them is the Devil; the harvest is the completion of the age; and the harvesters are the angels.

As the darnel is gathered, and consumed in the fire, so it will be at the completion of the age. The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all offences causing sin, and those who practice lawlessness, and they will cast (throw) them into the furnace of fire; there will be weeping (crying) and gnashing (grinding) of teeth.

Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He having ears to hear, let him hear.’

“Do not love the world nor the things in the world.

If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him, because all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - is not of the Father, but is of the world.

And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”

### **3. The Character of God**

Many people question God's integrity, asking questions like, "How can God allow so much evil to exist in a world that He created?", "How can He allow people to go through so much pain and suffering?", "Why should we believe that God knows what is best for us, and seek to know Him and His will?". In other words, "How could a loving God be so holy, and perfect, yet He allows all kinds of evil, pain, and suffering, to be in a world that He created, and doesn't do anything about it?"

The only way to know the answers to these questions is to know God's character; and the only way to know God's character is to know God, and know what He says in His Word, the Holy Bible.

We can only truly know God's character when we seek to understand and know God Himself. When we seek to understand and know God, He enables us to see things from His perspective.

It is impossible to see things from His viewpoint until we seek to understand and know Him, and His Word, in spirit and truth:

“Thus says Jehovah (the Lord):

‘Do not let the wise man glory in his wisdom;  
do not let the mighty man glory in his might;  
do not let the rich man glory in his riches. But let  
him who glories glory in this, that he understands  
and knows Me, that I am Jehovah (the Lord),  
doing lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness,  
in the earth. In these I delight,’ says Jehovah (the Lord).”

‘The time is coming, and now is, when the true lovers of  
God will worship the Father in fullness of spirit and truth;  
for the Father is seeking such ones as these to worship Him.’

When we get to know God, and what He says about evil, and the pain and suffering that is caused by it, He opens our eyes and helps us to see things as He sees them. And when we get to know God and His Word, it is impossible to question why He does things the way He does, and why He doesn't do things the way that we think He should. When we see things His way, we come to realise that His character is flawless, His integrity is perfect, and His motives are always holy and just.

We are children who are not able to understand the ways of our Father until we get to know Him. The closer we are to Him the more we will understand why He allows things to happen the way that He does.

When God created the first human beings, Adam and Eve, He wanted them to have a fulfilling relationship with Him, delight in Him, and love Him. He never wanted them, or anyone living after them, to have any knowledge of the existence of the evil of sin, or to experience any of the pain and suffering, that come from the affects of it. Sin existed, but God never wanted Adam and Eve, or any of us, to even know of its existence.

God gave authority to Adam and Eve to rule the earth, allowing them to multiply. He gave them the free will to live in unity and harmony with Him, according to His Word, and be fulfilled by Him; or to live independently without Him according to the Devil's ways.

Being with God meant they had to live according to His ways. The choice to live independently apart from Him would be a decision to live according to the Devil's ways. God gave them the free will to choose what they wanted for themselves; to live with Him according to His Word, and be blessed; or to live independently apart from Him according to the Devil's evil ways, and be cursed.

God's words were ignored, and Adam and Eve chose to live their own way, in disobedience to God's Word, when they ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, which God had told them not to do, under any circumstances; otherwise, they would die.

When they disobeyed God's Word, they, along with the whole human race were exposed to sin, and the devastating effects, and curse of it, which ultimately causes death.

God later chose a nation for Himself, the nation of Israel, separating them to be a people to Himself. Again, God wanted His people to have a fulfilling relationship with Him, delight in Him, and love Him. He also meant for them to be His example to the world, showing the world what it was like to live with God; always being in His presence, living as He wanted them to live, and being blessed by Him. He told them to make a tabernacle, which was a moveable tent. The tabernacle was a symbol of God's holiness, His desire to dwell among His people, and what He expected from them, in order for them to be blessed by Him:

**'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'**

He gave them the choice to live with Him, in obedience to Him and His Word, and be blessed by Him; or to live without Him, in disobedience to Him and His Word, and be cursed by Him.

Sadly, many of the Israelites turned away from God, and chose to disobey Him and His Word, choosing to live according to the Devil's ways, as Adam and Eve had previously done.

To the present day, God is still giving the same choice that He gave to Adam and Eve, the children of Israel, and everyone else in the Bible; to follow Him and His Word; or follow the Devil and his ways. It is important to make the right choice, because God's Word, and the Devil's ways, both have eternal consequences.

The world will continue to be exposed to sin, and the ongoing consequences of it, as long as we live independently apart from God. Sin is separation from God, and His Word, and affects our immediate and eternal future. We must therefore choose whether we want to live with God, under His authority; or live without Him, under the Devil's influence, and accept the consequences of our decision. It is a choice that nations of the world must make, as well as being a choice that individuals in the world must make.

Throughout history, mankind has chosen to rule the world independently apart from God in many different ways, yet no ruler has ever been able to govern the world, or any part of it, with any lasting peace, or justice; nor has any ruler been able to maintain any lasting legacy of integrity (good moral character).

God's anger towards the rebelliousness of mankind against Him, and His heartfelt reaction to their rebellion, reveals His true character. God's love is so much deeper, and different, to our limited understanding of love. Our love is a more sentimental love; whereas, God's love is a holy love. His love is so great that He hates all forms of sin, because it separates us from Him; and He hates all the evil consequences that it causes. No one loves so passionately, and yet hates all evil, the way God does.

God knows our limited ability to love without Him, and loves us even though we have not loved Him, or wanted Him to be part of our lives. Even though mankind constantly sins by living apart from God; even though mankind continues to go through pain and suffering because of the effects of sin; and even though mankind continually chooses to be stubborn and rebellious against God; He still wants to save us from sin, the Devil's evil influence in the world, and from ourselves and our own foolish choices:

“The one not loving does not know God, because God is love.”

The Bible records mankind's rebellion against God, and reveals His plan to save us from that sin. It records what happens when people rebel against Him, and what we must do to reverse its evil effects. God is more than able to save us; however, He will never compromise Himself, His Word, or His character, which is His perfect moral integrity; and He will never change:

**“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today,  
and to the ages (forever).”**

### **The Holiness of God**

Holiness is to be without sin. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, are holy, which means God is pure and perfect in every way:

**“They do not rest day or night, saying: ‘Holy, holy, holy,  
Lord God Almighty, the One who was, and is, and is coming.’ ”**

**“Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty;  
righteous and true are Your ways, O King of the saints.**

**Who will not fear You, Lord, and glorify Your name? For You  
alone are holy. All the nations will come and worship before You,  
because Your righteous judgments were manifested (revealed).”**

Jesus is the only person who has ever lived without ever sinning. He lived His entire life on earth without committing one single sin. He was obedient to His parents on earth, and obedient to His Father in heaven, fulfilling everything the Father wanted Him to do, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He loved His Father in heaven, and loved His people on earth.

Jesus fulfilled the Fathers will, loving and serving His children, as our perfect example and role model. He tells us that we must be holy (wholly without sin), because He is holy:

“He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, for us to be holy and unblemished (faultless) before Him in love;”

“According to the Holy One calling you, you also become holy in all conduct; because it has been written:  
‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’”

“I beseech you (call you to act), brothers, through the compassions of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, that is holy and well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service.”

Without holiness, no one will see the Lord:

“Eagerly pursue peace (strive for peace) with all (people), and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord; watching diligently (watching out carefully for one another) lest anyone falls short and fails to obtain the grace of God.”

“Beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement (filthiness) of the flesh, and of spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

“For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in sanctification (holiness). Therefore, the one despising (rejecting) this does not despise (reject) man, but God, who gives His Holy Spirit to you.”

‘You then, be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect.’

## The Righteousness of God

God's righteousness is doing what is right according to Him. God is perfectly righteous, which means that He has perfect moral integrity, and always does what is right, in accordance with His standards contained in His Word, the Holy Bible:

“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

“If you know that He is righteous, know that everyone practicing righteousness has been born of Him.”

“The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears open to their prayers. But the face of the Lord is against ones doing evil.”

“Little children, let no one lead you astray. The one practicing righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous.”

“The earnest prayer of a righteous one has great power.”

“And if the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and sinner appear?”

“ ‘My son, do not despise the discipline (training) of the Lord, nor faint while being reproved (corrected). For whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and scourges (whips) every son He receives.’ ”

If you endure discipline, God is dealing with you as with sons; for who is a son whom a father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are bastards (illegitimate), and not sons.

Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh as discipliners (trainers), and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits, and we shall live? For they truly disciplined us for a few days, according to the thing seeming good to them; but He for our profit, in order for us to partake of His holiness. And all discipline for the present indeed seems not of joy, but of grief (painful), but later it gives peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”

“And by this we know that we have known Him, if we keep His commandments. The one saying, ‘I have known Him,’ and not keeping His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His Word, truly in this one, the love of God has been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him. The one saying he remains in Him ought himself walk in the same manner as He walked.”

“Do not fret (anger) because of evildoers; and do not be envious of workers of iniquity (wrongdoers), for they will soon fade like grass and wither like the green herb. Trust in Jehovah (the Lord) and do good; live in the land and feed on faithfulness. Delight yourself in Jehovah (the Lord) that He may give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to Jehovah (the Lord), and trust in Him, and He will work. He will bring forth your righteousness like the light, and your judgment like the noonday.

Rest in Jehovah (the Lord), and wait patiently for Him; do not fret (anger) yourself because of him who prospers in his way; with the man practicing evil wiles (wickedness).  
Abstain (resist) from anger and cease from fury;  
do not fret (anger) yourself to do evil.

For evildoers will be cut off; and the ones waiting on Jehovah (the Lord), they will inherit the land. It is but a little, and the wicked will not be (anymore). You will search his place, but he is not (there). But the meek (humble) will inherit the earth, and will delight themselves in the abundance of peace. The wicked plots (evil) against the righteous, and gnashes at him with his teeth; the Lord laughs at him, for He sees that his day is coming.

The wicked have drawn the sword, and bent their bow, to cause the poor and needy to fall; to slaughter the way of the upright. Their sword will enter into their own heart, and their bows will be broken. Better is a little to the righteous than the abundance of many wicked ones. For the arms of the wicked ones will be broken, but Jehovah (the Lord) is upholding the righteous ones. Jehovah (the Lord) knows the days of the upright; and their inheritance will be forever. They will not be ashamed in an evil time; and in days of famine they will be satisfied. But the wicked will pass (perish), and the enemies of Jehovah (the Lord) will be like the glory of the pastures; they are consumed like smoke, and vanish.

The wicked borrows, and does not repay, but the righteous is gracious and giving. For His blessed ones will inherit the land, and those cursed by Him will be cut off. The steps of a man are established by Jehovah (the Lord), and He delights in his way. Though he falls, he is not cast down; for Jehovah (the Lord) is upholding his hand. I have been young and am also old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, or his seed (children) begging bread. All the day he is gracious and lending, and his seed is for a blessing. Turn away from evil and do good, and live forever.

For Jehovah (the Lord) loves judgment, and does not forsake His saints; they are preserved forever; but the wicked's seed is cut off. The righteous will inherit the earth and live upon it forever. The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom, and his tongue speaks judgment. The law of his God is in his heart; his steps do not slide. The wicked is watching the righteous, seeking to kill him. Jehovah (the Lord) will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him in his judgment. Wait on Jehovah (the Lord) and keep His way that He may exalt you to inherit the earth. You will see the wicked cut off. I have seen the wicked, ruthless, and spreading himself as a flourishing (prosperous) green tree; and yet he passes away, and he is not; I looked for him, but he was not found. Watch the perfect and see the upright, for the end of that man is peace. But the transgressors (rebellious ones) are destroyed together; the end of the wicked is cut off. But the salvation of the righteous is from Jehovah (the Lord); He is their strength in time of distress (trouble). Jehovah (the Lord) helps them and delivers them; He delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they take refuge in Him.”

“If you confess (acknowledge) with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes to righteousness, and with the mouth one confesses to salvation.”

“In every nation the one fearing Him and working righteousness is acceptable to Him.”

‘Blessed are the ones hungering and thirsting for righteousness, for they will be filled (satisfied).’

“For You, O Jehovah (Lord), will bless the righteous;  
You will surround him with favour, as with a shield.”

‘Do not be anxious, saying, ‘What may we eat?’  
or ‘What may we drink?’ or ‘What may clothe us?’  
For the nations seek after all these things. Your heavenly  
Father knows that you have need of all these. But seek  
first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness,  
and all these things will be added to you.’

“All Scripture is God-breathed, and is profitable for teaching,  
conviction, correction, and for instruction in righteousness,  
that the man of God may be perfect and complete  
for every good work.”

“I pray, that your love may yet abound more and more  
in full knowledge and all perception (understanding),  
for you to prove (distinguish) the things that differ,  
that you may be sincere (genuine), and without blame  
(faultless) for the day of Christ, having been filled with  
the fruits of righteousness through Jesus Christ,  
to the glory and praise of God.”

“Now little children, remain in Him, so that when He is  
revealed we may have confidence, and not be  
ashamed before Him at His coming.”

“According to His promise, we look for new heavens  
and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.”

“His righteousness endures forever.”

## The Judgment of God

God is in all places at once, knows everything, can do anything, and can always be relied upon to do what is right, because He is holy and righteous; therefore, His justice is always perfectly right. And because God is everywhere, and knows all things, and can do whatever He wants, and is holy; only He can truly judge.

A judge convicts and punishes the wicked, and clears and rewards the innocent. As a righteous judge, God can be relied upon to judge rightly. However, out of His righteousness, He is severe towards anyone who is not righteous; anyone who does not do what is right, according to His standard, the Holy Bible.

God is jealous for His holy name, His reputation, His people, and His creation, and won't allow people to continually behave in ways that are in opposition to Him, and His Word.

He doesn't envy anything, or anyone, because envy is wanting what belongs to someone else, and everything belongs to Him. However, He is a jealous God, and jealousy is holding on to what is rightfully yours.

Alongside God's jealousy is His vengeance (punishment of evil). God's vengeance comes to those who are against Him, wanting to trust in themselves, and follow the ways of the Devil; living in opposition to His character, and in disobedience to His Word.

He brings judgments upon His creation; upon individual people, and populated nations, to bring forth righteousness and holiness. He doesn't do this for the sake of punishment, but for discipline. He disciplines His children, because He loves us, and wants what is best for us; wanting to purify us, provide for us, and protect us.

His judgments keep us from being independent of Him, to being dependent on Him. They teach us to turn away from lawlessness to righteousness; from disobedience to obedience;

from being sinful, to sinning less, to being sinless; from being proud to being humble; from being greedy to being generous; from being selfish to being selfless; from having no love, to having much love, and giving love; and from being wicked to being holy.

His vengeance is upon those who oppose Him, and His Word. However, He is gracious towards those who faithfully submit to Him, and obey Him:

‘The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.

The one not honouring the Son does not honour the Father who has sent Him. Truly, truly, I say to you, the one who hears My Word, and believing the One who has sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

Truly, truly, I say to you, there comes an hour, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and the ones hearing will live. For even as the Father has life in Himself, so He gave also to the Son to have life in Himself. And He gave authority to Him to do judgment, because He is the Son of Man.

Do not marvel at this, because there comes an hour in which all those in the tombs will hear the voice of Him, and will come out; the ones having done good to a resurrection of life; and the ones having practiced evil to a resurrection of judgment.

I am not able, from Myself, to do anything. As I hear, I judge, and My judgment is just (right), because I do not seek My will, but the will of the One sending Me; the Father.’

“God highly exalted Him, and gave Him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth; and every tongue should acknowledge (fully agree) that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

“For it has been written: ‘As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess (give acknowledgment) to God.’ So then, each one of us will give an account concerning himself to God.”

“For we must all manifest (appear for all to be revealed) before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive the things done through the body, according to what he practiced, whether good or bad.”

‘The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and the evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil things. I tell you that every idle (careless) word that men may speak, they will give account for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified (declared righteous), and by your words you will be condemned.’

“Because the time has come to begin the judgment from the house of God; and if firstly from us, what will be the end of the ones disobeying the Gospel of God?”

“For we know the One having said, ‘Vengeance is Mine; I will repay,’ says the Lord. And again, ‘The Lord will judge His people.’ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

## **The Mercy of God**

Mercy is being compassionate, and withdrawing punishment (partially or completely), that is intended towards an enemy or an offender. God is compassionate and merciful towards us:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the One, according to His great mercy, having regenerated us (given us a rebirth) to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,”

“When the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works in righteousness which we had done, but according to His mercy, He saved us through the washing of regeneration (spiritual rebirth) and renewal of the Holy Spirit, which He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, that being justified (declared righteous) by His grace (undeserved favour), we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

“For we being weak, in due time, Christ died on behalf of the ungodly ones. For anyone will, with difficulty, die for a just one; for perhaps one even dares to die for the sake of the good one. But God commends His love to us in that we being sinners, Christ died for us. Much more, then, having been justified (declared righteous) by His blood, we will be saved through Him from wrath (God’s vengeance). For if being enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we will be saved by His life. And not only so, but also glorying in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.”

“God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even we being dead in trespasses (unintentional errors and wilful offences), made us alive together with Christ; by grace you are having been saved (you have been saved, and are being saved); and raised us up together, and seated us together in the heavenlies (heavenly places) in Christ Jesus, that He might show in the coming ages, the exceeding riches of His grace (His undeserved favour) in kindness toward us in Christ. For by grace you are having been saved (you have been saved, and are being saved), through faith, and this not of you, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

“Let us, therefore, draw near with confidence to the throne of grace (God’s undeserved favour), that we may receive mercy, and we may find grace in time of needing help.”

‘Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.’

“Beloved, building yourselves up by your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, awaiting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.

And pity some, making distinction (clearly separating them). But save others with fear, seizing them out of the fire, hating even the garment having been stained from the flesh. Now to Him being able to keep you without stumbling, and to set you before His glory without blemish (without fault), with great joy; to the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory and greatness and might and authority, both now and to all the ages (forever). Amen.”

“His mercy endures forever.”

## The Forgiveness of God

Forgiveness is releasing someone from the wrong they have done. Where mercy is having compassion by withdrawing punishment; forgiveness is clearing the record of any wrongdoing completely.

Before Jesus was condemned to death by crucifixion on a cross, He taught about the power of God to forgive sins, and how we should forgive one another, just as He has forgiven us:

“They brought a paralytic (disabled man) lying on a bed to Him.

And seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, ‘Be of good courage, child; your sins have been forgiven you.’ And behold, some of the scribes (religious leaders) said within themselves, ‘This man blasphemes (speaks evil against God).’

And knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, ‘Why do you think evil in your hearts? For what is easier to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’

or ‘Rise up and walk?’ But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on the earth to forgive sins.’ He then said to the paralytic, ‘Rise up, take up your bed, and go to your house.’ And rising up, he went away to his house.

And the crowds, having seen this, marveled, and glorified God for giving such authority to men.”

“At dawn He again arrived in the temple, and all the people came to Him; and sitting down He taught them. And the scribes and the pharisees (religious leaders) brought to Him a woman having been caught in adultery; and standing her in the midst (before Him), they said to Him, ‘Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act, committing adultery.

Now, in the law, Moses commanded us that such be stoned (stones be thrown at the offender until death). What, therefore, do You say?' This they said, testing Him, that they might have to accuse Him. But Jesus bent down and wrote with His finger on the ground. And when they continued questioning Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, 'The sinless of you (whoever is without sin among you) let him cast (throw) the first stone at her.' And again, bending down, He wrote on the ground. And hearing, and being convicted by their conscience, they went out one by one, beginning with the older ones, to the last.

And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst (before Him). And Jesus, raising Himself up, and seeing no one but the woman, said to her, 'Woman, where are those, your accusers? Did no one sentence (condemn) you?' She said, 'No one, Lord.' And Jesus said to her, 'Neither do I sentence (condemn) you; go and sin no more.' "

"Coming near to Him, Peter said, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Until seven times?'

Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you, until seven times, but, until seventy times seven. For the kingdom of heaven is likened to a man, a king, who decided to take accounts with his servants. And having begun to take account, one debtor of ten thousand talents was brought near to him; and he not having any to pay, the lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all, as much as he had to pay back.

Then falling down, the servant bowed to him, saying, 'Lord, have patience with me, and I will repay all to you.'

Being moved with compassion, the lord of that servant released him, and forgave him the debt.

But going out, that servant found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him, he took him by the throat, saying, ‘Pay me what you owe me.’ Then falling down at his feet, his fellow servant begged him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will repay all to you.’ But he would not; and going away, he threw him into prison, until he pay back all that was owing. His fellow servants, having seen the things that were done, were exceedingly grieved, and came to their lord and reported all that had happened.

Then calling him forward, his lord said to him, ‘Wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt, since you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, as I had compassion on you?’ And being angry, his lord delivered him up to the tormentors, until he repay all that was owing to him.

So also My heavenly Father will do to you, unless each of you forgive your brother his transgressions (sins), from your heart.’ ”

‘If you forgive men their transgressions (sins), your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you will not forgive men their transgressions (sins), neither will your Father forgive you.’

‘Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven.’

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous that He may forgive us the sins, and may cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His Word is not in us.”

## **The Grace of God**

Grace is giving favour to someone who has done nothing to earn it or deserve it. It is giving something to someone who has not earnt it, or doesn't deserve it. God's grace is similar, but much greater, in that His grace comes out of His great love.

Where mercy is having compassion by withdrawing punishment towards an enemy, and forgiveness is clearing the record of any wrongdoing, God's grace gives favour to the offender as well.

God gives grace to everyone; and everything He does is through His grace, in all of life's successes and struggles. During difficult times, and in tough circumstances, it may be hard to believe that God is giving us grace; however, His grace comes through blessing and cursing, joy and sorrow, triumphs and tragedies.

Regardless of how it may look to us, God is always pouring out His grace towards us. It is only when we submit to Him, seek Him, understand and know Him, and follow Him (trusting Him, wanting Him, hearing from Him, making sense of what He is saying to us, responding to Him, remaining connected with Him, and obeying Him), along with the benefit of hindsight, that we begin to see why God does things the way that He does, and why He allows things to happen the way that He allows. It is only through submission, desire, understanding, knowing, and obeying Him, that we see how everything He does is by His grace.

The fullness of God's grace was revealed when Jesus was sent to suffer and die on the cross for us. When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the people rejoiced at the coming of their long awaited Messiah, the King of Israel. This was an occasion for great rejoicing and triumph. However, in a matter of a few days, the occasion soon turned to great sadness and tragedy when Jesus was rejected by His own people, tortured, and crucified to death.

Both events were by the grace of God, even though there was great triumph and shocking tragedy. It is only when we see the final outcome of Jesus being resurrected from the dead, and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on all the nations, that we see God's purpose in all that He willed and allowed to happen. It is only then that we see that it all happened because of God's amazing grace, and His sacrificial love towards us.

There are many other examples of God pouring out His grace in many different ways in the Bible, and He still pours out His grace upon us. God's grace is upon everyone who receives Him or refuses Him. However, if He is continually refused, there will come a time when His grace will no longer be available. It is God's grace towards those who have received Him, that will not allow anyone who has rejected Him, to enter into His kingdom.

Many people don't come to understand and know God's grace towards them because they haven't taken the time to understand and know God. He will reveal His grace to anyone wanting to understand and know Him and His goodness:

“To the ones loving God, all things work together for good,”

When it comes to our salvation, God poured out His grace by pouring out His blood for us, through suffering and sacrificing Himself on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins; and then by pouring out the Holy Spirit upon us. He did this on our behalf, even though we have done nothing to earn it or deserve it:

“For all sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified (declared righteous) freely by His grace through the redemption (payment) in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation (a sacrifice necessary to remove God's wrath)

through faith in His blood as a showing forth of His righteousness, because in His forbearance (tolerance), God had passed over the sins that had previously occurred, for the showing forth of His righteousness in the present time, Him being just (righteous) and justifying (declaring righteous) the one having faith in Jesus.”

“The Holy Spirit fell on all those hearing the Word, and the faithful of the circumcision were amazed, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out on the nations also.”

Salvation is the grace of God to redeem us from our sins, remove sin from us, and restore us to Himself, through suffering and sacrificing Himself on the cross, and giving us the Holy Spirit:

“Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies (heavenly places) in Christ, according as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, for us to be holy and unblemished (faultless) before Him in love; predestinating (determining in advance) us to adoption through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, in which He favoured us in the One having been loved (His Beloved Son), in whom we have redemption (our sins paid for) through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace, which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and understanding, making known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the administration of the fullness of the times, unite things in Christ, both things in the heavens, and things upon the earth, in Him.”

“Repent (turn to God, and transform your lives), and be baptised, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”

“The grace of God which brings salvation appeared to all men, instructing us that having denied ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live sensibly (with self-control), and righteously, and godly, in the present age, waiting for the blessed hope and appearance of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself on our behalf, that He might redeem us from all iniquity (lawlessness), and purify a special people for Himself, zealous (eager) for good works.”

The grace of God is involved in every part of His creation and yet still represents only part of His character. It will take eternity for us to know the riches of God’s grace, and the extent that we have received it, because everything He does is through His grace:

“God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even we being dead in trespasses (unintentional errors and wilful offences), made us alive together with Christ; by grace you are having been saved (you have been saved, and are being saved); and raised us up together, and seated us together in the heavenlies (heavenly places) in Christ Jesus, that He might show in the coming ages, the exceeding riches of His grace (His undeserved favour) in kindness toward us in Christ. For by grace you are having been saved (you have been saved, and are being saved), through faith, and this not of you, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

## **The Love of God**

God created love, so His love is deeper than what we could ever possibly imagine. His love is holy, which means it is sentimental, as well as being sacrificial. It is love that wants what is best for His created people, and will do whatever it takes to protect them, provide for them, and give them everything they need to be all He wants them to be, in accordance with His perfect character.

God's love is the greatest and most powerful gift to His people, and He has given us the capacity to love as He loves:

"Love suffers long (is patient); is kind (nice); does not envy (want what belongs to someone else); does not vaunt itself (boast about itself); is not puffed up (proud); does not behave indecently (is not rude); does not seek its own things (not selfish); is not provoked (not easily roused to anger); thinks no evil; does not rejoice over wrong, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things (patiently perseveres all things); believes all things; hopes all things; endures all things. Love never fails."

Jesus came to earth as the perfect living example of how we should love God, and love one another. His life revealed His love for the Father, and revealed His love for us. Jesus loves His Father so much, that He was willing to fulfill the Father's will by living a perfectly sinless life, before being tortured to death.

Jesus willingly submitted Himself to horrendous suffering, pain, and agony, dying on a cross, while people humiliated, mocked, and ridiculed Him, so that He could fulfill the will of the Father, and do what was necessary to save us from eternal condemnation and everlasting punishment.

Jesus did this because of His love for the Father and His love for us. Jesus' sinless life and sacrificial death is the greatest revelation of the fullness of God's character, because every aspect of God's character was fully displayed during Jesus' life on earth: His holiness, His righteousness, His judgment, His mercy, His forgiveness, His grace, and His love, are all revealed; and through His life and death, Jesus gives us the fullness of Him:

“I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named, that He may give you, according to the riches of the glory of Him, power to become mighty through the Spirit of Him, in the inward man, that through faith, Christ might dwell in your hearts; having been rooted, and having been founded in love, that you may have strength to seize, with all the saints, what is the breadth (width) and length and depth and height, to know the love of Christ that surpasses (exceeds) all knowledge, that you may be filled to all the fullness of God.

Now to Him who is able, beyond all things, to do super abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power working in us, to Him be the glory in the church in Christ Jesus, to all the generations of the age of the ages (forever). Amen.”

Jesus wants us to have the fullness of Him, so we may delight in Him, and love with His love. His love worships the Father, bringing glory and honour to Him, in fullness of spirit and truth:

‘The time is coming, and now is, when the true lovers of God will worship the Father in fullness of spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such ones as these to worship Him.’

Jesus has instructed us to obey His two greatest commandments in the Bible:

“ ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’

This is the first commandment.

And the second, like it, is this:

‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.”

Why would God tell us to love Him with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength? How could we ever truly love Him that much? He tells us to love Him with every part of our being, because this is how He loves us; and He wants us to have the fullness of His love, so we can fully love Him, fully love one another, and have eternal life together.

He tells us that we can know the love that He has for us, as we seek Him, understand Him, know Him, and follow Him.

As children of God, He wants us to be like Him; and we become like Him as we learn from Him, and take on His character. By seeking Him (wanting Him), understanding Him (hearing from Him, making sense of what He is saying, and responding to Him), knowing Him (staying connected to Him), and following Him (obeying Him), we become like Him; righteous, as He is righteous; merciful, as He is merciful; forgiving, as He is forgiving; giving one another grace, as He gives us grace; loving Him, and loving one another, as He loves us; and being holy, as He is holy. This happens to the extent that we continually seek God, understand Him, know Him, and follow Him. By staying close to God, we can experience His love; and when we experience His love, we can genuinely give it to others.

Jesus wants us to love one another as He loves us:

‘A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love among one another.’

Not only does God want us to love Him with every part of our being and love one another; He wants us to love one another as He loves us. How could we possibly love one another that much?

The only way we could ever love one another as God loves us, is to know Him intimately, having the fullness of His love in us, and having the fullness of His love flowing out of us:

“ ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. The one believing into Me, as the Scripture (Old Testament) has said, out of his belly will flow rivers of living water.’ He said this concerning the Spirit, whom the ones believing into Him were about to receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”

“Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God, and everyone loving has been born of God and knows God. The one not loving does not know God, because God is love. By this the love of God was manifested (revealed) in us, because His Son, the Only begotten, God has sent into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be a propitiation (a sacrifice necessary to remove God’s wrath) for our sins.”

Every part of God’s character can be seen in His great love for us.

His holiness, His righteousness, His judgment, His mercy, His forgiveness, and His grace, all come out of His love. He wants to give us that love and He wants us to love one another with it.

The world is in a poor state because of a lack of godly love which can only come from God. Many people either don't believe in God, don't want God, believe in the wrong God, or think that they know God, but don't have His love in them.

God's love brings unity with Him and unity with one another. Any lasting peace and harmony can only come from loving God and loving one another. The closer we get to God, the more we drink from His love. The more we drink from His love, the more His love springs to life, becoming a fountain to everlasting life:

‘Whoever drinks of the water which I will give him will never thirst unto the age (will never ever thirst), but the water which I give him will become in him a fountain of water, springing to everlasting (eternal) life.’

As we drink from God's love, we should love one another, having His love perfected in us, with the help of the Holy Spirit:

“Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us His Spirit.”

His love flowing out of us, is the fruit of the Holy Spirit in us:

“The fruit of the Spirit is: Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control;”

As we remain loyal to Jesus, God remains in us, and we in Him; and as we remain in love, we remain in God, and He in us:

“Whoever confesses (acknowledges allegiance) that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.”

“God is love, and the one abiding in love abides in God, and God in him.”

God is holy; pure and perfect in every way. He is righteous; always doing what is right. His judgments are upheld in perfect justice; He has put laws in place to protect His created children. He is merciful; not wanting to punish us, even though we have broken His laws. He is forgiving, wanting to clear our record of any wrongdoing; releasing us from all sins we have committed. He wants to give grace; pour out His undeserved favour upon us, even though we have done nothing to earn it or deserve it. He does this because He loves us; wanting what is best for us:

“I have been persuaded that not death, nor life, nor angels, nor demons, nor powers, nor things present, nor things coming, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord.”

“According as it has been written (in the Scriptures): ‘Things which eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and has not come up into the heart of man, what God has prepared for the ones loving Him.’ ”

“Now faith, hope, and love, these three remain; but the greatest of these is love.”

#### **4. Reality of Salvation - Recycling God's People**

Many people don't know what salvation is; and those who do, don't necessarily know what it really means, and how it relates to their eternal well-being. Many people think there is no such thing as salvation and don't believe that they need to be saved. Others think that they can believe in any god, or don't believe there is a God. Others think that all will be fine for them because they are generally good people and haven't done anything really bad. Others know they are bad, but think that God would never accept them. Many others believe in God, and think that if they follow what their religion has taught them, they will be eternally blessed. Most people, however, whether they believe in God or not, don't really know what to expect in the hereafter.

Religion is a belief of what people must do to obtain God's favour, whomever, or whatever, that may be. Most religions require people to be good, before God will accept them. They are based on man-made beliefs and principles, that if applied, will supposedly bless them for eternity. They are all about self-effort based on man-made conditions, which you must do in order to be right with God, or to be at peace with the universe. In effect, they think their beliefs and efforts will earn their way to eternal blessings. They are what you might call "do-it-yourself" religion, and they appeal to people because they can take pride in earning eternal life in their own eyes, in their own right; whereas, it is really self-righteousness; a sin that God hates. It is having pride in ones self, which is independent of God, separating us from Him, causing us to be disobedient to Him. Self-righteousness caused the first separation from God when Lucifer rebelled against Him, and it has caused God's people to be separated from Him ever since the serpent deceived Adam and Eve into disobeying God.

Ever since God created His people, He has always wanted to be with His people. From beginning to end, the Bible tells of God's desire to be close to His people, but how many of them do not want to be close to Him. It speaks of God wanting what is best for His people, wanting them to obey Him; but how they want to do what they think is best for themselves, choosing to disobey Him.

It records the history of God wanting His people to return to Him, but how they continually refuse, and rebel against Him.

When sin was brought into the world through Adam and Eve's disobedience to God, every descendant of Adam and Eve was infected by the effects of sin, which caused us to be separated from God. This separation from God has descended from Adam and Eve to every child of God in every generation since we were created, affecting our lives from the moment we are born.

Throughout the Bible, God constantly urges His people to turn away from sin, and the eternal effects of it, and be restored to Him. In the Old Testament, He raised up leaders, priests, judges, kings, and prophets, to warn His people against sin, and the effects of it, urging them to return to Him, so they may have life.

In the New Testament, God sent His own Son, to not only warn us about sin, and the effects of it, and urge us to repent; but as God, Jesus Christ warns us about the reality of eternal condemnation in hell if we continue to practice sin, and how He came to save us from our sins, so we may have eternal life.

Jesus, Himself, had great difficulty with the self-righteous people of His day, in particular, the religious leaders. In the Bible, Jesus tells us that He came to save sinners, but He cannot connect with people who think that they are righteous in themselves, righteous in their life, or righteous in their religion:

‘I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.’

Christianity is unique in that we are accepted by God first, just as we are, in order that He may mould us into what He wants us to be; just like Him. We cannot be what God wants us to be without His help, and He cannot make us into what He wants us to be without our effort. It is a twofold action. His righteousness is placed inside of us when we believe in Jesus Christ, and His righteousness flows out of us as we continue believing in Jesus.

Salvation, in its simplest terms, means that we need to be saved from eternal condemnation in hell, and be fully restored to God. It cannot be obtained apart from God, and it cannot be obtained by our own efforts. It's a combination of both. Salvation can only be obtained through faith in Jesus Christ; and when it is obtained, it can only be maintained through an ongoing relationship with our Father, through Jesus, in co-operation with the Holy Spirit.

It requires effort, however, it is not effort that is independent from God; it is effort that is dependent on Him, in co-operation with Him, through a believing, active faith. We begin by faith in Jesus Christ, and continue in faith, believing in Him all the way:

“I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation to everyone believing, both to Jew first, and to Greek; for in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it has been written:  
‘The just (righteous) shall live by faith.’ ”

Our separation from God was fully restored when Jesus gave up His life to redeem us, remove sin from us, and restore us to the Father. So why did Jesus have to sacrifice His life for our sins? When God chose the Israelites to be a people separated to Himself, He established a legal system. His law required that when someone committed a sin, it had to be punished by death.

If they were to obtain God's mercy, they were required to take an animal, that was in perfect condition, to the priest, and have the priest sacrifice the animal as penalty, and payment, for the sins they committed. In this way, the person would receive God's mercy, be forgiven for the sins committed, and not die. If the sinner was to have their life saved, another life had to be given up.

An innocent life had to be sacrificed to pay the penalty for someone who was guilty of sin. An innocent life was sacrificed to save a guilty life, so that mercy could be given out, and justice would be carried out. Because blood carries life, blood had to be shed to pay the penalty, and redeem another life. Only then could mercy be given out, and justice be carried out, at the same time. The law required sin to be punished before it could be pardoned.

Under God's law, without the shedding of blood, there can be no forgiveness for sins committed. If there is no shedding of blood for life, then God would not be true to His character, according to His law. The Old Testament provides an example for us to learn that God's people have forgiveness of sins through the sacrifice of an innocent life, so that justice for sins is carried out, and mercy for sins committed may be given out.

Jesus' suffering and death in the New Testament fulfilled the requirements for the forgiveness of sins according to the sacrificial law given to the Israelites in the Old Testament. When Jesus sacrificed His life, He perfectly fulfilled the legal requirements of God's justice. By submitting to the Father's will and sacrificing His own life, Jesus paid the penalty for our sins, saving us from paying the death penalty for all of our sins committed. This is why Jesus had to suffer an excruciating, sacrificial death. There is no other way that God can save us from our sins, and give us eternal life, because the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, must abide by the law that was originally established in the Old Testament.

When God made the ultimate sacrifice of giving up His own life to pay the penalty for our sins, this ensured that He remained true to His perfect character. In this way, our death penalty was paid for by our Father, through the death, and resurrection of Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit. In doing this, God's sacrifice paid the penalty required under the law, so mercy could be given, while justice was upheld, at the same time. God's perfect justice has been served whilst pouring out His mercy at the same time. Our death penalty has been paid for through Jesus' sinless life and suffering death, and our lives have been fully redeemed through His resurrection. This new life in God means that we never have to be separated from Him ever again, now, and for all eternity.

It is difficult to be just and merciful at the same time, as it can only be achieved by someone making a sacrifice. This is why God required sacrifice of life in the Old Testament, and why Jesus' sacrifice on the cross was necessary in the New Testament. At the cross we see God's perfect justice (the punishment for sin), and God's perfect mercy (the guilty pardoned), because the innocent has paid the price. If God forgave us without sacrificing Himself, and giving up His life at the cross, then He would be merciful, but not just, according to His law. If He refused to forgive sin and punished it all, then He would be just, according to the law, but He wouldn't be merciful. God's perfect justice is maintained right throughout the Bible. In the Old Testament, as well as the New Testament, God's character provides both mercy and justice without compromising Himself, and most of all, His holiness.

Imagine a man and a women being charged with an offence, where, if they are found guilty, they will incur the death penalty. They appear in the courtroom and are found guilty of the charges made against them. The judge must exercise judgment on the guilty parties and punish them according to the law.

The judge, however, is merciful and compassionate. Even though he must execute justice as the law requires, out of his caring nature, he wants to do everything in his power to exercise mercy. The judge hands down the judgment of the death penalty for the guilty parties as the law requires. He then leaves the bench and goes over to the convicted criminals, and tells them, they are free to go. He then turns to the security guard, holds out his hands, and informs the court official that he will accept the penalty for their offences and allow himself to be put to death on their behalf. In this way, the judge has executed justice as required by the law, whilst at the same time exercising his mercy. He carries out justice, and at the same time pays the penalty for the offence, without any compromise. This is what God, our Father, has done for us when He sent His Son, Jesus, to die for our sins:

‘For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that everyone believing into Him may not perish, but have eternal life. God did not send His Son into the world that He may judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. The one believing into Him is not judged; but the one not believing has been judged already, because he has not believed into the name of the only begotten Son of God.’

‘The one believing and being baptised will be saved; but the one not believing will be condemned.’

God has always been merciful to His people whom He created and loves; however, His perfect character demands that justice must be carried out, and the penalty of sin is death. The judgment and penalty is severe because God is holy, and He will not allow anyone to live with Him in His kingdom who is not holy.

In redeeming us from our sins, God wants to be merciful in forgiving our sins, whilst at the same time ensuring that justice is upheld. The main difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament is that we no longer have to provide a sacrifice to pay a penalty, and be redeemed from our sins, because Jesus has done it for us. Instead of providing an animal sacrifice, or paying the ultimate penalty of eternal punishment and separation from God, He wants us to accept Jesus' sacrifice, and receive His Holy Spirit, His love, and His lordship over our lives, as our Lord and Saviour, loving Him, and loving one another, in obedience to Him and His Word, serving Him, being blessed by Him, thanking Him, praising Him, and receiving His abundant grace to know and fulfill His will and purpose for our lives, and bring honour to Him, while being prepared for our future with Him.

The law that God gave the Israelites in the Old Testament was for their provision and protection. There were blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. They were required to obey God's laws to be blessed by Him, and they were punished if they disobeyed Him. The same applies in the New Testament. In the New Testament, Jesus has given us the new law. Under the new law, Jesus promises to provide for us, protect us, and lead us in peace, especially during troubles and trials, when we submit to Him, seek Him, understand Him, know Him, and follow Him.

He never says life will be easy, but life has never been easy since mankind first disobeyed God. However, we can have constant peace from God. But we cannot expect to have His help if we don't seek Him, and obey Him. If we live according to our ways, and not according to His ways, we will be cursed by Him.

The Bible tells us that we must be saved to have everlasting life, and salvation is the basis of how we are saved from everlasting punishment from God, and restored to everlasting life with Him:

“Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead...This is the stone, regarded as being worthless by you, the builders, which has become the head of the corner (the head cornerstone). And there is salvation in no other, for neither is there any other name under heaven having been given among men by which we must be saved.”

Salvation is the foundation of christian faith, and the building of that faith is our relationship with Jesus:

‘I am the door. If anyone enters through Me, he will be saved,’

When we enter, through knowing Jesus, we come to the Father:

‘I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life.  
No one comes to the Father except through Me.’

Knowing the Father, through Jesus, is eternal life:

‘This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.’

We must know God personally to have eternal life with Him, and this has been made possible because of our salvation. He gives us the free will to be dependent on Him, or independent of Him; to obey Him, or disobey Him.

God has created us for a purpose, and He wants us to fulfill our God-given purpose. However, we cannot fulfill the purpose that God has for us without knowing what that purpose is; and we cannot know what that purpose is without knowing God.

Many people are not aware, or do not believe, that we can have an intimate, fulfilling, relationship with God that has a present and future eternal purpose, and that He wants to give us life, here and now, and forever. He wants to provide for our needs, protect us, lead us in peace, and even give us what we desire, as we get to know Him, learn to obey Him, and remain in Him:

“The Lord is near. Do not be anxious for anything, but in everything by prayer, and by petition (earnest and specific), with thanksgivings, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

‘If you remain in Me, and My words remain in you, you will ask whatever you desire, and it will be done for you.’

The Bible clearly tells us that if we refuse to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and refuse to believe that He died on our behalf for our sins, refusing to know Him, obey Him, and remain in Him, then we become refuse (worthless rubbish), and cannot be saved. Salvation is similar in meaning to the words “salvage” and “recycle”. In the Bible, the word “saved” means to be salvaged; rescued from harm, recycled, and fully restored to God. God salvages people and recycles us to become like Him.

When we come into a relationship with Jesus, we are redeemed (He saves us from sin), recycled (He removes sin from us), and restored (He makes us holy, as He is holy). As we are being saved we change from being sinners to being saints; from being foolish to being wise; from being unholy to being holy. Salvation is our need to be saved from eternal ruin and fully restored to God.

When Jesus spoke about hell, He related it to the rubbish dump in the valley of Gehenna outside Jerusalem where all the garbage was thrown. He speaks of people being thrown into hell who are useless and good for nothing. In God's eyes, the world is polluted with people who want to be independent of Him, sinful, and self-centred, thinking only of themselves, and what they want, having no want of God, or care for others. They are in opposition to God, and His purposes, and are worthless in His eyes. It is a harsh reality, but true, according to God's Word, the Holy Bible.

When we come to understand that God hates anything that causes sin, and everything that is evil, and by being apart from Him in all our self-centred, self-serving, and selfish ways, we will only continue to sin; and He sees everything, and nothing escapes His attention, then we will see our hopeless state, realise our desperate need of Him, seek His help, do what He says, live our lives as He desires, and begin to see things from His perspective.

The Bible teaches us about God's integrity. It reveals that His character is always consistent and will never change:

**“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”**

He is a unique combination of justice and mercy. If we stress one more than the other, we will get an unbalanced view of God. If we think only of God's justice, we will have too hard a view of Him. If we only think of His mercy, we will have too soft a view of Him. In one case, there will be fear, but no love. In the other case, there will be love, but no fear.

The prophets throughout the Bible provide an awesome insight into God's character and how we should respond to Him.

God's justice means that He must punish sin; and His mercy means that He longs to forgive, and pardon it.

God will exercise mercy as long as He wills to do so, but when it is persistently refused, He must exercise justice:

“For we know the One having said, ‘Vengeance is Mine; I will repay,’ says the Lord. And again, ‘The Lord will judge His people.’ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

This nature of God’s character flows all the way through the Bible, giving us insight into how God operated with His people in the past, how He operates with us in the present, and how He will operate with us in the future.

If we are to receive God’s grace, and remain in His grace, we must know Him, and we must obey Him. We cannot separate knowing Him and obeying Him. Knowing God, and continually obeying Him, go hand-in-hand, because knowing God means being in a close relationship with Him; and if we are in close relationship with God, we will want to obey Him.

The Bible, in its entirety, depicts two sides of God’s character. God is just, so He must punish sin; but He is also merciful, and so He wants to pardon it. He hates all sin, but He loves all sinners.

God will never change His perfect character, and neither will He change His expectations of what He requires of His people:

‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’

‘You then, be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect.’

Even though we may realise the truth about salvation, and know God’s requirements to satisfy His law, how can we really know that we need what God wants us to have?

Multitudes of people came to Jesus because they all had a need, and they believed that He could fulfill that need. They were in need of deliverance from all kinds of sicknesses and diseases. However, what they really needed deliverance from the most, was deliverance from sin, the effects of sin, and the pain that comes with it. This is why Jesus came; to save us from our sins, and deliver us from the effects of sin. The same continues today; many people seek Jesus because they have a need that only He can fulfill, whether it be physical, mental, or emotional healing, being lifted out of helplessness, and hopelessness, needing restoration, peace, and fulfillment, or material needs, and overall well-being.

When we come to Jesus with all our needs, believing in Him, and confessing our need of Him, He forgives our sins, delivers us from sin, and the effects of it, and gives us the Holy Spirit to help us turn away from sin, and the effects of it, in the future.

The Holy Spirit is given to heal us, help us, provide for all our needs, and guide us, so we can be more like Jesus, becoming righteous, and bearing fruit to holiness, as we build a relationship with our Father, through Jesus, with the help of the Holy Spirit, and fulfill the Father's will for our life.

The Bible tells us that we must repent. Repentance is turning to God, and allowing Him to transform our lives. It means turning away from ourselves, and our ways; and turning to God, and His ways. Many people think that repentance is having to stop doing all the bad things that they are doing, which is true. However, it can also be hard to turn away from our independence apart from God, and our own self-professed goodness.

Self-sufficiency and self-righteousness cause barriers between us and God. Thinking that we are good can be just as difficult, if not more difficult, to repent of than knowing we are bad. People who think that they are good within themselves may struggle with this.

People who know they are bad (sinners) can more easily respond to God the way He wants us to. The reality is that anyone who is dependent on themselves, and not dependent on God, no matter how good they may think they are, or what good they may do, will not enter into God's kingdom:

“There were some present at that time reporting to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate (the roman governor of Judea) had mixed with their sacrifices. Answering, Jesus said to them, ‘Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered such things? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse offenders than all other men dwelling in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.’ ”

Repentance requires submission and surrender to God:

‘The one falling on this Stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will crush him to powder.’

Jesus tells us repeatedly throughout the Gospel's of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, that we cannot save our souls. He tells us that submission and surrender to Him means putting Him first:

‘The one loving father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and the one loving son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.’

‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and let him take up his cross, and let him follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he should gain the whole world, but forfeits (gives up) his own soul? Or what will a man give as an exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is about to come in the glory of His Father, with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his work. Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will by no means taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.’

‘Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and let him follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake and the Gospel’s will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and forfeits (gives up) his own soul? Or what will a man give as an exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man will also be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.’

‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and let him follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, but loses or forfeits (gives up) himself? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of this one the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His glory, and in the glory of the Father, and of the holy angels. But, I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall by no means taste of death until they see the kingdom of God.’

‘Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life will preserve it.’

‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless the grain of wheat falling into the earth dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will also be.

If anyone serves Me, the Father will honour him.’

‘If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ Or what king, going to attack another king in war, does not sit down first and take advice whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So, therefore, every one of you who does not renounce (give up) all that he has cannot be My disciple. Salt is good, but if the salt becomes useless (tasteless), with what will it be seasoned? It is neither useful for soil (the land) nor for manure (fertilizer); they throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.’

Nothing can compare to God. This is why Jesus tells us to turn away from our life, and our ways; and turn to Him, and His ways.

He gives us help when we think we are beyond it. He gives us hope when all seems lost. He gives us strength when we're weak. He gives us courage when we're fearful. He gives us peace when we have troubles. He gives us healing where we are hurt most. He gives us understanding when nothing makes sense. He gives us insight to things we cannot see. He works through evil intentions to bring about good outcomes. He gives us success where we have failed. He provides us with what we need when we need it.

He gives us what we cannot get ourselves. He gives us direction when we are lost. He gives us love when we are unable to give it or receive it. He gives life meaning and purpose. He gives motivation, passion, and inspiration to live. He gives fullness of love that no one else can give. He gives fulfilment that nothing can compare. He gives a future that no one else can offer; a future of living together forever with Him in His eternal kingdom.

Jesus wants us to have fullness of life in Him and have eternal life with Him. This is why He tells us to put Him first in our lives by obeying His greatest commandment more than anything else:

“ ‘You shall love the Lord your God  
with all your heart,  
with all your soul,  
with all your mind,  
and with all your strength.’  
This is the first commandment.”

And then to obey His second greatest commandment:

“And the second, like it, is this:  
‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’  
There is no other commandment greater than these.”

When we put God first in our lives, making our relationship with Him our number one priority, He helps us to focus on what's important to Him; loving Him and loving one another. As the relationship grows, He reveals His purpose and plan for our lives, continually giving us direction, as well as providing all the time and energy we need to fulfill it.

If we don't know God, or don't know His purposes and plans for us, we may be doing good things, but not God's things; we could be doing too much or not enough. Not knowing God, and not doing what He wants us to do, will cause us to be tired, worried, and confused, eventually leaving us unsatisfied, stressed, and unfulfilled. However, knowing God, and doing His will, simplifies our lives, and satisfies us, giving us rest in Him, and rest in our work with Him:

**‘Come to Me, all you who labour and are being burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, because I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.’**

**“You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed (focused) on You, because he trusts in You.”**

Repenting, by turning away from dependence on ourselves to dependence on God, and turning away from our way of life to His way of life, is a recycling process that takes time. The word “saved” is mentioned in various ways throughout the Bible; however, when it comes to our salvation, the meaning of “saved” falls into three basic categories: “We have been saved”, “We are being saved”, and “We will be saved”. The Bible uses three terms to describe this process:

## **Justification, Sanctification, and Glorification**

**Justification** means being justified by God, where He has made us righteous, by setting us free from the penalty of our sin. Justification allows our broken relationship with God to be restored, and provides the foundation to live according to Him, His Word, and His will. Justification is received when we surrender our lives to Jesus and commit ourselves to Him.

By surrendering our lives to Jesus, we are submitting to Him; committing ourselves to Him and His will. When we do this, we receive His payment of dying for our sins and we are justified.

Many religions think we must get ourselves right before we can be right with God. Christianity is different in that we can, and we must, get things right with God first. We are incapable of getting ourselves right with God without His help. God knows this and gives us everything we need to get right with Him according to His standards, in accordance with His will.

Many christians think that if they believe in Jesus Christ they will go to heaven and there is nothing more to it. They are not aware that eternal life requires surrendering our lives to Jesus; committing ourselves to Him, in total submission to His will:

**‘Truly, I say to you, unless you turn, and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.’**

Little children have the qualities of belief, love and affection, total trust, dependence, wonder, fascination, joy and happiness; living life in the present moment. However, as we grow up, many things come against us, and we soon lose these childhood qualities. When we come to God, in the same way as a little child, these qualities are miraculously restored to us.

God is our Father and we are His children. He wants us to be children who trust, love, and obey their Father. As we surrender ourselves to Him, in total submission to His will, we go through an amazing and wonderful transformation. God calls it being 'born from above' and is the beginning of being justified.

We are justified by believing in Jesus and committing to Him; submitting ourselves and surrendering our lives to Him in total submission to His Word, His will, and His ways. Justification is a great blessing and is the beginning of our journey of salvation:

“Now the righteousness of God has been manifested (revealed) apart from the law (the law of Moses in the Old Testament), although the law and the prophets bear witness to it; the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and upon all those believing; for there is no difference, for all sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified (declared righteous) freely by His grace through the redemption (payment) that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation, (a sacrifice necessary to remove God’s wrath) through faith in His blood, as a showing forth of His righteousness, because in His forbearance (tolerance), God had passed over the sins that had previously occurred, for the showing forth of His righteousness in the present time, Him being just (righteous) and justifying (declaring righteous) the one having faith in Jesus.”

“For we being weak, in due time, Christ died on behalf of the ungodly ones. For anyone will, with difficulty, die for a just one; for perhaps one even dares to die for the sake of the good one. But God commends His love to us in that we being sinners, Christ died for us.

Much more, then, having been justified (declared righteous) by His blood, we will be saved through Him from wrath (God's vengeance). For if being enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we will be saved by His life. And not only so, but also glorying in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man (Adam), and death through sin, so also death spread to all men, inasmuch as all sinned; for sin was in the world until the law was given, but sin is not charged where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of Adam's transgression (sin), who was a type of the One coming (Jesus). But the free gift is not like the offence. For if by the one man's offence many died, much more the grace of God, and the gift in grace, of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. And the gift is not like the effect through the one who sinned. For the judgment from one offence brought condemnation, but the free gift from many offences brought justification. For if by the one man's offence death reigned through that one, much more will those who receive abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

So then, as through one offence, judgment came to all men to condemnation, so also through one righteous act, justification of life came to all men. For as through the disobedience of the one man, many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one Man, many will be made righteous. But the law came in that the offence might abound (increase),

but where sin abounded, grace abounded more, so that as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”

We are justified by obeying the law of Jesus Christ:

“Therefore, you have no excuse, O man, everyone judging, for in what you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge, practice the same things. But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth on those who practice such things. And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and yet do them yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you despise the riches of His kindness, and forbearance (tolerance), and long-suffering, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

But according to your hardness and impenitent (presuming) heart you are treasuring (storing) up wrath (punishment) for yourself in a day of wrath (God’s vengeance), and revelation (revealing) of a righteous judgment of God, who will give to each one according to his works; to those who by patient endurance in good work are seeking glory, honour, and incorruptibility (genuineness), He will give eternal life; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness; anger and wrath (punishment), trouble and pain, on every soul of man working out evil, both of Jew first, and of Greek; but glory, honour, and peace, to everyone working out good, both to Jew first, and to Greek. For there is no partiality (favouritism) with God.

For as many as sinned without law will also perish without law and as many as sinned within law will be judged through law. For not the hearers of the law are just (righteous) with God, but the doers of the law will be justified (declared righteous).

For when nations not having law do by nature the things of the law, they not having law are a law to themselves; who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness; and the thoughts between one another accusing or even excusing, in the day when God judges the hidden things of men, according to my Gospel, through Jesus Christ.”

We are justified by doing good works:

“You see, then, that a man is justified (declared righteous) by works, and not by faith only. In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified (declared righteous) by works, having received the messengers and sending them out by another way? For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.”

We are justified by our words:

‘By your words you will be justified (declared righteous), and by your words you will be condemned.’

We are justified through troubles and suffering:

“Having been justified (declared righteous) by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we boast (rejoice) in the hope of the glory of God.

And not only so, but we also boast (rejoice) in tribulations (troubles), knowing that tribulation (trouble) works out perseverance (patient endurance); and perseverance (patient endurance) works out character; and character, hope; and hope does not put us to shame, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit given to us.”

**Justification is being set free from the penalty of sin when we believe in Jesus Christ,**

**AND**

**Justification allows our loving relationship with God, and with one another, to be restored, living according to His Word, in accordance with His will.**

**Sanctification** means being set apart for God and made holy. When we are justified we are set free from the penalty of sin, made right with God, and our broken relationship with Him can be restored. Sanctification is the means by which we are set free from the power of sin because its hold on us has been broken. Sanctification gives us the power to turn away from sin, sin less, and become sinless. It enables us to become what God wants us to be; just like Him: ‘**You shall be holy, for I am holy.**’

We become more like God wants us to be when we practice righteousness in our newfound relationship with our Father, through our Lord Jesus, with the help of the Holy Spirit. In the same way that justification sets us free from the penalty of sin, we are made right with God, and our relationship with Him can be restored; sanctification sets us apart from the power of sin, so we can do what is right with God, and become like Him.

Being sanctified by God is being set apart for Him, so we may become like Him, and is done in co-operation with Him:

“God’s firm foundation stands, having this seal: ‘The Lord knows those who are His,’ and, ‘Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity (unrighteousness).’

But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth (clay); some for honour, and some for dishonour.

Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel to honour, having been sanctified (made holy) and useful for the Master, having been prepared for every good work.

So flee youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, with those who call upon the Lord out of a pure heart.”

“For this is the will of God, your sanctification (holiness); that you abstain from fornication (refrain from sexual immorality); that each one of you know how to possess his own vessel (control his own body) in sanctification (holiness) and honour, not in passion of lust, like the nations who do not know God; that no one go beyond (take advantage of) and defraud (wrong) his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger concerning all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly testified (warned you).

For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in sanctification (holiness). Therefore, the one despising (rejecting) this does not despise (reject) man, but God, who gives His Holy Spirit to you.”

“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord, because a man is head of the woman, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is Saviour of the body.

But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for it, that He might sanctify it (make it holy), cleansing it by the washing of the water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself as the glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such things, but that it be holy and unblemished (perfect).”

“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely (make you perfectly holy), and may your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be kept blamelessly (faultlessly) at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who is calling you is faithful, who will also do it.”

“Now I commend you to God and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those having been sanctified (made holy).”

**Sanctification means being set apart for God and made holy,**

**AND**

**Sanctification is the means by which we are set free from the power of sin, giving us the power to turn away from sin, sin less, and become sinless, enabling us to become what God wants us to be; holy, as He is holy.**

**Glorification** is honouring God during the course of our lives until such time as we are eternally honoured together with Him. Glorifying God involves commitment and sacrificial love for Him, and for one another, as we fulfill His general overall purpose for all of us, and His specific individual plan for each one of us.

Glory is obtained through commitment and sacrifice in order to achieve a desired goal. The greater the glory, the greater the commitment and sacrifice that is required to obtain that glory. Receiving glory in God's kingdom is similar to how it is obtained in the world. In God's kingdom, glory is obtained through sacrificial acts of love towards God, and towards one another, during our life. The greater the commitment and sacrificial love for God, and for one another, the greater the glory that is received from Him. A heroic act to save someone's life is a good example of the kind of commitment and sacrifice required for great glory to be given; both in the world and in God's kingdom.

Jesus gave the greatest commitment of sacrificial love towards the Father, and towards us, when He committed Himself to live a sinless life on earth, giving Himself fully to long-suffering love for His people, and then giving Himself to be tortured and crucified to death on the cross to save us from our sins, perfectly fulfilling the Father's will on earth, and inheriting the kingdom of God.

Jesus endured long-suffering love and sacrifice out of love for His Father and love for His people. His sacrificial love towards His Father and towards His people brought glory to the Father and glorified Jesus. Before His death, Jesus prayed to His Father:

‘Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son may also glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, so that to all whom You have given Him, He may give them eternal life. And this is eternal life, that they may know You,

the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I have glorified You on the earth, finishing the work which You gave Me to do. And now, Father, glorify Me with Yourself, with the glory I had with You before the world was.'

Jesus lived His entire life in great sacrificial love for His Father and great sacrificial love for His people. In the days leading up to being tortured to death, Jesus made the greatest sacrificial acts of love ever known to mankind.

When entering Jerusalem, riding on a donkey, the people laid their clothes on the road, along with tree branches, in front of Jesus, proclaiming Him to be the King of Israel. However, Jesus, knowing that in a few days He would be rejected and tortured to death by His own people; out of His great love for them, He wept for Jerusalem, and what His people would one day have to endure because they had rejected Him as their King:

"As He drew near, seeing the city, He wept over it, saying, 'If you had known, even you, at least in this day of yours, the things for your peace; but now they were hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you, and your enemies will raise up a rampart (barricade) to you, and will surround you, and will keep you in on every side, and raze you (tear you down to the ground), and your children within you; and will not leave a stone upon a stone in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.' "

On the night of Jesus' arrest, He arranged to have a last supper with His disciples. After supper, Jesus provided His disciples with the perfect example of how to serve one another in humility and love; love extended even to the one who would betray Him:

“Before the feast of the Passover, Jesus, knowing that His hour had come, that He should depart from this world to the Father, loving His own in the world, He loved them to the end.

And supper having taken place, the Devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, that he should betray Him. Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, and taking a towel, He girded Himself (tied it around His waist). Then He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciple’s feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.”

After supper had ended, Jesus took His disciples to the Mount of Olives to pray. Instead of Jesus asking His disciples to pray for Him; out of His love and concern for them, He instructed them to pray for themselves. Then, out of Jesus’ great love for the Father, He willingly submitted to obey Him, and fulfill His will:

“Having come to the place, He said to them, ‘Pray that you may not enter into temptation.’ And He was withdrawn from them about a stone’s throw, and falling on His knees, He prayed, saying, ‘Father, if You will, take away this cup from Me; but not My will, but Yours, be done.’ And there appeared to Him an angel from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly (intently); and His sweat became like drops of blood falling down onto the ground. And having risen up from the prayer, coming to the disciples, He found them sleeping from the grief, and He said to them, ‘Why do you sleep? Rise and pray, that you may not enter into temptation.’ ”

While being arrested, Jesus, again showed love and concern for His disciples, more than for His own welfare, instructing the roman soldiers to let them go:

“Then Judas, having taken a band of soldiers and officers from the chief priests and pharisees, came there with torches, and lamps, and weapons. Jesus, therefore, knowing all things that were coming upon Him, came forward and said to them, ‘Whom do you seek?’ They answered Him, ‘Jesus the Nazarene.’ Jesus said to them, ‘I am (He).’ And Judas who betrayed Him, also stood with them. When He said to them, ‘I am (He),’ they drew back and fell to the ground.

Then, again He asked them, ‘Whom do you seek?’ And they said, ‘Jesus the Nazarene.’ Jesus answered, ‘I told you that I am (He); if then, you seek Me, let these go,’ that the Word might be fulfilled which He said, ‘Of those whom You gave Me I have lost not one of them.’ ”

While being arrested, Jesus healed one of the soldiers:

“And those around Him, seeing what was going to happen, said to Him, ‘Lord, shall we strike with the sword?’

And a certain one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. And answering, Jesus said, ‘Allow it until this (allow this until now).’ And touching his ear, He healed him.”

When Jesus was being led to be crucified, He showed His love and concern for the women of Jerusalem:

“And there was following Him a great multitude of the people, and of women who were also mourning and lamenting Him.

And turning to them, Jesus said, ‘Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep over Me, but weep over yourselves and over your children. For behold, the days are coming in which they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren, and the wombs which did not bear, and the breasts that never nursed.’

Then they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us,’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us.’ For if they do these things in the fresh tree, what will happen in the dry?’ ”

While hanging on the cross, Jesus showed His great love for the people, praying to the Father to forgive them, because they did not realise what they were doing:

“There were also others, two criminals, who were led with Him to be put to death. And when they came to the place they called Skull, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and one on the left. Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing.’

And dividing His garments, they cast lots (drew chances). And the people stood by watching; and also the rulers with them sneering (mocking), saying, ‘He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the Chosen of God.’

The soldiers also mocked Him, coming near and offering vinegar to Him, and saying, ‘If you are the King of the Jews, save Yourself.’ ”

Jesus saved one of the criminals hanging on a cross next to Him:

“And one of the hanged criminals blasphemed Him (spoke evil against God), saying, ‘If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.’ But answering, the other rebuked him, saying, ‘Do you not fear God, that you are in the same judgment? And we indeed justly (righteously), for we receive things worthy of what we did; but this man has done nothing wrong.’ And he said to Jesus, ‘Lord, remember me when You come in Your kingdom.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Truly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.’ ”

Jesus provided for the future welfare of His mother:

“And there stood by the cross of Jesus, His mother, and His mother’s sister, Mary, the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. Jesus, therefore, seeing His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, ‘Woman, behold your son.’ Then He said to the disciple, ‘Behold your mother.’ And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.”

Through His sinless life and sacrificial death, out of love for His Father and love for His people, Jesus was worthy to inherit the kingdom of God, receiving power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing, forever and ever:

“And they sing a new song, saying, ‘Worthy are You to receive the scroll, and to open its seals, because You were slain, and purchased us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and made us kings and priests to our God, and we shall reign upon the earth.’ ”

And I saw, and I heard a sound of many angels around the throne, and the living creatures, and the elders, and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, saying with a great voice, ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive the power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing.’ And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and underneath the earth, and the things that are on the sea, and all the things in them, I heard saying, ‘To the One sitting on the throne, and to the Lamb, be the blessing and the honour and the glory and the might to the ages of the ages (forever and ever)!’

And the four living creatures said, ‘Amen!’  
And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped  
Him who lives to the ages of the ages (forever and ever).”

Jesus gave the greatest glory to the Father and inherited the kingdom of God by making the greatest sacrifice; and we must endure sacrifice and suffering to be heirs together with Him:

“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God; and if children, also heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer together with Him, that we may also be glorified together with Him. For I consider that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed in us.

For the earnest expectation of the creation is eagerly waiting for the revelation (revealing) of the sons of God.”

“For you were bought with a price; so glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

We glorify God by believing in Jesus, holding on firm to our faith in Him, doing good works for Him, obeying the commandments from Him, and being an example for others to do the same:

‘Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they reproach (abuse) you, and persecute you (treat you badly because you believe in Me), and say all kinds of evil against you, lying, for My sake. Rejoice and be glad, because your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt becomes useless (tasteless), with what will it be seasoned? It is no longer strong for anything but to be thrown out, and trodden down by men.

You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under the grain measure, but on the lampstand, and it lightens all those in the house. So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and may glorify your Father in heaven.

Do not think that I came to abolish the law or the prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly, I say to you, until the heavens and the earth pass away, one iota or one point shall by no means pass away from the law (not one bit of the law will pass away) until all things come to pass. Whoever therefore relaxes (breaks) one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, this one shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and pharisees (religious leaders), you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.’

We glorify God and receive glory as we endure persecutions, troubles, and suffering, in the body of Christ together:

“Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. We ought to give thanks to God always concerning you, brothers, as it is right, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of each one of you all to one another increases, so that we ourselves boast in you in the churches of God for your perseverance (patient endurance) and faith in all your persecutions (bad treatment because you believe in Jesus) and tribulations (troubles) that you endure. This is clear evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you suffer; since it is a just (righteous) thing with God to repay with tribulation (trouble) those who trouble you, and to give you, who are being troubled, rest with us at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven (when Jesus is revealed) with angels of His power, in flaming fire, giving full vengeance to those not knowing God, and to those not obeying the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will pay the penalty; eternal destruction from the face (presence) of the Lord, and from the glory of His strength, when He comes to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all those believing in that day, because our testimony to you was believed.

To this end, we indeed always pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of the calling, and may fulfill every good pleasure of goodness, and work of faith in power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

“The end of all things has drawn near. Be sound-minded (self-controlled) and watchful in your prayers. Above all things having fervent (constant) love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable (helpful) to one another without grumbling; each one as he has received a gift, ministering it to one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let it be as the oracles (words) of God. If anyone ministers (serves), as by strength which God supplies, that in all things, God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom is the glory and power to the ages of the ages (forever and ever). Amen.

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial happening among you to test you, as if something strange were happening to you; but according as you share the sufferings of Christ, rejoice, that also at the revelation of His glory (when Jesus' glory is revealed), you may rejoice exultingly (exceedingly). If you are reproached (abused) in the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

Truly, according to them, He is blasphemed (spoken evil of); but according to you, He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evildoer, or as a meddler (in other people's matters). But if anyone suffers as a christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this respect.

Because the time has come to begin the judgment from the house of God; and if firstly from us, what will be the end of the ones disobeying the Gospel of God? And if the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and sinner appear? Therefore, those suffering according to the will of God, as to a faithful Creator, let them commit their souls in well-doing.”

We glorify Jesus when we are united in one mind and one voice:

“And may the God of perseverance (patient endurance) and encouragement give to you to have the same mind among one another, according to Christ Jesus; that with one accord (together) with one mouth, you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

**Glorification is honouring God during the course of our lives through sacrificial love for God and sacrificial love for one another,**

**AND**

**Glorification is being eternally honoured together with Him.**

God chose us for justification (setting us free from sin when we believe in Jesus, surrender our lives to Him, and commit ourselves to Him, allowing our broken relationship with God to be restored, and providing the foundation to live according to Him, His Word, and His will) through sanctification (being set apart for God to be made holy) to obtain eternal glorification (through sacrificial love for God and for one another):

“God chose you from the beginning for salvation (justification) through sanctification (holiness) by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you through our Gospel, to obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (glorification).

So then, brothers, stand firm and hold the traditions (teachings) you were taught, whether by our word or our epistle (letter).

And may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, the One who loves us, and gives us eternal encouragement and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work.”

We have been justified and sanctified through Jesus:

“By one offering (sacrifice) He has perfected forever (justified) the ones being sanctified (the ones being made holy).”

We have been justified and glorified through Jesus:

“And we know that to the ones loving God, all things work together for good, to those being called according to purpose.

Because whom He foreknew, He also predestinated (ordained beforehand) to be conformed to the image of His Son (to be like His Son), for Him to be the firstborn among many brothers. And whom He predestinated (ordained beforehand), these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified (declared righteous); and whom He justified (declared righteous), these He also glorified.”

Justification, sanctification, and glorification, commence when we believe in Jesus, surrender our lives to Him, and commit ourselves to Him. Justification, sanctification, and glorification, are then ongoing throughout the course of our lives.

Justification continues as we build our relationship with God, obey His Word, and fulfill His will. Sanctification continues as we turn away from sin and become holy. Glorification continues as we are purified and refined through troubles and suffering and sacrificial acts of love towards God and towards one another.

The commencement and continual process of our salvation can be illustrated by rescuing someone from a torrent of river rapids.

Imagine someone is being swept down a torrent of water in a river, being in desperation to be saved from being swept over a massive waterfall to certain death. A helicopter then appears overhead and lowers a rope for the person to cling to, to be lifted to safety. When the person grabs hold of the rope, they would be thinking three different things; even all during the same time:

“I am saved”, “I am being saved”, “I will be saved”.

Whilst each thought is a consideration that is true, the actual rescue has not yet been completed, because the person has not been rescued until they reach the safety of the helicopter. If at any time they were to completely let go of the rope during the rescue attempt they would fall to certain death and would not be saved.

The helicopter has the ability to save the person from certain death; however, the willingness and co-operation of the person is required to firstly, grab hold of the rope; and secondly, to keep hanging onto the rope, until such time as they have arrived safely in the helicopter. If the person refuses to grab hold of the rope, or after having grabbed hold of the rope, lets go of it, they are not saved, not being saved, and will not be saved.

If you can imagine the torrent of water being the river rapids of life; the helicopter being God lifting us to safety; the rope being our relationship with the Father, through Jesus, with the help of the Holy Spirit; the hanging onto the rope being our need to continually remain connected to Him, which takes willingness and co-operation; and the risk of being swept over the edge of the waterfall to certain death, being our desperate need to be saved from eternity in hell; this is a picture of our journey of salvation.

When someone is being rescued from danger, they are told to always keep looking up, which is exactly what God tells us to do:

“If then you were raised with Christ, seek the things above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things that are above, not on things that are on the earth. For you died, and your life has been hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”

In the same way that a rescue attempt from certain death requires the willing submission and co-operative effort of the person being rescued, the same applies to our eternal salvation.

When God rescues us from eternal death, He requires our willing submission and co-operative effort, until such time as we arrive safely to our eternal destination in heaven. Then we can confidently say, “I am saved”. Using the example of the helicopter rescue; when the person has been saved, safely arriving at the desired destination, the person would not say that they had saved themselves by grabbing hold of the rope, and hanging onto it. They would say that someone had saved them, even though it required their willingness and co-operation. It is the same with our salvation. Jesus has saved us, Jesus is saving us, and Jesus will save us, even though it requires submission and co-operation, in the process of receiving, and obtaining, our eternal salvation.

Justification, sanctification, and glorification, are the basis on which our salvation is received, and also obtained. It is received when we believe in Jesus, surrender our lives, and commit ourselves to Him; and it is obtained by hearing His voice, knowing Him, and following Him, until we are fully restored and glorified together forever with Him in the kingdom of God.

Restoration is restoring something back to its original quality and purpose. This is what God does with His people in restoring us back to our original purity; to live life with Him as He originally purposed. It is a process of our character being transformed into His character, and becoming holy, as He is holy.

Restoration with God is a twofold process involving repentance and righteousness. Both are uniquely linked with each other, working together, hand-in-hand, during the course of our lives, as we build our relationship with God, allowing Him to restore us to Himself and become perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect.

Repentance is wanting to stop living our lives independently apart from God and wanting to stop sinning. It means turning away from our living apart from God and the way we are living, and turning to God and living the way He wants us to live with His continual help and careful guidance:

“Repent (turn to God, and transform your lives),  
and be baptised, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ  
for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of  
the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children,  
and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”

**Repentance is turning away from our independence  
from God, to having a fulfilling relationship  
that is dependent on Him,**

**AND**

**Repentance is turning away from sin; turning away  
from the way we are living, to the way God wants us  
to live, with His continual help and careful guidance.**

Righteousness is receiving God's righteousness for forgiveness of sins and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit to help us live the way He wants us to live. When we accept Jesus as our Saviour, we are accepting His offer of righteousness to forgive our sins; and when we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, His righteousness is placed inside of us, progresses in us, and flows out of us, helping us to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit. As we co-operate with the Holy Spirit, He moulds and transforms us into God's likeness and character, helping us to fulfill God's will; His general overall purpose, and His specific individual plan, for our life:

**“Little children, let no one lead you astray. The one practicing righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous.”**

**Righteousness is receiving forgiveness of sins and having God's righteousness placed inside of us when we commence to believe in Jesus,**

**AND**

**Righteousness is having God's righteousness progressing in us, and flowing out of us, as we continue believing in Jesus.**

As our relationship with God grows, we turn away from sin, and are constantly guided to fulfill His will with His ongoing help:

**“I say, walk in the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the lust (desires) of the flesh. For the flesh lusts (desires) against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.**

But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident (openly obvious); adultery (sexual immorality with another person's spouse), fornication (sexual immorality outside of marriage), uncleanness (impurity), licentiousness (filthy behaviour), idolatry (image worship), sorcery (witchcraft), hatreds, strifes (quarrelling), jealousies, angers, rivalries (self-seeking ambition), divisions (disunion), heresies (sects), envyings (being upset over, or wanting what someone else has), murders, drunkenness, revellings (rioting parties), and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I have told you previously, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is: Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become vainglorious (wanting glory for ourselves), provoking one another (irritating one another to a challenge), envying one another (being upset over, or wanting what someone else has).

Brothers, if a man is overtaken in some trespass, (unintentional error or wilful offence) you, the spiritual ones, restore such a one in a spirit of meekness (gentleness), considering (watching) yourself, that you not also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one test (examine) his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone, and not in another.

For each one will bear his own load. Let him who is taught the Word share in all good things with him who teaches.

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. The one sowing to his flesh will reap corruption (destruction), but the one sowing to the Spirit will reap eternal life. And let us not lose heart (lack courage) while doing good, for in due time we shall reap, if we do not faint. Therefore, as we have time (opportunity), let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of the faith (members of God's family)."

The Lord tells us that we can, and must be holy, as He is holy. He wants us to be just like Him; and we cannot expect to enter into His kingdom without being holy:

"Eagerly pursue peace (strive for peace) with all (people), and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord; watching diligently (watching out carefully for one another) lest anyone falls short and fails to obtain the grace of God."

"Beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement (filthiness) of the flesh, and of spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

"I beseech you (call you to act), brothers, through the compassions of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, that is holy and well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service."

The only way to be holy is to have a close personal relationship with God, knowing Him, and obeying Him, so we can become like Him. This requires continual repentance and righteousness.

Repentance and righteousness commence when we believe in Jesus Christ, and they continue throughout the course of our lives as our relationship with the Lord grows. As the relationship, and our love for Him, deepens, we take on more of His nature.

Holiness is a life-long process that can only be achieved by having an intimate relationship with God, being obedient to His Word, the Holy Bible, co-operating with, and being guided by the Holy Spirit to love God, and love one another, as He loves us.

Repentance and righteousness commence when we believe in Jesus, and continue throughout the course of our lives in the same way that justification, sanctification, and glorification, commence when we believe in Jesus, and continue throughout the course of our lives. Repentance and righteousness, through justification, sanctification, and glorification, all commence, and continually work together, when we believe in Jesus Christ, and build our relationship with God. This may be illustrated as follows:

### REPENTANCE

### RIGHTEOUSNESS

#### Justification, Sanctification, and Glorification Commences

Turning away from our independence from God to having a fulfilling relationship that is dependent on Him.

Receiving forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (God's righteousness placed inside of us).

#### Justification, Sanctification, and Glorification Continues

Co-operating with the Holy Spirit to turn away from sin, obeying God and His Word; sinning less, with the goal to become sinless:

**‘Be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect.’**

Being guided by the Holy Spirit to know God's will (His general overall purpose and His specific individual plan) and seeking His help to fulfill it. (His righteousness progressing in us and flowing out of us).

Repentance and righteousness are received by the grace of God. We receive God's grace by accepting that Jesus' sacrifice of His life has paid the price required for the forgiveness of our sins; and our relationship with God can be restored when we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, who helps us turn away from our independence apart from God, to having dependence on Him; and helps us turn away from our sinfulness, into His likeness, as well as helping us turn from doing our will, to doing His will.

When we believe in Jesus by committing ourselves to His will; surrendering our lives, and submitting ourselves to Him, and are born from above with the Holy Spirit, we commence to have a relationship with the Father, through Jesus, with the help of the Holy Spirit. This involves repentance of our independence from God, to having dependence on Him, relying on His righteousness for the forgiveness of sins, and ongoing repentance of turning away from sin, in obedience to His Word, and co-operating with, and being guided by the Holy Spirit to fulfill His will.

Righteousness is doing what is right according to God's Word. Unrighteousness is anything that is in opposition to what God has commanded in His Word, including sinfulness, and wickedness, and lawlessness, and ungodliness, and unholiness. Repentance and righteousness work together as we turn away from ourselves, and from our sin, and draw near to God, and do His will. As we do this, His righteousness progresses in us, and flows out of us:

**“Those who are in the flesh (controlled by sin) cannot please God. You are not in the flesh (controlled by your sinful nature), but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.”**

‘When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.

And gathered together before Him will be all the nations; and He will separate them one from another, as the shepherd separates his sheep from the goats; and He will set the sheep on His right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I hungered and you gave Me to eat, I thirsted and you gave Me drink, I was a stranger and you took Me in, naked and you clothed Me, I was sick and you visited Me, I was in prison and you came to Me.’ Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungering and feed You, or thirsting and gave You drink? And when did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and came to You?’ And answering, the King will say to them, ‘Truly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of these, the least of My brethren, you did it to Me.’

Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Go away from Me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels; for I hungered and you gave Me nothing to eat, I thirsted and you gave Me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.’ Then they also will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungering, or thirsting, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister to You?’ Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, neither did you do it to Me.’ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.’

“Now little children, remain in Him, so that when He is revealed we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. If you know that He is righteous, know that everyone practicing righteousness has been born of Him.”

As repentance and righteousness work together we are no longer separated from God. As the relationship with our Father, through Jesus, with the help of the Holy Spirit progresses, we begin to experience changes in our heart. We don't have the desire to sin like we used to. We have more compassion and consideration for others, wanting what is best for them, more than just what is best for ourselves. We are more forgiving and patient; more understanding and less demanding. At the same time we begin to experience healing and fulfilment, inner peace, outward joy, and a hope and love that we cannot comprehend, as God commences to bring us wholly into Him.

As the relationship continues to grow, He continues to change the taste buds of our hearts, so we desire to do what pleases Him, constantly being transformed into His character; from being proud to being humble; from being selfish to being selfless; and from being self-serving to becoming a servant. These changes occur as God works inside of us, slowly but surely, renewing us to be more like Him.

The more personal and intimate the relationship with God becomes, the more we want to please Him and obey Him, by partnering with Him to practice righteousness. As He restores us to Himself, and to one another, we ultimately become what the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, want us to be; wholly in Him:

‘That all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in you; that they also may be one in Us.’

There is no greater need in all of creation than for every human being to seek Jesus Christ to obtain salvation. On the other hand, there is no greater tragedy than for a human being to be rebellious against God. The world suffers because of sin and it affects every single person. It has no sense of what salvation means and our desperate need to be saved:

**‘For what will it profit a man if he should gain the whole world, but forfeits (gives up) his own soul?’**

A world without God will only lead to more and more unrighteousness, self-centredness, and greed, and a lack of love for one another. As such, we are on a rendezvous with God’s judgment and desperately need to turn to Him with genuine heartfelt repentance, and realise our need of Him:

**‘The time has been fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has drawn near. Repent and believe in the Gospel.’**

“Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks he is wise in this age, let him become foolish, that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it has been written: ‘He catches the wise in their craftiness;’ and again, ‘The Lord knows the reasoning’s (thoughts) of the wise, that they are vain (profitless).’ So let no one glory in men.”

“For the Word of the cross is folly (foolishness) to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it has been written: ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; and the intelligence of the intelligent, I will bring to nothing.’ ”

“The wisdom of the prudent (wise) is to understand His way, but the folly (foolishness) of fools is deceit.”

“Because the foolish thing of God is wiser than men, and the weak thing of God is stronger than men.”

‘ ‘For My thoughts are not your thoughts; nor are your ways My ways,’ says Jehovah (the Lord).

‘For as the heavens are high from the earth, so My ways are high from your ways, and My thoughts from your thoughts.’ ’

We must be saved and only God can do it. The world has an abundance of knowledge but lacks the wisdom for it to have any eternal value. We need to understand and know God. We don't need worldly wisdom as much as we need to know God and His wisdom about the life He has given us, its meaning and purpose, and what He wants us to do with it:

“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, for you to know the hope of His calling, and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us; the ones believing, according to the working of the might of the strength of Him, which He worked in Christ, raising Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and lordship, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the coming one.

And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him filling all things.”

The Bible tells us why we were created, what God wants to preserve us for, and what He wants to protect us from. If we believe His Word, we will change the way we live, and live how He wants us to live; in faithfulness to Him, loving Him and loving one another, in co-operation with Him.

The Bible reveals the history of what happens when God's people turn to Him and what happens when they turn away from Him. This history of the world is the library of God's wisdom.

Throughout the Old Testament, God sent His prophets to warn His people to turn away from sin, and return to Him. The same theme continues in the New Testament, where the Son of God tells us to repent and turn to Him. Jesus continues to warn His people away from sin, urging us to be restored to Him, constantly revealing Himself to those who seek Him; to understand Him, know Him, and follow Him, by obeying the truth of His Word:

**‘I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life.  
No one comes to the Father except through Me.’**

“There is salvation in no other, for neither is there any other name under heaven having been given among men by which we must be saved.”

Jesus is the Way; He is the only way; and there is no other way. Any way that does not lead to Jesus Christ, and what He has commanded us to obey in His Word, the Holy Bible, is a way that leads to destruction:

‘Enter through the narrow gate, because wide is the gate, and broad (easy) is the way leading to destruction, and many are those going in through it; because narrow is the gate and troublesome (difficult) is the way leading to life, and few are those finding it.’

‘These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation (trouble), but be encouraged, I have overcome the world.’

Salvation is all that God has done to save us from anything that separates us from Him. It is about His character towards everyone He has created. He longs to restore our relationship with Him, and our relationships with one another, and everything that has been spoiled by sin. This is what salvation is all about and so much more than what we could ever possibly imagine. We don’t take sin, and the effects of it, seriously enough. It’s the cause of the separation of our relationship with God, and the breakdown of relationships with one another, in particular, within His family.

Salvation is freely given to us by the grace of God, but requires a response, and that response is repentance. Sin separates us from God, and unless it is dealt with, our relationship with Him, and love for one another, is shattered. We are creatures of God, made in His image, created with the capacity to know Him, love Him, be loved by Him, and to love one another. We must come to the reality that our relationship with Him is our greatest purpose in life. Knowing Him must be our greatest priority.

When we meet Jesus it is not just a mere formality to get us to heaven, but the beginning of a wonderfully fulfilling adventure where each step becomes more challenging and more enthralling as we grow and mature into all that God has intended us to be.

Eternal life isn't simply a place we hope to go to when we die, or something we hope to get in the future; but a purpose in life, a quality of life, and a richness of love, and living it here and now, seizing every opportunity, and fulfilling God's greatest potential.

Salvation is the reality that God has exercised His perfect mercy, whilst at the same time executing His perfect justice, without compromising His perfect integrity, to pardon our sin, and provide us with His abundant grace, to save us from eternal punishment, and preserve us for His eternal glory. It is being saved from the deadly forces of evil in a cruel world, bringing us under the authority of a loving, forgiving, merciful, caring, and compassionate God who wants to interact with every part of life He has created, protect us, and preserve us, for His glory.

Receiving this renewal of the soul is the reason Jesus suffered and died for us. In Him we have all of God, for all of creation is under Him. He is the conqueror of sin and all wisdom and knowledge are found in Him. With Him we have everything. Without Him we have nothing. He is everything and all we need:

“And a voice came out from the throne, saying, ‘Praise our God, all you His servants, those fearing Him, the small and great.’

And I heard, as a sound, the voice of a great multitude, and as a sound of many waters, and as a sound of mighty thunders, saying,

‘Hallelujah! Because the Lord God Almighty reigned. Let us rejoice, and let us exult, and give the glory to Him, because the marriage of the Lamb came, and His wife prepared herself.’

And it was given to her that she be clothed in fine linen, pure and bright; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

And he said to me, ‘Write: Blessed are the ones having been called to the supper of the marriage of the Lamb.’

And he said to me, ‘These words of God are true.’ ”

## **5. Receiving Salvation - Restoration with God**

The first five books of the New Testament; the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and “The Acts of the Apostles”, tell us how to receive salvation. The Gospels tell us about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and that we must believe in Him to have eternal life. The acts of the apostles tell us about the Holy Spirit and how we must receive Him to have eternal life.

A Gospel is most commonly referred to as “The Good News” which can be likened to an awesome ground breaking news report announcing something of such great significance that the whole world will never be the same once this amazing news gets out. The Gospels report on these major events from different aspects.

For example, all four Gospels tell us about Jesus Christ being God, but from different perspectives. Matthew introduces Jesus as being the “King of the Jews”, Mark tells of Jesus being ‘The Son of Man’, Luke emphasises Jesus as being “Saviour” of the world, and John proclaims that Jesus Christ is “The Son of God”.

Each Gospel reports that Jesus is God in their own unique way. Likewise, each one gives an account of events with their own unique emphasis. For example, Matthew and Luke primarily focus on what Jesus said, Mark focuses more on what Jesus did, and John focuses on who Jesus is. All are reporting about the significance of Jesus Christ from different viewpoints, so that the reader can be fully informed as to who Jesus is, what He said, what He did, what has taken place, and what this means to us.

The fifth book in the New Testament, “The Acts of the Apostles” is also referred to as “The Book of Acts”. It tells us that all who believed in Jesus Christ were filled with the Holy Spirit, and were baptised, and how the church was established, and how the Word began to spread, along with the growth of the church.

The acts of the apostles highlights how people received salvation:

1. They believed in Jesus Christ as the Son of God.
2. They were born from above with the Holy Spirit.
3. They were baptised in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

## **1. Believing in Jesus Christ as the Son of God**

The first five books, along with the rest of the New Testament, tell us that we need to be saved from our sins and believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and is God, who came down from heaven to dwell on earth in a human body, and that He lived a sinless life of long-suffering love, and became the perfect sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins when He was tortured to death on the cross, and then rose from the dead to the resurrection of life, perfectly fulfilling the will of the Father, and inheriting all of the kingdom of God. Knowing and believing who Jesus is, however, is not enough, on its own, to receive salvation and enter into the kingdom of God. It is not enough to simply believe that Jesus is the Christ. The Devil and his demons believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, yet they are not saved:

“In the synagogue there was a man who had a spirit of an unclean demon; and he cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Ah, what have You to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are; the Holy One of God.’ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, ‘Be silent, and come out of him.’

And throwing him down in their midst, the demon came out of him without injuring him.”

Many people think that if they believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and go to church, they will be saved. Salvation is not simply believing in Jesus, attending church, or belonging to a particular christian denomination. The Bible doesn't tell us to join a religious organisation to obtain salvation. God's Word tells us to believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be a member of His body; the body of Christ, and fellowship with one another.

Many others think that if they believe in who Jesus is and try to obey some of the commandments in the Bible; for example, the ten commandments in the Old Testament, they will be saved. However, believing in who Jesus Christ is, and doing our best to obey some of the Bible, won't grant us eternal life with Him.

The Bible tells us that believing in Jesus means believing in who He is, and what He has done for us, **AND** committing to Him, trusting in Him, and relying upon Him, in obedience to Him and His Word, loving Him and loving one another, as He loves us.

The word "believe", as it means in the Bible, is to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who sacrificed Himself to save us from our sins, **AND** believe in Him by faith; committing to Him, trusting in Him, and relying upon Him. Believing in Jesus is submitting ourselves, and surrendering our lives, completely into His care. It is placing ourselves under His authority, allowing Him to fulfill His will, in obedience to Him, and in co-operation with Him, with complete confidence that He knows what is best for us and our future. It's an ongoing work of faith which takes loyalty, trust, and obedience to God, in every area of our lives. It means committing to Him in faith, trusting in Him in faith, relying on Him in faith, being obedient to Him in faith, loving Him in faith, loving others in faith, seeking His will for our life in faith, and fulfilling His will in faith. When we do this, He promises to take total responsibility for us, giving us all we need, now and forever.

God's will is to fulfill His general overall purpose for all of us, and fulfill His specific individual plan for each of us. His general overall purpose is unity with Him, and unity with one another, in obedience to His Word. His specific individual plan is our own personal role as a member of His body; the body of Christ.

We fulfill His general overall purpose and specific individual plan through knowing Him. To commit to Jesus in this way means having a relationship with Him; loving Him, and being loved by Him; wanting to be faithful to Him, and wanting His faithfulness; wanting to be obedient to Him and His Word, and wanting to be blessed by Him; wanting to share His love with one another, and wanting to be loved by them; doing everything in partnership with Him, and receiving His help. This faith trusts God to provide for our needs, to protect us, and have His peace in us, even when we go through life's trials. This means that we can live life, free from worry, anxiety, pressure, stress, and fear.

We need not live life on our own. If we constantly seek God, He promises to not only help us, but to give us life that is filled with His peace and joy, no matter what seasons we go through:

**‘I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly.’**

**‘This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.’**

**‘My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. I give eternal life to them, and they shall not perish unto the age (never be destroyed), and no one shall seize them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all, and no one is able to seize them out of My Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.’**

## 2. Born from Above with the Holy Spirit

Being ‘born from above’ is being spiritually born into God’s family. When we believe in who Jesus is, and what He has done for us, and receive the Holy Spirit, we are born into His family:

‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born  
from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’

To become a child of God we must be born into God’s family. No one can become a member of God’s family, or enter into His kingdom, without being ‘born from above’ with the Holy Spirit. This doesn’t happen by way of a natural birth; it happens by way of a spiritual birth. The Bible tells us how Jesus explains this:

“There was a man of the pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler  
of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him,  
‘Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God;  
for no one can do these signs that You do unless  
God is with Him.’ Jesus answered and said to him,  
‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born  
from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’

Nicodemus said to Him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old?  
Can he enter into his mother’s womb a second time and be born?’

Jesus answered, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born  
of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born  
of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel because I told you,  
‘You must be born from above.’

The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone having been born of the Spirit.'

Nicodemus answered and said to Him, 'How can these things be?' Jesus answered and said to him, 'Are you the teacher of Israel, and you do not know these things? Truly, truly, I say to you, what we know, we speak; and that which we have seen, we testify, and you do not receive our testimony.

If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things.

No one has gone up to heaven except He who came down from heaven; the Son of Man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone believing into Him may not perish but have eternal life.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that everyone believing into Him may not perish, but have eternal life. God did not send His Son into the world that He may judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. The one believing into Him is not judged; but the one not believing has been judged already, because he has not believed into the name of the only begotten Son of God.

And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the light, for their works were evil. For everyone practicing wickedness hates the light and does not come to the light, that his works may not be exposed. But the one doing the truth comes to the light, that his works may be manifest (clearly seen), that they have been worked in God.' ”

Jesus tells us that to become a child of God, we must believe into Him, and have a spiritual birth, being born from above with the Holy Spirit. He tells us that being born from above is more than a natural birth. It's a new spiritual birth that is absolutely necessary for our eternal welfare:

‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.’

Natural babies are pure, innocent, and full of love, living in awe of everything around them. However, as we get older, this all starts to change as the effects of sin, that has been handed down to us from Adam and Eve, starts to influence our lives. This is why Jesus said we must be ‘born from above’, so we can be healed of the effects of sin, have sin removed from us, and be restored back to having a childlike loving relationship with our Creator as originally intended with Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden:

‘Truly, I say to you, unless you turn, and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.’

When we believe into Jesus, and receive the Holy Spirit, the spiritual purity that was taken from us in the garden of Eden is redeemed. Our sins are forgiven through Jesus’ sacrificial life and death, the Holy Spirit enables us to have our relationship with God restored, empowers us to turn away from sin in the future, and gives us the ability to do good works that glorify God.

Jesus tells us, that through believing into Him, and receiving the Holy Spirit, we are able to do good works that are clearly seen to have been done in partnership with God, and glorify Him:

‘The one doing the truth comes to the light, that his works may be manifest (clearly seen), that they have been worked in God.’

God has redeemed us, removed sin from us, and restored us, through the sacrifice of His Son, and giving us His Holy Spirit, so we may have a personal relationship with Him that is loving, intimate, and fulfilling, and worships Him in His fullness:

‘The time is coming, and now is, when the true lovers of God will worship the Father in fullness of spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such ones as these to worship Him.

God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.’

We must receive the Holy Spirit, because with Him we receive the guarantee that He will help us turn away from sin, and do good works that glorify God, so we may enter into His kingdom, and receive eternal rewards. Without receiving the Holy Spirit, and having His continual help, we cannot enter into, or inherit, the kingdom of God. This is why the relationship with our Father, through Jesus, with the help of the Holy Spirit, is so important.

Being ‘born from above’ allows us to have a relationship with our Father, through Jesus, with the help of the Holy Spirit, all at the same time. This is one of God’s great mysteries; having a relationship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who are individual identities of God, and are one God as well.

When we believe in who Jesus is, and what He has done for us, **AND** believe into Him by committing to Him, trusting in Him, and relying upon Him; submitting ourselves and surrendering our lives to Him, He promises to give us the Holy Spirit, to bring us into an eternal relationship with God, and give us everlasting life:

‘For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son,  
that everyone believing into Him may not perish,  
but have eternal life.’

‘If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive because it does not see Him nor know Him. But you know Him because He lives with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I am coming to you.’

‘The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I have said to you.’

‘I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone asking receives, and the one seeking finds, and to the one knocking it will be opened.

For what father is there among you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead of a fish? And if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?

If you then, being evil, know to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father of heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!’

“The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit given to us.”

### **3. Baptism into the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit**

Baptism is a ceremony formally acknowledging our commitment to God. It is a public declaration of our intention to fully submit to Him, and surrender our lives to Him, where we are immersed with water signifying that we are cleansed from sin.

Baptism is a celebration of being cleansed from our sinful ways, to live according to God's ways; repenting of our independence apart from God, to having dependence on Him; turning away from our self-righteousness, to His righteousness; and from doing our will, to fulfilling His will. Jesus even allowed Himself to be baptised as an example for us to follow:

“Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan (river) to John, to be baptised by him. But John forbade Him (tried to stop Him), saying, ‘I have need to be baptised by You, and do You come to me?’ But answering, Jesus said to him, ‘Allow it now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.’

Then he allowed Him. And having been baptised, Jesus went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and coming upon Him; and behold, a voice from the heavens, saying, ‘This is My Son, the Beloved, in whom I am well pleased.’ ”

Likewise, Jesus instructs us to be baptised:

‘Go, therefore, and disciple all the nations, baptising them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you all the days, until the end of the age.’

There may be certain situations and circumstances that may make it extremely difficult, or impossible, for someone to be baptised. An example of this in the Bible is when the thief on the cross, next to Jesus, believed in Him, but was unable to be baptised:

“He said to Jesus, ‘Lord, remember me when You come in Your kingdom.’

And Jesus said to him, ‘Truly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.’”

This was an extreme situation. A similar circumstance may be when someone believes in Jesus and commits themselves to Him before they are about to pass away.

Being baptised is a fundamental foundation for our salvation, and should be conducted, when and where, it is possible to do so, as a formal acknowledgment of our commitment to follow Jesus.

In the absence of extreme situations or unusual circumstances, a christian should be baptised as a consenting adult who wants to publicly acknowledge their commitment to follow Jesus Christ, obey His Word, and fulfill His will, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

To receive salvation, we need to believe in who Jesus Christ is, what He has done for us, **AND** believe into Him; committing ourselves to Him, trusting in Him, and relying upon Him, being born from above with the Holy Spirit, and being baptised. This enables us to have a relationship with God the Father, through His Son, Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, which brings about an ongoing repentance of turning away from our independence apart from God, to our depending on Him, and with the help of the Holy Spirit, turning away from sin, to sin less, with the goal to be sinless; being holy, as He is holy, as we practice doing good works, and fulfill His will for our lives.

Having access to God, and entering into His kingdom, through knowing Him, being obedient to His Word, and being committed to fulfilling His will, can be illustrated using the example of the “World Wide Web”. You can enter the world wide web by accessing a computer and connecting to the internet. Entering the world wide web is like having the entire world at your fingertips. However, to find what you desire, you must first enter the letters “www.” You cannot enter the world wide web unless you first type in “www.” In the same kind of way, it is how we access God, and enter into His kingdom. Anyone wanting to access God, and enter into His kingdom, must first apply His “WWW”:

“The Way of God, The Word of God, The Will of God.”

1. The Way of God – Knowing Him.
2. The Word of God – Obeying His Word.
3. The Will of God – Fulfilling His Will.

## **1. The Way of God – Knowing Him**

Jesus is ‘**The Way**’. After He was tortured, crucified on the cross, and then resurrected from the dead, Jesus gave the Holy Spirit to His disciples as promised, and He became known as ‘**The Way**’.

The Holy Spirit helps us to know Jesus; and when we know Jesus Christ, we know the Father:

‘I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life.  
No one comes to the Father except through Me.’

Jesus’ disciples witnessed the relationship that Jesus had with His Father in heaven. They saw that Jesus prayed to His Father.

They saw Jesus being obedient to the Father's will; they saw Jesus glorifying the Father in everything He said and everything He did; and they saw power from the Father in every part of Jesus' life.

When one of Jesus' disciples asked Him to teach them how to pray, Jesus taught them a simple childlike prayer to the Father. This prayer has become known as "The Lord's Prayer":

**'Our Father in heaven hallowed (holy) be Your name.  
Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is  
in heaven. Give us today our daily bread; and forgive us  
our debts (sins) as we also forgive our debtors (those who  
have sinned against us). And do not lead us into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil; for Yours is the kingdom, and the  
power, and the glory, to the ages (forever). Amen.'**

'Our Father in heaven' addresses God as our Father. God is a loving father. When a child approaches their father they want him to respond to them when they speak to him. They also want to know that he will give careful attention to the child's needs and requests and that he will do what is in the child's best interests. This is why Jesus tells us to approach God as our Father.

'hallowed (holy) be Your name.' proclaims that God's name is holy and He is to be honoured as being holy.

'Your kingdom come.' seeks the Father's coming kingdom, and acknowledges that His kingdom will come, and that He will establish His kingdom rule and reign on earth forever.

'Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' asks for our Father's will to be done on the earth as it is in heaven, and agrees that His sovereign will, will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

'Give us today our daily bread;' is a request for our Father to provide for our needs on a day-by-day basis.

‘and forgive us our debts (sins) as we also forgive our debtors (those who have sinned against us).’ asks our Father to forgive us for the sins we have done and acknowledges our commitment to forgive others for the sins they have done to us.

‘And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil;’ pleads with our Father, not to allow us to be led into temptation to sin, but to save us from doing evil.

‘for Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, to the ages (forever).’ acknowledges that our Father owns all of the kingdom, has all the power over the kingdom, and has all the glory in the kingdom, forever.

‘Amen.’ is stating to our Father, “So be it Father”, or “Let it be done as You will Father”.

When Jesus wanted to spend time with His Father, He would go away by Himself to a quiet place to pray:

“He went up to the mountain by Himself to pray.  
When evening came He was there alone.”

Likewise, Jesus tells us to go to a quiet place to spend time with our Father, to pray to Him, and receive from Him:

“When you pray, go into your room and shut the door,  
and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your  
Father who sees in secret will reward you.’

Praying to our Father, through our Lord Jesus, with the help of our Holy Spirit, means spending quality time in a quiet place where we can talk with our Father, with our Lord, and with our Holy Spirit, with no interruptions or distractions. It allows us to concentrate on communicating with Him and receive from Him.

It is time when we can totally focus on being alone with God, speaking to Him, and hearing from Him, enjoying His presence, and listening to what He wants us to do:

**‘My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.’**

Knowing God comes through experience. The closer we draw near to Him, the more we experience His presence. Listening to what God is saying, and noticing what He is doing, takes patience, discernment, and sensitivity. This is one of the main reasons why it is so important to be in a quiet place where there are no interruptions or distractions. It is much easier to listen to what someone is saying when you are in a quiet place, not being rushed for time, totally focused on them, and what they want to say, with no one else around. It is the same with God. He always has much to share with us, if we will give Him the time to do so.

This means making time with Him a priority, allowing quality time so that we are not rushed, or hurried, being in a quiet place so that we can properly discern His voice, being sensitive and responsive to what He is saying. When we learn to hear what God is saying to us in our quiet time with Him, we find it easier to hear from Him, and be directed by Him, throughout each day. This takes commitment, patience, time, and effort.

It is similar to when a husband and wife communicate with each other. If they are to be completely connected with one another, they need time and space to talk with each other, as well as keeping in touch with each other throughout each day. They need quality time with each other as well as keeping in regular contact with each other. It is similar with God. If we are to be completely connected with Him, we need to spend quality time with Him each day, and stay in contact with Him throughout each day.

If we want to hear from God, be guided by Him, and receive the best from Him, He should get the best of our time and focus. It is extremely important to take the time to speak with God, having the patience to hear from Him, and the sensitivity to be guided by Him. This is the only way we can know God and follow Him:

**“Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.”**

When we draw near to God, we can seek Him about our needs, and desires, and hopes for ourselves and others. We can seek Him when we need help, or when others are in need of help. We can seek Him when we worry, and doubt, and when we are hurt, confused, stressed, and tired. We can seek Him about our past, our present, and our future. We can seek Him continually about where He wants us to be and what He wants us to do. We can seek Him about anything, and everything, all the time.

True fulfilment comes from seeking God and being connected with Him. He is always ready to hear from us, and speak to us; and rewards us, as we seek Him, and do what He wants us to do:

**“Without faith it is impossible to please God. The one approaching (drawing near) Him must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder to the ones seeking Him out.”**

We don't need to have any particular reason to spend regular time with God. We can spend time with Him without any need, or desire, in mind and just enjoy being in His presence.

Like a married couple, or friends, who enjoy getting together regularly to enjoy each other's company, it is no different to spending regular time with God, wanting to enjoy His company; His is just more fulfilling.

When we spend time with God, seeking His help and guidance, and just wanting to be close to Him, He has the most amazing way of comforting us with His peace and love; giving us rest, and keeping us encouraged, and rejuvenated, as we wait on Him:

“The ones waiting for Jehovah (the Lord) will renew their strength. They will go up with wings like eagles; they will run and not get weary; they will walk and not faint.”

God is more eager to spend time with us, than our spending time with Him. He is more eager to speak to us, than we are to speak to Him. He is more eager to hear from us, than our hearing from Him. He is more eager to help us, than our willing to ask Him for help. He is more eager to bless us, than our wanting to obey Him. He is more eager to love us, than we are to love Him:

“We love because He first loved us.”

Nothing compares to God, and nothing compares to drawing near to Him, knowing Him, and loving Him:

“He is a rewarder to the ones seeking Him out.”

‘I am the good shepherd. I know My own, and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me, and I know the Father;’

‘I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly.’

‘The time is coming, and now is, when the true lovers of God will worship the Father in fullness of spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such ones as these to worship Him.’

## **2. The Word of God – Obeying His Word**

Just as it is important to spend quiet, quality time with God; it is also important to spend quiet, quality time reading, studying, and understanding God's Word, so that we can learn to obey it. Jesus is 'The Way', and He is also known as "The Word":

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being (were made) through Him, and without Him not one thing came into being (was made) that has come into being (that has been made)."

When we spend time with the Lord reading and studying His Word, He helps us to understand it, and apply it to our lives:

"All Scripture is God-breathed, and is profitable for teaching, conviction, correction, and for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect and complete for every good work."

The Holy Bible is from God, and is filled with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God speaks to us through the pages of the Bible as we read and meditate on what He is saying. This is how we begin to hear and discern God's voice, by listening to what He is saying to us through His Word. By getting into the habit of reading God's Word on a regular basis, we begin to hear from Him, becoming attentive to what He is saying to us:

"The Word of God is living and active (powerful in effect); sharper than any two-edged sword,

piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow,  
and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

No creature is hidden before Him, but all things are naked and  
laid open before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”

As we spend time with God, and spend time reading His Word, we find ourselves wanting to make Him, and His Word, more of a priority in our lives. As we build our relationship with Him we find ourselves seeking Him more and more each day, asking Him for help and guidance, and how to apply His Word to our lives.

The most effective way to read and study the Bible is to ask the Lord for His help and guidance on what He thinks is best to read and study and then seek Him for understanding. By doing this, we learn to hear and discern His voice, and understand what He is saying to us. If we are ever not sure of what to read, or what to revise, we can never go wrong by studying Jesus' own words.

Jesus' words are the most important words in the entire Bible. Most of His words are in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. His words are often repeated throughout the Gospels to give them added emphasis because of their supreme importance.

God doesn't want us to just read and understand His written Word. He wants us to obey His Word. While seeking the Lord and studying His Word it is wise to continually ask Him to examine our hearts and motives in every area of our lives according to His standard, the Holy Bible, and allow Him to show us areas of our lives that need to be addressed. Judging by our own standards is usually mixed with self-centred motives which is not God's standard. Having regular contact with God to see how we are going is like having a spiritual health check. Asking for His input gives us His accountability, ensures that our relationship with Him remains healthy, along with our love for one another.

Having constant contact with God, and asking Him to let us know how well we are obeying His Word, safeguards us continually, brings answers to our prayers, and helps us to mature and become more like Jesus, providing that we respond to Him by:

Being attentive when He alerts us to sin that we have committed.  
Being submissive to confess the sin when He convicts us of it.  
Being responsive asking for His help to stop doing it in the future.

The Bible gives serious warnings for anyone refusing to admit their sin, confess it, and respond to it, the way God expects us to:

“Everyone practicing sin practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. And you know that He was revealed to bear our sins, and sin is not in Him. Everyone remaining in Him does not sin. Everyone sinning has neither seen Him nor known Him. Little children, let no one lead you astray. The one practicing righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. The one practicing sin is of the Devil, because the Devil sins from the beginning. For this (reason) the Son of God was revealed, to undo the works of the Devil. Everyone born of God does not sin, because His seed remains in him, and he is not able to sin, because he has been born of God. By this the children of God and the children of the Devil are revealed. Everyone not practicing righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother, because this is the message you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.”

This means, we must strive to be transformed into Christ’s likeness, and become righteous as He is righteous, loving one another as Jesus has commanded, with the help of the Holy Spirit:

“And hope does not put us to shame, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit given to us.”

“Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”

“The one practicing righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. The one practicing sin is of the Devil,” and “Everyone not practicing righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother,”. Therefore, it is crucially important to have God’s righteousness. The righteousness that comes from God can only be obtained through having a relationship with God.

When we believe in God; committing to Him, trusting in Him, relying upon Him, and constantly seeking Him, and building our relationship with Him, and co-operating with Him in faithful obedience to His Word and His ways, we have His righteousness through the Holy Spirit, becoming like Him, and loving one another as He wants us to:

“This is His commandment: that we should believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another, even (as much) as He has commanded us. The one keeping His commands remains in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He remains in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.”

‘As the Father loved Me, I also loved you; remain in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will remain in My love, as I kept My Father’s commandments, and remain in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and your joy may be full. This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.’

Jesus tells us that the road to eternal life is not easy, and there are few who find it:

‘Enter through the narrow gate, because wide is the gate, and broad (easy) is the way leading to destruction, and many are those going in through it; because narrow is the gate and troublesome (difficult) is the way leading to life, and few are those finding it.’

Why will there be few people who enter into God’s kingdom? There are many reasons why many will not be allowed to enter; however, they are all due to our not believing, and not obeying, what Jesus commands us in the Bible. Many people don’t believe in God, or don’t believe the Bible; and many who believe in Him, and believe in His Word, do not obey it. Others think they don’t need God, or think they can work their own way into heaven.

Whether it is because of rebellion, or religion, the main reason why many people will not enter into God’s kingdom is because many won’t co-operate with God on His terms according to what is written in His Word, the Holy Bible. The Bible tells us:

“The fear of Jehovah (the Lord) is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”

Obedience in fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and knowledge of Him results in understanding Him. However, obedience in love for the Lord is the fullness of wisdom.

Fear of the Lord that grows out of love and respect for Him comes from understanding and knowing Him. God wants us to glory in understanding Him and knowing Him from a reverential fear that respects who He is, and obeys Him, out of love for Him:

“Thus says Jehovah (the Lord):  
‘Do not let the wise man glory in his wisdom;  
do not let the mighty man glory in his might;  
do not let the rich man glory in his riches.  
But let him who glories glory in this,  
that he understands and knows Me, that  
I am Jehovah (the Lord), doing lovingkindness,  
judgment, and righteousness, in the earth.  
In these I delight,’ says Jehovah (the Lord).”

God wants His righteousness in us, not our own. He wants us to be holy, not according to our own standards, but according to His standard. This can be so far beyond us, that we may not want to even believe, let alone try to believe, and give up before we start. However, this is a self-centred reaction, whether it is self-promoting, or self-pitying. Either way, it is self-destroying. There is nothing wrong with being unsure of ourselves; however, faith requires that we are sure of God, and what He can do in us, and through us, if we are willing to try with His help.

We need to be God-centred rather than self-centred. If pride or pity is our self-centred reaction, then turning to God in genuine heartfelt repentance is the God-centred response. When we come to the end of ourselves, we can begin with God, and continue with Him. This is how we commence to be saved; it is how we continue to be saved; and it is how we will be completely saved.

This is the heart of being a christian; to believe, and continue believing in our God who can help us be what He wants us to be, and help us do what He wants us to do, depending on His power and grace, rather than our own strength and ability; living life in unity with Him, according to His will, rather than living life apart from Him, according to our own will:

“He has delivered (rescued) us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For in Him all things were created, the things in the heavens and the things on earth, the visible and the invisible (things we can see and things we cannot see); whether thrones or lordships (kings or kingdoms) or rulers or authorities, all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and all things consist (exist) in Him.

He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He be pre-eminent (first in everything). For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, making peace with the blood of the cross, whether the things on the earth, or the things in the heavens.

And you, who once were alienated and enemies in the mind by evil works, He has now reconciled (brought peace and unity), in the body of His flesh, through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and without charge (free from accusation) before Him, if you continue in the faith, founded and steadfast (firmly grounded and established), and are not moved away from the hope of the Gospel which you heard proclaimed in all creation under heaven.”

“Do not let sin reign (rule) in your mortal body, to obey it in its lusts (desires). Do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin,

but present yourselves to God as living from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not lord it over you (rule over you), for you are not under law (the Old Testament law of Moses), but under grace. What then?

Shall we sin because we are not under law (the Old Testament law of Moses), but under grace? Let it not be! (Absolutely not!) Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves for obedience, you are slaves to whom you obey, whether of sin to death, or obedience to righteousness? But thanks to God, though you were slaves of sin, you were obedient from the heart to the form (standard) of teaching to which you were delivered (committed). And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh.

For as you presented your members as slaves to impurity (uncleanness), and of iniquity unto iniquity (lawlessness leading to more lawlessness), so now present your members as slaves of righteousness unto sanctification (holiness). For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now having been set free from sin and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit unto sanctification (holiness), and the end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

“Now little children, remain in Him, so that when He is revealed we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. If you know that He is righteous, know that everyone practicing righteousness has been born of Him.”

### **3. The Will of God – Fulfilling His Will**

God's purpose for our relationship with Him is to be intimately connected with Him; and through obeying Him and His Word, we may do His will and be together forever with Him:

“The world is passing away, and the lust of it;  
but he who does the will of God abides forever.”

As we build our relationship with Him, and obey His Word, in co-operation with Him, we come to know His will for our life:

“Do not be conformed to this age (this world), but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove (know and approve) what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

As we draw near to God, and fulfill His will, He takes pleasure in us, and gives us the desires of our heart:

“I delight to do Your will, O my God;  
Your law is within my heart.”

“It is God who is working in you,  
both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”

“Trust in Jehovah (the Lord) and do good;  
live in the land and feed on faithfulness.

Delight yourself in Jehovah (the Lord)  
that He may give you the desires of your heart.”

Jesus seeked His Father's will:

**'I am not able, from Myself, to do anything. As I hear, I judge, and My judgment is just (right), because I do not seek My will, but the will of the One sending Me; the Father.'**

Jesus submitted to the Father's will and did what He saw Him do:

**'Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son is not able to do anything from Himself, but only what He sees the Father doing; for whatever He does, the Son does likewise.'**

When we do His will, Jesus considers us members of His family:

**'Whoever does the will of God, this one is My brother, and My sister, and My mother.'**

When we are '**born from above**' we become members of God's family. The Bible tells us that as newborn spiritual babies we need nourishment from the Word of God to grow to salvation:

**"As newborn babies, desire the pure spiritual milk (the Word of God), that you may grow by it to salvation."**

As our relationship with God progresses we begin to grow and mature spiritually. It is similar to a baby growing up to be a little child, then growing to be a responsible son or daughter, and then an adult, and then maturing to be a loving father or mother.

The Bible talks about different levels of maturity as we grow in our love for the Lord and for one another. It speaks of us being babies, little children, little youths, young men, and fathers:

“I write to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven through His name. I write to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, little youths, because you have known the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the Word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.”

The Bible tells us that we need to grow up from the milk of the Word; from knowing and understanding the Word of God, to eating the solid food of righteousness; practicing righteousness and growing into all that God wants us to be. We are told that the mature practice eating the solid food of God’s righteousness, discerning (distinguishing) good from evil:

“Everyone partaking of milk (living only on milk) is unskilled in the Word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their senses trained through practice to discern (distinguish) both good and evil.”

As we grow from babies, who know God’s Word, to obedient sons (and daughters) who are led by the Spirit of God to do His will, we become fathers (and mothers) who help others grow:

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

“Though you have myriads (thousands) of teachers in Christ, yet not many fathers.”

Doing and fulfilling the will of God is a process that takes time. When we are '**born from above**' we commence building our relationship with our Father, through Jesus, with the help of the Holy Spirit, and we begin to grow spiritually. We begin to think differently, feel differently, act differently, and talk differently.

It is a process that happens in stages as we grow from being spiritual babies, to spiritual adults, to spiritual parents; or, as the Bible tells us; from babies, to little children, to youths, to young men (sons and daughters), to fathers (and mothers), in the Spirit.

Just as it takes time for a child to develop into being a responsible adult as their parents bring them up, it is the same with God. We will make mistakes along the way just as all children do; however, as we grow up and mature, we learn from our mistakes, and are constantly helped and encouraged by our Father in the same way a child is nurtured and encouraged by their parents as they mature from childbirth to adulthood.

As children grow they learn to submit to their parents authority. It is the same with God. As we grow and develop, we learn to submit to His authority, and obey Him, so we may become more like Him.

The design that God established for a family is similar to the design for His family; the body of Christ. He gives us life and everything we need to fulfill His will. Everything He gives us is by His grace. However, He requires responses of love; first of all to Him, and to one another; especially other members of His family; and as we grow, we get more responsibilities. We are expected to live according to His values, being obedient to His Word, and faithful to His will. If we are obedient and faithful we will remain in His family and obtain an inheritance. If we are not obedient to His Word and faithful to His will we will be removed from His family and cast (thrown) out of His kingdom.

When a husband and wife have children, the children have been given grace in that they have been given life; they are loved, cared for, provided for, and protected, in many different ways and have done nothing to earn it or deserve it. In giving love, and care, provision, and protection, to their children, the parents look for responses of love from them. This is why couples want to have a family; so they can love the children, be loved by them, and love one another as a family. It is the same with God and His family.

As the children grow from being babies, to teenagers, to adults, the parents expect additional responses from their children in the form of responsibilities. The responsibilities increase as the children grow older to the stage where the sons and daughters may get married and have a family themselves. This brings great joy to the parents as they can have a bigger family and become grandparents. This comes with greater responsibilities for the grandparents, and the children, who have become parents themselves. God's plan is similar in that He wants us to grow from being spiritual babies who live on milk, to being responsible sons and daughters who practice righteousness, to being mature fathers and mothers who teach others to do the same.

However, what would happen if children, as they are growing up, refuse to respond to their parents, or to other members of their family, in love? And what would happen if this trend continued to the point where it not only caused problems for the parents, but also caused problems between other members of the family? The end result may be that the family members refusing to respond according to the family values, established by the parents, would eventually not be welcome in the family home because of the disruption they cause to the parents and other members of the family. The disobedient family members are still loved by the parents, and other members of the family; however,

they would not be allowed to be involved with the family, and may never be allowed in the family household. Furthermore, they would lose any share of the family inheritance that had been set aside for them.

Jesus tells us about the kingdom of God, giving examples of servants in a household serving their master, and doing his will. Jesus was a servant to His Father, and to His people, and did the Father's will. He requires us to do the same:

‘For it is like a man going abroad (travelling to a far country), who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them.

And to one he gave five talents, and to another two, and to another one, to each according to his ability; and immediately he went abroad (on a journey). He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and gained another five talents. Likewise, he who had received the two talents gained two more also. But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money.

After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. And he who had received the five talents came forward and brought five more talents, saying, ‘Lord, you delivered to me five talents; here, I have gained five talents more.’ His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will set you over many. Enter into the joy of your lord.’ He also who had received the two talents came forward and said, ‘Lord, you delivered to me two talents; here, I have gained two talents more.’ His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will set you over many. Enter into the joy of your lord.’

He also who had received the one talent came forward and said, 'Lord, I knew that you are a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter. And being afraid, I went away and hid your talent in the ground; here, you have what is yours.' And answering, his lord said to him, 'Evil and slothful (lazy) servant, you knew that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter. Then you ought to have put my money to the bankers, and at my coming I would have received my own with interest. Therefore, take the talent from him, and give it to him who has the ten talents.'

To everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even that which he has will be taken from him. And throw the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness; there will be weeping (crying) and gnashing (grinding) of teeth.'

'Which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and recline (sit down to eat)?' but will not (instead) say to him, 'Prepare something for my supper, and having girded yourself, serve me until I eat and drink, and afterward you shall eat and drink?' Does he thank that servant because he did the things commanded? I think not. So you also, when you have done all things commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy servants. We have done what we ought to do.'

'Let your loins (waist) be girded and the lamps burning, and be like men waiting for their lord when he returns from the wedding feasts, so that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately.'

Blessed are those servants whom the lord will find watching when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will gird himself and have them recline (sit them down to eat), and he will come and serve them. If he comes in the second watch, or the third (in the middle of the night, or just before dawn), and finds it so, blessed are those servants. But know this, that if the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would have watched, and not have allowed his house to be dug through. You, then, be ready, for in the hour that you do not think, the Son of Man comes.'

'Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom the lord will set over his household to give the portion of food in season? Blessed is that servant whom his master finds so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. But if that servant says in his heart, 'My lord delays to come,' and begins to beat the men-servants and the maid-servants, and to eat, and to drink, and become drunk, the lord of that servant will come on a day which he does not expect, and in an hour which he does not know, and will cut him apart and put his portion with the unbelievers. That servant, who knew the will of his lord, and did not prepare, nor do according to his will, will be beaten with many stripes. But he, who did not know, and did things worthy of stripes, will be beaten with few. Everyone to whom much was given, much will be demanded from him; and to whom much was deposited, more abundantly they will ask of him.'

'Beware, watch, and pray, for you do not know when the time is. As a man going abroad (travelling to a far country) leaving his house and giving his servants authority, and to each one his work,

and commanded the doorkeeper to keep watch. Watch, therefore, for you do not know when the lord of the house will come; late (in the evening), or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or early (in the morning); lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!'

Doing God's will takes endurance; and the only way to have the endurance to do what God wants us to do, is to be confident in our faith in Him. We become confident in our faith in Him by building a strong relationship with Him and doing His will:

“Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has great reward. You have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise.”

As we build our relationship with Him; committing to Him, trusting in Him, and relying upon Him, He helps us to co-operate with Him, being guided by Him, and being obedient to Him; responding to Him, and to one another, the way He wants us to.

As the relationship grows, He reveals our abilities, and gifts, and helps us to use them in fulfilling His will. Over time, as we stay in close relationship with Him, obeying His Word, and being guided by Him, our will becomes His will:

‘This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love than this has no one, that anyone should lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his lord does; but I have called you friends, because all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.’

‘If you remain in Me, and My words remain in you,  
you will ask whatever you desire,  
and it will be done for you.’

Real success isn’t what we have achieved, or what we have acquired, by the world’s standards. True success is what we have done with what God has given us, and how well we have done with what He has assigned for us to do:

‘Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on the earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break through and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break through and steal.  
For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.’

“Do not love the world nor the things in the world.  
If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him, because all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”

Success from a worldly perspective is based on the world’s standards, according to our will, and has a shelf life that expires when we die. Success from a heavenly perspective is based on God’s standards, according to His will, and never expires.

Success from the point of view of the world is measured by how much we think we have succeeded, or by how much other people think we may have succeeded; whereas, success from God’s point of view is measured by how much He thinks we have succeeded, according to His standard, in His Word, the Holy Bible.

Characteristics of worldly success and godly success may be compared as follows:

### **Worldly Success**

We work independently without God  
We do our own will  
We serve our own needs  
We improve wealth for ourselves  
We compete with each other  
We can compromise standards  
We are satisfied with our approval  
We achieve our goals  
We are glorified

### **Godly Success**

We work dependently with God  
We do God's will  
We love and serve others  
We improve welfare of others  
We complement one another  
We cannot compromise God's Word  
We are satisfied with God's approval  
We fulfill God's will  
God is glorified

Fulfilling what we want to achieve will be measured by our own desires; whereas, fulfilling what God wants us to achieve will be measured by His desire to fulfill His general overall purpose for all of us and His specific individual plan for each one of us.

Fulfilling what God wants us to do will involve loving, helping, and serving Him, by loving, helping, and serving one another:

**‘When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. And gathered together before Him will be all the nations; and He will separate them one from another, as the shepherd separates his sheep from the goats; and He will set the sheep on His right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I hungered and you gave Me to eat, I thirsted and you gave Me drink, I was a stranger and you took Me in, naked and you clothed Me, I was sick and you visited Me, I was in prison**

and you came to Me.' Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungering and feed You, or thirsting and gave You drink? And when did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and came to You?' And answering, the King will say to them, 'Truly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of these, the least of My brethren, you did it to Me.'

Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Go away from Me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels; for I hungered and you gave Me nothing to eat, I thirsted and you gave Me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.' Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungering, or thirsting, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister to You?' Then He will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, neither did you do it to Me.' And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.'

The importance of loving and serving one another appears right throughout the Bible, with even greater significance given in the New Testament, especially from Jesus Himself:

'Whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first, he shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.'

'Love one another as I have loved you.'

Jesus came to fulfill the will of the Father. He did this by loving His people, serving His people, and giving His life for His people. Everything Jesus did was according to the Father's will. He spoke to the Father, heard from the Father, and did whatever the Father wanted Him to do. In like manner, He wants us to do the same.

## **Hearing from God & Doing His Will**

To effectively communicate with someone, we must talk to them, and listen to their responses. It is no different with God. It is just as important to listen to God, as it is to talk to Him. If we do not take the time to listen to what He is saying, we will never have a fulfilling relationship with Him. No relationship will have much depth if only one person does all the talking. Likewise, when we communicate with God, our relationship with Him will not have much depth if we are the only ones doing the talking.

When we pray, we should not just ask God for what we want, and go our own way. He wants to interact with us continually, during quiet time spent together, and throughout each day.

When we sit with Him to pray, it is very important to allow sufficient time to talk to Him, and listen to Him, in a quiet place where there will be no interruptions. Then we can communicate with Him effectively. By speaking to Him, and listening to what He wants to say, we experience a unique fulfilment that can only come from knowing God, as well as receiving comfort, peace, encouragement, knowledge, understanding, wisdom, insight, correction, instruction, direction, renewal, refreshment, hope, and love that comes from having a close relationship with God.

Sometimes the Lord will have a lot to say; other times He may not have much to say. Sometimes He may not say anything immediately, but will speak in different ways throughout the day.

The Lord is everywhere all the time and constantly communicates with us in many ways. God communicates with us by:

- Speaking to us directly.
- Speaking to us through His Word.
- Speaking to us through other people.
- Speaking through us to other people.
- Speaking to us in our day-to-day activities.
- Speaking to us in circumstances and situations.
- Speaking to us through dreams and visions.

### **Barriers to Hearing from God & Doing His Will**

Many people don't seek God, and when we do, it is usually when we are in desperate need of help; and even then we tend to seek Him as a last resort after we have exhausted every other option. Reasons for this may be that we think our problems are our own responsibility, so we should solve them on our own; or we think that we can solve our problems without His help. We may think that God wouldn't hear us, let alone answer our prayers; or that we don't deserve to have our prayers answered, even if we were to ask Him. This could not be further from the truth. In fact, God will allow our problems to get completely out of control so we will ask for His help and learn to rely on Him. This does not mean that we leave everything up to Him. It means working together with Him in our day-to-day activities and relying on Him for guidance, especially when we do not know what to do next.

Our Father, our Lord Jesus, and our Holy Spirit, want to be involved in every aspect of our lives, including all of our problems, pressures, and predicaments. God wants us to live life with Him. He will deliver us out of every situation if we ask Him.

It may not be in our timing, or done the way we want, or think, but He will do it in the way that He thinks best. If He does not help us when we want, or the way that we want, He is using the situation to develop us in whatever way He thinks is best for us.

One of the Devil's greatest deceptions is making people believe that God does not exist, and the Devil does not exist. And for those who actually believe in God, the Devil would have them believe that they cannot hear from Him, let alone get to know Him personally. This may have been true, to some extent, if we were living in the days of the Old Testament, because back then God spoke directly to only a few people, like Moses. However, in the New Testament, this all changed when God revealed Himself, and spoke to many people. Jesus communicated with people, and established relationships while He was on the earth, and after He was resurrected. Jesus spoke to people who believed in who He was and what He was saying. He also spoke to people who would not believe in Him or what He was saying. But He spoke to many people; more to those who would listen, and even more to those who got to know Him. Jesus told them then; and He tells us now, through His Word, that if we know Him, we will know the Father, who will give His Spirit to live with us, and in us:

‘I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you do know Him, and have seen Him.’

‘If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive because it does not see Him nor know Him.

But you know Him because He lives with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I am coming to you.'

'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My Word, and My Father will love him; and We will come to him and make Our home with him.'

'All things were delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father; and who the Father is except the Son, and whomever the Son wills to reveal Him.'

Many people struggle to believe that they can hear from God, and many who would believe find it difficult to get alone with Him long enough to find out. The Devil knows this and will do anything he can to keep us apart from the Lord. The Devil will try to stop us having, and remaining in a close relationship with God.

The Devil did it with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and has been doing it ever since the beginning of creation.

He does this because he knows that when we draw near to God, He gives us power to overcome the Devil. The Devil fears this and will try to oppose us as we draw close to God.

The closer we draw near to God, the more opposition we will get from the Devil. However, the closer we draw near to God, the stronger and more powerful we become to overcome the Devil and his deceptions, and fulfill the will and purpose that God has for our lives in the present, in the future, and for all eternity:

"Do you think that it is in vain (to no purpose) that the Scripture says, 'The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously'? But He gives greater grace. Therefore, it says, 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.'

Be subject (submit) to God.  
Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you.  
Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.”

There are many ways that Satan tries to lure us away from God and they all involve temptation to sin. Sin is disobedience to God and it separates us from God. The Devil knows this, so he will tempt us to sin. We cannot fight the Devil on our own. We need God’s constant help to overcome sin when the Devil tempts us.

As we continually commit ourselves to God, trusting in Him, and relying upon Him, the Holy Spirit strengthens us whenever the Devil tempts us to sin. When Jesus was baptised, He was led by the Spirit into the desert, where the Devil tempted Him to sin:

“Having been baptised, Jesus went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and coming upon Him; and behold, a voice from the heavens, saying, ‘This is My Son, the Beloved, in whom I am well pleased.’

Then Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tempted by the Devil. And having fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards He hungered. And coming to Him, the tempter said, ‘If You are the Son of God, speak that these stones may become loaves (of bread).’ But answering, He said,

‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’ Then the Devil took Him into the holy city (Jerusalem), and set Him on the pinnacle (on top) of the temple, and said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, throw

Yourself down; for it is written (in the Scriptures), ‘He will command His angels concerning You,’ and ‘On their hands they shall bear (lift) You up, lest You strike Your foot against a stone.’”

Jesus said to him, ‘Again it is written (in the Scriptures), ‘You shall not tempt the Lord your God.’’ Again, the Devil took Him to a very high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, ‘All these things I will give to You, if You will fall down and worship me.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Go, Satan; for it is written (in the Scriptures), ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.’’ Then the Devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.”

Here Satan is called “[the tempter](#)”. One of the ways that Satan tries to separate us from God is to tempt us into doubting God. Doubt is a lack of faith; and without faith it is impossible for us to please God, let alone get close to Him; so the Devil will try to get us to doubt everything about God. For example, he will try to:

- make us believe that the Holy Bible is not the Word of God.
- make us believe that we have not been created by God.
- make us believe that God is not our Father.
- make us believe that if God exists, He does not love us.
- make us believe that Jesus Christ is not the Son of God.
- make us believe that Jesus did not die for our sins.
- make us believe that Jesus did not rise from the dead.
- make us believe that Jesus is not our Lord and Saviour.
- make us believe that we do not need the Holy Spirit of God.
- make us believe that we cannot know God personally.
- make us believe that God does not listen to us when we pray.
- make us believe that we cannot get help from God.
- make us believe that we cannot hear from God.
- make us believe that we cannot get close to God.
- make us believe that we cannot receive power from God.

A lack of belief starts with doubt. We must decide whether we will allow the Devil to influence us into believing that everything about God, and His Word, the Holy Bible, is not true. When we are tempted by the Devil to doubt God, we must seek the Lord and wait for Him to answer. He wants us to seek Him constantly. We may have questions like:

“Lord, am I hearing from You, or am I just speaking to myself; or is the Devil trying to make me doubt You? Can You please help me to hear and know Your voice?”

“Lord, am I doing what You want me to do, or what I want to do, or what the Devil is trying to get me to do? Can You please lead me to do what You want me to do?”

“Lord, am I fulfilling Your will for my life, my own will, or what the Devil wills for me to do? Can You please reveal Your will for my life and show me how to fulfill it?”

When we seek the Lord, we must be sensitive enough to listen to what He has to say. This comes through spending quality time with Him and staying in close contact with Him:

“Without faith it is impossible to please God. The one approaching (drawing near) Him must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder to the ones seeking Him out.”

If we take a good look around us, we can see how many things can so easily keep us apart from God; whether it be not having enough time to pray, read the Bible, fellowship with other people, especially christians, or to just sit alone in His presence.

The Devil knows that if anyone has a close relationship with God, he has no power over them; so he will use the things of this world to distract us from having a fulfilling relationship with God.

The Devil uses numerous things to distract us away from God and His purposes for us. This involves occupying our lives with things that we do not really need or things that take up our time. These will be things that bring temporary happiness, little rest, false hopes, minimal fulfilment, and involve excessive spending, and working long hours, which results in a constant lack of time to have any quality of life with family and friends, let alone any quality time with God; being self-sufficient, working in our own strength, and not tapping into God's power that is able to work in us and through us. We may even be involved in a good cause that has some value, but isn't God's will, which has eternal value.

The only way to know how the Devil uses the things of the world to distract us away from God is by getting to know God; hearing Him and following Him, distinguishing and discerning His quiet voice from all other voices and distractions in a busy world that is constantly trying to get our attention and take our time.

We are being deceived if we do not believe in God or refuse to believe what He says in His Word. We are also being deceived if we do not believe that God has a will and purpose for each and every one of us; and the Devil will do whatever he can to keep us from believing in God, knowing Him, and fulfilling His will.

God's will is to love Him and love one another, in obedience to Him and His Word, and remain close to Him; fulfilling His general overall purpose for all of us and His specific individual plan for each of us. When we do this, everything falls into place.

There is a great future for anyone who lives in companionship with Abba our Father, Jesus Christ our Lord, and our Holy Spirit, committing to Him, trusting in Him, and relying upon Him;

following Him, being obedient to His Word, fulfilling His will, and with His help, overcoming any barriers that get in our way.

Jesus promises that if we stay close to Him and obey His Word, He will answer our prayers, give us whatever we desire, and we will bear fruit that glorifies our Father:

‘If you remain in Me, and My words remain in you, you will ask whatever you desire, and it will be done for you. In this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and you will be My disciples.’

As we remain in Him, and His words remain in us, more of our prayers are answered, as our will comes into line with His will. As we get closer to God, and obey His Word, we become more inclined to ask for the very things that God wants us to ask for; both for ourselves, and for other people, according to His perfect will and timing, because our will becomes His will.

It is like a son or daughter making a request to their father, and receiving what they have requested, because they have been faithful and obedient; and it is their father’s will to give them what they have asked for; both for themselves, and for others.

In a very similar way, our Father blesses our faithfulness and obedience, and answers our prayers in many different ways, as we remain in His love, obey Him, and receive His fullness of joy:

‘As the Father loved Me, I also loved you; remain in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will remain in My love, as I kept My Father’s commandments, and remain in His love.

These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and your joy may be full. This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.’

We must believe everything that the Bible tells us. We must believe that we can speak to God, hear from Him, know Him, and follow Him. We must believe that He has a will and purpose for our life that He wants us to fulfill. We must believe that He rewards obedience and punishes disobedience; and we must make knowing Him, and fulfilling His will, our number one priority:

**“He who does the will of God abides forever.”**

‘Remain in Me, and I in you. As the branch is not able to bear fruit of itself, unless it remains in the vine, neither can you, unless you remain in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. He who remains in Me, and I in him, this one bears much fruit; because apart from Me, you are not able to do anything. If anyone does not remain in Me, he is cast (thrown) out as a branch and is withered (dried up); and they gather them and cast (throw) them into the fire, and they are burned.’

## **Finding the Right Balance**

As we seek to know our Lord Jesus Christ, (The Way of God), seek to obey the Bible, (The Word of God), and seek His purpose for our lives, (The Will of God), we receive all the help we need to do what He wants on a day-by-day, moment-by-moment basis. He wants us to have a wonderful, fulfilling relationship with Him.

Many christians lack the fulfilment that God wants to give because we are not close enough to Him. Some may have faith to live a good life and stay away from sin, but not enough faith to fully commit to God, have a close relationship with Him, and be fulfilled by Him. Being in a close relationship with God gives us a peace that is free from all the worries and anxieties in the world.

It is an inner rest where we are grounded, constantly reassured, and guided, by a stronger partner; the Holy Spirit living inside us.

A wonderful balance in life can be achieved by being in a genuine relationship with God, where we can have constant peace without being lazy and complacent, or overworked and chaotic. We can live in constant peace regardless of life's circumstances. The fullness of His peace in us will depend on the closeness, sensitivity, intimacy, and strength of our relationship with Him. This requires effort just like all relationships require effort if they are going to be strong and fulfilling.

When God speaks to us, He gives a deep sense of inner peace to confirm that the message is truly from Him. If we are not sure of what He is saying, or what He is showing us, we can simply ask Him to confirm the message and make it clearer. Then it will just be a matter of waiting for Him to respond and staying alert in the meantime. God will always respond when we ask anything of Him. If we don't think He has responded, we may have missed what He is trying to tell us, or we may need to keep seeking Him.

We must, however, be aware of false peace. When we have a strong desire to do something it can produce a false sense of peace that can actually come from our own desires or from the Devil.

Neither of these are God's desires for us. When we try to do anything solely on our own logic or reasoning, or anything that is in opposition to God's character, we won't have lasting peace, and it will play on our conscience. However, the closer we get to God, the more we come to realise who it is that has been guiding us; our own desires, the Devil, or God and His perfect will for us. Whether it's our own desires or the Devil's influence, God's intentions will be revealed when we continually seek Him for the answers. As we continue to keep our mind set on God, He directs our life, and gives us lasting peace:

“The mind of (to set the mind on) the flesh (the sinful nature) is death, but the mind of (to set the mind on) the Spirit is life and peace;”

“You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed (focused) on You, because he trusts in You.”

We should never move quickly on important decisions, but wait for the Holy Spirit to speak to us and guide us accordingly, even if it requires asking Him to confirm the message a number of times to make sure we are hearing from God correctly, and not relying on our own thoughts and emotions, and not being deceived by the Devil; and not allowing ourselves to become anxious for an answer, but waiting patiently for God’s answer and direction.

Peace from God requires balance with the rest of life’s responsibilities: marriage, family, work, friends, social life, etc. When our life is centred on God, we can rest in all of its twists and turns, whatever they are. Jesus tells us that we can have rest from our labour, and rest in our labour, when we rest in Him:

‘Come to Me, all you who labour and are being burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, because I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.’

Jesus wants to give us rest from our labour, and rest from our burdens, so we may be refreshed and recover strength. He tells us to come to Him, so we may get rest from work and worry:

‘Come to Me, all you who labour and are being burdened, and I will give you rest.’

Jesus also wants to give us rest in our work by co-operating, and working in harmony with Him, without getting tired, worried, or stressed. He tells us that we can rest in our work by resting in Him because His yoke is easy and His burden is light:

‘Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, because I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.’

Jesus wants us to have complete rest; rest from our work and worries, and rest in our work without worries; and both can be done in harmony with Him when we rest in Him and rely on Him. The rest that Jesus gives may be emphasised as follows:

‘Come to Me, all you who labour and are being burdened, and I will give you rest *from your labour, and rest from your worries, so you may recover and be refreshed.* Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, because I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls; *resting in your work, free from worry, by resting in Me.* For My yoke is easy and My burden is light, *that you may endure, persevere, overcome, and be fully developed in readiness for eternity.*’

Jesus wants us to rest in Him when we are working, and when we are relaxing; when we are in need, and when we are satisfied; when we are hurting, and when we are healed; in happiness, and in sadness; in times of trouble, and in times of peace; when we cry out to Him, and when we give thanks to Him; resting in Him everywhere, and in everything, all the time:

“Pray without ceasing.”

“The Lord is near. Do not be anxious for anything, but in everything by prayer, and by petition (earnest and specific), with thanksgivings, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

The Lord has a marvelous way of recovering, repairing, restoring, refreshing, renewing, rejuvenating, and replenishing us when we commit to Him, trust in Him, and rely upon Him:

‘Peace I leave to you; My peace I give you; not as the world gives, I give you. Let you not be troubled in your heart, nor let it be fearful.’

Jesus tells us to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and we will be given all that we need:

‘I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, what you may eat, or what you may drink; nor for your body, what you may put on. Is life not more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of heaven; they do not sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And who of you being anxious can add one cubit to his stature (one hour to his life).’

And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they do not labour, nor do they spin; yet I say to you, that not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed as one of these. But if the grass of the field which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, God clothes, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith.

Therefore, do not be anxious, saying, ‘What may we eat?’ or ‘What may we drink?’ or ‘What may clothe us?’ For the nations seek after all these things. Your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these. But seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.’

The right balance in life can only be found in unity with God. Finding the right balance starts by seeking the kingdom of God and receiving His salvation that gives us eternal life:

“If you confess (acknowledge) with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes to righteousness, and with the mouth one confesses to salvation.”

We find the right balance by knowing God and doing His will. The Father reveals His will as we put Him first in our lives, through our relationship with His Son, Jesus, in unity with the Holy Spirit. By focusing ourselves, and concentrating our efforts, on centering our lives on God, we obtain His righteousness, and become holy as He is holy; seeking peace from Him and with one another, out of our love for Him and love for one another:

“Eagerly pursue peace (strive for peace) with all (people), and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord; watching diligently (watching out carefully for one another) lest anyone falls short and fails to obtain the grace of God.”

‘The time has been fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has drawn near. Repent and believe in the Gospel.’

## **God's Promises**

People believe that we get what we give out, karma, or what goes around comes around. This is true; however, it is a truth that comes from God; and a promise that is contained in His Word:

“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. The one sowing to his flesh will reap corruption (destruction), but the one sowing to the Spirit will reap eternal life.”

Reaping what we sow is an eternal truth; a promise from God. It starts with receiving the Word of God and responding to it. We obtain God's promises when we receive what He has said in His Word and respond to it the way that He wants us to.

God gives us the greatest and most precious promises along with everything we need to respond to Him and receive them:

“His divine power has given to us all things pertaining to life and godliness, through the acknowledgment of Him who called us through glory and virtue (excellence), by which He has given to us very great and precious promises, so that through these you may be partakers (sharers) of the divine nature, escaping from the corruption in the world by lust (sinful desires). ”

For this very reason, bringing in all diligence (making every effort), supply your faith with virtue (excellence), and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with endurance, and endurance with godliness, and godliness with brotherly kindness, and brotherly kindness with love.

For if these things are in you and abounding, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in acknowledgment of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the one in whom these things are not present is blind, being short-sighted, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent (make every effort) to make sure of your calling and choice; for by doing these things, you will never fall. For so richly will be supplied to you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

## Perpetuity

If we know God, we will be with Him forever:

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have beheld, and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life; the Life was manifested (revealed), and we have seen, and testify to it, and announce to you the eternal Life, which was with the Father and was manifested (revealed) to us. What we have seen, and what we have heard, we announce to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ. And we write these things to you, that your joy may be full.”

‘This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.’

‘This is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone beholding (acknowledging) the Son, and believing into Him, may have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.’

## **Preservation**

**If we** believe in who Jesus Christ is and everything that He has done for us; **and** believe into Him (committing to Him, trusting in Him, and relying upon Him), **we will** be saved:

‘For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that everyone believing into Him may not perish, but have eternal life.’

‘I am the resurrection and the life; the one believing into Me, even if he should die, shall live. And everyone living and believing into Me shall never die.’

‘My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. I give eternal life to them, and they shall not perish unto the age (never be destroyed), and no one shall seize them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all, and no one is able to seize them out of My Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.’

**If we** remain strong in our faith, **we will** be preserved by the power of God, **and** our reward **will be** preserved in heaven:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the One, according to His great mercy, having regenerated us (given us a rebirth) to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible (will never perish), undefiled (pure), and unfading, having been kept in the heavens for you, who by God’s power are being guarded, through faith, to a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, grieving in manifold (various) trials, that the proving (trustworthiness) of your faith, being much more precious than perishing gold, having been proved (tested) through fire, may be found to praise, and honour, and glory, at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom not having seen, you love; in whom not yet seeing, but believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable (inexpressible); and having been glorified, obtaining the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”

### Presence

If we repent and turn to God, all of our sins **will be** forgiven, and we **will** experience His presence:

“Repent, therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,”

If we draw near to God, we **will** be filled, **and will** overflow:

“ ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. The one believing into Me, as the Scripture (Old Testament) has said, out of his belly will flow rivers of living water.’ He said this concerning the Spirit, whom the ones believing into Him were about to receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”

“You will make known to me the path of life.  
In Your presence is fullness of joy.  
In Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”

## **Partnership**

**If we** remain connected to God, **we will** be partners with Him:

‘Remain in Me, and I in you. As the branch is not able to bear fruit of itself, unless it remains in the vine, neither can you, unless you remain in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. He who remains in Me, and I in him, this one bears much fruit;’

**If we** do whatever Jesus commands us, **we are** His friends:

‘You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his lord does; but I have called you friends, because all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.’

## **Prognosis**

**If we** get to know God, **He gives** us an awareness of our overall well-being, and provides a thorough examination of our mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual condition. He reveals the areas in us, and in our lives, that are in need of repair and renewal:

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”

His prognosis reveals our true condition, and the future effects, if it is not dealt with:

“For the Word of the cross is folly (foolishness) to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”

## Prescription

**If we** turn to God, **He will** heal the hurts caused by the effects of sin; both our sins, and the hurts caused by other people's sins, replacing them with His love and fulfilment:

“He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their sorrows.”

**If we** believe what He has prescribed for us, **He will** heal whatever we need to have healed:

“Some were persuaded by the things being said; others disbelieved. And disagreeing with one another, they were dismissed, after Paul having said one word (statement): ‘Well did the Holy Spirit speak through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers, saying, ‘Go to this people and say, ‘Hearing you will hear (listen), but will not understand; and seeing you will see, but will not perceive; for the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing (unable to listen), and they have closed their eyes; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear (listen) with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them.’ ’ Therefore, let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the nations, and they will hear (listen).”

The Lord may not heal everything we want healed when we want to be healed; however, He will heal what we need healed, how and when He thinks best, according to His perfect will, and for our eternal benefit.

He is everything and all we need to be healed and made whole; however, we must turn to Him to get our prescription filled.

## **Pardon**

**If we** seek God, **and** repent of sin, **He will** have mercy on us:

“Seek Jehovah (the Lord) while He may be found; call on Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to Jehovah (the Lord), and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”

**If we** are merciful to others, **we will** receive mercy:

‘Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.’

**If we** confess our sins, **He will** forgive us, **and** help us to stop:

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous that He may forgive us the sins, and may cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

**If we** forgive one another, **God will** forgive us:

‘If you forgive men their transgressions (sins), your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you will not forgive men their transgressions (sins), neither will your Father forgive you.’

‘Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven.’

“Let us, therefore, draw near with confidence to the throne of grace (God’s undeserved favour), that we may receive mercy, and we may find grace in time of needing help.”

## **Peace**

**If we** always seek God, **He will** always keep us in perfect peace:

“You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed (focused) on You, because he trusts in You.”

“The Lord is near. Do not be anxious for anything, but in everything by prayer, and by petition (earnest and specific), with thanksgivings, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

‘Peace I leave to you; My peace I give you; not as the world gives, I give you. Let you not be troubled in your heart, nor let it be fearful.’

‘ ‘For I know the plans that I have for you,’ says Jehovah (the Lord), ‘plans of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.’ ’

## **Provision**

**If we** rely on God for our needs, **He will** satisfy them:

‘Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone asking receives, and the one seeking finds, and to the one knocking it will be opened.

Or what man of you, if his son asks him for a loaf (of bread), will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those asking Him.'

**If we** seek the kingdom of God **and** His righteousness, all that we need **will be** given to us:

'I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, what you may eat, or what you may drink; nor for your body, what you may put on.

Is life not more than food, and the body more than clothing?

Look at the birds of heaven; they do not sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

And who of you being anxious can add one cubit to his stature (one hour to his life). And why are you anxious about clothing?

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they do not labour, nor do they spin; yet I say to you, that not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed as one of these.

But if the grass of the field which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, God clothes, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith.

Therefore, do not be anxious, saying, 'What may we eat?' or 'What may we drink?' or 'What may clothe us?' For the nations seek after all these things. Your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these. But seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.'

## Plenty

**If we** are generous to others, **God will** be generous to us:

“There is one who scatters, yet increases more; but another withholds what he should give, and comes to poverty. The blessing (generous) soul is made fat (will prosper), and he who waters will himself be watered.”

‘Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be put into your bosom (given to you). For the measure that you measure will be measured back to you.’

“The one sowing sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one sowing in blessings will also reap blessings. Each one as he purposes in his heart, not of sadness (reluctance) or of distress (pressure), for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound to every good work.”

**If we** remain in Him, **and** His words remain in us, **He will** give us the desires of our hearts:

‘If you remain in Me, and My words remain in you, you will ask whatever you desire, and it will be done for you.’

“Now to Him who is able, beyond all things, to do super abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power working in us,”

## **Purpose**

**If we** love God, and seek His purpose, **He will** work everything for our eternal good:

“And we know that to the ones loving God, all things work together for good, to those being called according to purpose.”

**If we** are being transformed by Him, **we will** know His will:

“Do not be conformed to this age (this world), but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove (know and approve) what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

**If we** place all our trust in the Lord, **He will** direct our steps:

“Trust in Jehovah (the Lord) with all your heart; and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him (seeking, understanding, knowing, and obeying Him), and He shall direct (make straight) your paths.”

**If we** do the will of God, **we will** be with Him forever:

“Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him, because all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”

## Perspective

If **we** understand God's purposes, **we will** see things from His eternal viewpoint, **and** the eternal future He has planned for us:

“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, for you to know the hope of His calling, and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us; the ones believing,”

“And they sing a new song, saying, ‘Worthy are You to receive the scroll, and to open its seals, because You were slain, and purchased us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and made us kings and priests to our God, and we shall reign upon the earth.’ ”

If **we** serve in this life, **we will** be rewarded in the next:

‘Whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first, he shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.’

‘Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on the earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break through and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break through and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.’

“Set your mind on things that are above,  
not on things that are on the earth.”

“Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead,  
and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us,  
and washed us from our sins in His blood, and made us kings  
and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and  
might to the ages of the ages (forever and ever). Amen.”

## Power

**If we** have God’s Spirit, **and** practice righteousness, **He will**  
remain in us, and **we will** have no desire to sin:

“The one practicing righteousness is righteous, even as He  
is righteous. The one practicing sin is of the Devil, because  
the Devil sins from the beginning. For this (reason) the Son of  
God was revealed, to undo the works of the Devil. Everyone  
born of God does not sin, because His seed remains in him,  
and he is not able to sin, because he has been born of God.”

**If we** have the Spirit of God, **we will** bear the fruit of the Spirit:

“The fruit of the Spirit is: Love, joy, peace, long-suffering,  
kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control;”

**If we** remain in Him, **we will** bear much fruit:

‘I am the vine; you are the branches. He who remains in Me,  
and I in him, this one bears much fruit; because apart  
from Me, you are not able to do anything.’

**If we** are humble, **He will** give us grace:

“God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

**If we** love, **He gives** us power to overcome fear:

“God did not give us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of self-control.”

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear,”

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

### **Perseverance**

**If we** wait on God, **He will** give us strength to endure:

“Have you not known? Have you not heard? Jehovah (the Lord), the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not faint nor grows weary. His understanding is unsearchable.

He gives power to the faint, and to him with no strength, He increases might. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall surely stumble; but the ones waiting for Jehovah (the Lord) will renew their strength. They will go up with wings like eagles; they will run and not get weary; they will walk and not faint.”

“Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has great reward. You have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise.”

**If we** endure temptation, trials, and testing, through our love for the Lord, **we will** be given the crown of life:

“Blessed is the man who endures temptation (trials that have a beneficial purpose), because having been approved (having passed the test) he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those loving Him.”

**If we** endure persecution, **we will** have great reward in heaven:

‘Blessed are you when they reproach (abuse) you, and persecute you (treat you badly because you believe in Me), and say all kinds of evil against you, lying, for My sake. Rejoice and be glad, because your reward is great in heaven,’

### **Perfection**

**If we** are one with God, **we will** be made perfect as one:

‘That all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in you; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You have given Me, I have given them, that they may be one as We are one; I in them, and You in Me; that they may be perfected into one, and that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You loved Me.

Father, those whom You have given to Me, I desire that where I am, they may also be with Me, that they may behold My glory which You gave Me, because You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

Righteous Father, the world does not know You, but I know You, and these know that You sent Me; and I made known to them Your name, and will make it known, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.’

“By one offering (sacrifice) He has perfected forever (justified) the ones being sanctified (the ones being made holy).”

‘You then, be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect.’

“The One having begun a good work in you will fulfill (complete) it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

“Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement (filthiness) of the flesh, and of spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

### **Plethora**

**If we** enter by Jesus, **we are** given abundant life:

‘I am the door. If anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come, except that he may steal, and kill, and destroy. I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly.’

**If we** overcome, **we will** inherit an abundance of all things:

‘The one overcoming, this one will be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the scroll of life; and I will acknowledge his name before My Father, and before His angels.’

‘The one overcoming, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name.’

‘To the one overcoming, I will give to him to eat from the hidden manna (food from heaven), and I will give to him a white stone, and on the stone a new name having been written, which no one knows except the one receiving it.’

‘To the one overcoming, I will give to him to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.’

‘The one overcoming, I will give to him to sit with Me in My throne, as I also overcame and sat with My Father in His throne.’

‘The one overcoming, and keeping My works to the end, I will give him authority over the nations.’

‘The one overcoming shall inherit all things, and I will be God to him, and he shall be a son to Me.’

### **If we know The Lord - The Way of God:**

‘I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life.’

‘This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.’

‘My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.’

## **If we obey His Word - The Word of God:**

“And by this we know that we have known Him, if we keep His commandments. The one saying, ‘I have known Him,’ and not keeping His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His Word, truly in this one, the love of God has been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him. The one saying he remains in Him ought himself walk in the same manner as He walked.”

‘Blessed are those hearing the Word of God and keeping it.’

## **If we do His Will - The Will of God:**

“Now may the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep, in the blood of the eternal covenant, our Lord Jesus, perfect you in every good work to do His will, doing in you that which is well pleasing before Him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory to the ages of the ages (forever and ever). Amen.”

“Because the time has come to begin the judgment from the house of God; and if firstly from us, what will be the end of the ones disobeying the Gospel of God? And if the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and sinner appear? Therefore, those suffering according to the will of God, as to a faithful Creator, let them commit their souls in well-doing.”

## **He will fulfill His Promises - The Promises of God:**

“As many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes.”

“Without faith it is impossible to please God. The one approaching (drawing near) Him must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder to the ones seeking Him out.”

The wisest decision we can ever make during the course of our lives is to surrender ourselves in total submission to Jesus Christ. Surrendering to God does not mean that we are weak. It means approaching God and admitting that we are weak, in our own strength, to live the way that He wants us to live, and be who He wants us to be. When we draw near to Him, He makes us strong in Him, as we commit to Him, trust in Him, and rely upon Him, to do what we cannot do ourselves.

When we surrender ourselves to God, we will never have to surrender to anyone or anything. Everyone surrenders themselves to someone or something, and we are free to choose who and what we surrender ourselves to. However, we are not free from the consequences of our decisions.

Surrendering to God is not easy; however, when we submit ourselves to Him and His authority, allowing Him to take control of our lives, we are safeguarded against the consequences of our own wrong decisions; decisions that have eternal consequences.

Jesus is the supreme example of the perfect man completely surrendering Himself to God and His will regardless of the difficulty. On the night before Him being tortured and crucified to death on the cross, Jesus selflessly and courageously committed Himself to the Father’s will:

‘Father, if You will, take away this cup from Me;  
but not My will, but Yours, be done.’

“He who does the will of God abides forever.”

**Receiving salvation is believing that Jesus Christ  
is the Son of God, who through His life, death, and  
resurrection, sacrificed Himself to save us from our sins;**

**AND**

**surrendering our lives to Him;  
submitting ourselves to Him, His Word, and His will,**

**BY**

**believing into Him (committing to Him,  
trusting in Him, and relying upon Him) continually,**

**THROUGH**

**seeking Him (wanting Him),**

**understanding Him (hearing from Him, making sense  
of what He is saying, and responding to Him),**

**knowing Him (being connected with Him),**

**AND**

**following Him (obeying Him) in every part of our life**

**IN**

**a close, purposeful, and  
intimately personal relationship with Him.**

## **6. Retaining Salvation - Remaining in God's Grace**

While the Gospels and Acts tell us about salvation and provide instruction on what we must do to receive it, much of the rest of the New Testament provides instruction on what we must do to retain it. The instructions are by way of letters written to churches that had been established, and christians spread abroad, telling them to guard their salvation, and strongly urging them not to take it for granted:

**“How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?”**

Salvation can be rejected, neglected, and thrown away, after it has been received. We are told to work out our salvation and take it seriously:

**“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,”**

Working out our own salvation means everyone is responsible for their salvation, and we must continually work on our salvation so we can be totally free from sin, and be holy, as God is holy.

The Bible makes it very clear that we have no guarantee of entering the kingdom of God, or inheriting His kingdom, without a genuine commitment to obeying His Word and doing His will:

**“The time has come to begin the judgment from the house of God; and if firstly from us, what will be the end of the ones disobeying the Gospel of God? And if the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and sinner appear? Therefore, those suffering according to the will of God, as to a faithful Creator, let them commit their souls in well-doing.”**

As we partner with God, He gives us everything we need to obey His Word, fulfill His will, and receive His promises:

“In Him, you also, hearing the Word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation, in whom also believing, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is an earnest (pledge) of our inheritance to the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.”

The word “earnest” means, “something of value deposited by the purchaser, and forfeited if the purchase is not completed.”

In English Bible translations, “earnest” is translated as being a “pledge”, a “guarantee”, or a “deposit guaranteeing”.

For an easier understanding of the meaning of the word “earnest”, it could be said that, “God, in giving us the Holy Spirit, is giving an earnest (a pledge, a guarantee, or a deposit guaranteeing) an eternal inheritance to those believing into Jesus.”

It must be noted, however, that the guarantee of an eternal inheritance is not to be perceived as being an unconditional one. Believing in Jesus is a real belief that has conditions, and serious repercussions, if we don’t satisfy them.

His words apply to us today just as much as they did back when christianity was first established:

‘Heaven and earth will pass away,  
but My words will never pass away.’

He tells us that salvation is hard work, but is worth every effort. He describes work as “toil”, and “labour”, but has great rewards. He warns that the gate is narrow, and there are few who find it, but it leads to life:

‘Enter through the narrow gate, because wide is the gate, and broad (easy) is the way leading to destruction, and many are those going in through it; because narrow is the gate and troublesome (difficult) is the way leading to life, and few are those finding it.’

If the gate is narrow, and the way which leads to life is difficult, we must not take the law of the Lord lightly. Christian faith is not a mere formality whereby we escape hell. We must never forget that the cross was a double exchange. Jesus died so that our sins could be forgiven; **AND** so we could receive His righteousness. Many christians believe that salvation is an insurance policy where Jesus has paid the premium and we receive immunity from being thrown into hell. Salvation, however, is not an unconditional guarantee from God.

The first letter of John (1 John) identifies the children of God and what we must do to remain in Him. It highlights certain conditions that reveal who the children of God are. They relate to our belief about God and who He is, whether we have the Spirit of God, our obedience to God’s commands, our love for Him, and our love for one another.

### **The Test of Belief**

Believing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God is the first test to prove that we are children of God. When Jesus came down from heaven to suffer and die to take away the sins of the world, He was fully human, yet fully God. This may be difficult to grasp because we cannot imagine how He could be both at the same time. When Jesus came to earth, there were things that He would not do, unless, or until, He received permission from the Father.

He emptied Himself of privileges and power in complete submission to the Father's will, but He never ceased to be God.

God the Son was equal with God the Father, and God the Holy Spirit, with all the glory of heaven. He chose to be a man, knowing that He would suffer, be tortured and killed, and be resurrected, when He came to earth as man, and as God Himself:

“I did not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth.

Who is the liar, but the one denying that Jesus is the Christ (the Messiah). This is the antichrist, the one denying the Father and the Son. Everyone denying the Son neither has the Father; the one confessing (acknowledging) the Son has the Father also.”

“And this is the witness (testimony), that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. The one having the Son has life; the one who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I wrote these things to you, who are believing in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may believe in the name of the Son of God.”

### **The Test of the Spirit**

If we don't have the Spirit of God, we are not children of God. The Holy Spirit inside of us testifies that we are children of God; not the church, not a particular christian denomination, or anyone who interprets the Bible in any way, other than its true meaning.

The condition of having the Holy Spirit is a crucial test; because if we don't have the Spirit of God, we still belong to the Devil:

“The one keeping His commands remains in Him, and He in him.

And by this we know that He remains in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us. Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone forth into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses (acknowledges) that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God. And every spirit that does not confess (acknowledge) that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God; this is the antichrist which you heard is coming, and now is already in the world.”

### **The Test of Obedience**

Obedience to God’s Word reveals who belongs to Him. If we keep turning away from sin, and keep practicing righteousness, in partnership with God, we have the constant assurance that we are in His will, and our salvation is secure. However, anyone who continues to practice sin, is not a child of God; and anyone who does not practice righteousness will not remain a child of God:

“This is the message which we have heard from Him, and we announce to you: God is light, and no darkness is in Him - none. If we say that we have fellowship (partnership) with Him, and we walk in darkness, we lie and are not practicing the truth.

But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship (partnership) with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous that He may forgive us the sins, and may cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His Word is not in us.

My little children, I write these things to you, so that you do not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an advocate (intercessor) with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous One. He is a propitiation (a sacrifice necessary to remove God's wrath) for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.

And by this we know that we have known Him, if we keep His commandments. The one saying, 'I have known Him,' and not keeping His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His Word, truly in this one, the love of God has been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him. The one saying he remains in Him ought himself walk in the same manner as He walked."

"Everyone practicing sin practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. And you know that He was revealed to bear our sins, and sin is not in Him. Everyone remaining in Him does not sin.

Everyone sinning has neither seen Him nor known Him.

Little children, let no one lead you astray. The one practicing righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous.

The one practicing sin is of the Devil, because the Devil sins from the beginning. For this (reason) the Son of God was revealed, to undo the works of the Devil. Everyone born of God does not sin, because His seed remains in him, and he is not able to sin, because he has been born of God. By this the children of God and the children of the Devil are revealed. Everyone not practicing righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother, because this is the message you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another."

## **The Test of Love**

Our love for God, and our love for one another, proves that we are children of God. If we have the love of God from the Holy Spirit of God, we will love people who are not easy to love, because we're children of the Father, and the love of the Father and Jesus is in us. Our love for God and our love for one another go hand-in-hand. When we know God, we will love like He does:

“Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God, and everyone loving has been born of God and knows God.

The one not loving does not know God, because God is love.

By this the love of God was manifested (revealed) in us, because His Son, the Only begotten, God has sent into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be a propitiation (a sacrifice necessary to remove God's wrath) for our sins.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”

As we build our relationship with God, and learn to continually abide in Him, over time we will turn away from sin, sin less, and become sinless; and we will love one another as God loves us.

When we sin, we can ask God to forgive our sins, and they will be forgiven. He knows our heart, so He knows when we ask for forgiveness if we are sincerely sorry, and if we genuinely want to turn away from sin, and are willing to receive His help to do it.

The first letter of John affirms that we will not sin if we are born of God, know Him, and remain in Him; emphasising the importance of abiding in Him, turning away from sin, and loving one another. The closer we draw near to Him, the more we will be like Him; and when we abide in Him, we will not sin:

“We know that everyone having been born of God does not sin; but the one born of God keeps (guards) himself, and the evil one does not touch him. We know we are of God, and the whole world lies in evil. And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, that we may know the true One (know Him who is true); and we are in the true One (in Him who is true), in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.”

The second letter of Paul to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians) tells us to examine and test ourselves to see if our faith is genuine:

“Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith. Prove (test) yourselves. Or do you, yourselves, not know that Jesus Christ is in you, unless you are rejected (fail the test).”

We need to examine ourselves regularly to see if we are being obedient to God and His Word. Examining ourselves, however, can be difficult as we tend to have self-centred motives which justify our thoughts and actions. This in turn compromises our obedience to God and our being guided by Him.

We need to be honest with ourselves, and be honest with God, if we are going to be properly examined. When he was writing the Psalms, David asked God to examine him, and test him:

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; try (test) me and know my thoughts; and see if any wicked way is in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

Many people, especially christians, justify their thoughts and actions, and misunderstand God’s grace in many different ways.

They minimise the effects of sin (unrighteousness); believe their good deeds alone will get them to heaven (self-righteousness); wrongly apply God's Word to their lives (mixed-righteousness).

We need to understand God's grace according to His Word. This means not under-estimating sin, not over-estimating good deeds done for others, and not misapplying the Word of God to our lives. There is a balance in God's Word that requires repentance (turning away from sin) as well as loving one another (doing good deeds). For example, doing good deeds for others while continuing in sin is useless; and being without sin, but not doing anything for others is equally useless:

“Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?  
Let it not be! (Absolutely not!)”

“The one knowing to do good and not  
doing it, it is sin to him.”

We cannot remain in God's grace by neglecting sin or by neglecting doing good deeds for others. We cannot remain in God's grace without obeying all of His law. Everything we do must be in balance in accordance with the Word of God; and this can only be done by knowing Him and following Him.

We can't do what God wants us to do, according to His Word, without drawing near to Him. This means remaining close to Him day-by-day on a moment-by-moment basis.

Jesus provided the perfect example of being one with the Father when He lived in constant fellowship with the Father and with the Holy Spirit. He lived in perfect union with the Father and with the Holy Spirit, providing the perfect example to His disciples, and all who believe in Him, fulfilling the perfect will of God.

## **Misunderstanding God's Grace**

God's grace (His favour toward us, even though we have done nothing to earn it or deserve it) can be easily misunderstood if the truth of His Word is not properly understood. This results in God being misrepresented because His Word has been misinterpreted.

If we fail to understand God's Word, in particular, God's grace, and how it applies to us, our salvation can be placed at risk:

“For by grace you are having been saved (you have been saved, and are being saved), through faith, and this not of you, it is the gift of God.”

Salvation is the grace of God, and a gift from God, to **redeem** us from our sins, **remove** sin from us, and **restore** us to Himself:

“Repent (turn to God, and transform your lives), and be baptised, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”

“The Holy Spirit fell on all those hearing the Word, and the faithful of the circumcision were amazed, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out on the nations also.”

“When Simon saw that the Holy Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, saying, 'Give me this authority (power) also, that on whomever I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.'

But Peter said to him, ‘May your silver be with you into perdition (may your money perish with you), because you thought you could possess the gift of God through money.’”

The Holy Spirit is a gift from God, given by the grace of God, to anyone believing into His Son, Jesus, and His sacrifice for our salvation. Like any other gift, the Holy Spirit must be utilised by the person receiving Him to obtain any benefit from Him. He has unlimited power to restore our relationship with God; however, this requires co-operation on our part, and on God’s; and like any other relationship, it requires work on our part, and on His part.

When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we are no longer separated from God, as His righteousness is placed inside of us.

As the relationship grows, His righteousness progresses in us, and flows out of us, as the Holy Spirit helps us have a close, loving, and intimately personal relationship with God, and love one another, fulfilling God’s general overall purpose for all of us, and His specific individual plan for each one of us.

God wants to live with us, in us, and through us, so we may know the fullness of His love, and give His love to one another. He wants to live with us, in us, and through us, to bless us, and be a blessing to one another. He wants to live with us, in us, and through us, to be one with Him, and one with one another.

We must have God’s righteousness inside of us, progressing in us, and flowing out of us, if our salvation is to remain secure. Salvation cannot be obtained, and cannot be retained, without the Holy Spirit, and His continual work in us, and through us.

The only way to have God’s righteousness progressing in us, and flowing out of us, is to keep building a close relationship with Him. If we don’t draw near to Him, and stay close to Him, we can easily move away from His righteousness.

## **Minimising Sin – Unrighteousness**

People justify committing sin, thinking that other people do the same things, or worse things, comparing themselves to what others do. They may think to themselves, “What I am doing is not so bad compared to what other people do”, or “I’ve never done anything really bad; I’m not what you would call a bad person”, or “I am generally a good person; I do good things for other people”. Others don’t believe sin exists at all. Even christians who know that sin exists, and believe God is a God of love, think He will keep forgiving them, without any responsibility on their part.

The problem is that we use the world’s ways as our benchmark, and not God’s standard according to His Word, the Holy Bible.

Jesus taught the multitudes to enter into eternal life through the narrow gate, warning that the way leading to life was difficult:

‘Enter through the narrow gate, because wide is the gate, and broad (easy) is the way leading to destruction, and many are those going in through it; because narrow is the gate and troublesome (difficult) is the way leading to life, and few are those finding it.’

He says that if we continue to obey His Word, we will become free from sin:

“Jesus said to the Jews who believed in Him, ‘If you abide (continue) in My Word, you are truly My disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.’ They answered Him, ‘We are Abraham’s seed (descendants), and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that You say, ‘You will become free’?’

Jesus answered them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone practicing sin is a slave to sin. But the slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. Therefore, if the Son sets you free, you are really free.’ ”

Jesus warned people who think they will enter into the kingdom of God, but will not be allowed to enter because of sin:

‘Struggle (strive and fight) to enter in through the narrow gate, because many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able (will not have enough strength). From the time the Master of the house rises up, and He shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us.’ Answering, He will say to you, ‘I do not know (approve) you, where you are from.’ Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank before You, and You taught in our streets.’ And He will say, ‘I tell you, I do not know (approve) you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of unrighteousness.’

There will be weeping (crying) and gnashing (grinding) of teeth, when you see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, but you being thrust outside.

They will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline (sit) in the kingdom of God. And, behold, there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last.’

Jesus told the people that many will expect to enter into the kingdom of God; however, they will be bitterly disappointed when Jesus tells them, He never knew them (never approved them), and to get away from Him, because they continued to sin.

Jesus even warned what will happen to people who have been given authority to speak on His behalf, heal the sick, and perform miracles, if they continue to practice sin. They will assume that because they work in the power of God, they will enter into the kingdom of heaven. However, they will be rejected, because they presumed on God's grace, and didn't turn away from sin:

‘Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter into the kingdom of heaven, but the ones doing the will of My Father in the heavens. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name do mighty works?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew (approved) you; depart from Me, you working (practicing) lawlessness.’

Therefore, everyone who hears these words from Me, and does them, will be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock; the rain came down, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house; but it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. And everyone hearing these words from Me, and not doing them, will be compared to a foolish man who built his house on the sand; the rain came down, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it.’

When Jesus healed a man, He told him to sin no more:

“There is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which in Hebrew is called Bethesda, having five porches (covered areas protected from the weather). In these were lying a great multitude of the weak, blind, lame, withered, waiting for the stirring of the water.

For an angel at a certain time descended into the pool and agitated (moved) the water. Then the first one entering, after the agitation (moving) of the water, became well of whatever disease held him.

And there was a certain man there being in infirmity (weakness) thirty-eight years. Jesus, seeing him lying there, and knowing that he had been lying there a long time, said to him, ‘**Do you desire to become whole (well)?**’ The weak man answered him, ‘Lord, I have no man, when the water is agitated (moved), to put me into the pool; but while I am coming, another goes down before me.’ Jesus said to him, ‘**Rise, take up your mattress (bed) and walk.**’ And immediately the man became whole (well), took up his mattress (bed), and walked.

It was a Sabbath (day of rest) that day. Therefore, the Jews said to him having been healed, ‘It is a Sabbath (day of rest); it is not lawful for you to take up your mattress (bed).’ He answered them, ‘He who made me whole (well), that one said to me, ‘**Take up your mattress (bed) and walk.**’ ’ They asked him, ‘Who is the man saying to you, ‘**Take up your mattress (bed) and walk?**’ But the one healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, a multitude being in the place.

After these things, Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, ‘**Behold, you have become whole (well); sin no more lest something worse may happen to you.**’ ”

When Jesus healed a woman, He told her to sin no more:

“At dawn He again arrived in the temple, and all the people came to Him; and sitting down He taught them.

And the scribes and the pharisees (religious leaders) brought to Him a woman having been caught in adultery; and standing her in the midst (before Him), they said to Him, ‘Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act, committing adultery.

Now, in the law, Moses commanded us that such be stoned (stones be thrown at the offender until death). What, therefore, do You say?’ This they said, testing Him, that they might have to accuse Him. But Jesus bent down and wrote with His finger on the ground. And when they continued questioning Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, ‘The sinless of you (whoever is without sin among you) let him cast (throw) the first stone at her.’ And again, bending down, He wrote on the ground. And hearing, and being convicted by their conscience, they went out one by one, beginning with the older ones, to the last.

And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst (before Him). And Jesus, raising Himself up, and seeing no one but the woman, said to her, ‘Woman, where are those, your accusers? Did no one sentence (condemn) you?’ She said, ‘No one, Lord.’ And Jesus said to her, ‘Neither do I sentence (condemn) you; go and sin no more.’ ”

Paul’s letter to the Romans urges us not to continue in sin:

“Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Let it not be! (Absolutely not!) We who died to sin, how shall we still live in it? Or are you ignorant that all of us who have been baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death? Therefore, we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united with Him in the likeness of His death, so also we shall be in the resurrection; knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be made useless (destroyed), so that we no longer serve sin. For the one who has died has been justified (declared righteous) from sin.

Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more; death no longer rules over Him. For in

that He died (when He died), He died to sin once for all, but in that He lives (the life He lives), He lives to God.

So you also, reckon (consider) yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but living to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Do not let sin reign (rule) in your mortal body, to obey it in its lusts (desires). Do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as living from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not lord it over you (rule over you), for you are not under law (the Old Testament law of Moses), but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law (the Old Testament law of Moses), but under grace?

Let it not be! (Absolutely not!)

Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves for obedience, you are slaves to whom you obey, whether of sin to death, or obedience to righteousness? But thanks to God, though you were slaves of sin, you were obedient from the heart to the form (standard) of teaching to which you were delivered (committed). And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh.

For as you presented your members as slaves to impurity (uncleanness), and of iniquity unto iniquity (lawlessness leading to more lawlessness), so now present your members as slaves of righteousness unto sanctification (holiness). For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now having been set free from sin and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit unto sanctification (holiness), and the end, eternal life.

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

The letter written to the Hebrews warns of God’s judgment if we continue to sin:

“If we are wilfully sinning after receiving the full knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice concerning sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery zeal (fury of fire) about to devour the adversaries (enemies).

Anyone disregarding the law of Moses dies without mercy on the word of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment do you think he will be thought worthy (he will deserve) who has trampled down the Son of God, considered the blood of the covenant by which He was sanctified common (unholy), and insulted the Spirit of grace?

For we know the One having said, ‘Vengeance is Mine; I will repay,’ says the Lord. And again, ‘The Lord will judge His people.’ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

Jesus warns what will happen to anyone who causes sin, urging us to do whatever it takes to stay away from it:

‘Whoever causes one of these little ones believing in Me to stumble (fall into sin), it is better for him that a millstone be hung on his neck, and he be cast (thrown) into the sea.

And if your hand causes you to stumble (fall into sin), cut it off; it is better for you to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go away into gehenna (hell), into the unquenchable fire (fire that can never be put out), where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.

And if your foot causes you to stumble (fall into sin), cut it off; it is better for you to enter into life lame, than having two feet to go away into gehenna (hell), into the unquenchable fire (fire that can never be put out), where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.

And if your eye causes you to stumble (fall into sin), cast (throw) it out; it is better for you to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast (thrown) into the gehenna (hell) of fire, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.’

Sin, lawlessness, and unrighteousness, is rebellion against God. Sin means “falling short” or “missing the mark” according to God’s standard of holiness. Lawlessness is violating God’s law (breaking God’s law) according to His Word, the Holy Bible. Unrighteousness is not doing what is right according to God’s standard of righteousness in His Word, the Holy Bible:

“This is the message which we have heard from Him, and we announce to you: God is light, and no darkness is in Him - none.

If we say that we have fellowship (partnership) with Him, and we walk in darkness, we lie and are not practicing the truth.

But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship (partnership) with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”

Whether people minimise sin, or, on the other hand, think they are so bad that even if there is a God, He would never forgive them, God will forgive them if they will turn to Him.

Some great men in the Bible, including Moses, David, and Paul, committed murder; however, they repented, were forgiven by God, and did great things for Him. However, on the other hand, many of the chosen people of God, the Israelites, were not allowed to enter into the promised land, because they wouldn’t stop complaining. No matter how small, or how great, sin may be in our eyes, if we refuse to acknowledge it, and repent (turn away from it), it will remain sin in God’s eyes:

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous that He may forgive us the sins, and may cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar,  
and His Word is not in us.”

Jesus’ blood covers all sins; however, it should not be assumed that it doesn’t require genuine heartfelt repentance of turning away from sin on an ongoing basis. When committing ourselves to Jesus, and receiving the Holy Spirit, and with genuine effort on our behalf, He helps us to turn away from sin.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. In other words, if we go on confessing our sins, He is faithful and righteous to go on forgiving our sins, and the blood of Jesus will go on cleansing us from all unrighteousness:

“My little children, I write these things to you, so that you do not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an advocate (intercessor) with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous One. He is a propitiation (a sacrifice necessary to remove God’s wrath) for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.

And by this we know that we have known Him, if we keep His commandments. The one saying, ‘I have known Him,’ and not keeping His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His Word, truly in this one, the love of God has been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him. The one saying he remains in Him ought himself walk in the same manner as He walked.”

The Lord is sinless, and He is our ultimate example; therefore, sinning less and becoming sinless is our ultimate goal. God is absolutely fair. He doesn’t overlook sin in people who don’t believe in Him, or in people that do believe in Him. He is waiting to forgive anyone who comes to Him in a spirit of true repentance wanting to be cleansed of sin:

“Having been set free from sin and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit unto sanctification (holiness), and the end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

The New Testament repeatedly tells us that by the grace of God we should not sin, because the old nature that caused us to sin has been put to death, but the newness of life in the Holy Spirit, through faith in Jesus Christ, helps us to repent (turn away) from sin to righteousness. Therefore, we are no longer slaves of sin leading to death, but slaves of righteousness leading to life.

As slaves of obedience we are to submit, and be obedient, to the leading of the Holy Spirit in our lives; no longer being slaves of sin, but slaves of obedience to righteousness, bearing fruit to holiness. This submissive obedience to the guidance of the Holy Spirit is of supreme importance:

“Eagerly pursue peace (strive for peace) with all (people), and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord; watching diligently (watching out carefully for one another) lest anyone falls short and fails to obtain the grace of God.”

“And hope does not put us to shame, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit given to us.”

Being born of God, we know the Father, by knowing Jesus, and being in Him. Knowing Him and being in Him is eternal life:

“We know that everyone having been born of God does not sin; but the one born of God keeps (guards) himself, and the evil one does not touch him. We know we are of God, and the whole world lies in evil. And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, that we may know the true One (know Him who is true); and we are in the true One (in Him who is true), in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.”

No one living in close relationship with God will have the desire to keep on sinning, but will desire to sin less and become sinless, wanting to be just like Him:

“Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”

“Everyone remaining in Him does not sin.”

‘You then, be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect.’

### **Maximising Deeds – Self Righteousness**

The Bible tells us that faith on its own cannot save us. To be saved we must have an active faith. This means that as we continue believing into (committing to, trusting in, and relying upon) God, we must be active in doing good deeds for one another as the Holy Spirit directs us:

“What is the gain, my brothers, if anyone says he has faith but does not have works? Is faith able to save him? If a brother or sister is naked and lacking of daily food, and any one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and filled,’ without giving them the things needed for the body, what is the gain?

So also faith, if it does not have works, is dead by itself.”

“Was not Abraham our father justified by works, offering up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith worked with his works, and by works, faith was perfected; and the Scripture was fulfilled, saying, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness;’ and he was called, ‘Friend of God.’

You see, then, that a man is justified (declared righteous) by works, and not by faith only. In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified (declared righteous) by works, having received the messengers and sending them out by another way? For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.”

“The one knowing to do good and not doing it, it is sin to him.”

Jesus, however, warns us that if we think we can do anything in our own strength to save our own lives, we will lose our life. But if we do everything for His sake, we will have eternal life:

‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and let him take up his cross, and let him follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he should gain the whole world, but forfeits (gives up) his own soul? Or what will a man give as an exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is about to come in the glory of His Father, with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his work.’

Many people, including christians, think that their good deeds will save them. They take pride in doing good deeds for others, not because it glorifies God, but because it glorifies themselves in the eyes of other people. We can easily take pride in ourselves when doing good deeds for others, and be deceived into thinking that we are good people, because we do good things for others. However, if we do this, we are at risk of becoming self-righteous, which is wickedness in God’s eyes:

“He also spoke this parable to some of those trusting in themselves, that they were righteous, and despising the rest:

‘Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a pharisee, and the other a tax collector. The pharisee standing, prayed these things to himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like the rest of men, rapacious (extortioners), unrighteous, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice in the week; I tithe (give one tenth) all things, of all that I get.’ And the tax collector, standing far off (a distance away), would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote on his breast (beat on his chest repeatedly), saying, ‘God, be propitious (merciful) to me, the sinner.’ I tell you, this one went down to his house justified (declared righteous), rather than that one; for everyone who is exalting himself will be humbled, and the one who is humbling himself will be exalted.’ ”

This is what Jesus encountered with the religious leaders of His day. They appeared to be righteous by doing good deeds and keeping the law. However, Jesus knew their hearts, knowing they were self-centred, and full of pride, wanting to impress others with their righteousness. He told them that even though they appeared to others to be clean on the outside, on the inside He could see they were filthy:

‘Woe (grief) to you, scribes (teachers of religious law) and pharisees (religious leaders), hypocrites! (actors under an assumed character) because you tithe (give one tenth) of the mint, and the dill, and the cummin (spices), and have neglected the weightier (more important) matters of the law: justice, mercy, and faith. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. Blind guides, straining out the gnat (mosquito), but swallowing the camel.

Woe (grief) to you, scribes (teachers of religious law) and pharisees (religious leaders), hypocrites! (actors under an assumed character) because you cleanse the outside of the cup and the plate, but within they are full of robbery and excess (self-indulgence). Blind pharisee! First cleanse the inside of the cup and of the plate, that the outside also may become clean.

Woe (grief) to you, scribes (teachers of religious law) and pharisees (religious leaders), hypocrites! (actors under an assumed character) because you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are filled with dead men's bones and all uncleanness. So you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but within you are full of hypocrisy (deceit) and lawlessness.'

It is natural to want to look good in the eyes of other people; however, if we only focus on getting other people's approval, it can easily lead to pride, and self-righteousness, which is just another form of self-centredness. We become people pleasers instead of God pleasers, if we focus on doing things to get people's approval, rather than doing things to get God's approval.

We must be careful to check our motives when doing anything good, to see if we are satisfying our own desires, doing what we want, to please ourselves, and other people; or if we are doing what God wants, to please Him. We need to constantly seek Him and receive assurance from Him: "Lord, am I doing what You want me to do, in a way that glorifies You; or am I doing what I want to do, in a way that glorifies me?", "Lord, am I doing good to receive recognition from You; or am I doing good to receive recognition from others?", "Lord, are my intentions to follow Your example when serving others; or am I being self-serving?".

Jesus wants us all to be selfless and humble, rather than selfish and proud. When we do good deeds and give God the glory, it is out of self-lessness. When we do good deeds to get the glory for ourselves, it is self-righteousness.

To ensure we are giving our time and resources with the right intentions that give God all the glory we must be fully committed to glorifying Him, asking Him to give us a humble and generous heart to give in a way that pleases Him, according to His will, rather than giving in a way that glorifies us, and suits ourselves.

The only way to ensure we are doing God's will, to please Him, and not doing our own will, to satisfy our own agenda, is to stay in close relationship with Him, and do what He wants us to do, when He wants us to do it. When we do this, we will have a deep sense of fulfilment in everything we do, as well as pleasing God at the same time.

The best way to ensure that we don't become full of pride and self-righteous is to take no credit for anything good that we do. Giving God all the credit for any good thing that we do keeps us humble and gives Him glory. Proclaiming that it is God who gives us the ability to do good; and without Him, we are not capable of doing anything good, gives Him the honour He deserves.

Jesus always remained humble. He gave us an example of how to practice humility by not allowing Himself to be called good, but pointed people to the goodness of the Father. When a man addressed Him as “**Good Teacher**”, Jesus replied:

‘Why do you call Me good? No one is good except One, God.’

Jesus is the Son of God, being one with the Father, and equal with Him; and Jesus is the only person who could ever rightfully receive recognition for everything He did, because He is God.

Yet, Jesus glorified the Father, providing us with the perfect example of self-lessness and humility, giving His Father all the glory in everything He said and did.

If Jesus remained humble in everything that He said and did, not allowing a man to even call Him good; then, how much more should we humble ourselves and refuse to think that we are good, or allow ourselves to become prideful, by wanting to impress others by our own good deeds. We should be more intent on impressing God, and impressing Him upon other people.

Instead of taking credit for ourselves when doing good deeds, we should point people to what God is doing through us, and give Him the credit. He is without sin, and only He has pure motives.

Jesus perfectly fulfilled the will of the Father, and no one, other than God, deserves the credit for any good thing we do; and only He deserves to be called good, for it is only because of Him that we have the Holy Spirit, and anything good that we do out of a pure heart, with a pure motive, is only made possible because of the power of the Holy Spirit working through us.

Every good deed should be done as if it were only seen by God. When we bring honour to Him, we will be rewarded by Him:

‘Beware of practicing your righteousness before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise, you have no reward from your Father in heaven. Therefore, when you give to the needy, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites (actors under an assumed character) do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be glorified by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand does, so that your giving may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.’

In everything we do, in word or deed, we should glorify Jesus to the glory of God the Father:

“Everything, whatever you do in word or deed,  
do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus,  
giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”

Only God can rightfully receive the glory for any good thing that we do, because without the help of the Holy Spirit, who constantly guides us away from self-righteousness to God’s righteousness, we are incapable of doing anything good without having self-centred motives.

Doing God’s will requires God-centred motives, which requires being in close relationship with Him, and being obedient to the leading of the Holy Spirit; so in everything we say and do, we are pleasing God, trusting in Him, knowing we are fulfilling His will:

“Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast (firm in purpose),  
unmoveable, abounding in the work of the Lord at all times,  
knowing that your labour is not empty (fruitless) in the Lord.”

### **Misapplying Law – Mixed Righteousness**

People have different opinions on how the Bible applies to us. Some believe that we should obey some of God’s laws, but not all of them. Some believe we should obey the ten commandments in the Old Testament. Others believe we are bound by a mixture of both the Old Testament and the New Testament. Others believe that we are under the New Testament, but disagree on what it means to us, and how it should be applied. Others believe that we don’t need to obey the Bible at all.

God expects us to obey all of His Word in the Bible, in particular, the New Testament, which has precedence to the Old Testament. The New Testament tells us:

“For the law (Old Testament law of Moses) having a shadow of the coming good things, not the image itself of those things, every year by the same sacrifices, which they offer continually, are never able to perfect those drawing near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because those serving would no longer have conscience of sin, having once been cleansed?

But in them (the sacrifices), there is a remembrance of sins year by year; for it is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Wherefore (for this reason), coming into the world, He says, ‘Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sin offerings, You were not pleased. Then I said, ‘Behold, I come (in the scroll of the book it is written of Me) to do Your will, O God.’ Saying above, ‘Sacrifice and offering, and burnt offerings and sin offerings, You did not desire, nor were pleased with,’ which are offered according to the law (Old Testament law).

Then He said, ‘Behold, I come to do Your will, O God.’ He takes away the first that He may establish the second; by which will we are having been sanctified (have been made holy, and are being made holy) through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands daily ministering, and often offering the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But He, offering one sacrifice for sins

forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from then on awaiting until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet.

For by one offering (sacrifice) He has perfected forever (justified) the ones being sanctified (the ones being made holy).

And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after having said, ‘This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord; giving (I will put) My laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds; and their sins and lawlessness I will remember no more.’ Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin. Therefore, brothers, having confidence to enter the Holies (most holy place) by the blood of Jesus, which He renewed for us, a new and living way through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession (acknowledgment) of our hope firmly (without wavering), for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another to incitement (take action) to love and good works, not forsaking the gathering of ourselves together, as is the habit of some, but exhorting (encouraging one another), and so much more as you see the Day approaching.”

Jesus has taken away the first covenant in the Old Testament to establish the second covenant in the New Testament. This means that we are no longer under the old covenant law of Moses in the Old Testament, but are under the new covenant law of Jesus in the New Testament:

“Christ having appeared as a high priest of the coming good things, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle (tent) not made with human hands, that is, not part of this creation, nor through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered once for all into the Holies (most holy place), having obtained eternal redemption (paid the eternal ransom).

For if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of a heifer (young cow) sprinkling those having been defiled (made unclean), sanctifies (makes holy) to the purifying (cleanness) of the flesh, by how much more the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself unblemished (without fault) to God, will purify (cleanse) your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? Because of this, He is Mediator (reconciler) of a new covenant, since a death has occurred for the redemption (payment of the eternal ransom) of the transgressions (breaking of the law) under the first covenant, that those having been called might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.”

The New Testament law of Jesus should not be confused with the Old Testament law of Moses, for they are different laws with different requirements. The new law requires us to obey the law of Jesus, with His help, when we receive the Holy Spirit, relying on His sacrifice for forgiveness of our sins. The old law required the people to obey the law of Moses, through their own efforts, and required the sacrifice of animals for the forgiveness of sins when they disobeyed the law:

“The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death. For the law (the Old Testament law of Moses) was powerless, in that it was weak through the flesh (because of our sinful nature). But God, by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, as an offering for sin, condemned sin in the flesh (destroyed sin’s control over us, by giving His Son as a sacrifice for our sins) so that the righteous requirement of the law would be fulfilled (fully satisfied) in us who no longer walk according to the flesh (following our sinful nature), but according to the Spirit.

For those who live according to the flesh (doing what their sinful nature urges them to do) set their minds on things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit (set their minds on the things of the Spirit). The mind of (to set the mind on) the flesh (the sinful nature) is death, but the mind of (to set the mind on) the Spirit is life and peace; because the mind of the flesh (the sinful nature) is enmity (hostile opposition) against God; for it is not subject (will not submit) to the law of God, neither can it. Those who are in the flesh (controlled by sin) cannot please God.

You are not in the flesh (controlled by your sinful nature), but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God dwells in you.

Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

So then, brothers, we are under obligation; not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh (not doing what our sinful nature urges us to do). For if you live according to the flesh (doing what your sinful nature urges you to do) you will die.

But if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body (put the sinful nature to death), you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God.”

The new law gives us grace for salvation because we have the help of God living inside of us enabling us to live life free from sin:

“And you were dead in your trespasses (unintentional errors and wilful offences) and sins (falling short of God’s standard), in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air (the Devil), the spirit now working in the sons of disobedience; among whom we also all conducted ourselves, then, in the lusts of our flesh (sinful nature), doing the wishes of the flesh and the thoughts of the mind (doing what our sinful nature urged us to do), and were by nature children of wrath (God’s vengeance), as also the rest.

But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even we being dead in trespasses (unintentional errors and wilful offences), made us alive together with Christ - by grace you are having been saved (you have been saved, and are being saved) - and raised us up together, and seated us together in the heavenlies (heavenly places) in Christ Jesus, that He might show in the coming ages, the exceeding riches of His grace (His undeserved favour) in kindness toward us in Christ. For by grace you are having been saved (you have been saved, and are being saved), through faith, and this not of you, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

The New Testament law of Jesus Christ requires us to turn away from our independence apart from God, to being dependent upon Him. It requires us to turn away from sinning, to sin less, and become sinless; and requires us to do good deeds for others.

It requires us to do these things with the help of the Holy Spirit, whom the Father gives, to all who believe into the Lord Jesus, and the sacrifice He made in dying for our sins on the cross.

The Old Testament law of Moses also required the people to turn away from their independence from God, to being dependent on Him. It also required them to turn away from sin and do good deeds for others. It required them to do these things with animal sacrifices, and the help of the Holy Spirit, who was with them.

The main difference between the old covenant law of Moses in the Old Testament and the new covenant law of Jesus in the New Testament is that under the old covenant law of Moses in the Old Testament, God was with His people. Under the new covenant law of Jesus in the New Testament, He is in His people:

“The kingdom of God is within you.”

The new covenant law has the power to transform people, turning us away from sin, and do good deeds that glorify God.

The old covenant law did not have the power to transform people, to turn them away from sin, and do good deeds that glorify God; because even though God was living with the people, He was not living in the people:

“You are not in the flesh (controlled by your sinful nature), but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.”

“Do not be conformed to this age (this world), but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove (know and approve) what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

“The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”

## **Law of Moses – Righteousness Under Law**

The Old Testament records how God chose the Israelites to be His very own people. He made a covenant with them promising to bless them if they were obedient and to curse them if they were disobedient. He gave them the law of Moses so that they would know what He required of them. God expected His people to obey His commands and be holy, as He is holy, because,

### **HE WAS WITH THEM.**

“And God spoke to Moses and said to him, ‘I am Jehovah (the Lord). I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name, Jehovah (the Lord), I have not made Myself known to them. I also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their lodging (dwelling), where they have lodged.

And I have also heard the groaning of the sons of Israel, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered My covenant.

Therefore, say to the sons of Israel, ‘I am Jehovah (the Lord), and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and will deliver you from their slavery, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.

I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. And you shall know that I am Jehovah (the Lord) your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you into the land which I lifted My hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it to you for a possession. I am Jehovah (the Lord).’ ”

‘The king of Egypt will not permit to let you go, not even by a strong hand. So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My wonders, which I will do in its midst (among them); and afterward he will send you away.’

“And Jehovah (the Lord) went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them in the way; and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, to go by day and by night. He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day, or the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.”

“And the people murmured (complained) against Moses, saying, ‘What shall we drink?’ And he cried to Jehovah (the Lord), and Jehovah (the Lord) showed him a tree; and he threw it into the waters, and the waters became sweet.”

“And Jehovah (the Lord) spoke to Moses, saying, ‘I have heard the murmurings (complaints) of the sons of Israel. Speak to them, saying, ‘Between the evenings you shall eat flesh (meat), and in the morning you shall be satisfied with bread.

And you shall know that I am Jehovah (the Lord) your God.’ ’

In the evening quail came up and covered the camp, and in the morning dew lay around the camp. And when the layer of dew lifted, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine, scale-like (flake-like) thing, fine as the frost on the earth.

And the sons of Israel saw it, and said to one another, ‘What is it?’ For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, ‘It is the bread which Jehovah (the Lord) has given you for food.’ ”

“And Moses went up to God, and Jehovah (the Lord) called to him from the mountain, saying, ‘Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the sons of Israel, ‘You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and I bore you on eagle’s wings, and brought you to Myself. And now, if you will surely listen to (obey) My voice and keep My covenant, you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.’ ”

“If you will surely listen to (obey) the voice of Jehovah (the Lord) your God, being careful to obey all His commandments which I command you today, Jehovah (the Lord) your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of Jehovah (the Lord) your God:”

“And it shall be, if you will not listen to (obey) the voice of Jehovah (the Lord) your God, to be careful to do all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:”

‘You shall be holy, for I Jehovah (the Lord) your God am holy.’

“Moses came and told the people all the words of Jehovah (the Lord), and all the judgments. And all the people answered with one voice and said, ‘All the words which Jehovah (the Lord) has spoken we will do.’ And Moses wrote all the words of Jehovah (the Lord). And he rose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve memorial pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel.

Then he sent young men of the sons of Israel, and they offered up burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of bullock to Jehovah (the Lord). And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half the blood he sprinkled on the altar.

And he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, 'All that Jehovah (the Lord) has spoken we will do, and we will obey.' And Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, 'Behold the blood of the covenant which Jehovah (the Lord) has made with you in accordance with all these words.' "

"And Jehovah (the Lord) spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to the sons of Israel, and let them take an offering for Me. From every man whose heart impels him (offers it willingly) you shall take My offering. And this is the offering which you shall take from them: gold, and silver, and bronze; blue, and purple, and scarlet thread, and fine linen, and goats' hair; rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins, and acacia wood; oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil, and for the fragrant incense; onyx stones, and stones for setting, for the ephod (priest's outer garment) and for the breastplate. And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst (among them).' "

"Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle (tent) of meeting, because the cloud dwelt upon it, and the glory of Jehovah (the Lord) filled the tabernacle. In the going up of the cloud from above the tabernacle, the sons of Israel journeyed in all their journeys. But if the cloud did not go up, they did not journey until the day of its going up. For the cloud of Jehovah (the Lord) was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was upon it by night, before the eyes of all the house of Israel in all their journeys."

The Israelites, however, did not enter into the land that God had promised to give them, because of their disobedience and lack of faith; even though God was so powerfully with them:

“With whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those sinning, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter into His rest, but to those not obeying? And we see that they were not able to enter in because of unbelief (faithlessness).

Therefore, let us fear, while a promise remains of entering His rest, lest any one of you may seem to have come short of it. For indeed we have had the good news preached to us, even as they also; but the Word did not profit those hearing it, not being mixed with faith in those who heard.”

The importance of obeying God’s Word is repeated right throughout the Bible. From the Old Testament right through to the New Testament, God’s people are constantly told to turn away from sin, and turn back to Him, or they will suffer.

However, sadly, many of the people refused to do what God wanted them to do, rejecting Him, and His promises, continuing to follow their own sinful ways, and suffering the consequences.

Obedience to God’s commands was expected of the Israelites in the Old Testament, if they were to enter into God’s promised land; and it is no different for christians in the New Testament, if we want to enter into God’s kingdom:

“In truth I perceive (understand) that God shows no partiality (favouritism). In every nation the one fearing Him and working righteousness is acceptable to Him.”

God chose the Israelites to be a holy people separated to Himself, and is now offering His righteousness to anyone who wants to be separated to Him, and made holy, in His Son, Jesus.

God expects christians to be obedient to His Word delivered to us by Jesus in the New Testament in the same way that the Israelites were expected to be obedient to His Word when it was delivered to them through Moses in the Old Testament:

“Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, ‘Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as in the provocation (rebellion), in the day of temptation (testing) in the wilderness, where your fathers tempted Me, testing Me, and saw My works

for forty years. Therefore, I was angry with that generation, and said, ‘They always go astray in their heart; and they have not known My ways.’ So I swore in My wrath (anger), ‘They shall not enter into My rest.’ ’ Watch, brothers, lest there be in any of you

an evil heart of unbelief (faithlessness) in falling away from the living God; but exhort (encourage) one another each day, as long as it is being called ‘Today,’ that not any one of you be hardened

through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become sharers of Christ, if truly we hold fast the beginning of the assurance firm to the end, while it is said, ‘Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as in the (provocation) rebellion.’

For who were those who heard and yet provoked (rebelled)?

Was it not all who came out of Egypt through Moses?”

“This is the Word of faith which we proclaim; that if you confess (acknowledge) with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes to righteousness, and with the mouth one confesses to salvation.”

Believing in Jesus comes from our hearts as well as our mouths; and by this, one believes to righteousness; being righteous in God's eyes, as well as becoming righteous by His standards, resulting in the salvation of our souls:

“Therefore, holy brothers, sharers of a heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, being faithful to Him who appointed Him, as also Moses in all His house. For He has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by so much as He who built the house has more honour than the house. For every house is built by someone; but He who built all things is God. And Moses truly was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of the things which were to be spoken later; but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house, whose house we are, if we hold fast the assurance (confidence) and rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.”

We are no longer under the righteous requirements of the law of Moses in the Old Testament. Ever since Jesus Christ died and rose from the dead, and gave the Holy Spirit to all who will believe in Him, we have been subject to the righteousness of God according to the righteous requirements of the law of Jesus Christ in the New Testament:

“Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness (testify about them) that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant (not knowing) the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, they did not submit to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone believing.”

## **Law of the Messiah – Righteousness Under Grace**

In the New Testament, God has made a covenant with all who believe in His Son, Jesus Christ, and commit themselves to Him, in faithful obedience to His Word:

‘For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that everyone believing into Him may not perish, but have eternal life.’

Because of the sacrifice that God made for our sins, we have a higher expectation to be obedient to Him and His Word in the New Testament, than what was required under the old covenant law of Moses in the Old Testament, because of all that He has done for us, in dying for our sins and giving us His Spirit:

“And hope does not put us to shame, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit given to us.”

We have been given greater grace from God in the law of the New Testament, than the grace given to the children of Israel in the Old Testament, because when we believe in Jesus Christ and the sacrifice He made for us, and receive the Holy Spirit,

### **HE IS IN US.**

The old law is relevant to us in that it is an example of what God requires of His people. However, we have a much greater need for obedience, and the grace needed to achieve it, due to the commands of God in the New Testament being far more demanding than the commands of God in the Old Testament:

‘You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those cursing you, do good to those hating you, and pray for those falsely accusing you, and persecuting you; so that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. For He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and He sends rain on the just (righteous) and the unjust (unrighteous). For if you love those loving you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? If you only greet your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even tax collectors do so? You then, be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect.’

Note the commands of Jesus in the New Testament compared to the ten commandments given to Moses in the Old Testament:

Law of Moses

Moses' 1<sup>st</sup> Commandment

1. ‘You shall have no other gods before Me.’

Law of Jesus

Jesus' Commandment

“ ‘The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

Later in the Old Testament, God further commanded His people:

‘You shall love Jehovah (the Lord) your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.’

‘You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am Jehovah (the Lord).’

Jesus’ commandments, however, instruct His people to love God even more, along with one another, giving the original commandments even more emphasis:

“ ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment.

And the second, like it, is this:

‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’  
There is no other commandment greater than these.”

We are to love God with all of our heart, soul, and strength; and with all of our thoughts. The added command to love God with all of our mind, highlights our need to love God completely, and make decisions that are in accordance with His sovereign will.

One of our human weaknesses is uncertainty. Jesus constantly tells us not to worry about anything because He knows how damaging worry can be to our welfare. He also knows how the Devil attacks our minds to try to cause us to make decisions that are in opposition to God’s will and make us continually worry.

Uncertainty in making right or wrong choices, and the worry that comes with it, comes from our human weakness and the influence the Devil has over us when we are not close to God.

When Jesus commands us to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, He is empowering us to overcome our own human weaknesses, and overcome the negative influence that the Devil has over us when he attacks our thoughts and decisions.

In everything Jesus says, He emphasises our need to love God, and put Him first in everything; and love one another. When we love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength, there is no room for anything else to take His place. God expects us to love Him as He loves us, and love one another in the same way:

“See that no one returns evil for evil to anyone, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. Rejoice always.

Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

Later in the Gospels, in a similar way that God gave further commands to the Israelites that were in addition to the ten commandments, Jesus gives us further commands in addition to His commandments; to love one another more than ourselves:

‘A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love among one another.’

We can love one another as Jesus loves us by knowing His love. Knowing His love comes from being, and remaining, in a close personal relationship with Him that has intimacy and purpose.

No one can expect to receive salvation, or retain their salvation, without obeying Jesus’ commandments. The greatest commands from Jesus, as with every other command that Jesus has given us, are necessary for our salvation and eternal welfare:

‘Apart from Me, you are not able to do anything.’

When we believe in Jesus, receive the Holy Spirit, and believe into Him, we are given the power to overcome our weaknesses, and any destructive influence the Devil uses to keep us in fear:

‘The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I have said to you. Peace I leave to you; My peace I give you; not as the world gives, I give you. Let you not be troubled in your heart, nor let it be fearful.’

As we keep believing into God; committing to Him, trusting in Him, and relying upon Him, we are given the power to make right decisions, and overcome any worry and fear that the Devil throws at us, along with whatever we bring upon ourselves:

“The Lord is near. Do not be anxious for anything, but in everything by prayer, and by petition (earnest and specific), with thanksgivings, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Jesus wants us to seek Him in everything, and commit ourselves to loving Him; because when we do, we will be free from fear:

“God did not give us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of self-control.”

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one fearing has not been perfected in love. We love because He first loved us.”

## Law of Moses

### Moses' 2<sup>nd</sup> Commandment

2. 'You shall not make for yourself an idol (carved image), or any likeness of anything that is in the heavens above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters under the earth. You shall not bow down to them, or serve them;'

## Law of Jesus

### Jesus' Commandment

'The time is coming, and now is, when the true lovers of God will worship the Father in fullness of spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such ones as these to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.'

In the Old Testament, God commanded His people not to have any idols, and not to worship any idols, which were false Gods. God wanted His people to look towards Him, and not to anything that was man-made. God is Spirit, and He is more powerful than any man-made idol, or any other physical representation of Him.

In the New Testament, Jesus speaks more in-depth, saying that whoever truly loves the Father can now worship Him in His fullness; and how He longs for us to worship Him in this way.

Worship is giving God our highest respect by doing what He knows is best for us, in complete submission to Him, His Word, and His will, with reverence, awe, adoration, and love for Him; honouring Him in everything we say and do. We can only truly worship God to this extent by knowing how much He loves us.

Jesus is telling us that our Father wants us to be close to Him; and we can draw close to Him through Jesus. When we come to know our Father, through Jesus, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we cannot help but truly love Him. By knowing God personally, we know His love; and we glorify Him when we give it to others.

Worshiping God, as He has commanded us, is more important than anything, because it is only through our knowing God and worshiping Him, that we can enter into His kingdom:

‘Remain in Me, and I in you. As the branch is not able to bear fruit of itself, unless it remains in the vine, neither can you, unless you remain in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. He who remains in Me, and I in him, this one bears much fruit; because apart from Me, you are not able to do anything. If anyone does not remain in Me, he is cast (thrown) out as a branch and is withered (dried up); and they gather them and cast (throw) them into the fire, and they are burned. If you remain in Me, and My words remain in you, you will ask whatever you desire, and it will be done for you. In this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and you will be My disciples.’

### Law of Moses

#### Moses' 3<sup>rd</sup> Commandment

3. ‘You shall not take (speak) the name of Jehovah (the Lord) your God in vain (disrespectfully); for Jehovah (the Lord) will not leave him unpunished who takes (speaks) His name in vain (disrespectfully).’

### Law of Jesus

#### Jesus' Commandment

‘I tell you, every sin and blasphemy (speaking evil against God) will be forgiven to men, but the blasphemy (speaking evil) against the Spirit will not be forgiven to men. And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, neither in this age, nor in the coming one.’

Under the old law, if God’s people spoke God’s name in any way that was disrespectful, He would punish them. God is holy, and His name is to be treated with respect. Under the new law, Jesus tells us that sin and blasphemy against God will be forgiven, even if anyone speaks against Him in a disrespectful way.

However, if anyone speaks against the Holy Spirit, they will not be forgiven; ever!!! This is terrifying, as Jesus is warning that any disrespect for the Holy Spirit is a sin that can never be forgiven.

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is rejecting the work of God in us, or around us; in our own lives, or in the lives of others.

If anyone witnesses, or experiences the work of the Holy Spirit, but deliberately, and persistently refuses to believe it is the work of God, they are rejecting God, Himself, and can never be saved.

If anyone deliberately, and persistently refuses to believe into Jesus, they cannot receive the Holy Spirit, and cannot be saved.

If anyone has already received the Holy Spirit, but deliberately, and persistently rejects His conviction of sin, and leading in their lives, refusing to co-operate with Him, they will not be saved.

In the Old Testament, the Israelites were expected to have total respect for God and His name, otherwise He would punish them. God had high expectations of them, because,

### **HE WAS WITH THEM.**

In the New Testament, we are expected to have total respect for God's Holy Spirit; otherwise, we will be punished forever. God has higher expectations of us, because of all that Jesus has done for us, and all that God has given us. When we believe into Jesus Christ, and receive the Holy Spirit,

### **HE IS IN US.**

This command from Jesus has far worse consequences, if we choose to disobey it, than the command given to the Israelites. Speaking against God's name brought punishment upon them. Rejecting what God has done for us brings eternal condemnation.

## Law of Moses

### Moses' 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment

4. ‘Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to Jehovah (the Lord) your God. You shall not do any work, you, your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, and your livestock, and your stranger who is within your gates.’

## Law of Jesus

### Jesus' Commandment

“Behold, there was a man having a withered (weak) hand. And they questioned Him, saying, ‘Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?’ that they might accuse Him. He said to them, ‘What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbaths, will not lay hold of it and lift it out. How much more value is a man than a sheep? So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbaths.’ Then He said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ And he stretched it out, and it was restored healthy as the other.”

In the Old Testament, God instructed His people not to do any work on the seventh day of each week (Saturday), and to dedicate that day to Him. God wants His people to be refreshed, and the best refreshment is for us to take a break from work, and get rest and refreshment from Him.

In the New Testament, Jesus acknowledges the Sabbath, and at the same time, convicts the religious leaders of their self-centred motives, telling them that anyone will work on the Sabbath to help themselves, and provide for their own needs; so why would it be unlawful to help someone else, and provide for their needs?

Jesus clarified the law, and gave it greater depth, acknowledging that people will do what may be necessary for their own welfare on the Sabbath; so they should also do what may be necessary to provide for the welfare of others on the Sabbath. Jesus tells us to do more than what was required, or assumed, under the old law.

## Law of Moses

### Moses' 5<sup>th</sup> Commandment

5. ‘Honour your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land Jehovah (the Lord) your God is giving to you.’

## Law of Jesus

### Jesus' Commandment

‘The one loving father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and the one loving son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

And whoever does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.’

In the Old Testament, God instructed His people to honour their parents. Honouring our father and mother means loving them, and respecting them, in the way we live our lives.

In the New Testament, Jesus compares the love that someone has for their family, to the love He expects from us. He is saying, if we love anyone more than Him, we are not worthy of Him. This command doesn’t dishonour our parents, it prioritises where God expects to be in our lives. He expects us to love Him more than anyone. He commands our greatest love because we are His greatest love. He commands our highest respect because He is worthy of more respect than anyone. He expects us to take our cross and follow after Him in complete submission and obedience to Him, His Word, and His will, because He submitted to the Father’s will, honoured Him, and took His cross to die for us.

Jesus’ command to love Him and follow Him, honours Him, and emphasises the great importance of our need to know Him, and obey Him, if we are to have eternal life with Him:

‘My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.’

## Law of Moses

## Law of Jesus

### Moses' 6<sup>th</sup> Commandment

### Jesus' Commandment

6. 'You shall not murder.'

'You have heard that it was said to the ancients (people from past ages), 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders shall be liable (in danger) of the judgment.' But I say to you, everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable (in danger) of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca,' (worthless one) will be liable (in danger) of the council. And whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be liable (in danger) of the gehenna (hell) of fire.'

In the Old Testament, God instructs His people not to murder one another. Murder is intentionally, unlawfully, killing a person. We are created by God in His own image, so to take a person's life unlawfully is to unlawfully destroy the image of God.

Under the law of Moses, it was lawful to repay what someone had done, or intended, towards another person:

"Your eye shall not pity; life shall go for life,  
eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot."

In the New Testament, repaying action for action is not lawful:

"Be all of one mind, sympathetic, loving brothers, compassionate, friendly, not giving back evil for evil, or abuse for abuse; but on the contrary, blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing."

Jesus tells us that if we are angry with one another, insult one another, or condemn one another, we will be subject to judgment ourselves, and be liable to be sentenced to eternal condemnation in hell. Jesus commands not to return any evil that is done to us, but to follow His example, and repay evil with good:

‘You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those cursing you, do good to those hating you, and pray for those falsely accusing you, and persecuting you; so that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.’

Jesus further emphasises this command, comparing what was allowable under the law of Moses, to what He expects from us:

‘You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye, and tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, do not resist the evil; but whoever strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other to him also.’

Jesus commands us to love one another more than repaying evil for evil; otherwise we will be liable to eternal punishment in hell.

### Law of Moses

#### Moses' 7<sup>th</sup> Commandment

7. ‘You shall not commit adultery.’

### Law of Jesus

#### Jesus' Commandment

‘You have heard that it was said to the ancients (people from past ages), ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you, everyone looking at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.’

In the Old Testament, God commands His people not to commit adultery. Adultery is when a husband or wife are unfaithful to one another through sexual immorality.

Under the old law, a man could divorce his wife for indecency, which meant sexual immorality, or other shameful behaviour:

“When a man has taken a wife and married her, and it happens that she finds no favour in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, and puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house; and if she leaves his house and becomes another man’s wife, and the latter husband hates her, and writes her a certificate of divorce, and puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house; or if the latter husband dies, who took her to be his wife, her former husband, who sent her away, is not to take her again to be his wife, after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination (disgusting act) before Jehovah (the Lord) your God, and you shall not bring sin upon the land that Jehovah (the Lord) your God is giving to you as an inheritance.”

In the New Testament, Jesus alters the Old Testament law:

‘It was said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, apart from a matter of fornication (sexual immorality), makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.’

“The pharisees came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, ‘Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason?’

Answering, He said to them,

‘Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?’

So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate.’

They said to Him, ‘Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?’ He said to them,

‘Because of your hard-heartedness, Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for fornication (sexual immorality), and marries another, commits adultery; and he who marries her who is divorced commits adultery.’ ”

‘Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her; and if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.’

Jesus places a much greater emphasis on the husband and wife to honour their marriage commitment, and remain faithful to each other, than what was expected of couples under the old law.

Jesus instructs that looking at a woman to have sexual desire for her is considered to be adultery, giving further emphasis to the Old Testament commandment given to men, regarding women.

Disobeying the Old Testament commandment involved someone committing a sexually immoral act. Disobeying Jesus’ command involves a man having lustful desire towards a woman. Jesus’ commands place a much greater responsibility on marriage, and on men and women, compared to the Old Testament.

## Law of Moses

### Moses' 8<sup>th</sup> Commandment

8. ‘You shall not steal.’

## Law of Jesus

### Jesus' Commandment

‘If anyone wants to sue you and take your tunic (shirt), let him have your cloak (coat) also.’

Stealing is taking from someone, what doesn’t belong to us. It is being selfish, greedy, and independent; refusing to trust God to provide for us, and not being satisfied with what He gives us.

Obeying the Old Testament commandment shows our respect for God, and for one another, by not taking from one another.

In the New Testament, Jesus commands more from us, saying, ‘If anyone wants to take you to court, to take legal action against you, give them what they want; and more than what they want.’

The old law expected the people to do what was right towards one another. The new law expects us to do more. Jesus expects us to bless one another, regardless of what they do to us, or want from us. He commands us to give to whomever wants to take from us, and more.

## Law of Moses

### Moses' 9<sup>th</sup> Commandment

9. ‘You shall not bear false witness (give a false testimony) against your neighbour.’

## Law of Jesus

### Jesus' Commandment

‘I tell you that every idle (careless) word that men may speak, they will give account for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified (declared righteous), and by your words you will be condemned.’

The Old Testament law commands us not to lie to one another, or about one another. God is honest and trustworthy towards us, so He expects His people to be the same with each other.

In the New Testament, Jesus tells us that we will be judged for every careless word that we speak. Jesus is commanding more than being honest and trustworthy. He wants us to be careful with what we say to each other. He warns that careless words to each other will condemn us when we stand before Him to be judged.

To speak careless words is speaking disrespectfully to someone, or speaking disrespectfully about someone, even if it is the truth. Speaking careless words that are disrespectful towards one another, or about one another, shows that we do not care for one another, or about one another.

Jesus commands us to love one another, and this takes more than being honest, and not lying. He wants us to love one another by being careful what we say to one another, or about one another; even if it is true. We are not to avoid speaking the truth; however, the truth must be spoken in love, out of a pure heart, and with a pure motive. Careful words have the power to bless one another, along with ourselves. Careless words have the power to condemn one another, along with ourselves.

### Law of Moses

#### Moses' 10<sup>th</sup> Commandment

10. ‘You shall not covet (desire) your neighbour’s house. You shall not covet (desire) your neighbour’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbour’s.’

### Law of Jesus

#### Jesus' Commandment

‘If you remain in Me, and My words remain in you, you will ask whatever you desire, and it will be done for you.’

In the Old Testament, God commands His people not to desire what belongs to someone else. God wants His people to be content with what we have, and not want what belongs to others. He provides for our every need, so we have no right to look to what others have to fulfill those needs.

In the New Testament, Jesus commands that He will give us whatever we desire, if we stay close to Him, and obey His Word.

God knows that when we remain in Him, and His words remain in us, our desires will come into line with His will for us:

“The law was given through Moses;  
grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”

Jesus did not come to reduce the old law, or do away with it. He came to complete the law and fulfill it:

‘Do not think that I came to abolish the law or the prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly, I say to you, until the heavens and the earth pass away, one iota or one point shall by no means pass away from the law (not one bit of the law will pass away) until all things come to pass.’

Just as the New Testament has priority over the Old Testament, Jesus' own words are the most important in the New Testament:

‘For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man will also be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.’

‘Heaven and earth will pass away,  
but My words will never pass away.’

‘Therefore, everyone who hears these words from Me, and does them, will be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock; the rain came down, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house; but it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. And everyone hearing these words from Me, and not doing them, will be compared to a foolish man who built his house on the sand; the rain came down, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it.’

‘I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. The one who rejects Me, and does not receive My words has that which judges him. The Word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.’

‘If you remain in Me, and My words remain in you, you will ask whatever you desire, and it will be done for you.’

### **Giving – Old Laws & New Laws**

The Old Testament emphasises the importance of giving:

“There is one who scatters, yet increases more; but another withholds what he should give, and comes to poverty. The blessing (generous) soul is made fat (will prosper), and he who waters will himself be watered.”

The New Testament also emphasises the importance of giving:

“The one sowing sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one sowing in blessings will also reap blessings.”

“He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the fruits of your righteousness. In everything you will be enriched to all generosity, which through us, brings thanksgiving to God.”

In the Old Testament, the law of Moses required the people to give one tenth of their food produce to the priests, who were responsible for making the animal sacrifices, interceding on behalf of the people for forgiveness of their sins, teaching God’s laws to the people, overseeing His people, and guarding and maintaining the tabernacle; the tent where God dwelled:

‘To the sons of Levi (the priests), behold, I have given all the tithe (one tenth of all the produce) in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service which they are serving; the service of the tabernacle (tent) of meeting. And the sons of Israel shall not come near the tabernacle (tent) of meeting, lest they bear (take) sin and die. But the Levites (priests) shall do the service of the tabernacle (tent) of meeting, and they shall bear (take) their iniquity (punishment).’

“You shall surely tithe (give one tenth) all the increase of your seed that the field brings forth year by year. And you shall eat before Jehovah (the Lord) your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name dwell, the tithe of your grain, of your wine, and of your oil, and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock, that you may learn to fear Jehovah (the Lord) your God all your days.”

“All the tithe of the land, of the seed of the land, of the fruit of the tree, is Jehovah’s (the Lord’s). It is holy to Jehovah (the Lord).”

The law of tithing was an Old Testament command given to the children of Israel. Many christians believe that giving one tenth (ten percent) of our income to the church, similar to Israel giving one tenth of their produce to the Levites, applies to us today.

The Old Testament command may be obeyed as a minimum; however, the New Testament places a much greater emphasis on our giving, than the commands for giving in the Old Testament.

Giving under the new law works on different principles compared to tithing under the old law. The New Testament commands us to give willingly and generously, whether it be to those who minister the Word of God, or people who are in need.

There are no established limits to our giving to the ministry of God's Word or giving to those in need. Under the new law we are responsible for what we give and who we give it to. We are told that the Lord loves a person who gives willingly and generously, out of a cheerful heart, with no set limits:

“The one sowing sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one sowing in blessings will also reap blessings. Each one as he purposes in his heart, not of sadness (reluctance) or of distress (pressure), for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound to every good work.”

The Lord wants us to give, because we want to give; more than simply obeying the law. When we have the Spirit of God, we will want to give with the Spirit of God. When we are close to Him, we will give in accordance with His will. He wants us to give from a pure heart with genuine intentions, whatever we are able to give, so we may have equality with one another:

“For if the eagerness is present, it is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have. It is not for others to be eased and for you to be pressured, but by equality at this present time; your abundance for their need, so that their abundance may also be for your need, that there may be equality.”

The instructions regarding our giving in the New Testament have much greater emphasis compared to the laws for giving in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, God warns His people to remember who gave them the ability to become wealthy:

“Beware, lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’ You shall remember Jehovah (the Lord) your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth.”

In the New Testament, Jesus warns that it is very difficult for anyone who trusts in their wealth to enter into His kingdom:

‘Truly, I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.’

Jesus instructs that He must have priority over everything in our lives, including our money. He tells us that we cannot prioritise Him and prioritise the pursuit of material gain at the same time:

‘No one is able to serve two lords; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold fast to the one and despise the other. You are not able to serve God and wealth.’

Jesus instructs those who are rich, or seeking to be rich, to focus on generosity and eternal rewards, rather than storing up wealth:

‘Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on the earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break through and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break through and steal.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.’

“Command the rich in the present age not to be high-minded, nor to set their hope on uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with all things to enjoy; to do good, to be rich in good works, ready to share, and generous, treasuring up for themselves a good foundation for the future, that they may lay hold on eternal life.”

We will be required to give an account to God of how we spent our time and money. In regards to our giving, we will be judged according to our “*means*”, our “*mission*”, and our “*motives*”.

Our “*means*” is what we give of our resources to one another:

‘He spoke a parable to them, saying, ‘The land of a rich man brought forth well; and he reasoned within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do? I have nowhere to gather my fruits.’ And he said, ‘I will do this; I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will gather all my produce and my goods. And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take rest, eat, drink, and be glad.’ ’ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night they demand your soul from you, and the things which you prepared, whose will they be?’ So is the one treasuring up for himself, and not being rich toward God.’

Our “**mission**” is God’s will for each one of us and for all of us:

“All the believing ones were together and had all things common, selling their possessions and goods, and distributing them to all, as anyone had need. And day by day continuing steadfastly (firm in purpose) with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they shared food with gladness and simplicity (sincerity) of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day to day those who were being saved.”

Our “**motives**” are the reasons why we give to one another:

“A certain man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a property; and he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and placed it at the apostles’ feet. But Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land? While it remained, did it not remain your own?’

And having been sold, was it not in your authority? Why is it that this action was put into your heart? You did not lie to men, but to God.’ Hearing these words, Ananias fell down and died.

And great fear came upon all those hearing these things.

The young men arose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him. About three hours afterwards, his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter said to her, ‘Tell me if you sold the land for so much?’ She said, ‘Yes, for so much.’ And Peter said to her, ‘Why is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.’ Immediately she fell down at his feet and died.

And the young men came in and found her dead; and carrying her out, buried her beside her husband. And great fear came upon all the church, and upon all those hearing these things.”

There is a difference between doing our own will and doing God’s will; doing good things as opposed to doing God’s things. We can be doing good deeds with good intentions, but our good intentions may not be God’s intentions. Giving to others can be according to what we think people need, according to our will, but may not be what God intends for them, according to His will.

We can be serving people, yet not be serving who God wants us to serve, how He wants us to serve them, when He wants us to serve them. For example, when we are considering volunteering our time, or giving money to a charitable cause, there are many good causes that we can volunteer our time, and give money to, that help people in many different ways. However, we usually have limited time, and limited financial resources, so we must consider and decide which charitable causes we should volunteer our time, and give our money to.

How can we discern who God wants us to help with our time and money? We can know who God wants us to volunteer our time and give our money to, by asking Him to help us discern and decide who He wants us to help, how He wants us to help them, and when He wants us to help, on a moment-by-moment basis each day. The only way to do this in harmony with God’s will is to know Him, constantly hear from Him, and follow Him.

When we ask God what to do, and allow the Holy Spirit to guide us accordingly, we will be giving our time and money to help who the Lord wants helped, how He wants them helped, when He wants them helped, in harmony with Him, according to His will, while receiving His blessings now, and for all eternity.

## The Perfect Law of Liberty

The perfect law of liberty is having God's righteousness placed inside of us, progressing through us, and flowing out of us, without minimising sin (unrighteousness), maximising good deeds (self-righteousness), or misapplying law (mixed-righteousness):

**“The one who looks into the perfect law of liberty (freedom) and remains (continues) in it, not becoming a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in his doing.”**

There is a balance of living in the liberty (freedom) of the Spirit without having an open licence to sin, and without living under old laws, man-made religious traditions, or a mixture of both; because living according to man-made laws, and self-made lawlessness, are both as deadly as each other, if we slip into them.

The Bible warns against the perils of trying to obey the old law, or man-made rules and regulations, just as much as disobedience to the new law, and condemnation if we continue to practice sin.

The old law, man-made religious traditions, or a mixture of both, make rules and regulations that they think will place us in right standing with God by our own efforts, as if there is no grace from God at all. On the other hand, living with complete disregard for God's law, disobeying His rules, or making up our own rules, deceive us to sin, as if there is no limit to God's grace. Liberty (freedom) in the Spirit, however, is the God-given ability not to sin, giving us the freedom to live the way God wants us to, and enjoy His blessings, no matter what it takes to receive them.

Jesus has set us free from sin, redeeming us from our sins, removing sin from us, and restoring us to Himself. Living in this freedom that Jesus gives us, is living in the freedom of the Spirit.

Liberty in the Spirit is the power of God's Spirit inside of us, helping us to turn away from self-sufficiency to God's sufficiency; from self-righteousness to God's righteousness; and from being sinners to being saints.

Our goal is not just to get that freedom, but to keep it, because liberty can be lost. Our freedom can be lost in numerous ways; but each one, no matter what it is, will be rooted in one of two main areas. These are "*man-made laws*" and "*self-made lawlessness*"; and both are as deadly as each other, because both are traps that can cause us to lose sight of "*God-made liberty*".

The letter written to the Galatians tells us about the freedom we have in the Spirit, and how it can be easily thrown away; either by obeying man-made laws and traditions; or by following self-made lawlessness and beliefs.

Man-made laws are a forced freedom based on man-made rules and regulations to earn salvation. Self-made lawlessness is a false freedom to sin, without God's laws, taking salvation for granted. God-made liberty is a fulfilling freedom not to sin, obeying God's laws, with the help of the Spirit. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, give us this freedom. Therefore, we must not submit to "*man-made laws*", and try to follow traditions, thinking that they will please God and earn us a place in heaven. We must also not allow ourselves to fall into "*self-made lawlessness*" thinking that just because we believe in Jesus and what He has done for us, that we can continue to practice sin.

There is a delicate balance of freedom in the Spirit, without following man-made laws, or self-made lawlessness, as it is easy to slip one way or the other. It is important that we live in the liberty of God's grace, having the freedom not to sin, rather than trying to live under man-made laws to earn God's grace, or take God's grace for granted, by living under self-made lawlessness.

***Man-made laws*** say: “You must obey our rules and regulations, to earn God’s grace, if you want to get to heaven.”

***Self-made lawlessness*** says: “I’ll believe in whatever I want, or whoever I want.” Or “I believe in Jesus; I will try to be good, but if not, I will be fine because I am saved by the grace of God.”

***God-made liberty*** says: “You have My Spirit in you who gives you the power to obey My law, contained in My Word, living in the freedom not to sin, which gives you eternal life.”

It is important to have a clear understanding of these differences because this is the heart of the Bible. It is crucial that we get the right balance and walk in the whole truth. Man-made laws will tell us that we are saved by following their rules and regulations, and doing deeds through our own efforts. Self-made lawlessness will try to convince us that we are saved without any guidelines, and there is no need to obey God’s law, or do good to others. God-made liberty instructs that we are saved by the grace of God, enabling us to co-operate with the Holy Spirit; sinning less, aiming to be sinless, and doing good deeds as He guides us to. This grace is God’s Spirit working in us, and through us, helping us to become holy, do good deeds, and fulfill His will, as we build a close bond with our Father, our Lord Jesus, and the Holy Spirit:

“Stand firm in the liberty (freedom) by which Christ has made us free, and do not again be held with a yoke of slavery.”

“For you, brothers, were called to liberty (freedom). Only do not use the liberty (freedom) as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.”

“The Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty (freedom).”

“Therefore, put away all filthiness and overflowing of evil, and receive in meekness (humility) the implanted Word, which is able to save your souls. But become doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. Because if anyone is a hearer of the Word and not a doer, this one is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observed himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind he was (what he was like).

The one who looks into the perfect law of liberty (freedom) and remains (continues) in it, not becoming a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in his doing.”

The liberty given to us by God is not doing whatever we want, and it is not doing whatever others tell us to do; it is doing what the Bible tells us to do, and allowing the Holy Spirit to guide us. That is real freedom, and this is the freedom God wants for us. Man-made laws make rules in the hope that it will bring life, as all religions try to do. They don’t give life. Only the Father, through Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit, gives life; now and forever.

On the other hand, we cannot live without guidelines at all. This means that we cannot take God’s law lightly. If anyone wilfully and deliberately continues to practice sin, they will not enter the kingdom of heaven. They may think they are alright but the Bible tells us, if we are not right with God, we cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven. This is a very serious warning, as it may seem right to follow man-made laws, and it may be easy to follow self-made lawlessness, but both are as deadly as each other.

Only God can lead us to life that is everlasting, in the way that is well pleasing to Him:

‘Enter through the narrow gate, because wide is the gate, and broad (easy) is the way leading to destruction, and many are those going in through it; because narrow is the gate and troublesome (difficult) is the way leading to life, and few are those finding it.’

There are many open paths that lead to destruction, and it is easy to follow them, and get lost on them. The only way to stay on the path that leads to life is to stay close to God. No one can find the narrow gate on their own; and no one can find their way on their own. Even if we have been on the right path, we can easily be led astray, and we can’t find our way back on our own. Going our own way is how we strayed in the first place. The only way to find the path that leads to eternal life, and stay on it, is to know God, stay close to Him, and be led by Him, all the time.

It is possible for someone, having started on their journey to salvation, to lose it, and never reach the end. We are to continue in faith. If we minimise sin, maximise good deeds, misapply the law; or follow man-made laws, or our own self-made lawlessness, we will lose everything. Once we come to Jesus Christ, we must continue with Him, and obey His Word. Liberty is the freedom not to sin, with the help of the Holy Spirit inside of us, and it is a wonderful freedom to have. Jesus promises that if we remain in Him, and obey His Word, we will bear much fruit. As we bear fruit for God, we receive His blessings; now and forever.

God has set us free, and keeps us free, as we commit to Him, trust in Him, rely upon Him, and remain with Him, continually. It is not enough to be set free; we must remain free. We need to be firmly established and constantly built up by God. Sin matters to Him and it should matter to us; and anything that opposes Him and His Word, whether it be man-made or self-motivated, is sin.

The Bible, along with church history, reveals constant attempts to substitute a relationship with God for something that is either man-made or self-motivated, or an ungodly mixture of both.

People may be overwhelmed by the possibility of having an intimate relationship with God; or reject it, because of either fear or guilt; so they will find a religious substitute to fill up the void. They may have been taught to have reverence for God and to worship Him in a certain way and may not be aware that they can know Him personally. Jesus has shown us how to know God, love Him and love one another, in a way that truly worships Him.

The early church made loving God, and loving others, central in their lives; and as a result, they turned the world upside down. This is why many christians are spiritually empty because anything that replaces God, or moves Him from being the number one priority in our lives, is an idol; an unfulfilling substitute for God.

An idol can be anything that has priority over God, whether it be wealth, possessions, career, leisure, relationships, or religion. However, the most deceptive idols for many christians who genuinely want to seek God, worship Him, and get close to Him, are the religious rules and regulations that are introduced as a substitute for a personal relationship with Him. These beliefs and traditions appear to worship God, but are false counterfeits.

In many cases, people simply follow the leader in religious systems that provide substitutes for a personal relationship with our Father, through Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

In other cases, people use God's grace as an opportunity for self-indulgence, and a licence to commit sin, thinking all will be fine and they will be saved. The Lord will deliver us from false religious beliefs, and sinful attitudes, and help us to live in the freedom and liberty that comes from knowing Him, if we will seek Him, hear from Him, trust in Him, and follow Him:

**‘My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.’**

Trying to keep laws through religious traditions makes people look righteous, but they are only doing what is required because they are told to, or because they think it pleases God. It is not genuine obedience out of a loving relationship with Him.

There is a mountain of difference between rituals, recklessness, and relationship. People who perform rituals hope to please God. Others who are reckless, do not care at all about pleasing God. People who seek to have a relationship with God will want to please Him and obey Him out of genuine love for Him. This love for our Father, and love for Jesus, and all that He has done for us, in faithful co-operation with the Holy Spirit, truly worships Him.

Religious traditions make the christian faith a matter of rules, rather than relationships. People think they are christians because they may keep the rules, but the love for God, and the genuine heartfelt desire to love and serve others, is not there.

Jesus tells us that the greatest commandments are to love God, and love one another with His love. Any substitute that tries to achieve this will leave us unfulfilled and powerless to please God.

A relationship with God brings forth His righteousness in us, and through us, and shows a genuine love for God and for others. This can only happen by having Spirit filled intimacy with Him.

The perfect law of liberty enables us to walk in the love of God, because we have His Spirit helping us. As we walk in the Spirit, something beautiful happens; fruit grows in our lives, and is given to others; fruit that comes from being connected to Jesus Christ:

**‘I am the vine; you are the branches. He who remains in Me, and I in him, this one bears much fruit; because apart from Me, you are not able to do anything.’**

A christian who is filled with the Spirit, is close to God, and being led by Him, will have all the fruits of the Spirit, mentioned in the letter written to the Galatians, operating through them:

“The fruit of the Spirit is: Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control;”

God's faithful children are the ones who live with the fruits of the Spirit. Love is the first fruit of the Spirit, and is the greatest fruit of the Spirit. You may see some of the fruits in people who do not know God, or who do not believe in Him. For example, some people have joy; others may seem to have peace; but you will not see all nine fruits working together, except in those who are filled with the Holy Spirit of God, have a close relationship with God, and are walking in obedience to Him. When all the fruits of the Spirit operate together, we live in perfect freedom:

“The one who looks into the perfect law of liberty (freedom) and remains (continues) in it, not becoming a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in his doing.”

Living in the perfect law of liberty is living with God's love inside us, flowing through us, and flowing out of us; loving Him, and loving one another; and being blessed in everything we do:

‘If the Son sets you free, you are really free.’

‘I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly.’

‘If you remain in Me, and My words remain in you, you will ask whatever you desire, and it will be done for you.’

## **Rejecting the Law – Rebellion Against God**

In the Old Testament, God freed the first generation of Israelites from slavery and promised them victory over their enemies before giving them the promised land. However, they were not willing to co-operate with Him, refusing to commit to Him, submit to Him, trust in Him, and rely upon Him, to help them fight their battles and complete the victory He had already won for them in advance. Their lack of belief and faith (commitment, submission, trust, and reliance) upon God to fight their battles and receive what He had promised cost them everything, even though God promised to be with them, fight for them, and had already won the war for them. It wasn't until the next generation, under the leadership of Joshua, that the Israelites fully committed themselves to the Lord, followed His instructions, and were led by Him to fight their battles, believing in what He had promised them; to be with them, fight for them, and give them the land.

We are in a similar but more superior situation to the Israelites. God was with the Israelites when they went into their battles. He fought for them and He fought with them, and they won their battles together. He did what He promised them He would do; however, they were still required to co-operate with Him and go into battle. In a similar way, Jesus has given us the promised land; the kingdom of God, through His victory over sin; however, we must co-operate with Him to enter into the kingdom of God, and this means fighting battles with sin, with His help. We have a much greater ability to fight our battles with sin and win because God is in us, through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, who with our co-operation, will win our battles over sin because Jesus has already won the war. Like the Israelites, God expects us to believe in Him, and obey Him, so we may enter into His rest:

“For we have become sharers of Christ, if truly we hold fast the beginning of the assurance firm to the end, while it is said, ‘Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as in the (provocation) rebellion.’ For who were those who heard and yet provoked (rebelled)? Was it not all who came out of Egypt through Moses?

With whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those sinning, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter into His rest, but to those not obeying? And we see that they were not able to enter in because of unbelief (faithlessness).

Therefore, let us fear, while a promise remains of entering His rest, lest any one of you may seem to have come short of it. For indeed we have had the good news preached to us, even as they also; but the Word did not profit those hearing it, not being mixed with faith in those who heard.”

“Let us therefore strive to enter into that rest, that no one fall in the same example of disobedience. The Word of God is living and active (powerful in effect); sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. No creature is hidden before Him, but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”

The letter to the Hebrews warns that if we receive the truth and continue to sin, there is no longer a sacrifice for our sins, but a terrifying expectation of God’s judgment that will devour us:

“If we are wilfully sinning after receiving the full knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice concerning sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery zeal (fury of fire) about to devour the adversaries (enemies). Anyone disregarding the law of Moses dies without mercy on the word of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment do you think he will be thought worthy (he will deserve) who has trampled down the Son of God, considered the blood of the covenant by which He was sanctified common (unholy), and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know the One having said, ‘Vengeance is Mine; I will repay,’ says the Lord. And again, ‘The Lord will judge His people.’ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

Having received the truth; and having received the Holy Spirit, anyone who rejects the conviction of the Holy Spirit, refusing to obey God’s Word, and continues to sin, will place their salvation at risk, to the point where they will be rejected by God and be eternally condemned. God pours out His grace on everyone; however, if He is continually rejected, there will come a time when His grace will no longer be available:

“It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become sharers (partakers) of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, to renew them again to repentance, crucifying again for themselves the Son of God, and putting Him to open shame. For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and produces herbs useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated,

receives blessing from God; but if it bears thorns and briers,  
it is disapproved (rejected) and near to being cursed,  
whose end is for burning.”

Ultimately, if there is no change in our lives after accepting the truth, and receiving the Holy Spirit, and we wilfully continue to disobey God’s law, we will not escape His condemnation:

“See that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we turn away from Him who warns from heaven, whose voice shook the earth then; but now He has promised, saying, ‘Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heavens.’ The words, ‘Yet once more,’ declares the removal of the things being shaken, as of things having been made, so that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, through which we may serve God well pleasingly, with reverence and awe. For our God is a consuming fire.”

“Therefore, we ought more abundantly give heed (pay much closer attention) to the things heard, lest we drift away. For if the Word spoken through angels proved steadfast (stood firm), and every transgression (breaking of the law) and disobedience received a just recompense (punishment), how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was first spoken by the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness, both with signs and wonders, and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His will.”

We are in danger if we neglect our salvation, whether we deny our faith by drifting away, or reject the faith by turning away. Neglecting our faith is a condition that can be recovered; however, Hebrews tells us that upon receiving salvation we can drift away to a point of no return, where there is no possibility of recovering our salvation. Hebrews tells us not to neglect our salvation, because if it is thrown away, it cannot be retrieved:

“Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has great reward. You have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: ‘For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay; but the just (righteous) shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back (withdraws), My soul has no pleasure in him.’ But we are not of those shrinking (withdrawing) back to destruction, but of those believing to the preserving (saving) of the soul.”

We need endurance so that after we have done the will of God, we may receive the promise of eternal life. The Holy Spirit will help us to endure and keep us moving forward as we stay in close relationship with Him, living in faith, allowing Him to transform us into God’s likeness, with His righteousness, bearing fruit, becoming holy, and fulfilling His will, looking forward to Jesus’ return to reign as “King of kings and Lord of lords”, receiving His promises, and inheriting the kingdom of God from our Father, with our Lord Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, and with one another.

It is wrong to threaten someone with something that could never happen. The Bible is the Word of God and it affects the eternal welfare of every person who has ever lived. The letter to the Hebrews rightly warns us to guard what God has so freely given us; eternal life together forever with Him.

The New Testament contains very solemn warnings to christians, and anyone who will believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, about the need to believe in Jesus, and keep on believing in Him (having faith in Him; committing to Him, trusting in Him, and relying upon Him), so that we do not neglect the salvation of our souls and drift away to the point of no return.

The letter to the Hebrews urges us to keep moving on, to keep going forward, not drawing back, urgently appealing, warning, speaking tenderly, yet strongly in every possible sense, along with other letters in the New Testament, in varying tones, because of the real risk of losing, or throwing away, our salvation:

“Let us lay aside every weight and the surrounding sin  
that easily ensnares (traps) us, and let us run with  
endurance the race that is set before us,”

“Do you not know that those who run in a race all indeed run,  
but one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it.”

“I press on toward the goal for the prize of the  
upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

The failure of many of the Israelites who had left Egypt to journey to the promised land in Canaan is recorded throughout the New Testament as a warning to us, that although we may have started our journey with the Lord, we need to make sure we arrive in the promised land; the kingdom of God. They warn us that although we may have left the slavery of sin, as the Israelites were in slavery in Egypt, we need to continue towards God’s kingdom; the promised land, because it is not those who start the journey of salvation that make it; it is those who finish it:

“I do not want you to be ignorant (unaware), brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptised to Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank of the spiritual Rock following them, and the Rock was Christ. But with most of them God was not well pleased, for they were scattered (slayed) in the desert. Now these things became our examples, that we might not desire evil as they did.

Neither be idolaters (image worshipers) as some of them were; as it has been written, ‘The people sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play.’ Neither should we commit fornication (sexual immorality), as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. Neither should we test the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents. Neither grumble (complain), as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition (instruction), to whom the ends of the ages have come.

Therefore, let him who thinks he stands look (beware) lest he fall. No temptation has taken you except what is human (common to man); but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way out, that you may be able to endure it.”

“Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, ‘Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as in the provocation (rebellion), in the day of temptation (testing) in the wilderness, where your fathers tempted Me, testing Me, and saw My works for forty years.

Therefore, I was angry with that generation, and said, ‘They always go astray in their heart; and they have not known My ways.’ So I swore in My wrath (anger), ‘They shall not enter into My rest.’ Watch, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief (faithlessness) in falling away from the living God; but exhort (encourage) one another each day, as long as it is being called ‘Today,’ that not any one of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become sharers of Christ, if truly we hold fast the beginning of the assurance firm to the end, while it is said, ‘Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as in the (provocation) rebellion.’ For who were those who heard and yet provoked (rebelled)? Was it not all who came out of Egypt through Moses?

With whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those sinning, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter into His rest, but to those not obeying? And we see that they were not able to enter in because of unbelief (faithlessness).”

“I say, then, did they stumble that they might fall? Let it not be! But through their fall came salvation to the nations, to provoke them to jealousy. Now if the fall of them is riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the nations, how much more their fullness. For I speak to you, the nations, inasmuch as I am an apostle to the nations, I glorify my ministry, if somehow I may provoke to jealousy those who are my own flesh, and may save some of them. For if the casting away of them is the reconciliation of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead? And if the firstfruit is holy, also the lump; and if the root is holy, also the branches.

But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and became a partaker of the root and of the fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches. If you do boast, you do not bear (support) the root, but the root bears (supports) you. You will then say, ‘The branches were broken off that I may be grafted in.’ Very well. For unbelief (faithlessness), they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be high-minded, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will He spare you. Behold, then, the kindness and severity of God; on those who have fallen, severity; but on you, God’s kindness, if you continue in His kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. And those also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut out of the olive tree, wild by nature, and grafted into a good olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?”

Likewise, Jesus urges us to remain connected to Him:

‘Remain in Me, and I in you. As the branch is not able to bear fruit of itself, unless it remains in the vine, neither can you, unless you remain in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. He who remains in Me, and I in him, this one bears much fruit; because apart from Me, you are not able to do anything. If anyone does not remain in Me, he is cast (thrown) out as a branch and is withered (dried up); and they gather them and cast (throw) them into the fire, and they are burned.’

It is only by remaining in Jesus that we can bear fruit and avoid being cast away and thrown into the fire.

In the letter of Jude we are urged to defend our salvation and warned against false teachers. We are reminded of what happened to the children of Israel who rebelled against God, the angels who failed in their responsibilities towards God, and the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, and nearby cities, who repulsed God:

“Beloved, with all eagerness to write to you concerning our common salvation, I had the necessity to write to you exhorting (urging) you to earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints. For certain men crept in unnoticed; long ago being marked out for this judgment (condemnation), ungodly ones perverting the grace of God into licentiousness (uncontrollable lust), and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. But I want to remind you, you once knowing these things, that the Lord having saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those not believing. And the angels who did not keep their beginning, but deserted their dwelling place, He has kept in eternal chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day; as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them, in like manner to these, committing fornication (sexual immorality) and having gone away after different flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the judgment (vengeance) of eternal fire.”

The warnings are made very clear to us. The children of Israel were redeemed, but many did not make it to the promised land, and were destroyed. The angels were living in God’s kingdom, but failed in their responsibilities, and await God’s judgment. The people of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them, lived in such a way that repulsed God, and are now condemned to eternal punishment.

The second letter from Peter re-iterates these warnings, and tells us to beware of false teachers, as many will follow their beliefs. He says, it would be better if they had never known the way of righteousness, than to know it, and turn away from the holy commandment given to them. He uses crude language bluntly describing people who turn away from the truth of God's Word. They are like a dog going back to its own vomit; or like a pig going back to roll in the mud after having been washed clean. They were redeemed from sin, only to return back to it:

"There were also false prophets among the people, as also false teachers will be among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies (religious beliefs), and denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed (spoken evil of). And in covetousness (greed), with well fabricated (deceptively false) words, they will use you for their gain; their judgment of old (from long ago) is not idle, and their destruction does not slumber.

For if God did not spare sinning angels, but cast them down to Tartarus (hell) and committed them to chains of darkness, being kept to judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, the eighth person, a herald (preacher) of righteousness, bringing a flood on a world of ungodly ones; and covering the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah with ashes, He condemned them to destruction, setting an example to Men intending to live ungodly; and He delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the licentious (lustful) conduct of the lawless; dwelling among them day after day, that righteous man's soul was tormented by their lawless works.

Then the Lord knows to deliver the godly out of trials, and to keep the unjust (unrighteous) for a day of judgment, under punishment, and especially those going after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. Presumptuous and self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of glories, whereas angels, being greater in strength and power, do not bring an evil speaking judgment against them before the Lord. But these, like irrational beasts, born to be caught and destroyed, speaking evil of the things of which they are ignorant, will utterly perish in their corruption, being about to receive the wages of unrighteousness, deeming indulgence in the day as pleasure, revelling in spots and blemishes, feasting with you in their deceipts, having eyes full of an adulteress never ceasing from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in covetousness (greed). Cursed children, forsaking the straight way, following the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness, but was rebuked for his own transgression (sin); a dumb ass (donkey) speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet. These are springs without water, and clouds being driven by a storm, for whom the blackness of darkness is reserved. For speaking great swelling words of vanity (emptiness), they allure by the lusts of the flesh, in licentiousness (excessive lusts), the ones who have escaped from those living in error, promising them freedom, though they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom anyone has been overcome, to this one he has been enslaved.

For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the full knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last things are worse than the first.

For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But the true proverb has happened to them: ‘A dog returns to its own vomit,’ and, ‘A washed sow to wallowing in the mire (mud).’ ”

“Beloved, remember the words spoken before by the apostles of the Lord of us, Jesus Christ, because they told you, that at the last time there will be mockers (false teachers) according to their own lusts, going after ungodliness. These are ones separating themselves apart, worldly people, not having the Spirit.

But you, beloved, building yourselves up by your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, awaiting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. And pity some, making distinction (clearly separating them). But save others with fear, seizing them out of the fire, hating even the garment having been stained from the flesh.”

Jesus warns about false prophets claiming to be religious leaders who represent God, cleverly disguised to look godly, but are evil:

‘Beware of false prophets (pretending foretellers and religious imposters), who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous (greedy) wolves. From their fruits you will know them. Do they gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? So every good tree produces good fruits; but the bad (worthless) tree produces evil fruits. A good tree cannot produce evil fruits, nor can a bad (worthless) tree produce good fruits. Every tree not producing good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

Therefore, by their fruits you will know them.’

The Bible warns that not many should teach God's Word:

"My brothers, let not many of you become teachers,  
knowing that we will receive a greater (stricter) judgment."

Many people are not aware of the responsibility that comes with teaching the Word of God. Christian leaders are responsible for the people they minister to. There is great importance in hearing from God, obeying His law, and doing His will; and even greater importance in hearing from God and teaching His Word:

'That servant, who knew the will of his lord, and did not prepare, nor do according to his will, will be beaten with many stripes. But he, who did not know, and did things worthy of stripes, will be beaten with few. Everyone to whom much was given, much will be demanded from him; and to whom much was deposited, more abundantly they will ask of him.'

'Truly, truly, I say to you, there comes an hour, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and the ones hearing will live. For even as the Father has life in Himself, so He gave also to the Son to have life in Himself.'

And He gave authority to Him to do judgment, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this, because there comes an hour in which all those in the tombs will hear the voice of Him, and will come out; the ones having done good to a resurrection of life; and the ones having practiced evil to a resurrection of judgment. I am not able, from Myself, to do anything. As I hear, I judge, and My judgment is just (right), because I do not seek My will, but the will of the One sending Me; the Father.'

## **Retaining the Law – Relationship With God**

Retaining the law is obeying the law of Jesus Christ for salvation according to His Word, the Holy Bible. First and foremost this means obeying Jesus' greatest commandments:

“ ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’

This is the first commandment.

And the second, like it, is this:

‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.”

When we consider that loving God is the most important commandment given to us; and loving one another is the second most important commandment given to us; it is appropriate that He should be the greatest priority in our life; and loving one another should be our second highest priority. But what does Jesus really mean when He says to love Him with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength?

He is telling us to love Him with every part of our being and with everything we've got because this is how much He loves us. God commands us to love Him with everything we've got, because He loves us with everything He's got, which is more than what we could ever love Him. He wants to give His love to us, and showed the extent of His love for us, when He was tortured to death on the cross for our eternal welfare.

There is no greater love than God's love, and He wants to give His love to us; and He wants us to give His love to one another, urging us to love one another as He loves us:

‘A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I loved you, that you also love one another.’

Who could truly say that they love God more than anyone or anything? Yet this is God’s greatest commandment. Who could truly say that they love others as much as themselves? Yet this is God’s second greatest commandment. And who could truly say that they love others as much as God loves them? Yet this is God’s new commandment. How can we love God with all of our being, and love one another as much as ourselves; and moreso, love one another the way that God loves us? The only way that we can truly love God, and truly love one another, is to have God’s love; and the only way to have God’s love is to know Him intimately.

It is impossible to love someone without knowing them. It is impossible to love someone with everything we’ve got without knowing them intimately. Likewise, it is impossible to love God, and love one another as He loves us, without knowing Him intimately, experiencing the fullness of His love. God does not want us to simply know about Him and His love for us; He wants us to know Him and experience the fullness of His love, now and for all eternity. Our eternal destiny depends on the strength of our love for God, and the strength of our love for one another. This is why God commands us to love Him with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength.

The commands from Jesus are for our benefit; and just as laws are put in place for the benefit of the people, who are to obey them, it is the same with the laws given to us by Jesus. His laws are for our eternal benefit. When we seek to know God, we will experience His love; and as we get to know Him and experience His love, we will love Him, and love one another. As our love for Him grows, so will our love for one another.

As our relationship with God matures, we will have a strong desire to fulfill His will and love one another, even as He loves us. It all starts with knowing God, or getting to know Him better.

Jesus is the shepherd of the sheep. He knows His sheep, and His sheep know Him. All of His sheep hear His voice, know Him, and follow Him, and will become one flock with Him:

‘I am the good shepherd. I know My own, and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me, and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.’

If we are to have eternal life, we must know God. This means having a personal relationship with Him where we spend time with Him and He spends time with us; where we speak to Him and He speaks to us; where we listen to Him and He listens to us. It is a relationship based on love for each other, and faithfulness to one another, similar to a marriage commitment.

When a couple get married they commit to stay with each other for the rest of their entire lives. One of their greatest challenges is keeping that commitment and remaining together. For any marriage to last, one of the most important elements is the effort made by both husband and wife to remain committed to one another; constantly communicating with each other, listening to each other, and caring for one another, as well as being faithful and maintaining intimacy with one another. It is not unusual for a husband and wife to have constant contact with each other a number of times throughout the day, whether it be face to face, or by phone, before spending some quiet time with each other during the evening. Our relationship with God is no different.

Our relationship with God must be strong. It will only become strong, and remain strong, if we fully commit to Him, and remain committed to Him, by keeping in constant connection with Him, in faithfulness and intimacy. As with any marriage, it is one thing to commit; however, the real challenge is remaining committed right through to the very end.

The Bible tells us about Jesus' love and commitment towards the church, comparing it to how a husband should love his wife, and how He has prepared a marriage supper for His bride:

“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for it, that He might sanctify it (make it holy), cleansing it by the washing of the water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself as the glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such things, but that it be holy and unblemished (perfect).”

“ ‘Hallelujah! Because the Lord God Almighty reigned. Let us rejoice, and let us exult, and give the glory to Him, because the marriage of the Lamb came, and His wife prepared herself.’ And it was given to her that she be clothed in fine linen, pure and bright; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. And he said to me, ‘Write: Blessed are the ones having been called to the supper of the marriage of the Lamb.’ And he said to me, ‘These words of God are true.’ ”

Knowing God is the greatest commitment we will ever make, because knowing Him is the most important relationship we will ever have. The greater priority God has in our lives, the closer we will be to Him, the greater fulfilment we will receive from Him, and the greater our love will be for Him, and for one another.

Building a solid relationship takes commitment, time, and effort. It is no different when building a relationship with our Father, through Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit. It means spending quality time with Him, speaking to Him, hearing from Him, experiencing His love, and allowing ourselves to be led by Him, trusting that only He knows what is best for us, making our relationship with Him our greatest priority in life, and fulfilling His will our greatest goal in life. It means re-arranging our priorities to prioritise God and including Him in every aspect of our lives. It means living a life that fits into God and His purposes, rather than trying to fit God into our lives and busy schedules to suit our own purposes. It means managing our time around Him, and not managing Him around our time. Instead of trying to fit God into our lives, we make our lives fit into God, and allow Him to influence every part of it. It means putting Him first in everything, and loving one another with His love. Ultimately, it is allowing ourselves to be guided by Him on a day-by-day, moment-by-moment basis, being obedient to Him, and relying on Him for every aspect of our livelihood, while fulfilling His will:

**“Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”**

We receive lasting fulfilment that can only come from God to the extent that we draw close to Him and co-operate with Him. His fulfilment provides peace in happiness and peace in sadness, peace in good times and peace in bad times, peace in triumphs and peace in tragedies. The peace and fulfilment that comes from God sees the good in everything that happens, either to ourselves, or to others, during the course of our lives, no matter what situations or circumstances we find ourselves in.

The greater the commitment, time, and effort, taken to build a close relationship with God, the stronger the relationship will be, the stronger our love for others will be, and the more blessed, fulfilling, and rewarding, our lives will be:

“Be subject (submit) to God.  
Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you.  
Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.”

“Without faith it is impossible to please God. The one approaching (drawing near) Him must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder to the ones seeking Him out.”

Our love for God, and our relationship with Him, is more important than anyone or anything. When we get the order of the Lord’s greatest commands right, and work on having a healthy relationship with Him, we can effectively work on having healthy relationships with others, and give them the love that He gives us.

If our love for God, and our relationship with Him is healthy, our love for others will be healthy. If our love for God, and our relationship with Him is strong, our love for others will be strong. The opposite is also true. If our love for God, and our relationship with Him is unhealthy, our love for others will be unhealthy. If our love for God, and our relationship with Him is weak, our love for others will be weak. Some people may say that we can love others without God’s love. This is true. Because we are made in God’s image we have a natural tendency to love others and want to be loved. However, our limited ability to love has self-centred motives, and it is only by being connected to God that we can have selfless motives to love like He loves. To love with God’s love has far more substance than mere human love.

The love of God living inside us has the power to not only love those who love us, and love those who are easy to love; but to also love those who do not love us, and love those who are not easy to love; in particular those who have hurt us, which usually includes everybody to some extent. The degree to which we can love anyone, no matter how much they hurt us, or disappoint us, is the extent of God's love inside us.

The strength of God's love inside us, running through us, and flowing out of us, is determined by how close we are to Him. The closer we are to Him, the more we will love Him, and the more we will love others, no matter who they are, or what they have done to us.

God's love inside us, running through us, and flowing out of us, is of the greatest importance, as our eternal destiny depends on the strength of our love for Him, and for one another; and this all depends on how close we are to God. The closer we are to Him, the more we will become like Him, and have His love for others:

*I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.*

*Every branch in Me not bearing fruit, He takes away;  
and every branch bearing fruit, He prunes, so that it may  
bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the Word*

*which I have spoken to you. Remain in Me, and I in you.*

*As the branch is not able to bear fruit of itself, unless it  
remains in the vine, neither can you, unless you remain*

*in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. He who  
remains in Me, and I in him, this one bears much fruit;  
because apart from Me, you are not able to do anything.*

*If anyone does not remain in Me, he is cast (thrown) out  
as a branch and is withered (dried up); and they gather them  
and cast (throw) them into the fire, and they are burned.*

If you remain in Me, and My words remain in you, you will ask whatever you desire, and it will be done for you. In this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and you will be My disciples.'

"The fruit of the Spirit is: Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control;"

We must stay connected to Jesus, continually trusting in Him, and relying upon Him. In the example of the helicopter rescue, when someone is being saved from a life threatening situation, they need to hold on tight until they have reached safety. They are not saved at the beginning of the rescue attempt, or on the way through it. They are saved when they have reached the desired destination. It is no different when it comes to our eternal welfare and our eternal destination. We are not saved at the beginning of our journey of salvation, or during the journey, but at the end of the journey, when we have reached the kingdom of God.

We are not saved, simply by believing in the Lord; or when we commit ourselves to Him; or when we receive the Holy Spirit. We are saved once we enter into God's kingdom. Between now and then, during the whole course of our lives, we are in the process of being saved:

"God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even we being dead in trespasses (unintentional errors and wilful offences), made us alive together with Christ; by grace you are having been saved (you have been saved, and are being saved); and raised us up together, and seated us together in the heavenlies (heavenly places) in Christ Jesus, that He might show in the coming ages, the exceeding riches of His grace

(His undeserved favour) in kindness toward us in Christ. For by grace you are having been saved (you have been saved, and are being saved), through faith, and this not of you, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

Our salvation must be worked out constantly. This is why the New Testament places so much importance, and great emphasis, not only on obtaining salvation, but also retaining our salvation:

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,”

The emphasis on our salvation is of the greatest importance, because God wants everyone to be saved from eternal ruin:

“The Lord is not slow about His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward us, not willing that any should perish, but for all to come to repentance.”

The Bible is not written to scare us into doubting whether we will be saved or not, but is teaching us to be serious about our salvation; making our relationship with our Father, through Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit, our number one priority in life.

We can be constantly assured that we are on our way to heaven, and God will provide that ongoing assurance, as long as we ensure that we stay close to Him, and do what He wants us to do:

“I declare to you the Gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the Word which I preached to you; unless you believed in vain (not really believing its importance and purpose).”

We shouldn't have to wonder whether we are saved or not. There is an assurance in God's Word that gives us confidence that we are saved. This assurance is not based on believing in God; or belonging to a religious organisation; or by being a christian; but because of a person's continuing relationship with God.

We can have a constant assurance that we are going to heaven; however, our assurance must come from God Himself, according to His Word. If we remain connected to Him, and are obedient to His Word, we will not perish:

**‘If anyone does not remain in Me, he is cast (thrown) out as a branch and is withered (dried up); and they gather them and cast (throw) them into the fire, and they are burned.’**

**“For the Word of the cross is folly (foolishness) to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”**

If anyone ignores God's Word, they will not escape judgment. Our God-given conscience convicts us of God's law in our hearts:

**“There is no partiality (favouritism) with God. For as many as sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as sinned within law will be judged through law.**

**For not the hearers of the law are just (righteous) with God, but the doers of the law will be justified (declared righteous).**

**For when nations not having law do by nature the things of the law, they not having law are a law to themselves; who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness; and the thoughts between one another accusing or even excusing, in the day when God judges the hidden things of men, according to my Gospel, through Jesus Christ.”**

We can be as close to God as we want to be; getting to know Him; getting to know Him better; and getting to know Him best:

### **1. Getting to Know Him**

- Spending some time praying to God.
- Studying God's Word to understand it.
- Listening to what God is saying to us personally.
- Co-operating with God to help us sin less.
- Communicating with God some of the time each day.
- Including God in some aspects of our lives.
- Seeking to know God's will for ourselves.
- Relying on God to guide us into His will.

### **2. Getting to Know Him Better**

- Spending quality time praying to God.
- Studying God's Word to understand it and apply it.
- Listening to what God is saying to us through others.
- Co-operating with God to help us become sinless.
- Communicating with God more of the time each day.
- Including God in most aspects of our lives.
- Seeking to fulfill God's will for ourselves.
- Relying on God to guide us to fulfill His will.

### **3. Getting to Know Him Best**

- Spending quality time praying with God.
- Studying God's Word to help others apply it.
- Listening to what God is saying to us through everything.
- Co-operating with God to help others become sinless.

- Communicating with God most of the time each day.
- Including God in all aspects of our lives.
- Seeking to help others fulfill God's will for themselves.
- Relying on God to lead us to help others fulfill His will.

The greatest love we can have for God is to love Him, be loved by Him, and love one another with His love, as we fulfill His will. Jesus revealed His love for the Father, and for us, when He made the greatest sacrifice to fulfill the Father's will. After asking the Father, and hoping that, if it were possible, to change His will, Jesus endured torture, pain and suffering, to redeem us:

‘My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.  
Yet, not as I will, but as You will.’

‘My Father, if this cup cannot pass away unless I drink it,  
Your will be done.’

Jesus' sacrificial love during His life, and even during His death, was the greatest show of love in fulfilling the will of the Father. He gave up His life so we could have the fullness of life in Him. To have the fullness of life that He wants to give us, we can pray:

“May Your will be done for my life.”

The greatest love to have for Him is to fulfill His will for our life:

‘You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.  
No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know  
what his lord does; but I have called you friends, because all  
things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.’

It is not just accepting God's forgiveness and being redeemed from our sins that saves us, but allowing the Lord to remove sin from us as we build our relationship with Him, and allow Him to restore us to Himself. This means becoming holy, as He is holy:

“According to the Holy One calling you, you also become holy in all conduct; because it has been written:  
‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’”

This is what makes our salvation sure; drawing close to God, loving one another, and seeking His holiness, until we are saved:

“Be subject (submit) to God.  
Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you.  
Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.”

“Eagerly pursue peace (strive for peace) with all (people), and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord; watching diligently (watching out carefully for one another) lest anyone falls short and fails to obtain the grace of God.”

God disciplines us to help us become holy. He requires holiness from His children and will discipline us to achieve this. It is God's grace that redeems us; it is God's grace that removes sin from us; and it is God's grace that restores us to Himself. This requires discipline for our own good. He tells us that, if we are not disciplined, we are not His children. Every good father disciplines his children because he loves them and wants what is best for them. Our heavenly Father loves us and He knows what is best for us. He wants us to be together forever with Him. He requires holiness for this to happen and will discipline us to get it:

“ ‘My son, do not despise the discipline (training) of the Lord, nor faint while being reproved (corrected). For whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and scourges (whips) every son He receives.’

If you endure discipline, God is dealing with you as with sons; for who is a son whom a father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are bastards (illegitimate), and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh as discipliners (trainers), and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits, and we shall live? For they truly disciplined us for a few days, according to the thing seeming good to them; but He for our profit, in order for us to partake of His holiness. And all discipline for the present indeed seems not of joy, but of grief (painful), but later it gives peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”

The Holy Spirit is a gift from God who has been given to us by the grace of our Father, through the sacrifice Jesus made for us, so we may have His help in turning away from our sin to His righteousness, bearing fruit, becoming holy, and being saved to everlasting life:

‘I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive because it does not see Him nor know Him. But you know Him because He lives with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I am coming to you.’

‘The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I have said to you.’

The way we become holy is by having the Holy Spirit in us and co-operating with Him. We need His help to overcome our sinful nature, the world and its temptations, and the Devil:

“The grace of God which brings salvation appeared to all men, instructing us that having denied ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live sensibly (with self-control), and righteously, and godly, in the present age, waiting for the blessed hope and appearance of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself on our behalf, that He might redeem us from all iniquity (lawlessness), and purify a special people for Himself, zealous (eager) for good works.”

“Clothe yourselves with humility, because God sets Himself against the proud ones, but He gives grace to the humble ones. Be humbled, then, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in time, casting all your anxiety (worry) onto Him, because it matters to Him concerning you (He cares for you). Be sober (keep sensible); watch, because your adversary (your enemy) the Devil walks about like a roaring lion seeking someone he may devour.”

This is why Jesus continually instructs, urges, and exhorts us throughout the New Testament to believe in Him, abide in Him, and remain in Him:

“For this very reason, bringing in all diligence (making every effort), supply your faith with virtue (excellence), and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with endurance, and endurance with godliness, and godliness with brotherly kindness, and brotherly kindness with love.

For if these things are in you and abounding, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in acknowledgment of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the one in whom these things are not present is blind, being short-sighted, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent (make every effort) to make sure of your calling and choice; for by doing these things, you will never fall. For so richly will be supplied to you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

God demonstrated how far He will go to bring about holiness, and save us from going to hell, when He sent Jesus to suffer and die on the cross for us to pay the penalty for our sins. Jesus won the greatest war ever fought when He defeated sin. He won the victory through holiness, and this is what He requires from us.

Jesus' victory over sin has provided the way for us to have victory over sin. We must fight sin, and defeat it, with the help of the Holy Spirit. Battles with sin are battles to become holy and are to be fought with the power of God's Spirit inside of us.

We will win our battles over sin if we fight sin with God's help, in His power, by staying close to Him, trusting in Him to help us. As we believe into God; committing to Him, trusting in Him, and relying upon Him, He will help us win our battles until the ultimate victory; when we will be together forever with Him.

Everyone is responsible for their own salvation and the salvation of their family. We can have the constant assurance that our salvation remains secure; however, this assurance can only come from our Father in heaven, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Our relationship with God must be our highest priority in life; fulfilling His will our greatest goal; and our eternal salvation our greatest responsibility.

Our assurance comes through building our relationship with God, getting to know Abba as our Loving Father, Jesus Christ as our Best Friend, and the Holy Spirit as our Soul Mate. As we build and maintain a close, intimate relationship with God, allowing Him to become involved in every aspect of our lives, living life together with Him, allowing Him to imprint Himself and His character into us, we can be constantly assured that our salvation is totally secure. This takes effort; however, everything in life that has any worthwhile significance and lasting value takes a lot of effort to maintain and keep. It is no different with our salvation.

Salvation has the most worthwhile significance, and the greatest everlasting value of anything we pursue in life, and it takes our lifetime to maintain and retain it, to receive the fullness of God's blessings that come with spending eternity together with Him.

Everything comes down to how much we want to obey God and do what He wants us to do, as opposed to doing our own will and doing what we want to do; and how our choices impact on the will and purpose that God has for us, now, and for eternity. This is the personal responsibility of each and every individual.

We can reject salvation, and we can throw it away after having received the Holy Spirit, if we refuse to submit to Him and obey His leading in our life to turn us away from sin, and live according to the commands God the Father has given us, through His Son, Jesus Christ, in His Word, the Holy Bible.

Salvation is not instantaneous or automatic, but is an ongoing process that requires commitment, perseverance, and endurance. It is a continuous recycling process that starts when we are justified and continues right throughout our sanctification until we are finally glorified together forever with Jesus:

‘The one who endures to the end will be saved.’

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the One, according to His great mercy, having regenerated us (given us a rebirth) to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible (will never perish), undefiled (pure), and unfading, having been kept in the heavens for you, who by God’s power are being guarded, through faith, to a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, grieving in manifold (various) trials, that the proving (trustworthiness) of your faith, being much more precious than perishing gold, having been proved (tested) through fire, may be found to praise, and honour, and glory, at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom not having seen, you love; in whom not yet seeing, but believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable (inexpressible); and having been glorified, obtaining the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”

“Trust in Jehovah (the Lord) with all your heart; and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him (seeking, understanding, knowing, and obeying Him), and He shall direct (make straight) your paths.”

“Now may the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep, in the blood of the eternal covenant, our Lord Jesus, perfect you in every good work to do His will, doing in you that which is well pleasing before Him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory to the ages of the ages (forever and ever). Amen.”

## **7. Obtaining Eternal Rewards in Heaven**

God created us to live with Him forever. He wants us to enjoy living with Him for eternity. The reason for salvation is so we may have eternal life with God. Heaven is where we will spend eternity with God. Eternal life is how we get there:

“We know that everyone having been born of God does not sin; but the one born of God keeps (guards) himself, and the evil one does not touch him. We know we are of God, and the whole world lies in evil. And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, that we may know the true One (know Him who is true); and we are in the true One (in Him who is true), in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.”

‘For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that everyone believing into Him may not perish, but have eternal life.’

‘The thief does not come, except that he may steal, and kill, and destroy. I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly.’

Jesus' own words are the most important commands in the entire Bible. If we want to be certain of how we may enter into God's kingdom and obtain eternal rewards when we get there, we need only read and study Jesus' words, and apply them with wholehearted commitment to our life. In this way, our salvation will be assured, we will enter into God's kingdom, and we will receive blessings and rewards that will last for eternity:

‘I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. The one who rejects Me, and does not receive My words has that which judges him. The Word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.’

‘For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man will also be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.’

‘Therefore, everyone who hears these words from Me, and does them, will be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock; the rain came down, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house; but it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock.

And everyone hearing these words from Me, and not doing them, will be compared to a foolish man who built his house on the sand; the rain came down, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it.’

‘Heaven and earth will pass away,  
but My words will never pass away.’

‘The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. The one not honouring the Son does not honour the Father who has sent Him. Truly, truly, I say to you, the one who hears My Word, and believing the One who has sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.’

‘The good man out of the good treasure of his heart  
brings forth good things, and the evil man out of  
the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil things.

I tell you that every idle (careless) word that men may speak,  
they will give account for it in the day of judgment. For by  
your words you will be justified (declared righteous),  
and by your words you will be condemned.’

“For we must all manifest (appear for all to be revealed)  
before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each  
one may receive the things done through the body,  
according to what he practiced, whether good or bad.”

“Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.  
No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God abides  
in us, and His love has been perfected in us. By this we know  
that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us  
His Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father  
has sent the Son as Saviour of the world.

Whoever confesses (acknowledges allegiance) that Jesus is the Son  
of God, God abides in him, and he in God. And we have known  
and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and the  
one abiding in love abides in God, and God in him. By this,  
love is perfected with us, that we may have confidence in the  
day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world.

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear,  
because fear involves punishment, and the one fearing has not  
been perfected in love. We love because He first loved us.”

In the letter to the Thessalonians, the apostle Paul thanked God for their faith and love towards one another, as they endured patient suffering, counting them worthy of the kingdom of God:

“Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. We ought to give thanks to God always concerning you, brothers, as it is right, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of each one of you all to one another increases, so that we ourselves boast in you in the churches of God for your perseverance (patient endurance) and faith in all your persecutions (bad treatment because you believe in Jesus) and tribulations (troubles) that you endure. This is clear evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you suffer; since it is a just (righteous) thing with God to repay with tribulation (trouble) those who trouble you, and to give you, who are being troubled, rest with us at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven (when Jesus is revealed) with angels of His power, in flaming fire, giving full vengeance to those not knowing God, and to those not obeying the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will pay the penalty; eternal destruction from the face (presence) of the Lord, and from the glory of His strength, when He comes to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all those believing in that day, because our testimony to you was believed. To this end, we indeed always pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of the calling, and may fulfill every good pleasure of goodness, and work of faith in power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Jesus tells us who will obtain rewards in heaven and inherit the kingdom of God:

‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek (humble), for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are the ones hungering and thirsting for righteousness, for they will be filled (satisfied). Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they reproach (abuse) you, and persecute you (treat you badly because you believe in Me), and say all kinds of evil against you, lying, for My sake. Rejoice and be glad, because your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.’

‘Blessed are the poor in spirit,’ are those who recognise their need of God, and the need for His help in every aspect of their lives, now and forever, ‘for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’

‘Blessed are those who mourn,’ are those who yearn for God’s coming kingdom when Jesus Christ will restore everything that is wrong in the world, ‘for they shall be comforted.’

‘Blessed are the meek (humble),’ are those who humble themselves in complete surrender to God; submitting to Him, loving Him and being loved by Him, seeking and doing His will, loving and serving one another, obeying His Word and fulfilling His will, ‘for they shall inherit the earth.’

‘Blessed are the ones hungering and thirsting for righteousness,’ are those who desperately desire God’s righteousness, and His coming rule and reign on earth, ‘for they will be filled (satisfied).’

‘Blessed are the merciful,’ are those who have received God’s mercy and forgiveness, and show their appreciation and gratitude by being merciful to others, ‘for they shall obtain mercy.’

‘Blessed are the pure in heart,’ are those who are without any evil intent, self-centred motives, or desire to sin, wanting to be just like God, ‘for they shall see God.’

‘Blessed are the peacemakers,’ are those who seek to have peace with one another, ‘for they will be called sons of God.’

‘Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake,’ are those who do what is right according to God’s Word, even if they are treated badly, ‘for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’

‘Blessed are you when they reproach (abuse) you, and persecute you (treat you badly because you believe in Me), and say all kinds of evil against you, lying, for My sake.’ are those who remain faithful to Jesus, no matter how badly they may be treated. ‘Rejoice and be glad, because your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.’

Jesus revealed that obedience to the ten commandments alone was not enough to enter into the kingdom of heaven and inherit the kingdom of God; but only by surrendering everything to Him and following Him, can anyone enter into the kingdom of God and inherit the riches of His kingdom:

“As He was going forth into the way, one came running, and kneeling down, questioned Him, ‘Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?’ Jesus said to him, ‘Why do you call Me good? No one is good except One, God. You know the commandments: ‘Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not bear false witness (lie about others), do not defraud (cheat), honour your father and mother.’ ’

And he said to Him, ‘Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth.’ And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, ‘One thing you lack. Go, sell what things you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.’ But being saddened by these words, he went away grieving, for he had many possessions. And looking around, Jesus said to His disciples, ‘How hard it is for those who have riches to enter into the kingdom of God.’ And the disciples were astonished at His words. But answering, Jesus said to them again, ‘Children, how hard it is for those trusting in riches to enter into the kingdom of God. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.’

And they were exceedingly astonished, saying among themselves, ‘Who is able to be saved?’ But Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With men it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God.’ ”

“Command the rich in the present age not to be high-minded, nor to set their hope on uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with all things to enjoy; to do good, to be rich in good works, ready to share, and generous, treasuring up for themselves a good foundation for the future, that they may lay hold on eternal life.”

Fearing God is the beginning of wisdom:

“The fear of Jehovah (the Lord) is the beginning of wisdom,”

Understanding and knowing God is how we obtain wisdom:

“Thus says Jehovah (the Lord): ‘Do not let the wise man glory in his wisdom; do not let the mighty man glory in his might; do not let the rich man glory in his riches. But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am Jehovah (the Lord), doing lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth. In these I delight,’ says Jehovah (the Lord).”

Hearing, and knowing, and obeying Him, is growing in wisdom:

‘My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.’

Loving Him and loving one another is the greatest wisdom:

“ ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment.

And the second, like it, is this:

‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.”

Loving one another as God loves us is the fullness of wisdom:

‘A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I loved you, that you also love one another.’

The importance of loving God cannot be over emphasised if we are to have eternal life and obtain eternal rewards. It is wisdom to pray and ask the Lord to help us get to know Him and stay close to Him. It is wisdom to pray and ask the Lord to help us obey Him and judge us according to His standard, instead of us judging ourselves according to our own standards. It is wisdom to pray and ask the Lord to help us to know His will and fulfill His will.

The Lord will give us all the wisdom we need if we seek Him and follow Him. Human intelligence, natural ability, and acquired skill, may bring rewards in this life; but only God's wisdom will bring rewards for eternal life:

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask from God,  
who gives to all generously without reproach  
(finding fault), and it will be given to him.”

“My son, if you receive My words and treasure up My commands within you, making your ear attentive to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; for if you cry out for discernment and lift up your voice for understanding; if you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will understand the fear of Jehovah (the Lord) and find the knowledge of God. For Jehovah (the Lord) gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding. He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk in integrity, guarding the paths of judgment (justice), and protects the way of His saints. Then you will understand righteousness, judgment (justice), equity (fairness), and every good path.”

“The one approaching (drawing near) Him must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder to the ones seeking Him out.”

Salvation is not obtained by belonging to a particular christian denomination or church, or religious organisation, or by believing in God. Likewise, we do not obtain eternal rewards by following a man-made religious set of rules. We receive eternal life and obtain eternal rewards by obeying the Word of God and fulfilling the will of God. Just as we cannot take our salvation for granted, we cannot assume that we will receive eternal rewards upon entering into God's kingdom. It is possible to enter into the kingdom of God, but not obtain eternal rewards:

“No one is able to lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw, each one’s work will become manifest (clear); for the day (day of judgment) will declare it, because it is revealed in fire; and the fire will prove the work of each, what sort it is. If the work which anyone has built remains, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.”

What must we do to enter into the kingdom of God and obtain eternal rewards that survive the test of fire?

### **Obey the Gospel of God**

“The time has come to begin the judgment from the house of God; and if firstly from us, what will be the end of the ones disobeying the Gospel of God? And if the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and sinner appear? Therefore, those suffering according to the will of God, as to a faithful Creator, let them commit their souls in well-doing.”

“The one believing into the Son has eternal life; but the one disobeying the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.”

‘Blessed are those hearing the Word of God and keeping it.’

## **Fear God**

“Let all the earth fear Jehovah (the Lord). Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.”

“In truth I perceive (understand) that God shows no partiality (favouritism). In every nation the one fearing Him and working righteousness is acceptable to Him.”

“He will bless those who fear Jehovah (the Lord), both the small and the great.”

“Trust in Jehovah (the Lord) with all your heart; and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him (seeking, understanding, knowing, and obeying Him), and He shall direct (make straight) your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes. Fear Jehovah (the Lord) and turn away from evil.”

‘Do not be afraid of those killing the body, but not being able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.’

“Fear Jehovah (the Lord), you His holy ones. Those who fear Him have no lack.”

## **Know God**

‘This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.’

“And by this we know that we have known Him, if we keep His commandments. The one saying, ‘I have known Him,’ and not keeping His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His Word, truly in this one, the love of God has been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him. The one saying he remains in Him ought himself walk in the same manner as He walked.”

‘My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.’

## **Serve One Another**

‘When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. And gathered together before Him will be all the nations; and He will separate them one from another, as the shepherd separates his sheep from the goats; and He will set the sheep on His right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I hungered and you gave Me to eat, I thirsted and you gave Me drink, I was a stranger and you took Me in, naked and you clothed Me, I was sick and you visited Me, I was in prison and you came to Me.’ Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungering and feed You, or thirsting and gave You drink?’

And when did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and came to You?' And answering, the King will say to them, 'Truly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of these, the least of My brethren, you did it to Me.'

Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Go away from Me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels; for I hungered and you gave Me nothing to eat, I thirsted and you gave Me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.' Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungering, or thirsting, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister to You?' Then He will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, neither did you do it to Me.' And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.'

'Let your loins (waist) be girded and the lamps burning, and be like men waiting for their lord when he returns from the wedding feasts, so that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the lord will find watching when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will gird himself and have them recline (sit them down to eat), and he will come and serve them. If he comes in the second watch, or the third (in the middle of the night, or just before dawn), and finds it so, blessed are those servants. But know this, that if the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would have watched, and not have allowed his house to be dug through.'

You, then, be ready, for in the hour that you do not think, the Son of Man comes.' And Peter said to Him, 'Lord, do you speak this parable to us, or also to all?' And the Lord said, 'Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom the lord will set over his household to give the portion of food in season? Blessed is that servant whom his master finds so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. But if that servant says in his heart, 'My lord delays to come,' and begins to beat the men-servants and the maid-servants, and to eat, and to drink, and become drunk, the lord of that servant will come on a day which he does not expect, and in an hour which he does not know, and will cut him apart and put his portion with the unbelievers. That servant, who knew the will of his lord, and did not prepare, nor do according to his will, will be beaten with many stripes. But he, who did not know, and did things worthy of stripes, will be beaten with few. Everyone to whom much was given, much will be demanded from him; and to whom much was deposited, more abundantly they will ask of him.'

### **Be Profitable for God**

'For it is like a man going abroad (travelling to a far country), who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, and to another two, and to another one, to each according to his ability; and immediately he went abroad (on a journey). He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and gained another five talents. Likewise, he who had received the two talents gained two more also. But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money.

After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. And he who had received the five talents came forward and brought five more talents, saying, ‘Lord, you delivered to me five talents; here, I have gained five talents more.’ His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will set you over many. Enter into the joy of your lord.’

He also who had received the two talents came forward and said, ‘Lord, you delivered to me two talents; here, I have gained two talents more.’ His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will set you over many. Enter into the joy of your lord.’

He also who had received the one talent came forward and said, ‘Lord, I knew that you are a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter. And being afraid, I went away and hid your talent in the ground; here, you have what is yours.’ And answering, his lord said to him, ‘Evil and slothful (lazy) servant, you knew that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter. Then you ought to have put my money to the bankers, and at my coming I would have received my own with interest.

Therefore, take the talent from him, and give it to him who has the ten talents.

To everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even that which he has will be taken from him. And throw the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness; there will be weeping (crying) and gnashing (grinding) of teeth.’ ’

‘Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on the earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break through and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break through and steal.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.’

### **Bear Fruit for God**

‘A sower went out to sow his seed. As he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside, and it was trampled down; and the birds came and devoured it. Other seeds fell on rocky places where it did not have much earth, and it immediately sprang up, because it had no depth of earth. But when the sun came up it was scorched; and because of having no root, it dried up. Others fell on thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them. Others fell on good earth and gave fruit; one indeed a hundred, one sixty, and one thirty. The one having ears to hear, let him hear!’

‘You, therefore, hear the parable of the sower: Everyone hearing the Word of the kingdom and not understanding, the evil one comes and seizes that which was sown in his heart. This is the Word sown by the wayside.

The Word sown on rocky places is the one who hears the Word, and immediately receives it with joy, but has no root in himself, and is only temporary. When trouble and persecution comes because of the Word, he is immediately offended.

The Word sown in thorns is the one who hears the Word, but the anxiety of this age (the worries of this world), and the deceit of riches, choke the Word, and it becomes unfruitful.

The Word sown on good earth is the one hearing the Word and understanding it, who indeed bears fruit, and produces truly a hundred, one sixty, and one thirty.'

'I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me not bearing fruit, He takes away; and every branch bearing fruit, He prunes, so that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the Word which I have spoken to you. Remain in Me, and I in you.

As the branch is not able to bear fruit of itself, unless it remains in the vine, neither can you, unless you remain in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. He who remains in Me, and I in him, this one bears much fruit; because apart from Me, you are not able to do anything.

If anyone does not remain in Me, he is cast (thrown) out as a branch and is withered (dried up); and they gather them and cast (throw) them into the fire, and they are burned.

If you remain in Me, and My words remain in you, you will ask whatever you desire, and it will be done for you. In this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and you will be My disciples.'

## **Do the Will of God**

"Do not be conformed to this age (this world), but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove (know and approve) what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

“Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him, because all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”

Doing the will of God is fulfilling His general overall purpose for all of our lives as we seek Him, understand Him, know Him, and follow Him; loving Him and loving one another, whilst at the same time fulfilling His specific individual plan for each one of us.

Ultimately, God wants to fulfill His greatest desire; for us all to be one (united), to be one in Him (united with Him), to be one as He is one (united as one), and perfected into one (made perfect):

‘That all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in you; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You have given Me, I have given them, that they may be one as We are one; I in them, and You in Me; that they may be perfected into one, and that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You loved Me.

Father, those whom You have given to Me, I desire that where I am, they may also be with Me, that they may behold My glory which You gave Me, because You loved Me before the foundation of the world. Righteous Father, the world does not know You, but I know You, and these know that You sent Me; and I made known to them Your name, and will make it known, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.’

A parent's greatest desire is for their children to love them, and love one another, in unity with them, and with each other. Likewise, this is God's greatest desire; for His children to love Him and love one another in unity with Him and with each other:

“For, even as the body is one and has many members, all the members of the one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptised into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, all were given to drink in one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot says, ‘Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,’ does that make it any less a part of the body?

And if the ear says, ‘Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,’ does that make it any less a part of the body? If all the body was an eye, where the hearing? If all hearing, where the smelling?

But now God set the members, each one of them, in the body, as He desired. If all were one member, where would the body be? Now, indeed, many are the members, but one body. The eye is not able to say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you,’ or again, the head say to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’

But much more the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those of the body we think to be less honourable, around these we put more abundant honour. And our unpresentable members are given greater modesty, which our more presentable members do not need.

God has blended the body together, giving greater honour to the member lacking it, that there be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.

If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it.

If one member is glorified, all the members rejoice with it. You are the body of Christ, and (individual) members in part.”

As we obey God and fulfill His will, He heals us and brings us into wholeness in Him, unifying us with Himself, and preparing us in readiness to spend eternity together forever with Him.

Unity with God and unity with one another, in love for God and love for one another, fulfills the will of God, and brings us to receive the greatest eternal rewards:

## **Perfect Peace**

“ ‘Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create. For behold, I create Jerusalem as a rejoicing, and her people a joy. I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in My people. The voice of weeping and the voice of crying shall no longer be heard in her. No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who has not filled (lived all) his days; for the youth shall die a hundred years old. But the sinner who is a hundred years old will be accursed. They will build houses and dwell in them; and they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They will not build and another dwell; they will not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall be the days of My people, and My chosen ones shall wear out the work of their hands. They will not labour in vain, or bear children for terror, for they will be the offspring of the blessed of Jehovah (the Lord), and their descendants with them. And it shall come to pass that before they call on Me, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear them. The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox; and dust will be the serpent’s food. They will do no evil, nor destroy, in all My holy mountain,’ says Jehovah (the Lord).”

## **Recognition**

‘The one overcoming, this one will be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the scroll of life; and I will acknowledge his name before My Father, and before His angels.’

‘The one overcoming, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name.’

‘I will give to him a white stone, and on the stone a new name having been written, which no one knows except the one receiving it.’

## **Fine Food**

‘To the one overcoming, I will give to him to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.’

‘To the one overcoming, I will give to him to eat from the hidden manna (food from heaven),’

## **Wonderful House**

‘In My Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know.’

## Reign & Rule

‘The one overcoming, I will give to him to sit with Me in My throne, as I also overcame and sat with My Father in His throne.’

‘The one overcoming, and keeping My works to the end, I will give him authority over the nations.’

“The kingdom and dominion (authority), and the greatness of the kingdom under all the heavens will be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions (rulers) shall serve and obey Him.”

“And they will reign forever and ever.”

## Eternal Inheritance

‘The one overcoming shall inherit all things,’

The eternal significance of our love for God, and our love for one another, cannot be over emphasised, because our eternal destiny relies on the strength of our relationship with God, and our love for one another. Our Lord is a God of love who is full of mercy, forgiveness, and grace. However, He is also a God of righteousness, judgment, and wrath, who expects obedience from His children. This cannot be taken lightly; for whilst obedience results in blessings that have eternal rewards, the opposite is also true; sin, disobedience, and unfaithfulness, have consequences that incur eternal punishment. For those who do not obey the Gospel of God, there will be eternal condemnation, cursing, punishment, and crying and grinding of teeth.

## **8. Avoiding Eternal Punishment in Hell**

People believe that we cease to exist after we die. Others believe that we will be re-incarnated. Others, including many christians, think that there is no such thing as hell or eternal punishment. Others think that even if hell does exist, it is a place of total destruction, where we will have no existence whatsoever because we will have been totally destroyed. Some people think that there might be a temporary punishment in hell before being totally destroyed in the lake of fire. One way or the other, many people don't know, or don't care, or think we have no future existence, and so it doesn't really matter how we live our life here on earth, because we have no future after we die. However, if we believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and believe that the Holy Bible is the Word of God, we will believe that every person who has ever been created will be resurrected from death; some to eternal life; others to eternal condemnation:

‘Do not marvel at this, because there comes an hour in which all those in the tombs will hear the voice of Him, and will come out; the ones having done good to a resurrection of life; and the ones having practiced evil to a resurrection of judgment.’

The Bible tells us of God longing to be with His people but how mankind continually rebels against Him. God gives us the free will to be with Him, or without Him; to be together with Him, or be separate from Him. This has significant eternal ramifications because it is a choice of whether we want to be with God forever or be without Him forever; to be with Him or to be against Him. The result is that we either become rubbish and are thrown into hell or we are salvaged and spend eternity with God in heaven.

Jesus compares hell to the rubbish dump in the valley of Gehenna outside Jerusalem where all the garbage was thrown. He speaks of people being thrown into hell as being good for nothing.

People who do nothing to help others, but just use the earth's resources for their own purposes; doing nothing to improve the world around them, or make it worse than what it was while they were living in it, are worthless to God and will have no place in His eternal kingdom:

‘You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt becomes useless (tasteless), with what will it be seasoned? It is no longer strong for anything but to be thrown out, and trodden down by men.

You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under the grain measure, but on the lampstand, and it lightens all those in the house. So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and may glorify your Father in heaven.’

In the Gospels, Jesus warns us about the reality of eternal punishment more than anywhere else in the entire Bible. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus gives seven vivid descriptions of where people who are condemned to eternal punishment will be sent: ‘hell’, ‘the fire’, ‘hades’, ‘the furnace of fire’, ‘the eternal fire’, ‘the gehenna of fire’ (hell of fire), and ‘eternal punishment’.

When Jesus warns about ‘hell’, He tells us not to sin, and stay away from anything that causes sin, using adultery as an example:

‘You have heard that it was said to the ancients (people from past ages), ‘You shall not commit adultery.’

But I say to you, everyone looking at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast (throw) it away; for it is better for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast (thrown) into **hell**. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast (throw) it away; for it is better for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast (thrown) into **hell**.'

When Jesus warns about '**the fire**', He tells us to beware of false prophets, (people who claim to speak on behalf of God but are not from God), attempting to deceive with a false humility and holiness. However, we can tell who they are by what they do:

'Beware of false prophets (pretending foretellers and religious imposters), who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous (greedy) wolves. From their fruits you will know them. Do they gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? So every good tree produces good fruits; but the bad (worthless) tree produces evil fruits. A good tree cannot produce evil fruits, nor can a bad (worthless) tree produce good fruits. Every tree not producing good fruit is cut down and thrown into **the fire**.

Therefore, by their fruits you will know them.'

When Jesus warns about '**hades**', He condemns cities where He had done many miracles, because they refused to repent and turn away from their sins:

'Then He began to reproach (scold) the cities where most of His miraculous power had been done, because they did not repent.

Woe (grief) to you Chorazin! Woe (grief) to you Bethsaida!

For if the miraculous power which has been done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes (shame). But I say to you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to **hades**. For if the miraculous power which has been done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say to you, it will be more bearable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you.'

When Jesus warns us about '**the furnace of fire**', He speaks of different kinds of seed; good ones that belong to Him, and bad ones that belong to an enemy. When the servants draw near to their master, they recognise the good seed from the bad seed. When they ask what to do, he tells them to wait until the harvest:

'The kingdom of heaven is likened to a man sowing good seed in his field. But while the men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed darnel (grain that looks like wheat when full-grown, but the seeds are black, and poisonous to man) in the midst of the wheat and went away. And when the herb sprouted and produced fruit, the darnel also appeared. And the servants, coming near to the master of the house, said to him, 'Lord, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where has the darnel come from?' He said to them, 'An enemy, a man, did this.' And the servants said to him, 'Will you then have us go out and gather them?' But he said, 'No, while gathering the darnel you may uproot the wheat with them. Allow them both to grow together until the harvest. And in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, 'Gather first the darnel, and bind them into bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my storehouse.' ''

Jesus explains that the good seed are the ones who belong to Him, and the bad seed are the ones who belong to the Devil. At the end of the age, at the judgment, all the ones causing sin, and those practicing sin, will be thrown into the furnace of fire:

‘The one sowing the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world; the good seed are the sons of the kingdom; the darnel are the sons of the evil one; the enemy who sowed them is the Devil; the harvest is the completion of the age; and the harvesters are the angels. As the darnel is gathered, and consumed in the fire, so it will be at the completion of the age. The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all offences causing sin, and those who practice lawlessness, and they will cast (throw) them into **the furnace of fire**; there will be weeping (crying) and gnashing (grinding) of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He having ears to hear, let him hear.’

When Jesus warns us about ‘the eternal fire’, calling a little child to Him, He tells us to become as little children before God. And whoever causes one of His children to sin, putting stumbling blocks (temptations to sin) in their way, will be cursed:

‘Truly, I say to you, unless you turn, and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever will humble himself as this child, this one is the greater in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me. But whoever causes one of these little ones believing in Me to stumble (fall into sin), it is better for him that a millstone be hung on his neck, and he be drowned in the depths of the sea.

Woe (grief) to the world because of stumbling blocks (temptations to sin). It is necessary that stumbling blocks (temptations to sin) come, but woe (grief) to the one by whom the stumbling block comes. And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast (throw) it away. It is better for you to enter into life maimed or lame, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast (thrown) into **the eternal fire.**’

When Jesus continues, He again warns of ‘**the gehenna of fire (hell of fire)**’, telling us not to sin, and to stay away from all sin:

‘And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast (throw) it away. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast (thrown) into **the gehenna of fire (hell of fire).**’

When Jesus warns us about ‘**eternal punishment**’, He stresses the importance of helping one another:

‘When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.

And gathered together before Him will be all the nations; and He will separate them one from another, as the shepherd separates his sheep from the goats; and He will set the sheep on His right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I hungered and you gave Me to eat, I thirsted and you gave Me drink, I was a stranger and you took Me in, naked and you clothed Me, I was sick and you visited Me, I was in prison and you came to Me.’

Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungering and feed You, or thirsting and gave You drink? And when did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and came to You?’ And answering, the King will say to them, ‘Truly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of these, the least of My brethren, you did it to Me.’

Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Go away from Me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels; for I hungered and you gave Me nothing to eat, I thirsted and you gave Me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.’ Then they also will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungering, or thirsting, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister to You?’ Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, neither did you do it to Me.’ And these will go away into **eternal punishment**, but the righteous into eternal life.’

Jesus tells us that ‘hell’, ‘the fire’, ‘hades’, ‘the furnace of fire’, ‘the eternal fire’, ‘the gehenna of fire’ (hell of fire), and ‘eternal punishment’, are places of eternal condemnation and punishment. Jesus warns us away from destruction, and from being destroyed:

‘Enter through the narrow gate, because wide is the gate, and broad (easy) is the way leading to destruction, and many are those going in through it; because narrow is the gate and troublesome (difficult) is the way leading to life, and few are those finding it.’

‘Do not be afraid of those killing the body, but not being able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.’

When Jesus mentions the words, ‘destruction’, and ‘destroy’; or, even other words, like ‘perish’, many think that He is saying that there are people who will perish, and be destroyed in hell, and won’t exist any more. However, when Jesus tells us to avoid the path that leads to destruction, or from being destroyed, He is speaking about a judgment of total loss and ruin, and well-being; not a judgment of termination, annihilation, or non-existence:

‘There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen, being merry and feasting luxuriously every day. And there was a certain poor man named Lazarus, who was laid at his porch, full of sores, desiring to be filled with the crumbs that were falling from the rich man’s table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom (embrace).

The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in hades (hell), he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom (embrace). And he cried out and said, ‘Father Abraham, have compassion on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.’ But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that you received good things in your life, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted and you are suffering. And besides all this, a great chasm (depth) has been fixed between us and you, so that those desiring to pass from here to you cannot, nor can they pass from there to us.’

And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father’s house, for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they also come to this place of torment.’ Abraham said to him, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.’ And he said, ‘No, father Abraham; but if someone from the dead should go to them, they will repent.’ But he said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’ ’

The revelation of Jesus Christ confirms what Jesus tells us about the reality of eternal punishment, where anyone not found in the book of life will be judged, and cast into “**the lake of fire**” forever:

“The Devil deceiving (misleading) them was cast (thrown) into **the lake of fire** and brimstone (burning sulphur) where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night to the ages of the ages (forever and ever).

And I saw a great white throne, and Him sitting on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the small and the great, standing before God, and scrolls were opened; and another scroll was opened, which is the scroll of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the scrolls according to their works.

And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, and death and hades (hell) gave up the dead who were in them; and they were each judged according to their works. And death and hades (hell) were cast (thrown) into **the lake of fire**. This is the second death. And if anyone was not found written in the scroll of life, he was cast (thrown) into **the lake of fire**.”

“And He who sat on the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’ And He said to me, ‘Write, because these words are faithful and true.’ And He said to me, ‘It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the one thirsting, I will give from the fountain of the water of life freely. The one overcoming shall inherit all things, and I will be God to him, and he shall be a son to Me. But the cowardly (fearful), and unbelieving (faithless), and detestable (foul), and murderer, and fornicators (sexually immoral), and sorcerers (those who practice witchcraft), and idolaters (image worshipers), and all the liars, will have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone (burning sulphur), which is the second death.’ ”

“For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it has been written: ‘As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess (give acknowledgment) to God.’ ”

Eternal condemnation, everlasting pain and suffering, torment, and crying and grinding of teeth, is reserved for:

### **The Unrighteous**

Anyone who doesn’t help others will be eternally punished:

‘When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. And gathered together before Him will be all the nations; and He will separate them one from another, as the shepherd separates his sheep from the goats; and He will set the sheep on His right, but the goats on the left.

Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I hungered and you gave Me to eat, I thirsted and you gave Me drink, I was a stranger and you took Me in, naked and you clothed Me, I was sick and you visited Me, I was in prison and you came to Me.’

Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungering and feed You, or thirsting and gave You drink? And when did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and came to You?’ And answering, the King will say to them, ‘Truly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of these, the least of My brethren, you did it to Me.’

Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Go away from Me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels; for I hungered and you gave Me nothing to eat, I thirsted and you gave Me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.’ Then they also will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungering, or thirsting, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister to You?’ Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, neither did you do it to Me.’ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.’

Any religious leader who teaches the Word of God, but doesn’t obey it themselves; appearing to be godly, but are evil because they sin themselves, will not escape hell:

‘Woe (grief) to you, scribes (teachers of religious law) and pharisees (religious leaders), hypocrites! (actors under an assumed character) because you tithe (give one tenth) of the mint, and the dill, and the cummin (spices), and have neglected the weightier (more important) matters of the law: justice, mercy, and faith. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. Blind guides, straining out the gnat (mosquito), but swallowing the camel.

Woe (grief) to you, scribes (teachers of religious law) and pharisees (religious leaders), hypocrites! (actors under an assumed character) because you cleanse the outside of the cup and the plate, but within they are full of robbery and excess (self-indulgence). Blind pharisee! First cleanse the inside of the cup and of the plate, that the outside also may become clean.

Woe (grief) to you, scribes (teachers of religious law) and pharisees (religious leaders), hypocrites! (actors under an assumed character) because you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are filled with dead men’s bones and all uncleanness.

So you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but within you are full of hypocrisy (deceit) and lawlessness.

Woe (grief) to you, scribes (teachers of religious law) and pharisees (religious leaders), hypocrites! (actors under an assumed character) because you build the graves (tombs) of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, and say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.’

So you witness (testify) against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets; and you fill up the measure of your fathers. Serpents! Offspring of vipers! How will you escape the judgment of gehenna (hell)?'

Anyone who disobeys the Word of God, and teaches others to do the same, will not enter into the kingdom of God:

'Whoever therefore relaxes (breaks) one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, this one shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and pharisees (teachers of religious law and religious leaders), you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.'

Anyone who causes a believer in Jesus to sin; and anyone who allows any part of themselves to sin, will be thrown into hell:

'Whoever causes one of these little ones believing in Me to stumble (fall into sin), it is better for him that a millstone be hung on his neck, and he be cast (thrown) into the sea. And if your hand causes you to stumble (fall into sin), cut it off; it is better for you to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go away into gehenna (hell), into the unquenchable fire (fire that can never be put out), where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched. And if your foot causes you to stumble (fall into sin), cut it off; it is better for you to enter into life lame, than having two feet to go away into gehenna (hell), into the unquenchable fire (fire that can never be put out), where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.'

And if your eye causes you to stumble (fall into sin), cast (throw) it out; it is better for you to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast (thrown) into the gehenna (hell) of fire, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.'

Anyone who causes others to sin; and anyone who practices sin, will be thrown into the furnace of fire:

'The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all offences causing sin, and those who practice lawlessness, and they will cast (throw) them into the furnace of fire; there will be weeping (crying) and gnashing (grinding) of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

He having ears to hear, let him hear.'

### The Unfruitful

Anyone who claims to speak on behalf of God, but is counterfeit and a fake imitation, will be thrown into the fire:

'Beware of false prophets (pretending foretellers and religious imposters), who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous (greedy) wolves. From their fruits you will know them. Do they gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? So every good tree produces good fruits; but the bad (worthless) tree produces evil fruits. A good tree cannot produce evil fruits, nor can a bad (worthless) tree produce good fruits. Every tree not producing good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

Therefore, by their fruits you will know them.'

Anyone who has not produced fruit, because they have not remained in Jesus Christ (the vine), will be thrown into the fire:

‘I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me not bearing fruit, He takes away; and every branch bearing fruit, He prunes, so that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the Word which I have spoken to you. Remain in Me, and I in you. As the branch is not able to bear fruit of itself, unless it remains in the vine, neither can you, unless you remain in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. He who remains in Me, and I in him, this one bears much fruit; because apart from Me, you are not able to do anything. If anyone does not remain in Me, he is cast (thrown) out as a branch and is withered (dried up); and they gather them and cast (throw) them into the fire, and they are burned.

If you remain in Me, and My words remain in you, you will ask whatever you desire, and it will be done for you. In this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and you will be My disciples.’

### **The Unwise**

Anyone who is not responsible in their service to one another, but mistreats them, will be cut into pieces and thrown into hell:

‘Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his lord has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his lord will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his goods.

But if that wicked servant says in his heart, ‘My lord delays to come,’ and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the lord of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect and in an hour which he does not know, and will cut him in pieces and appoint his portion with the hypocrites (actors under an assumed character). There will be weeping (crying) and gnashing (grinding) of teeth.’

Anyone who has been given spiritual gifts, but continues to sin, will be turned away:

‘Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter into the kingdom of heaven, but the ones doing the will of My Father in the heavens. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name do mighty works?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew (approved) you; depart from Me, you working (practicing) lawlessness.’

Anyone who has not kept their lamps burning (light shining) will be locked out of God’s kingdom:

‘The kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were wise, and five were foolish. For when the foolish took their lamps, they did not take oil with them; but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. And in the middle of the night a cry was heard, ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming! Go out to meet him.’ Then all those virgins rose and prepared their lamps.

And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ But the wise answered, saying, ‘No, lest there not be enough for us and you; go rather to those selling and buy for yourselves.’ And while they were going away to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut.

Later, the other virgins also came, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us.’ But answering he said, ‘Truly, I say to you, I do not know (approve) you.’ Watch, therefore, for you do not know the day, nor the hour, in which the Son of Man comes.’

### **The Unaware**

Anyone who has not been born from above with the Holy Spirit cannot enter into God’s kingdom:

‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’

‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Do not marvel because I told you, ‘You must be born from above.’ The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone having been born of the Spirit.’

### **The Unwilling**

Anyone who rejects Jesus, and refuses to obey His words, will be judged by the Word of God:

‘The one who rejects Me, and does not receive My words has that which judges him. The Word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.’

### The Unruly

Anyone refusing to believe the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, when they receive revelation from Him, or see signs and wonders by Him, will never be forgiven.

If anyone rejects the Holy Spirit of God, they can never receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour; and if they don’t receive Jesus as their Lord and Saviour, they can never be forgiven. Without Him there is no salvation:

‘I tell you, every sin and blasphemy (speaking evil against God) will be forgiven to men, but the blasphemy (speaking evil) against the Spirit will not be forgiven to men. And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, neither in this age, nor in the coming one.’

### The Outer Darkness

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus warns of ‘the outer darkness’; an outer realm of tragic remorse, grief, and regret. There will be ‘weeping (crying) and gnashing (grinding) of teeth’:

“When Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion (roman soldier) came to Him, beseeching (pleading with) Him, saying, ‘Lord, my servant is lying at home paralysed, being terribly tormented.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘I will come and heal him.’

But the centurion said, ‘Lord, I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof; but only say a Word, and my servant will be healed. For I am also a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.’ When Jesus heard this, He marveled, and said to those who followed, ‘Truly, I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such faith. And I tell you that many will come from east and west, and will recline (sit down) with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast (thrown) into **the outer darkness**. There will be weeping (crying) and gnashing (grinding) of teeth.’ ”

“Jesus spoke to them again in parables (stories that help to illustrate a truth), saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is likened to a man, a king, who made a wedding feast for his son. And he sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast; but they did not wish to come. Again, he sent out other servants, saying to them, ‘Tell those who are called (invited), ‘Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted beasts (livestock) have been killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding feast.’ ’ But not caring, they went away, one to his own field, another to his trading; and the rest seized his servants, insulted (treated them badly) and killed them. The king became angry, and sending his armies, he destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding is ready, but those who were called (invited) were not worthy. Go, therefore, to the exits of the ways (parting of the roads) and as many as you find, call (invite) to the wedding feast.’ And those servants went out to the ways (roads) and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good.

So the wedding hall was filled with reclining guests. But when the king came in to view those reclining (sitting down), he saw there a man who was not dressed in a wedding garment. And he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you enter here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. Then the king said to his servants, ‘Bind him, hand and foot, take him away, and cast (throw) him into **the outer darkness**; there will be weeping (crying) and gnashing (grinding) of teeth.’ ”

‘For it is like a man going abroad (travelling to a far country), who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, and to another two, and to another one, to each according to his ability; and immediately he went abroad (on a journey). He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and gained another five talents. Likewise, he who had received the two talents gained two more also. But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord’s money.

After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. And he who had received the five talents came forward and brought five more talents, saying, ‘Lord, you delivered to me five talents; here, I have gained five talents more.’ His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will set you over many. Enter into the joy of your lord.’ He also who had received the two talents came forward and said, ‘Lord, you delivered to me two talents; here, I have gained two talents more.’ His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will set you over many. Enter into the joy of your lord.’

He also who had received the one talent came forward and said, 'Lord, I knew that you are a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter. And being afraid, I went away and hid your talent in the ground; here, you have what is yours.' And answering, his lord said to him, 'Evil and slothful (lazy) servant, you knew that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter. Then you ought to have put my money to the bankers, and at my coming I would have received my own with interest. Therefore, take the talent from him, and give it to him who has the ten talents.'

To everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even that which he has will be taken from him. And throw the unprofitable servant into **the outer darkness**; there will be weeping (crying) and gnashing (grinding) of teeth.' '

The outer darkness is a realm where there will be deep regret, grief, and an immense sense of loss over what could have been. It is reserved for children of God's kingdom who lack faith; those who are invited to be in God's kingdom, but would not accept the call; and those who have God-given gifts and abilities, but would not use them for the benefit of God's kingdom.

There will be weeping (crying) and gnashing (grinding) of teeth over being on the outskirts of God's kingdom when they should have been in the greater realms. These will be children of God's kingdom, and those who were invited to be in God's kingdom, and servants of God's kingdom, yet they will have chosen not to rule with God in the greater and higher realms of His kingdom.

The outer darkness is a place on the outskirts of God's kingdom where there is separation from the light of God in His kingdom.

The outer darkness is reserved for:

### **Unfaithful Children**

Children of God's kingdom who lack faith will be condemned to 'the outer darkness':

“When Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion (roman soldier) came to Him, beseeching (pleading with) Him, saying, ‘Lord, my servant is lying at home paralysed, being terribly tormented.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘I will come and heal him.’ But the centurion said, ‘Lord, I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof; but only say a Word, and my servant will be healed. For I am also a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.’ When Jesus heard this, He marveled, and said to those who followed, ‘Truly, I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such faith. And I tell you that many will come from east and west, and will recline (sit down) with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast (thrown) into the outer darkness. There will be weeping (crying) and gnashing (grinding) of teeth.’ ”

### **Unworthy Guests**

Anyone who refuses the call from God, rejecting the invitation to be in His kingdom, will be condemned to 'the outer darkness':

‘The kingdom of heaven is likened to a man, a king, who made a wedding feast for his son.

And he sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast; but they did not wish to come. Again, he sent out other servants, saying to them, ‘Tell those who are called (invited), ‘Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted beasts (livestock) have been killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding feast.’ ’ But not caring, they went away, one to his own field, another to his trading; and the rest seized his servants, insulted (treated them badly) and killed them. The king became angry, and sending his armies, he destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding is ready, but those who were called (invited) were not worthy. Go, therefore, to the exits of the ways (parting of the roads) and as many as you find, call (invite) to the wedding feast.’ And those servants went out to the ways (roads) and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with reclining guests. But when the king came in to view those reclining (sitting down), he saw there a man who was not dressed in a wedding garment. And he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you enter here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. Then the king said to his servants, ‘Bind him, hand and foot, take him away, and cast (throw) him into the outer darkness; there will be weeping (crying) and gnashing (grinding) of teeth.’ ’

### **Unprofitable Servants**

Servants of God who are not profitable for the kingdom of God will be condemned to ‘the outer darkness’:

‘For it is like a man going abroad (travelling to a far country), who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them.

And to one he gave five talents, and to another two, and to another one, to each according to his ability; and immediately he went abroad (on a journey). He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and gained another five talents. Likewise, he who had received the two talents gained two more also. But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money.

After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. And he who had received the five talents came forward and brought five more talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; here, I have gained five talents more.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will set you over many. Enter into the joy of your lord.' He also who had received the two talents came forward and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; here, I have gained two talents more.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will set you over many. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

He also who had received the one talent came forward and said, 'Lord, I knew that you are a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter. And being afraid, I went away and hid your talent in the ground; here, you have what is yours.' And answering, his lord said to him, 'Evil and slothful (lazy) servant, you knew that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter. Then you ought to have put my money to the bankers, and at my coming I would have received my own with interest. Therefore, take the talent from him, and give it to him who has the ten talents.'

To everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even that which he has will be taken from him. And throw the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness; there will be weeping (crying) and gnashing (grinding) of teeth.' '

God's judgments are reserved for:

- Anyone who does not help others when they are in need.
- Anyone who teaches the Bible but does not obey it themselves.
- Anyone who disobeys the Bible and leads others to do the same.
- Anyone who causes christians to sin and practice sin themselves.
- Anyone who causes others to sin and practice sin themselves.
- Anyone who claims to speak on behalf of God but is counterfeit.
- Anyone who does not remain in Jesus (the vine) and bear fruit.
- Anyone who is not responsible in their service to one another.
- Anyone who has been given spiritual gifts but continues to sin.
- Anyone who has not kept their lamps burning (light shining).
- Anyone who has not been born from above with the Holy Spirit.
- Anyone who rejects Jesus Christ and refuses to obey His words.
- Anyone who refuses to believe the Holy Spirit is God's Spirit.

  

- Children of God who lack faith.
- People of God who reject His calling.
- Servants of God who are not profitable.

God's judgments are severe. This is why Jesus had to suffer so much pain and torture to save us from them. Jesus didn't simply die as a sacrifice for our sins; He bore upon Himself the full wrath of God's judgment on sin. He gave Himself as the blood sacrifice to satisfy God's justice and give mercy to anyone who wants it.

God did this so that we would not have to be judged to eternal condemnation and everlasting punishment. Jesus went through horrendous suffering on our behalf. He took the full brunt of all evil by living a perfectly sinless life, before being condemned, and tortured to death for our sake:

“Surely He has borne our sickness and our pains (griefs and sorrows); yet we esteemed Him stricken (regarded Him as being cursed), struck by God and afflicted. He was pierced for our transgressions (rebellion); crushed for our iniquities (evil).

The chastisement (correction) of our peace was upon Him, and by His wounds (bruises) we are healed.”

He was betrayed:

“One of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, ‘What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?’ And they weighed out thirty pieces of silver to him. From that time he sought an opportunity to betray Him.”

“When evening had come, He reclined (sat down) with the twelve disciples. And as they were eating, He said, ‘Truly,

I say to you, one of you will betray Me.’ And grieving exceedingly, they began to say to Him, each one of them, ‘Is it I, Lord?’ He answered and said, ‘He who has dipped his hand in the dish with Me will betray Me. Indeed, the Son of Man goes as it is written of Him, but woe (grief) to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed!

It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.’ Then Judas, the one betraying Him, said, ‘Is it I, Rabbi (Master)?’ He said to him, ‘You have said it.’

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it, broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body.’ And He took the cup, and after giving thanks, He gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink of it, all of you; for this is My blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I say to you, I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.’ And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.”

He was disappointed, distressed, and deserted:

“Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, ‘Sit here while I go over there and pray.’ And taking with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, He began to be sorrowful and deeply troubled. Then He said to them, ‘My soul is deeply grieved, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me.’ And going a little farther, He fell on His face and prayed, saying, ‘My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me. Yet, not as I will, but as You will.’ And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and He said to Peter, ‘Were you not able to watch one hour with Me? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.’ Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, ‘My Father, if this cup cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done.’ And again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. And leaving them, He went away and prayed a third time, saying the same words. Then He came to the disciples and said to them, ‘Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going.

Behold, the one betraying Me draws near.' And while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now the one betraying Him gave them a sign, saying, 'Whomever I may kiss, it is He; seize Him.'

And immediately he came up to Jesus and said, 'Hail, Rabbi (Master),' and kissed Him. Jesus said to him, 'Friend, do what you came to do.' Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and seized Him. And behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, 'Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I am not able now to call upon My Father, and He will place beside Me more than twelve legions of angels? How then should the Scriptures (Old Testament) be fulfilled, that it must be this way?' In that hour Jesus said to the multitudes, 'Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? I sat with you daily, teaching in the temple, and you did not seize Me. But all this has come to pass that the Scriptures (Old Testament) of the prophets may be fulfilled.' Then all the disciples left Him and fled."

He was denied:

"Jesus said to them, 'All of you will fall away because of Me this night; for it is written, 'I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' But after I have risen, I will go before you to Galilee.' And answering, Peter said to Him, 'Even if all fall away because of You, I will never fall away.' Jesus said to him, 'Truly, I say to you, this night, before the cock crows, you will deny Me three times.'

Peter said to Him, ‘Even if I must die with You, I will in no way deny You.’ And all the disciples said the same.”

“Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. And a servant girl came to him, saying, ‘You also were with Jesus the Galilean.’

But he denied it before them all, saying, ‘I do not know what you are saying.’ And when he went out to the gateway, another girl saw him and said to those who were there, ‘This one was with Jesus of Nazareth.’ And again he denied it with an oath, ‘I do not know the Man.’ After a little while those who were standing near said to Peter, ‘Truly, you also are one of them, for your speech makes you known.’ Then he began to curse and swear, saying, ‘I do not know the Man.’ Immediately, a cock crowed. And Peter remembered the Word of Jesus, having said to him, ‘Before the cock crows, you will deny Me three times.’ And he went out and wept bitterly.”

He was rejected and falsely accused:

“And those who had seized Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. And Peter followed Him from a distance, up to the court of the high priest, and going inside he sat with the officers to see the end. Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking false testimony against Jesus so that they might put Him to death, but they found none. Even though many false witnesses came forward, they found none. But at last, two false witnesses came forward and said, ‘This man said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.’ ’ And standing up, the high priest said to Him, ‘Do You answer nothing? What is it that these men testify against You?’ But Jesus kept silent.

And the high priest said to Him, ‘I put You under oath by the living God, tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God.’ Jesus said to him, ‘You have said it. I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.’ Then the high priest tore his garments, saying, ‘He blasphemed (spoke evil against God)! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, now you have heard His blasphemy (speaking evil against God)! What does it seem to you?’ They answered and said, ‘He deserves death.’ Then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped Him with the palms of their hands, saying, ‘Prophesy to us, Christ! Who is the one that struck you?’ ”

He was humiliated and tortured:

‘I gave My back to those who struck Me, and My cheeks to those who plucked (pulled) out My beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting.’

He was mocked and ridiculed:

“The soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium (governor’s headquarters) and gathered the whole battalion (company of soldiers) around Him. And they stripped Him and put a scarlet (purple) robe on Him; and plaiting (twisting) a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And kneeling before Him, they mocked Him, saying, ‘Hail, King of the Jews.’ And they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head. And when they had mocked Him, they stripped Him of the robe, put His own garments on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him.”

He was crucified to death:

“And bearing (carrying) His cross, He went out to the place called the Place of Skull, which in Hebrew is called, Golgotha.

There they crucified Him, and with Him two others, one on either side, and Jesus in the middle.”

He was speared after death:

“The soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other, who was crucified with Him; but when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.”

He was beaten beyond human description:

“Many were astonished at You, so much was the disfigurement by man; His appearance marred more than any man (beyond human resemblance).”

By the time Jesus died, He had been betrayed, disappointed, distressed, deserted, denied, rejected, falsely accused, humiliated and tortured, mocked and ridiculed, beaten beyond description, and crucified to death, yet He never sinned. Jesus had never done anything wrong, yet He willingly obeyed the will of the Father, and sacrificed Himself, suffering to death on our behalf.

Jesus gave Himself to live a sinless life and suffer to death for us. He has done everything to save us from eternal condemnation, everlasting punishment, and separation from God, if we believe in Him and His Word, and respond to Him the way He wants us to.

The choice is ours. Are we prepared to accept what Jesus has done for us, believe in His Word, and obey Him? Or reject Him, refuse to believe His Word, and disobey Him? Every one of us must decide for ourselves if Jesus is God, and if He suffered, and died for us. Each one of us must choose to believe if Jesus' words are true, or if He is lying. If there is no eternal condemnation and everlasting punishment, then why did Jesus tell us that there is? He is either telling the truth, or He is lying. It is as simple as that.

If there is no eternal condemnation and everlasting punishment, then why did Jesus have to go through so much pain and suffering to save us from it? If there is no such place as hell, then why did Jesus command us to obey Him, so we wouldn't have to go there?

We must decide whether Jesus' commands, the Words of God, are true or not, regardless of how it affects our religious beliefs, our pre-conceived perspective, or our presumptions about God:

“Therefore, if there is any encouragement in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any sympathy and pity, fulfill my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being united in spirit and purpose. Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility, consider others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, considered it not robbery to be equal with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men. And being found in the figure as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient until death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God highly exalted Him, and gave Him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth;

and every tongue should acknowledge (fully agree) that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is working in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”

“For we must all manifest (appear for all to be revealed) before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive the things done through the body, according to what he practiced, whether good or bad.”

‘The one overcoming, this one will be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the scroll of life; and I will acknowledge his name before My Father, and before His angels.’

“ ‘Hallelujah! Because the Lord God Almighty reigned. Let us rejoice, and let us exult, and give the glory to Him, because the marriage of the Lamb came, and His wife prepared herself.’ And it was given to her that she be clothed in fine linen, pure and bright; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. And he said to me, ‘Write: Blessed are the ones having been called to the supper of the marriage of the Lamb.’ And he said to me, ‘These words of God are true.’ ”

If we knew how much God loves us and how much He wants to bless us for eternity; and how much the Devil hates us and wants us to suffer for eternity, we would seek God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength, and obey whatever He says in His Word, the Holy Bible.

## **9. Spiritual Fitness to Win the Race of Our Lives**

To become physically fit, we train our body. This requires strenuous physical exertion, which includes repetitive exercise. Exercises are completed to force the body to work so it can be strengthened for the purpose intended. The motivation to train our body may be for preparation to compete in sport, or simply to be fit and healthy, to look and feel better within ourselves. Whatever the motivation may be, the effort has its rewards of becoming physically fit and healthy, and maintaining overall physical well-being. It is a choice that we make depending upon our priorities in life.

To become mentally fit, we train our mind. This requires strenuous mental exertion, which includes repetitive thinking. Thinking forces the mind to retain and remember information so that it can be recalled when it is needed. Motivation to train our mind may be to become educated, or to obtain a higher level of education. Whatever the motivation may be, the effort to become educated has its rewards of an improved quality of life; or for those wanting to be more highly educated, the potential to earn a higher level of income. Again, this is a choice that we make depending upon our priorities in life.

To become spiritually fit, we train our spirit. This requires strenuous spiritual exertion, which includes repetitive troubles, trials, and temptations, in life. This requires repetitive practice in knowing how to deal with them. Our level of spiritual fitness will be determined by, not what happens to us during our lifetime, but how we handle the many troubles, trials, and temptations, that we face every day. There will be many different motivations involved in how we handle each situation. Usually, it will involve looking after the interests of ourselves, or other people, or both.

For the child of God, it is not only a matter of how we handle the pressures of everyday life, but how we respond to them according to the standard of what God tells us in His Word, the Holy Bible.

Spiritual fitness is very different to physical fitness, and mental fitness, because it is not a choice that we can make for ourselves. We face troubles, trials, and temptations, every day, whether we choose them or not. However, spiritual fitness has rewards which are far greater than any reward that physical fitness or mental fitness can ever offer in this life, because spiritual fitness promises rewards in this life, and for all eternity:

“Exercise yourself to godliness; for bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the present life, and of that which is coming. Faithful is the Word and worthy of all acceptance.”

Physical fitness, mental fitness, and spiritual fitness, all have these things in common; they all require passion, commitment, discipline, effort, persistence, perseverance, and pain. However, whilst physical fitness is good for physical well-being, and mental fitness is good for mental well-being, spiritual fitness is not only good for our spiritual well-being, but has benefits that affect our eternal well-being.

Where our present physical bodies will eventually fade away, and our mental capabilities will deteriorate, our soul is eternal, which means we will live forever. Therefore, spiritual fitness is vitally important for our eternal well-being, because what we do with our life here on earth, how we handle everything that happens to us, and how we respond to the many troubles, trials, and temptations, that we encounter, will determine where we will spend eternity and what we will be doing when we get there.

There is a war going on for every one of our souls. This war is between God and Satan, and the fight is over our eternal destiny. Whether we like it or not, we are also at war over our own soul, and we must treat each and every battle as an opportunity to become spiritually fit. In this war, we cannot fight the Devil on our own and expect to win. The fight is spiritual; therefore, the weapons needed to fight this war, are spiritual weapons.

To be spiritually fit to win the war over our souls, we must fight with God, if we are to have victory over the Devil. Jesus has given us everything we need to win that victory. There is no other way to win, and everyone who is old enough, must fight.

Those who know Jesus, love Him, obey Him, and follow Him, will win. God loves us, has redeemed us, and wants to restore us to Himself, and reward us for eternity. Satan hates God, hates us, and wants to see us punished for eternity.

When we come to understand that nothing in life happens merely by chance, or co-incidence, and that everything in life has meaning and purpose, then we will begin to see things from God's perspective, and understand everything as He wants us to.

When God made the universe, everything He created was made with perfect precision, down to the finest detail. God loves His creation, and He cares about it; in particular, His created people, who He has made in His own image:

“God created man in His own image; in the image of God  
He created him; male and female He created them.”

‘Are not two sparrows sold for an assarion (roman coin)?  
Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your  
Father’s will. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered.  
Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.’

Work and rewards are principles that God has established for His creation. Everything that deserves a reward requires hard work. The harder someone trains their body, the more physical fitness they will achieve; the harder someone studies, and becomes more educated, the higher their income earning potential becomes.

Likewise, the more we focus our efforts on training our spirit, through building and maintaining a close relationship with God, seeking Him, obeying Him, and following Him, the greater our eternal rewards will be, because we are fulfilling the Lord's will, and working in co-operation with Him to achieve it.

So whether we train our bodies for physical rewards, or train our minds for financial rewards, or train our spirits for eternal rewards, every work has its reward. However, spiritual rewards have the greatest benefits, and the most lasting value.

Therefore, it should not surprise us that the greatest rewards, that will last for all eternity, will require the hardest work to accomplish during the course of our lifetime, however long that may be. The road may be hard and narrow; however, everything that has great reward is always worth it. This is why God's discipline can be quite harsh, but why it is absolutely necessary.

We need His help and guidance, knowledge and understanding, discipline and correction, wisdom and discernment, and tender loving care, to prepare us for His eternal kingdom:

“ ‘My son, do not despise the discipline (training) of the Lord, nor faint while being reproved (corrected). For whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and scourges (whips) every son He receives.’

If you endure discipline, God is dealing with you as with sons; for who is a son whom a father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are bastards (illegitimate), and not sons.

Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh as discipliners (trainers), and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits, and we shall live? For they truly disciplined us for a few days, according to the thing seeming good to them; but He for our profit, in order for us to partake of His holiness. And all discipline for the present indeed seems not of joy, but of grief (painful), but later it gives peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”

Just as the wind helps a bird to fly, the same wind forces resistance that is necessary for a bird to get stronger, so it can fly higher and longer. This is how God works in our everyday lives; in all of our circumstances and situations, and the troubles, trials, and temptations that we endure to achieve His purposes:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the One, according to His great mercy, having regenerated us (given us a rebirth) to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible (will never perish), undefiled (pure), and unfading, having been kept in the heavens for you, who by God’s power are being guarded, through faith, to a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, grieving in manifold (various) trials, that the proving (trustworthiness) of your faith, being much more precious than perishing gold, having been proved (tested) through fire, may be found to praise, and honour, and glory, at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom not having seen, you love; in whom not yet seeing, but believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable (inexpressible); and having been glorified, obtaining the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”

“Blessed is the man who endures temptation (trials that have a beneficial purpose), because having been approved (having passed the test) he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those loving Him.”

“Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble (lame), and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed. Eagerly pursue peace (strive for peace) with all (people), and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord; watching diligently (watching out carefully for one another) lest anyone falls short and fails to obtain the grace of God.”

God tests us, and allows us to be tempted, to perfect us. Just as gold becomes valuable when the impurities have been removed through fire, God uses tough times, and difficult circumstances, as a refining process to develop us and bring out the best in us.

He controls the heat and knows exactly what temperature is required to purify us, and prepare us, tailoring each trial to the specific area of our life that needs work. When we become strengthened in the areas that God wants to address, He increases the intensity of the heat. Just as an athlete gets fitter when the trainer increases the intensity of their training, we get fitter as we go through troubles, trials, and temptations, and overcome them, growing and maturing into spiritual perfection.

This means, no matter what happens to us, it can be a blessing and not a curse; a benefit and not a hindrance; an asset and not a liability; a worthwhile cause and not a waste of time and effort.

Most of us have difficulty seeing God’s intentions when we go through trials, tests, and temptations. We lack this insight to the degree that we do not know God, or do not stay close to Him.

The closer we are to God, the better we know Him, and the more we will be able to see things from His perspective. If we approach our problems with God, and seek His help, He will help us overcome them. When we seek God's help to life's problems, and co-operate with Him, He helps us to see that there is great purpose in enduring difficulties, great peace to be obtained as we go through them, and great opportunities to allow God to fulfill His greatest potential in us, as we commit to Him, trust in Him, and rely upon Him to help us through them, allowing Him to teach us every lesson that we need to learn along the way:

“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you fall into various trials, knowing that the proving (testing) of your faith works endurance. And let endurance have its perfect work (full effect), that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

“Complete (perfect) yourselves, encourage one another, be of the same mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you.”

‘These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation (trouble), but be encouraged, I have overcome the world.’

We should not grumble and complain when we have problems, and we should never under-estimate the value of enduring pain and suffering through difficult times. Having the right attitude towards all aspects of life, the good and the bad, pleases God.

Troubles, trials, and temptations, are opportunities for us to grow and mature into what God wants us to be - more like Him. When we are tempted to do evil, God will be there to help us:

“Let no one who is being tempted say, ‘I am being tempted by God,’ for God is not tempted by evil, and He Himself tempts no one. But each one is tempted by his own lusts, and enticed by his own desire. Then desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.”

“Let him who thinks he stands look (beware) lest he fall. No temptation has taken you except what is human (common to man); but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way out, that you may be able to endure it.”

God provides the way of escaping temptation when we seek Him to find it, obey Him through it, and follow Him out of it. When we struggle with sin, the Lord will help us through it, strengthen us during it, and develop us from it. When we work with Him, and wait on Him, He gives us strength and patience to deliver us and develop us. When we have problems, He gives us wisdom to solve them. When we have challenges, He gives us abilities to overcome them. When He gives us blessings, He gives us opportunities to bless others, and be responsible with them.

God is our Father, and a good father guards his children from danger and guides them to do what is right. He gives them what they need, so they may be blessed. Our Father has given us the Holy Spirit, through the sacrifice of His Son, so we may have life:

“The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death. For the law (the Old Testament law of Moses) was powerless, in that it was weak through the flesh (because of our sinful nature). ”

But God, by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, as an offering for sin, condemned sin in the flesh (destroyed sin's control over us, by giving His Son as a sacrifice for our sins) so that the righteous requirement of the law would be fulfilled (fully satisfied) in us who no longer walk according to the flesh (following our sinful nature), but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh (doing what their sinful nature urges them to do) set their minds on things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit (set their minds on the things of the Spirit). The mind of (to set the mind on) the flesh (the sinful nature) is death, but the mind of (to set the mind on) the Spirit is life and peace; because the mind of the flesh (the sinful nature) is enmity (hostile opposition) against God; for it is not subject (will not submit) to the law of God, neither can it. Those who are in the flesh (controlled by sin) cannot please God. You are not in the flesh (controlled by your sinful nature), but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God dwells in you.

Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. So then, brothers, we are under obligation; not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh (not doing what our sinful nature urges us to do). For if you live according to the flesh (doing what your sinful nature urges you to do) you will die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body (put the sinful nature to death), you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God."

‘Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone practicing sin is a slave to sin. But the slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. Therefore, if the Son sets you free, you are really free.’

When we are hurting, we draw on our deepest resources to do whatever it takes to get through the pain. When we live with God’s Spirit inside of us, in close relationship with Him, He gives us the strength to rise above pain in more ways than any human effort could ever achieve. He gives us the peace, and the strength, to not only get through our troubles, but to also see the benefit, and value of them, and help others when they go through trouble:

“Having been justified (declared righteous) by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we boast (rejoice) in the hope of the glory of God.

And not only so, but we also boast (rejoice) in tribulations (troubles), knowing that tribulation (trouble) works out perseverance (patient endurance); and perseverance (patient endurance) works out character; and character, hope; and hope does not put us to shame, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit given to us.”

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassions and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction (troubles), so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction (trouble) with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”

A loss of God's peace and perspective is a sign that we are not as close to Him as we need to be. If we are anxious, and worrying, fearful, stressed, or depressed, we have moved away from the love of God. When we are hurting, or worrying, instead of trying to rely on our own strength, we should move closer to God, and trust in Him, and rely upon His strength to help us:

**‘Come to Me, all you who labour and are being burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, because I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.’**

**“And we know that to the ones loving God, all things work together for good, to those being called according to purpose.”**

We had tests and examinations from our teachers at school to see how well we retained the knowledge we were taught. As we progressed through each year, the subjects and the lessons that we were taught, along with the tests that came with them, became more difficult to learn, and harder to remember. The real test, however, was how well we were able to apply the knowledge we learned after we left school. It is the same with life. We all have tests in life and God examines us in many areas. The older we get, the more difficult the tests usually become. However, it is not the knowledge that we obtain that gets us through tests in life, it is how we apply the knowledge we have learnt along the way that determines how well we do when we are tested. This applies to every challenge we have in life. It also applies to knowledge we obtain from God, and His Word, the Holy Bible. No matter how much God teaches us, or how much we read, study, and learn God's Word, it is useless unless we apply it to our everyday life:

‘Therefore, everyone who hears these words from Me, and does them, will be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock; the rain came down, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house; but it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. And everyone hearing these words from Me, and not doing them, will be compared to a foolish man who built his house on the sand; the rain came down, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it.’

Knowledge and understanding about God and His Word won’t get us through the storms of life unless we do what He says. If we don’t know Him, and obey Him, we will view problems with a limited perspective and react to them wrongly. This is why we need to receive knowledge from Him, remain in Him, and do whatever He says. The more we know and follow Him, the closer we will be to Him, and the better we will be able to see problems as challenges, and respond to them the way He wants us to.

God wants us to live life with faith instead of fear, no matter what happens. Jesus’ reaction to problems gives us the complete assurance that we have nothing to fear if we stay close to Him:

“When He got into the boat, His disciples followed Him. And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being covered by the waves; but He was sleeping. And His disciples came to Him, and woke Him, saying, ‘Lord, save us! We are perishing (going to die).’ And He said to them,

‘Why are you afraid, you of little faith?’ Then He rose and rebuked (commanded) the winds and the sea, and there was great calm. And the men marveled, saying, ‘What kind of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?’ ”

We will never have anything to fear if we remain close to Jesus. The disciples had nothing to fear because Jesus was in the boat with them. It is the same with us. When we go through different seasons in life, some will be pleasant, yet others will be painful; some seasons will be enjoyable, yet others will be threatening; but all will be well as long as we stay close to God. Even though we may go through storms, our life can be victorious, as long as we are close to God, obey Him, follow Him, and remain in Him.

Jesus will carry us through the wind, and the rain, over the waves, and across the deep waters, even if it appears as though we may sink at any moment. Regardless of what may happen to us, Jesus wants us to commit ourselves, and all of our circumstances, to Him, trusting in Him, and relying upon Him, to deliver us out of them, instead of being fearful, and easily frightened.

There will be times when the flow of the waters of life will be fast and treacherous, and we will have to stand firm in the Lord, and His promises. Yet, there will be times when the waters are slow and peaceful, and we can enjoy a smooth ride, taking time to enjoy the scenery. Regardless of the depth of the water, and the different seasons, if we remain close to God, and stay alert to changing weather conditions, He will never let us sink:

‘Peace I leave to you; My peace I give you; not as the world gives, I give you. Let you not be troubled in your heart, nor let it be fearful.’

“The Lord is near. Do not be anxious for anything, but in everything by prayer, and by petition (earnest and specific), with thanksgivings, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

The Lord uses our life experiences to prepare us for our future. He uses every success and failure, triumph and tragedy, and all happiness and hopelessness, that we have experienced in the past, are experiencing in the present, and will experience in the future. He uses our life experiences as training to purify and perfect us in readiness for our eternal future with Him in His eternal kingdom. The preparation is long, the training is tough, and it takes passion, commitment, discipline, effort, persistence, and perseverance, because we are being prepared to possess the kingdom of God, serve in the kingdom of God, and reign with Him for eternity:

“The saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.”

“The kingdom and dominion (authority), and the greatness of the kingdom under all the heavens will be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions (rulers) shall serve and obey Him.”

“And they will reign forever and ever.”

Jesus is the perfect living example of enduring hardship before obtaining glory. Jesus experienced the greatest suffering, and had to overcome the worst evil, before receiving the highest honour:

“Let us lay aside every weight and the surrounding sin that easily ensnares (traps) us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”

We must also endure hardship and experience suffering if we are to enter into the kingdom of God and reign with Him:

“Through many tribulations (hardships)  
we must enter the kingdom of God.”

‘The one overcoming, and keeping My works to the end,  
I will give him authority over the nations.’

If we are to have eternal life with God, and receive eternal rewards from Him, we must desire to seek Him, and do His will, denying ourselves, and our own will. We must follow after Him, and serve Him, if we are to receive honour from Him:

‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and let him take up his cross, and let him follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he should gain the whole world, but forfeits (gives up) his own soul? Or what will a man give as an exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is about to come in the glory of His Father, with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his work. Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will by no means taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.’

‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless the grain of wheat falling into the earth dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will also be.

If anyone serves Me, the Father will honour him.’

Just as Jesus was tested and tempted by the Devil, so will we:

“Having been baptised, Jesus went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and coming upon Him; and behold, a voice from the heavens, saying, ‘This is My Son, the Beloved, in whom I am well pleased.’ Then Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tempted by the Devil. And having fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards He hungered. And coming to Him, the tempter said, ‘If You are the Son of God, speak that these stones may become loaves (of bread).’ But answering, He said, ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’

Then the Devil took Him into the holy city (Jerusalem), and set Him on the pinnacle (on top) of the temple, and said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written (in the Scriptures), ‘He will command His angels concerning You,’ and ‘On their hands they shall bear (lift) You up, lest You strike Your foot against a stone.’ ’ Jesus said to him, ‘Again it is written (in the Scriptures), ‘You shall not tempt the Lord your God.’ ’

Again, the Devil took Him to a very high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, ‘All these things I will give to You, if You will fall down and worship me.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Go, Satan; for it is written (in the Scriptures), ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.’ ’ Then the Devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.”

If we humble ourselves before God, and rely on Him to get us through every difficulty that we experience in life, He will give us the strength to persevere, endure, and overcome them, and resist the Devil and his evil schemes, as He purifies and perfects us, accomplishes His purposes, and fulfills His will, at the same time:

“Clothe yourselves with humility, because God sets Himself against the proud ones, but He gives grace to the humble ones. Be humbled, then, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in time, casting all your anxiety (worry) onto Him, because it matters to Him concerning you (He cares for you). Be sober (keep sensible); watch, because your adversary (your enemy) the Devil walks about like a roaring lion seeking someone he may devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same sufferings are being accomplished by your brotherhood throughout the world. But may the God of all grace, who has called you to eternal glory in Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a little, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. To Him be the glory and the power to the ages of the ages (forever and ever). Amen.”

Once we see that all hardship, and suffering, and opposition from the Devil, is preparation for our future, then we will realise that every problem has a significant purpose, and that in all of our difficulties, God has our best interests at heart, preparing us for eternal glory with Him:

“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God; and if children, also heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer together with Him, that we may also be glorified together with Him.

For I consider that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed in us.”

When troubles, trials, and temptations come, the first thing we should do, is go to the Lord and ask Him why they are happening. We need to know as much as we can about our problems and why they have occurred, so we can see them from God’s perspective, and deal with them in His wisdom and strength. Sometimes our problems will be caused by our own wrongdoing, where we have failed while being tempted. Other times, we may not have done anything wrong, but God will test us to prove our faithfulness.

When we seek the Lord, and wait on Him, He will give us the insight to understand our problems, and the guidance needed to handle them. Whether our problems are caused by temptation or testing, God will guide us through them to purify and perfect us. Through every trouble, trial, temptation, and testing, God wants total obedience, love, faithfulness, loyalty, and devotion to Him, and love for one another, no matter what happens to us.

In the Old Testament we are told about Job, who was severely tested by God. Troubles came upon Job like a whirlwind, and he lost everything, except for his life and hope in God. Job had done nothing wrong; however, God took everything away from him:

“There was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before Jehovah (the Lord), and Satan also came among them. And Jehovah (the Lord) said to Satan, ‘From where have you come?’ And Satan answered Jehovah (the Lord) and said, ‘From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it.’ And Jehovah (the Lord) said to Satan, ‘Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth,

a perfect and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?' And Satan answered Jehovah (the Lord) and said, 'Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge around him and his house, and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face.' Jehovah (the Lord) said to Satan, '**Behold, all that he has is in your hand; only do not lay your hand on him.**' So Satan went out from the presence of Jehovah (the Lord).

Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house; and a messenger came to Job and said, 'The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, and the Sabeans attacked them and took them, and struck (killed) the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you.' While he was still speaking, another also came and said, 'The fire of God fell from heaven, and burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them; and I alone have escaped to tell you.' While he was still speaking, another also came and said, 'The Chaldeans formed three groups, and made a raid on the camels and took them, and struck (killed) the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you.' While he was still speaking, another also came and said, 'Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, and behold, a great wind came across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people, and they are dead; and I alone have escaped to tell you.' Job arose, and tore his robe, and shaved his head, and fell on the ground and worshiped. And he said, 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return.

Jehovah (the Lord) gave, and Jehovah (the Lord) has taken away. Blessed be the name of Jehovah (the Lord).’ In all this, Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.

Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before Jehovah (the Lord), and Satan also came among them to present himself before Jehovah (the Lord). And Jehovah (the Lord) said to Satan, ‘From where have you come?’ And Satan answered Jehovah (the Lord) and said, ‘From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it.’

And Jehovah (the Lord) said to Satan, ‘Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a perfect and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil? He still holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without a cause.’ And Satan answered Jehovah (the Lord) and said, ‘Skin for skin, all that a man has he will give for his life. But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face.’ Jehovah (the Lord) said to Satan, ‘Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life.’

So Satan went out from the presence of Jehovah (the Lord) and struck Job with burning ulcers (painful sores) from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. And he took a potsherd (broken piece of pottery) with which to scrape himself while he sat in the midst of the ashes. And his wife said to him, ‘Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die.’ But he said to her, ‘You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we receive good from God and not accept evil?’ In all this, Job did not sin with his lips.”

Job couldn't understand why so many bad things were happening to him; however, he refused to let go of God. Job's friends tried to comfort and counsel Job, but only served to condemn him.

Throughout all of Job's suffering, self-pity, confusion, cry's for God's help, querying God's judgment, and even questioning His integrity, Job trusted in God. Job brought his righteousness before God, but refused to question His sovereign will, remaining faithful to God, and putting all his hope in Him:

“Even today my complaint is bitter. My hand is heavy because of my groaning. Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come to His seat. I would lay out my case before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments. I would know the words He would answer me, and understand what He would say to me.

Would He contend with me in the greatness of His power? No, surely, He would give attention to me. There the righteous might reason with Him, and I would be delivered (acquitted) forever from My judge. Behold, I go forward but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him. When He works on the left, I cannot behold Him; when He turns to the right, I cannot see Him. But He knows the way that I take. When He has tried (tested) me, I shall come forth as gold. My foot has held fast to His steps; I have kept His way and not turned aside. I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my portion of food. But He is one mind (unchanging) and who can turn Him? Whatever His soul desires, that He does. For He completes what is appointed for me, and many such things are with Him. Therefore, I am terrified at His presence; when I consider this, I am afraid of Him. For God made my heart soft, and the Almighty terrifies me; for I am hemmed in by darkness, and thick darkness covers my face.”

Job finally heard from God, was humbled by Him, and responded to Him; and was restored and blessed by Him, more than before:

“Then Jehovah (the Lord) answered Job out of the whirlwind and said, ‘Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Now gird up your loins (brace yourself) like a man; for I will question you, and you instruct Me. Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements? Tell Me, if you know. Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk (foundations fastened)? Or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Or who shut in the sea with doors, when it burst forth from the womb; when I made the clouds its clothing, and thick darkness its swaddling band (wrapping), and placed boundaries on it, and set bars and doors, and said, ‘This far you shall come, but no farther, and here shall your proud waves stop’?

Have you commanded the morning since your days began, and caused the dawn to know its place, that it might take hold of the ends of the earth, and the wicked be shaken out of it? It is turned like clay under a seal, and stands out like a garment.

From the wicked their light is withheld, and the uplifted arm is broken. Have you entered into the springs of the sea, or walked in the recesses (depths) of the deep? Have the gates of death been revealed to you, or have you seen the gates of deep darkness?

Have you comprehended the expanse (vastness) of the earth? Declare, if you know all this. Where is the way to the dwelling of light? And where is the place of darkness, that you may take it to its territory, and that you may discern the paths to its home?

You know, for you were born then, and the number of your days is great. Have you entered the storehouses of the snow, or have you seen the storehouses of hail, which I have reserved for the time of trouble, for the day of battle and war? Where is the way the light is distributed, or the east wind scattered over the earth?

Who has divided a channel for the flood of rain, and a way for the thunderbolt, to cause it to rain on a land where there is no man; a wilderness in which there is no man, to satisfy the waste and desolate land, and to make the ground spring forth with grass?

Has the rain a father? Or who has begotten the drops of dew? From whose womb comes the ice, and who has given birth to the frost of heaven? The waters harden like stone, and the face of the deep is frozen. Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades (clusters of stars), or loosen the cords of Orion (constellation of stars)? Can you bring out Mazzaroth (constellations) in their season, or can you guide the bear with its cubs? Do you know the statutes of the heavens? Can you establish their rule over the earth?

Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, that an abundance of water may cover you? Can you send forth lightnings, that they may go and say to you, 'Here we are'? Who has put wisdom in the inward parts? Or who has given understanding to the heart?

Who can number the clouds by wisdom? Or who can tilt the water jars of the heavens, when the dust hardens into a mass, and the clods stick together? Can you hunt the prey for the lion, or satisfy the appetite of the young lions, when they crouch in their dens, or lie in wait in their lairs? Who provides food for the raven, when its young ones cry to God, and wander about for lack of food? Do you know the time when the wild goats give birth on the mountain? Do you observe the calving of the deer?

Can you number the months that they fulfill; and do you know the time when they give birth, when they crouch, bring forth their offspring, and are delivered of their young? Their young ones become strong; they grow up in the open field; they go forth and do not return to them. Who has set the wild donkey free? Who has loosed the bonds of the swift donkey, to whom I have given the wilderness for a home, and the barren land his dwelling? He laughs at the turmoil of the city; he does not hear the shouts of the driver. He seeks the mountains for his pasture, and he searches after every green thing.

Will the wild ox be willing to serve you? Will he spend the night at your manger? Can you bind him in the furrow (field) with ropes, or will he plow the valleys behind you? Will you trust him because his strength is great, and will you leave your labour to him? Do you have faith in him to return your grain, and gather it to your threshing floor?

The wings of the ostrich wave proudly, but are they the pinions and plumage of a loving stork? For she leaves her eggs on the ground, and warms them in the dust, forgetting that a foot may crush them, or that a wild beast may break them. She treats her young cruelly, as though they were not hers; her labour is in vain, without concern, because God has made her forget wisdom, and has not given her a share of understanding. When she lifts herself on high, she laughs at the horse and its rider.

Do you give the horse its strength? Have you clothed his neck with a mane? Can you make him leap like a locust? His majestic snorting is terrifying. He paws in the valley, and rejoices in his strength. He goes out to meet the weapons.

He laughs at fear, and is not frightened; he does not turn back from the sword. The quiver rattles against him, the flashing spear, and javelin. He swallows the ground with fierceness and rage; he cannot stand still at the sound of the trumpet.

When the trumpet sounds, he says, ‘Aha!’ He smells the battle from afar, the thunder of the captains and the shouting.

Is it by your wisdom that the hawk soars and spreads his wings toward the south? Does the eagle mount up at your command and make his nest on high? On the rock he dwells and makes his home, on the crag of the rock and the stronghold. From there he spies out the prey; his eyes see from afar. His young ones suck up blood; and where the slain are, there he is.’

And Jehovah (the Lord) said to Job, ‘Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty? He who argues with God, let him answer it.’ Then Job answered Jehovah (the Lord) and said, ‘Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer You? I lay my hand on my mouth. I have spoken once, and I will not answer; twice, but I will proceed no further.’ Then Jehovah (the Lord) answered Job out of the whirlwind and said, ‘Now gird up your loins (brace yourself) like a man; I will question you, and you shall instruct Me. Would you annul (abolish) My judgment? Would you condemn Me that you may be justified? Have you an arm like God, and can you thunder with a voice like His? Then adorn yourself with majesty and honour, and array yourself with glory and splendour. Pour forth the outbursts of your anger; look on everyone who is proud and humble them. Look on everyone who is proud and bring him low; and tread down the wicked where they stand. Hide them all in the dust together; bind their faces in darkness.

Then I will confess to you that your own right hand can save you.

Now behold behemoth (hippopotamus), which I made along with you; he eats grass like an ox. Behold, his strength in his loins, and his power in the muscles of his belly. He bends his tail like a cedar; the sinews of his thighs are knit together.

His bones are tubes of bronze; his limbs like bars of iron. He is the first of the ways of God; only His Maker can bring near His sword. For the mountains yield food for him, and all the beasts of the field play there. He lies under the lotus

trees, in the hiding place of reeds and in the marsh. The lotus trees cover him with shade; the willows of the brook surround him. Behold a flood presses, but he is not disturbed; he is confident, though the Jordan gushes against his mouth. Can one take him by his eyes, or pierce his nose with a snare?

Can you draw out leviathan (large sea animal) with a hook, or hold down his tongue with a cord? Can you put a rope in his nose, or pierce his jaw with a hook? Will he make many supplications (earnest pleas) to you, or speak soft words to you? Will he make a covenant with you, or will you take him as a servant forever? Will you play with him as with a bird, or will you put him on a leash for your maidens? Will traders bargain over him? Will they divide him up among the merchants? Can you fill his skin with harpoons, or his head with fishing spears? Lay your hand on him; remember the battle; you will not do it again! Behold, the hope of overcoming him is false; one is cast (thrown) down even at the sight of him. No one is so fierce that he dares to stir him up.

Who then is able to stand before Me? Who has given to Me, that I should repay him? All that is under the whole heavens is Mine. I will not keep silent concerning his limbs, his mighty powers, or the grace of his frame.

Who can strip off the surface of his skin? Who can come near him with a double bridle? Who can open the doors of his face?

Round about his teeth is terror. His rows of shields (scales) are his pride, shut up tightly as with a seal. One is so near another that no air can come between them. They are joined one to another; they clasp each other and cannot be separated. His sneezings flash forth light, and his eyes are like the eyelids of the dawn.

Out of his mouth go flaming torches; sparks of fire leap forth. Out of his nostrils comes forth smoke, as from a boiling pot and burning rushes. His breath kindles coals, and a flame comes forth out of his mouth. Strength dwells in his neck, and terror dances before him. The folds of his flesh cleave (hold tight) together, cast (poured out) firm upon him and cannot be moved. His heart is cast (poured out) hard as a stone, even as hard as the lower piece of millstone. When he raises himself up, the mighty are afraid; because of his crashings they are beside themselves.

Though the sword reaches him, it does not avail; nor the spear, the dart, or the javelin. He counts iron as straw, and bronze as rotten wood. The arrow cannot make him flee; for him slingstones are turned to stubble. Clubs are counted as stubble; he laughs at the shaking of a javelin. His underparts are like sharp potsherds (broken pieces of pottery); he spreads sharp pointed marks on the mire. He makes the deep boil like a pot; he makes the sea like a pot of ointment. He leaves a shining wake behind him; one would think the deep to be grey-headed.

On earth there is nothing like him; one made without fear. He beholds every high thing; he is king over all the sons of pride.'

Then Job answered Jehovah (the Lord) and said, ‘I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You. Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge? I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. Please listen, and I will speak; You said, ‘I will question you, and you instruct Me.’ I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore, I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.’ ”

“And Jehovah (the Lord) turned the captivity of Job (restored Job’s fortunes) when he prayed for his friends. And Jehovah (the Lord) gave Job twice as much as he had before.”

While being condemned by his friends, Job kept seeking the Lord to see if there was any wrongdoing in him, wondering why he deserved to be cursed. We must do the same. We should ask the Lord if there is anything we are doing wrong, or anything that we have done, to cause our problems; and if there is, we must ask the Lord what we must do to correct them. Even if there is nothing that we are doing wrong, or nothing that we have done, to cause, or contribute to, our problems, we should accept the Lord’s will, and submit to Him regardless.

As Job’s situation appeared to become more and more hopeless, he continually asked the Lord why all these things were happening to him, refusing to let go until he received insight and guidance. And even though he did not receive answers, and struggled for understanding, Job never rebelled against God and His authority, or abandon his commitment to God; but he remained faithful, regardless of what was happening to him:

“Though He slay me, I will hope (trust) in Him.”

As Job provides us with a good example of enduring testing to receive blessing, and to give glory to God, in the Old Testament, Jesus is the perfect example of enduring testing to receive blessing and glory, in the New Testament. Jesus lived a sinless life, yet He had to endure pain, suffering, grief, torment, shame, ridicule, humiliation, and torture, before receiving the highest honour:

“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive the power  
and riches and wisdom and strength and honour  
and glory and blessing.”

Jesus, who was perfect in every respect, hung onto the Father during His darkest hours, refusing to abandon His commitment to fulfill the Father’s will, having done nothing to deserve being tortured to death:

‘My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.  
Yet, not as I will, but as You will.’

“He humbled Himself, becoming obedient until death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God highly exalted Him, and gave Him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth; and every tongue should acknowledge (fully agree) that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

“Therefore, since we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast the confession (acknowledgment of our faith). For we do not have a High Priest who is not able to sympathise with our weaknesses, but has been tested in all respects, as we are, yet without sin.

Let us, therefore, draw near with confidence to the throne of grace (God's undeserved favour), that we may receive mercy, and we may find grace in time of needing help."

"Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

**'Do not be afraid; only believe.'**

**'All things are possible with God.'**

While the Old Testament account of Job is a good example of enduring when we are being tested by God, the Old Testament also provides us with an example of enduring when we are being tempted by our own sinful desires.

Following David's reign as king of Israel, his son Solomon was chosen to be king. Solomon loved the Lord, and obeyed His law, and was blessed by Him more than any man. As long as Solomon continued to obey God's law, he was blessed. Solomon, however, while being tempted, disobeyed the Lord, and chose to seek after other gods. He was unfaithful to God, and disobeyed His law, preferring to please his many wives, rather than please God. God became angry with Solomon and tore his kingdom apart:

"When the days of David drew near for him to die, he commanded Solomon, his son, saying, 'I am going the way of all the earth. Be strong and be a man, and keep the charge of Jehovah (the Lord) your God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes (regulations), His commandments, His judgments, and His testimonies (the law), as it is written in the law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn;

that Jehovah (the Lord) may establish His Word which He spoke concerning me, saying, 'If your sons heed (keep) to their way, to walk before Me in truth (trustworthiness), with all their heart, and with all their soul,' He said, 'there shall not be a man of yours cut from the throne of Israel.' ' "

"And Solomon loved Jehovah (the Lord), walking in the statutes (regulations) of his father David; only, he sacrificed and burned incense at the high places. And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the great high place. Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. At Gibeon, Jehovah (the Lord) appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, 'Ask; what shall I give you?' And Solomon said, 'You have shown great kindness to Your servant David my father, because he walked before You in truth (trustworthiness), in righteousness and in uprightness of heart with You; and You have continued this great kindness for him, and You have given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. And now, O Jehovah (the Lord) my God, You have made Your servant king in place of my father David, but I am a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. And Your servant is in the midst of Your people whom You have chosen, a numerous people that cannot be numbered or counted for multitude. Therefore, give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil; for who is able to judge (govern) this great people of Yours?' These words were good in the eyes of Jehovah (the Lord), that Solomon had asked this thing. And God said to him, 'Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked long life for yourself, nor asked riches for yourself, or the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice, behold, I have done according to your words.

Behold, I have given to you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has been no one like you before, nor shall anyone like you arise after you. I have also given you what you have not asked, both riches and honour, so that there shall be no man like you among the kings all your days. And if you walk in My ways, keeping My statutes (regulations) and My commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days.’ ”

“And it came to pass, when Solomon had finished building the house of Jehovah (the Lord), and the king’s house, and all Solomon desired that he wanted to do, that Jehovah (the Lord) appeared to Solomon a second time, as He had appeared to him at Gibeon. And Jehovah (the Lord) said to him, ‘I have heard your prayer and your supplication (earnest plea) which you have made before Me; I have consecrated this house which you have built to put My name there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually. And as for you, if you walk before Me, as your father David walked, with integrity of heart and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded you, keeping My statutes (regulations) and My judgments, then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, as I promised David your father, saying, ‘There shall not be a man of yours cut from the throne of Israel.’ But if you at all turn back, you or your sons, from following Me, and do not keep My commandments and My statutes (regulations) which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them; and the house which I have consecrated for My name, I will cast out of My sight. Israel will be a proverb and a byword (mockery) among all peoples. And this house, which is exalted, will become a heap of ruins.

Everyone passing by it will be astonished and will hiss, and they will say, ‘Why has Jehovah (the Lord) done thus to this land and to this house?’ And they will say, ‘Because they have forsaken Jehovah (the Lord) their God, who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and laid hold on other gods, and worshiped them and served them; therefore, Jehovah (the Lord) has brought all this calamity (disaster) on them.’ ’ ”

“And king Solomon loved many foreign women, along with the daughter of Pharaoh; Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, of the nations which Jehovah (the Lord) had said to the sons of Israel, ‘You shall not intermarry with them, nor shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods.’ Solomon clung to these in love. He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines (mistresses); and his wives turned away his heart. For when Solomon was old, his wives turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not complete (wholly devoted) to Jehovah (the Lord) his God, as the heart of David his father had been. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom, the abomination (disgusting idol) of the Ammonites. Solomon did what was evil in the sight of Jehovah (the Lord), and did not wholly follow Jehovah (the Lord), as David his father had done. Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh, the abomination (disgusting idol) of Moab, on the hill that is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination (disgusting idol) of the sons of Ammon; and so he did for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods. And Jehovah (the Lord) was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from Jehovah (the Lord), God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice,

and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not keep what Jehovah (the Lord) had commanded. Therefore, Jehovah (the Lord) said to Solomon, 'Because you have done this, and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes (regulations) which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and will give it to your servant. Yet, for the sake of David your father, I will not do it in your days; I will tear it out of the hand of your son. However, I will not tear away all the kingdom; I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of My servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen.' "

While Job was tested by God and overcame the Devil, Solomon was tempted by his own sinful desires and failed to overcome the temptation to sin. Whether we are being tested by God, or being tempted by our own sinful desires, we must do what Job did, and what Solomon failed to do; stay close to God, hold onto Him, and obey Him, whether we are being tested, or tempted.

Solomon struggled to satisfy his deepest desires for fulfilment. His life was filled with things of the earth, but not fulfilled with the things of God. He had gained so much during his earthly life, but lost God's long term eternal perspective. There is wisdom outside of the Bible. We are all made in the image of God, so we are able to make some sense of life; but that is not to say that we have the sense to make the most of life. God's laws are given for our good; not to spoil our life, but to help us make the most of it.

If our vision is limited to this world, and this life, we will never understand what life is really all about, and what makes it really worth living. We will try to find happiness in the temporary pleasures the world may offer, but miss out on the true fulfilment that only God can give. King Solomon concluded:

“I said in my heart, ‘Come now, I will test you with mirth (pleasure); enjoy yourself.’ And behold, this also is vanity (emptiness). I said of laughter, ‘It is foolishness,’ and of mirth (pleasure), ‘What does it accomplish?’ I searched in my heart, how to cheer my body with wine, while leading my heart in wisdom, and how to lay hold on folly (foolishness), until I might see what was good for the sons of men to do under heaven during the few days of their life. I made great works; I built houses for myself; I planted vineyards for myself; I made gardens and parks for myself, and I planted in them all kinds of fruit trees; I made pools of water for myself from which to water the forest of growing trees. I bought male and female servants, and servants were born in my house. I also had great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been in Jerusalem before me.

I also gathered for myself silver and gold, and the treasure of kings and of provinces.

I prepared male and female singers for myself, and many concubines (mistresses), and the delights of the sons of men. And I became great and increased more than all who were before me in Jerusalem; also my wisdom remained with me. All that my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any mirth (pleasure), for my heart rejoiced in all my labour, and this was my reward for all my labour. Then I looked on all my works that my hands had done, and on the labour that I had laboured, and behold, all was vanity (emptiness) and striving after the wind, and there was no profit under the sun. So I turned to consider wisdom and folly (foolishness). For what can the man do who comes after the king? Only what has already been done. Then I saw that there is advantage to wisdom above folly (foolishness), just as light has advantage over darkness.

For the wise man's eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in darkness; and I also know that one event happens to them all. And I said in my heart, 'What happens to the fool will happen to me also. Why then have I been more wise?' And I said in my heart that this also is vanity (emptiness). For there is no more remembrance of the wise than of the fool forever, in that the coming days will all be forgotten. How the wise dies just like the fool! So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun is evil to me; for all is vanity (emptiness) and striving after the wind. I hated all my labour that I laboured under the sun, that I must leave it to the man who will come after me. And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will rule over all my labour which I have laboured, and done wisely under the sun. This also is vanity (emptiness). So I turned about and gave my heart up to despair over all the labour which I laboured under the sun. For there is a man whose labour is with wisdom, and with knowledge, and with skill, yet he shall give it to a man who has not laboured for it. This also is vanity (emptiness) and a great evil. For what has a man for all his labour, and in striving of his heart, which he has laboured under the sun? For all his days are painful, and his work causes grief; even at night his heart does not rest. This also is vanity (emptiness).

There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and make his soul see good in his labour. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God; for who can eat, or who can have enjoyment, apart from Him? For to a man who is good before Him, He gives wisdom, and knowledge, and joy; but to the sinner He gives the business of gathering and collecting, to give to him who is good before God. This also is vanity (emptiness) and striving after the wind.

For everything there is a season; a time for every purpose under the heavens: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to seek, and a time to give up as lost; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to be silent, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.

What profit has the worker from that in which he labours? I have seen the business that God has given to the sons of men, to be humbled by it. He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, He has put eternity in their heart, yet so that man cannot find out the work that God has done from beginning to end. I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice, and to do good in their life; and also that every man should eat and drink and see the good of all his labour - it is the gift of God. I know that whatever God does, it shall be forever; nothing can be added to it, and nothing taken from it. God does it, that they should fear before Him."

Solomon had everything in life that this world had to offer; however, it did not satisfy the deep longing in his heart for lasting fulfilment. Solomon found that no one can find genuine fulfilment in their lives without seeking God, obeying Him, and fulfilling His purposes. Solomon concluded that anything apart from God was meaningless. He realised that God is the source of all things, and anything of real worth can only be found in Him:

“My son, be warned; the making of many books has no end, and much study is weariness to the flesh. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

For God will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether good or evil.”

“Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him, because all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”

“If then you were raised with Christ, seek the things above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things that are above, not on things that are on the earth. For you died, and your life has been hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”

Fearing God, and keeping His commandments, means having the highest reverence, and respect for Him, and obeying whatever He commands us to do; first and foremost:

“ ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment.

And the second, like it, is this:

‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

We should not be concerned if we haven't yet started our journey of salvation, or if we may have started and faulted along the way; or if we have started and strayed away; or even if we do not know if we have started or not. What is most important is that we start, and continue living life with God in the here and now, and live life as He intends. God does not measure our success in life by how late we may have started our journey of salvation, or how we may have failed along the way, or even how far we may have progressed to date. What is most important to Him, is that we start, continue, and endure, through the peaks and the troughs, until we reach the finish line. It is not how we start, or where we are currently at, but how we finish, that really matters in the end.

Some of us may start slow but finish well; whereas, others may make a great start but tire before the finish line. We may stumble at the start, or along the way, or we may even be starting the race a little late. It does not matter, because God can, and will help us make up for lost time, if we allow Him to take charge of our life.

God wants us to cling to Him with every ounce of our being, regardless of what stage in life we are at, or where we are in our spiritual walk. We can always learn from Him, no matter what stage of the journey we are at; always looking ahead to the future, and stepping into it with Him, never looking back, and keeping our eyes on the goal of living together forever with Him.

The better we get to know God, and the closer we are to Him, and the more we obey Him, the possibilities become unlimited. Our entire lives involve constant training for spiritual perfection. Knowing God, and fulfilling His will, requires ongoing training; and ongoing training requires constant exercise. Exercise requires opposition, and opposition develops strength. If we do not have opposition, we have no strength. If we have no strength, we have no growth. If we have no growth, we don't become spiritually fit.

The Devil is our opposition who will try to stop us from having a relationship with our Father, through Jesus, with the help of the Holy Spirit, live the way He wants us to live, and fulfill His will.

The Devil dreads us having a relationship with God, because he knows that when we know God, we have the power to know and fulfill His will, become spiritually fit, and enter into His kingdom.

The Devil cannot beat God, but he can easily beat us. That is why he will always try to keep us separate from God. If we allow him to do this, he will win. So we must focus on knowing God, obeying Him, remaining in Him, and fulfilling His will:

‘Remain in Me, and I in you.’

We cannot do anything separate from the Lord:

‘Apart from Me, you are not able to do anything.’

If we can't do anything apart from God, the opposite is also true:

‘With God all things are possible.’

If we stay close to God and obey Him, we cannot, and will not lose the battle over our souls. A spiritual battle can only be won by fighting with spiritual weapons. It is utterly impossible to win the battle over our souls in our own strength, or with a positive mental attitude, or with any other means of self help.

The only way to win the battle over our souls is by fighting with spiritual weapons. God has provided all the weapons we need to fight and defeat the enemy. If we seek to know Him, obey Him, submit to His will, and serve Him, He will give us every weapon we need for victory, and help us to use them.

## Spiritual Weapons

### Commitment

We must be fully, totally, and completely, committed to God:

‘If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ Or what king, going to attack another king in war, does not sit down first and take advice whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So, therefore, every one of you who does not renounce (give up) all that he has cannot be My disciple. Salt is good, but if the salt becomes useless (tasteless), with what will it be seasoned? It is neither useful for soil (the land) nor for manure (fertilizer); they throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.’

### Prayer

Prayer is our greatest spiritual weapon, because when we speak with God, we are building our relationship with Him; and when we ask for His help, we are asking Him to do things, or to help us do things, that we ourselves cannot do.

When we talk to God, and listen to Him, we receive the guidance needed for our prayers to be answered. Being in constant contact with Him gives us unlimited access to His power, along with the supernatural ability to know what we need to do at any given point in time.

## **Social Prayer**

Every relationship has occasion for social communication. In fact, most relationships have more social communication than other types of contact. It is no different with our relationship with God. He wants to have regular informal communication with us on an ongoing basis. This means that we do not necessarily need to have any particular reason to spend time with the Lord other than to just simply enjoy His company. Just as friends and family find it refreshing to spend quality time with each other, so we also get refreshed when we spend quality time with God. He has the most amazing way of resting, relaxing, restoring, refreshing, renewing, and rejuvenating us, when we spend time with Him.

There are many different ways to spend social time with God. We can sit down with Him after a meal and spend some quiet time together. We can go for a walk, or a drive, and enjoy the scenery while spending time together. We can interrupt our busy schedules, and take time out, to spend some time with the Lord. We can constantly check in with Him briefly throughout the course of each day while we are working, or even walking, or driving, from one destination to another.

The more time, and the more often, we spend time with God, the more we become aware of His presence everywhere we go; and the more we become aware of His power. He wants us to be in constant connection with Him all the time, everywhere we go.

## **Specific Prayer**

There will be times when we need to spend time with God to ask Him for His help. This may even be during social time together. When we come to the Lord with our needs and requests, we will have many things to ask Him about. At times, there will be general things to ask Him about; other times, they will be more specific. For example, general requests made to the Lord may be:

“Lord, may Your will be done for my life.”

“Lord, please bring about good, during these bad times.”

“Lord, please help me to know You, and fulfill Your will.”

Specific requests made to the Lord may be something like:

“Lord, may Your will be done regarding this aspect of my life.”

“Lord, please bring the best outcome from this bad situation.”

“Lord, please help me to know Your will in regards to this particular situation, and tell me what I should do about it.”

The quality of relationships has a lot to do with the effectiveness of the communication. If only general information is given, it is quite easy to have a misunderstanding. Likewise, the effectiveness of our communication with God will have much to do with the quality of our relationship with Him. He will always give us clear, detailed information, if we take time to hear what He has to say. This is also what He expects from us when we speak to Him.

## **Strategic Prayer**

Generally, a strategic prayer that we might pray may be:

“Lord, please deliver me out of this difficult time;  
but if this is Your will, please develop me during it.”

“Lord, if I have moved away from You, and I am not doing  
Your will for my life, please help me get back on the right path.”

“Lord, I don’t know if I am going through a time of testing,  
or if I have failed while being tempted, and sinned. If I am  
being tested, may Your will be done, and may I be better off for  
having gone through it. If I am failing while being tempted to sin,  
please reveal what I am doing, and help me turn away from it.”

Specifically, a strategic prayer that we might pray may be:

“Lord, please deliver me out of this challenging situation;  
however, if it is Your will that it must continue until it  
fulfills Your purposes for it, may Your will be done. But if  
what is happening to me is not Your will, please resolve it.”

“Lord, if I did the wrong thing in this particular situation,  
please help me know where I went wrong, work it together  
for good, and show me how I can improve in the future.”

“Lord, I don’t know if this problem I am having is a test, or if  
I have sinned. If it is a test, please get me through it, and fulfill  
Your will for it. If I have sinned, please reveal it to me, let’s  
deal with it, and help me turn away from it next time.”

## **Steadfast Prayer**

Steadfast prayers are constant petitions made to God that are firm in purpose, persistent, resilient, and unwavering, until they are finally answered:

“He said to them, ‘Who of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight, and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has arrived from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; and he will answer from within and say, ‘Do not bother me; the door has already been shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot rise up and give to you?’ I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity (shameless persistence) he will rise up and give him as many as he needs.’ ”

“He also spoke a parable to them, that they always ought to pray and not lose heart, saying, ‘A certain judge was in a certain city, who neither feared God, nor respected man. And a widow was in that city, and she came to him, saying, ‘Give me justice against my opponent.’ And for a time he would not; but afterward he said to himself, ‘Though I neither fear God, nor respect man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her justice, lest by her continual coming she weary me.’ And the Lord said, ‘Hear what the unrighteous judge said. And will God not execute justice for His elect, who cry out to Him day and night, and bear with them? I tell you, He will execute justice for them speedily. But when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?’ ”

The benefit of steadfast prayer is that it proves that we have placed our total faith and trust in God to answer our requests.

The benefit of our prayers to the Lord being sociable is that we can be more genuine, and intimate with Him, and Him with us.

The benefit of our prayers being specific is that we can receive answers to prayer specifically according to our needs and desires, and obtain detailed information from the Lord about what He wants us to do, at any given time, without making mistakes.

The benefit of strategic prayer is that it creates a wonderful win/win situation and leaves the Devil powerless. If it is a test, we can ask the Lord for help to get through it, and to be better off for having gone through it. If it has been a temptation, we can ask the Lord to reveal it, get help to deal with it, work it together for our good, and anyone else's, and help us to overcome it in future:

“The Lord is near. Do not be anxious for anything, but in everything by prayer, and by petition (earnest and specific), with thanksgivings, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

“Without faith it is impossible to please God. The one approaching (drawing near) Him must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder to the ones seeking Him out.”

‘Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone asking receives, and the one seeking finds, and to the one knocking it will be opened. Or what man of you, if his son asks him for a loaf (of bread), will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those asking Him.’

“You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed (focused) on You, because he trusts in You.”

“Pray without ceasing.”

## Obedience

Obedience to God is the power for our prayers to be answered. Just as parents reward obedient children, and grant their requests, according to their will and timing, our heavenly Father blesses His obedient children, and answers our prayers, in His perfect timing:

“The earnest prayer of a righteous one has great power.”

‘I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, what you may eat, or what you may drink; nor for your body, what you may put on. Is life not more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of heaven; they do not sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And who of you being anxious can add one cubit to his stature (one hour to his life).

And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they do not labour, nor do they spin; yet I say to you, that not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed as one of these. But if the grass of the field which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, God clothes, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith.

Therefore, do not be anxious, saying, ‘What may we eat?’ or ‘What may we drink?’ or ‘What may clothe us?’

For the nations seek after all these things. Your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these. But seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.'

'If you remain in Me, and My words remain in you, you will ask whatever you desire, and it will be done for you.'

## Thanksgiving

God wants us to give Him thanks for every good thing that happens to us, so that we always appreciate Him, and what He gives us, and so we do not ever forget Him, and His goodness.

He also wants us to thank Him for every bad thing that happens to us, so that we can learn from Him, and never forsake Him:

"In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

Giving thanks to God for all things, in all situations, all the time, is for our own good, and has great power, because it proves that we have complete trust in Him, and His will, and shows our love and appreciation for Him, regardless of our circumstances.

Giving thanks to God for everything also strips the Devil of any power that he will try to have over us, and any attempts he makes to alter our attitude of love, adoration, and admiration for God, and His perfect nature, no matter what happens to us:

"I will magnify Him with thanksgiving."

"He who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving honours Me."

## Praise

Giving thanks to God for everything shows our appreciation for everything that He has done. Giving praise to God for everything commends Him for everything He has done and all that He is:

“Shout joyfully to Jehovah (the Lord), all the earth! Serve Jehovah (the Lord) with gladness. Come before Him with singing. Know that Jehovah (the Lord), He is God. He has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, and bless (adore) His name. For Jehovah (the Lord) is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting, and His faithfulness to all generations.”

“Psalming (making music) in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Where thanks shows appreciation, praise gives commendation. When we praise God, giving Him the highest commendation, acknowledging Him as being perfect in all ways and in all things, we are giving Him all the glory that He alone deserves.

There is great power in praising God, because it reveals our faithfulness to Him, and ensures that no one gets the glory except for Him. When we ensure that God, and only God, gets all the glory for all things, it keeps us from being proud and glorifying ourselves, and helps us to receive God’s grace:

“Clothe yourselves with humility, because God sets Himself against the proud ones, but He gives grace to the humble ones.

Be humbled, then, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in time, casting all your anxiety (worry) onto Him, because it matters to Him concerning you (He cares for you).

Be sober (keep sensible); watch, because your adversary (your enemy) the Devil walks about like a roaring lion seeking someone he may devour.”

In a similar way that giving thanks to God in every situation, whether good or bad, strips the Devil of any power he will try to have over us, giving praise to God in every season, during good times and bad times, constantly keeps the Devil under control.

Thanking God in every situation, and praising Him during every season, helps us to constantly keep God’s perspective, co-operate with Him on an ongoing basis, and be guided by Him to respond to anything that happens. This leaves the Devil utterly powerless.

Everyone in the Bible who gave thanks to God in any situation, and praised Him throughout every season, were always victorious in whatever situation they were in, or whatever season they were going through. If God delivered them out of every problem situation, and brought them through every troublesome season, blessing their faithfulness, He will surely deliver us, and bless us:

“In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, grieving in manifold (various) trials, that the proving (trustworthiness) of your faith, being much more precious than perishing gold, having been proved (tested) through fire, may be found to praise, and honour, and glory, at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom not having seen, you love; in whom not yet seeing, but believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable (inexpressible); and having been glorified, obtaining the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”

In the Old Testament, David was anointed to be king of Israel. However, before he became king, he went through many tests; and after becoming king, he had to endure many temptations.

David had successes and failures during his life, along with many triumphs and tragedies. He loved God, was humbled by Him, and was humble before Him, constantly giving thanks to Him, and praising Him, in every situation and throughout every season.

David always confessed his sins to God, and repented of them whenever he did anything wrong. King David is a fine example of giving praise and glory to God for everything all the time:

“I will exalt You, my God, O King, and bless Your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless You, and praise Your name forever and ever. Great is Jehovah (the Lord), and greatly to be praised; His greatness is unsearchable. One generation will praise Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts. I will meditate on the glorious splendour of Your majesty, and on

Your wondrous works. They will speak of the might of Your awesome acts, and I will declare Your greatness. They will express the memory of Your great goodness, and shall sing of Your righteousness. Jehovah (the Lord) is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and great in lovingkindness.

Jehovah (the Lord) is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works. All Your works shall give thanks to You, O Jehovah (the Lord), and Your saints will bless You. They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom, and talk of Your power, to make known to the sons of men Your mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of Your kingdom. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Your dominion (rule) endures throughout all generations. Jehovah (the Lord) upholds all who fall, and raises up all who are bowed down.

The eyes of all look expectantly to You, and You give them their food in due season. You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing. Jehovah (the Lord) is righteous in all His ways, and kind in all His works. Jehovah (the Lord) is near to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth. He fulfills the desire of those who fear Him; He also hears their cry and saves them.

Jehovah (the Lord) preserves all who love Him, but all the wicked He will destroy. My mouth will speak the praise of Jehovah (the Lord), and all flesh shall bless His holy name forever and ever.”

The opposite is also true. Anyone in the Bible who did not give glory to God was humbled, cursed, or ultimately, struck down:

“Nebuchadnezzar the king, to all peoples, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you. It seemed good to me to declare the signs and wonders that the Most High

God has done with me. How great are His signs, how mighty are His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion (rule) is from generation to generation.

I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at rest in my house, and flourishing in my palace. I saw a dream that made me afraid, and the thoughts on my bed and the visions of my head troubled me. So I made a decree to bring in all the wise men of Babylon before me, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. Then the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the fortune-tellers came in, and I told them the dream; but they could not make known to me its interpretation.

At last Daniel came in before me, whose name is Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and I told the dream before him, saying,

‘O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you, and no secret troubles you, tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and its interpretation. As to the visions of my head on my bed, I was looking, and behold, a tree was in the midst of the earth, and its height was great. The tree grew and became strong, and its height reached to heaven; and it was visible to the ends of all the earth. Its leaves were beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in it was food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it, and the birds of the sky dwelt in its branches, and all flesh was fed from it. I was looking in the visions of my head on my bed, and behold, a watcher, a holy one, came down from heaven. He cried out aloud and said thus, ‘Chop down the tree and cut off its branches. Shake off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts flee from under it, and the birds from its branches. But leave the stump of its roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, in the tender grass of the field. Let it be wet with the dew of the heavens, and let his portion be with the beasts on the grass of the earth. Let his heart be changed from a man’s, and let the heart of a beast be given to him; and let seven times (years) pass over him. This decision is by the decree of the watchers, and the command by the word of the holy ones, in order that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men.’

This dream I, king Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now you, O Belteshazzar, tell me its interpretation, because all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known to me the interpretation; but you are able, for the spirit of the holy gods is in you.’ Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for a moment, and his thoughts troubled him.

The king spoke and said, 'Belteshazzar, let not the dream or its interpretation trouble you.' Belteshazzar answered and said,

'My lord, may the dream be for those who hate you, and its interpretation for your enemies. The tree that you saw, which

grew and became strong, whose height reached to heaven; and was visible to the ends of all the earth; whose leaves were

beautiful and its fruit abundant, in which was food for all; under which the beasts of the field found shade, and in whose branches the birds of the sky dwelt - it is you, O king, who have grown and become strong. Your greatness has grown and reaches to heaven, and your dominion (rule) to the end of the earth.

And as the king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, 'Chop down the tree and destroy it, but leave the stump of its roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and

bronze, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of the heavens, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven times (years) pass over him'. This is the interpretation, O king. It is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king: You shall be driven from among men, your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and you shall be made to eat grass like oxen. You shall be wet with the dew of the heavens, and seven times (years) shall pass over you,

till you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom

of men, and gives it to whomever He will.

And as it was commanded to leave the stump of the roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be assured to you, after you come to know that heaven rules. Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you; break off your sins by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities (wickedness) by showing mercy to the poor, that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your prosperity.'

All this came upon king Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of twelve months he was walking in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. The king spoke and said, 'Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling, by my mighty power and for the honour of my majesty?' While the words were still in the king's mouth, a voice came from heaven, 'King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: The kingdom has departed from you, and you shall be driven from among men. Your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and you shall be made to eat grass like oxen. And seven times (years) shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He wills.' In that hour the word was fulfilled on Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven from among men, and ate grass like oxen; and his body was wet with the dew of the heavens, till his hair had grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws.

At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me. And I blessed the Most High, and praised and honoured Him who lives forever; for His dominion (rule) is an everlasting dominion (rule), and His kingdom is from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are counted as nothing; and He does according to His will among the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand, or say to Him, 'What have You done?' At the same time my reason returned to me, and the glory of my kingdom, my majesty and splendour, returned to me. My counsellors and nobles sought me, I was restored to my kingdom, and excellent greatness was added to me. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and honour the King of heaven, for all His works are truth, and His ways are justice; and those who walk in pride He is able to humble."

“Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his nobles, and drank wine in the presence of the thousand. While tasting the wine, Belshazzar commanded to bring the vessels of gold, and of silver, which Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken from the temple which was in Jerusalem, that the king and his nobles, his wives, and his concubines, might drink from them. Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken from the temple of the house of God which had been in Jerusalem; and the king and his nobles, his wives, and concubines, drank from them. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, and of bronze, iron, wood, and stone. In that same hour the fingers of a man’s hand appeared and began writing on the plaster of the wall of the king’s palace opposite the lampstand; and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. Then the king’s cheerfulness changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins shook, and his knees knocked against each other.

The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the fortune-tellers. The king spoke, and said to the wise men of Babylon, ‘Any man who can read this writing, and tell me its interpretation, shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around his neck, and be the third ruler in the kingdom.’ Then all the king’s wise men came in, but they could not read the writing, or make known to the king its interpretation.

Then king Belshazzar was greatly troubled, his face changed, and his nobles were perplexed (puzzled). The queen, because of the words of the king and his nobles, came to the banquet hall. The queen spoke, and said, ‘O king, live forever. Let not your thoughts trouble you, nor let your cheerfulness change. There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods.

In the days of your father, light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, were found in him; and king Nebuchadnezzar your father, your father the king, made him head of all the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and fortune-tellers, because an excellent spirit, knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, explaining riddles, and solving problems, were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation.'

Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king spoke, and said to Daniel, 'Are you that Daniel who is one of the exiles from Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah? I have heard of you, that the spirit of the gods is in you, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom, are found in you. Now the wise men, and the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they might read this writing and make known to me its interpretation, but they could not show the interpretation of the thing. But I have heard that you can give interpretations and solve problems. Now if you can read the writing and make known to me its interpretation, you shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around your neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.' Then Daniel answered, and said before the king, 'Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another; yet, I will read the writing to the king, and make known to him the interpretation. O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father a kingdom and majesty, and glory and honour; and because of the greatness that He gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him. Whom he willed, he killed; and whom he willed, he kept alive; whom he willed, he raised up; and whom he willed, he put down.

But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened in pride, he was brought down from the throne of his kingdom, and his glory was taken from him. Then he was driven from among men, his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. He was fed grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of the heavens, till he knew that the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men, and sets over it whomever He will. And you, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this, but you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven; and the vessels of His house have been brought in before you, and you and your nobles, your wives, and your concubines, have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver, and of gold, and of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see, nor hear, nor know. But the God in whose hand is your breath, and whose are all your ways, you have not glorified. Then the fingers of the hand were sent from Him, and this writing was written. And this is the writing that was written:

MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN.

This is the interpretation of the word. MENE: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; TEKEL: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; PERES: Your kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.' Then Belshazzar gave the command, and they clothed Daniel with purple and put a chain of gold around his neck, and they made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

In that night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain.

And Darius the Mede received the kingdom,  
being about sixty-two years old."

“Now Herod was very angry with the Tyrians and Sidonians; but with one accord they came to him, and having persuaded Blastus, the king’s chamberlain (head of the bed chambers), they asked for peace, because their country depended on the king’s country for food. So on a set day, Herod, having been arrayed (clothed) in royal apparel (garments), and sitting on the tribunal (judgment seat), gave an oration (public speech) to them. And the people cried out, ‘The voice of a god and not of a man.’ Immediately, an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God, and he was eaten by worms and died. But the Word of God grew and multiplied.”

“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. The one sowing to his flesh will reap corruption (destruction), but the one sowing to the Spirit will reap eternal life.”

Genuine, and heartfelt, praise to God, that exalts Him always, in all things, moves His heart to work in us and around us in such incredible and amazing ways, that only He, and He alone, can do:

“Through Him, then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips, giving thanks to His name.”

“And a voice came out from the throne, saying, ‘Praise our God, all you His servants, those fearing Him, the small and great.’ ”

“Praise Him according to His excellent greatness.”

“Let everything that breathes praise Jehovah (the Lord).  
Praise Jehovah (the Lord)!”

## **Fruit**

Fruit that comes from God is the fruit of the Holy Spirit:

“The fruit of the Spirit is: Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control;”

The fruit of the Spirit is produced from God’s perfect character. We bear God’s holy fruit when we are in relationship with Him. The closer the relationship with Him, the better the quality of the fruit that will be produced. It is a powerful spiritual weapon, because when people see God’s fruit from a christian, they see God Himself in them. And when people see the fruit that is being produced in a christian is because of God’s love in them, they will want to have His love living in them as well. They are blessed, we are blessed, and God receives the glory.

**Love** seeks the highest good of one another, regardless of what we may think, or how we may feel, about them.

**Joy** is being filled with the Holy Spirit of God, loving Him, being loved by Him, and continually delighting in His presence.

**Peace** is the supernatural contentment that comes from being in unity with God, and seeking peace and unity with one another.

**Long-suffering** is being patient while persevering and enduring problem situations and difficult seasons without losing our peace.

**Kindness** is an active eagerness to help one another with an attitude of genuine concern for their well-being.

**Goodness** is a selfless desire to do what is good for one another in a way that benefits them and is generous towards them.

**Faithfulness** is being loyal to God; trustworthy and responsible to Him, and trustworthy and responsible to one another.

**Gentleness** is being humble, calm, and peaceable, towards one another, especially when we are in pain, or when problems arise.

**Self-control** is the selfless restraining of speech and actions, emotions and desires, in unity with God and with one another.

All the fruits of the Holy Spirit flow from God's love, and the influence of Him living in us, and flowing out of us:

“Love suffers long (is patient); is kind (nice); does not envy (want what belongs to someone else); does not vaunt itself (boast about itself); is not puffed up (proud); does not behave indecently (is not rude); does not seek its own things (not selfish); is not provoked (not easily roused to anger); thinks no evil; does not rejoice over wrong, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things (patiently perseveres all things); believes all things; hopes all things; endures all things. Love never fails.”

Love that suffers long is being understanding and patient with one another, persevering with them, while waiting on God.

Love that is kind is eagerly helping one another out of genuine care and concern for their general well-being.

Love that does not envy is being content with what we have, and not wanting, or being jealous of, what others have.

Love that does not boast is refusing to glorify ourselves, our life, our achievements, or anything about ourselves, to others.

Love that is not proud is being humble; not thinking, or acting, in any way that considers ourselves as being better than others.

Love that is not rude is behaving in a decent, courteous, polite, and respectful manner, towards God and towards one another.

Love that does not seek its own is doing what is best for others, putting their needs ahead of our own wants and desires.

Love that is not provoked is refusing to become easily angered, and not repaying one another with evil, when evil is done to us.

Love that thinks no evil is not allowing ourselves to have evil, sinful, or hateful thoughts, of any evil, sinful, or hateful nature.

Love that does not rejoice over wrong is not being glad when people sin, by doing what is wrong, and where there is injustice.

Love that rejoices with the truth is being glad when people are righteous, by doing what is right, and where there is justice.

Love that bears all things is persevering with every situation, and through all seasons, without complaining, or losing hope.

Love that believes all things is believing every truth about God, His Word, His promises, His faithfulness, and His purposes.

Love that hopes all things is always looking forward to the best, no matter what is happening, or where we are currently at.

Love that endures all things is persevering with every situation, and through every season, without never, ever, ever, giving up.

Love that never fails is the love of God that only He can give; His love that lives inside of us, and His love that flows out of us:

“Now faith, hope, and love, these three remain;  
but the greatest of these is love.”

“Love never fails.”

## Names

There is great power in the name of Jesus Christ:

“God highly exalted Him, and gave Him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth; and every tongue should acknowledge (fully agree) that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

“There is salvation in no other, for neither is there any other name under heaven having been given among men by which we must be saved.”

The mere mention of the name of Jesus Christ shakes the spiritual realms, and has the greatest power to cast out evil spirits.

Jesus, Himself, tells us that we will cast out demons in His name:

‘In My name they will cast out demons;’

Jesus has many other names reflecting the power of God:

‘Almighty’  
‘Alpha’  
‘Amen’  
“Anointed”  
“Apostle”  
“Author of Life”  
‘Beginning’  
“Beloved”

“Branch”  
‘Bread of Life’  
‘Bright & Morning Star’  
‘Chief of God’s Creation’  
“Counsellor”  
“Dayspring”  
“Deliverer”  
‘Door’  
“Elect”  
“Emmanuel”  
‘End’  
“Eternal Father”  
‘Faithful & True Witness’  
‘First’  
“Firstborn from the Dead”  
“Firstborn of all Creation”  
‘Good Shepherd’  
“Head”  
“High Priest”  
“Holy”  
‘I AM’  
“Image of the Invisible God”  
“Judge of the Living & the Dead”  
“King of Israel”  
“King of Kings”  
“King of the Jews”  
“Lamb of God”  
‘Last’  
“Last Adam”  
‘Life’  
‘Light of the World’

“Lion of the Tribe of Judah”  
‘Living Water’  
“Lord of Lords”  
“Lord our Righteousness”  
“Master”  
“Mediator”  
“Messiah”  
“Mighty God”  
‘Offspring of David’  
‘Omega’  
“Overseer”  
“Prince of Peace”  
“Prophet”  
“Redeemer”  
‘Resurrection’  
“Righteous”  
“Rock”  
‘Root’  
“Saviour”  
“Servant”  
“Shiloh”  
“Son of God”  
‘Son of Man’  
“Sun of Righteousness”  
‘Teacher’  
‘True Vine’  
‘Truth’  
‘Way’  
“Wonderful”  
“Word of God”

## Gifts

“**Administrations**” is assisting in the management of the different parts of the body of Christ in accordance with God’s will.

“**Apostles**” are messengers of God, who speak on behalf of God, and extend the ministry of the church, opening up new areas for the Bible to be taught, and preached, and oversee the different parts of the body of Christ.

“**Discerning Spirits**” is the supernatural power of God to detect evil spirits, know their activities, and thwart their evil plans.

“**Evangelists**” spread the Word of God with great power resulting in widespread multitudes of people receiving salvation.

“**Exhortation**” is instructing, advising, cautioning, correcting, urging, and encouraging one another with the Word of God.

“**Faith**” is the ability to believe God and His Word without doubt, especially in difficult situations, and adverse circumstances.

“**Giving**” is providing resources for the benefit of people who are in need willingly and generously with selfless humility.

“**Healing**” is the supernatural power of God to heal people’s sicknesses and illnesses, mental trauma’s and emotional hurts, physical and spiritual afflictions, without the need of human aid.

“**Interpretation**” is the supernatural power of God to reveal the meaning of unknown spiritual tongues, or national languages.

“Knowledge” is the supernatural revelation of God and His plans, and can include a deeper understanding of His Word, and insight about people, particular situations, and general circumstances.

“Leadership” is the God-given responsibility of leading the people of God, by the Word of God, according to the will of God.

“Mercy” is having sympathy or empathy for a person’s misfortune or misery, and having compassion, and showing kindness to them.

“Ministering” is the service of assisting the church and helping to meet the needs of one another in a caring and loving manner.

“Miracles” is the power of God to supernaturally intervene and counteract natural forces, overcome evil, and avoid disaster.

“Pastors” build up the body of Christ by teaching, nurturing, counselling, and protecting the spiritual needs of God’s children.

“Prophecy” is a Word from God about the future, brought forth through whom He wants it delivered, and then fulfilled by Him.

“Prophesying” is being used as a vessel for God to speak through, to deliver messages to whom He wants them given.

“Prophets” speak on behalf of God, bringing people to awareness of sin, convicting them to repent and turn away from their sin, and bring forth insight to future judgments, if they do not repent.

“Teachers” give understanding to the Word of God, and how it is to be applied, while preserving the truth of the Holy Bible.

“**Tongues**” is the power of God to speak in a spiritual utterance, personally to God, or publicly to others, in a spiritual language that is not understood by the person speaking it.

“**Wisdom**” is the supernatural power to ask God for guidance, apply His knowledge, act according to His directions, and fulfill His will, in a given set of circumstances:

“The one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.”

Everyone must seek to know the gifts that God has given to each one of us, ask Him how to use them, and be careful how we apply them. God’s gifts are extremely powerful, and it is only by using them in unity with Him that we will be able to fulfill His general overall purpose for all of us, and His specific individual plan for each one of us, and bring unity to the body of Christ:

“For, even as the body is one and has many members, all the members of the one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ.”

“You are the body of Christ, and (individual) members in part.”

“Now God set the members, each one of them, in the body, as He desired. If all were one member, where would the body be? Now, indeed, many are the members, but one body.”

“Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the full acknowledgment of the Son of God, to a complete (perfect) man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;”

## **Meditation**

People look to different forms of meditation seeking inner peace and overall well-being. It is used as a means of obtaining physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual empowerment. Many people, however, think that meditation is some kind of spiritual ritual where people get in touch with themselves, and the universe, and experience a sense of peace and spiritual enlightenment.

Meditation, however, is simply focused thinking. It is focusing ones thoughts on something in particular, whatever that may be, and is a skill that everyone of us has learned to varying degrees. For example, we all have ongoing positive and negative thoughts. Generally, the more positive we are about things, the better we will usually feel. Likewise, the more negative we generally are about things, the worse we will usually feel. Continual focus on positive things brings hope. Continual focus on negative things brings hopelessness. Hopelessness is a build up of unrest, worry, fear, and stress, especially about things that we either cannot fix, or will not fix. Focused thinking can be a positive influence, or a negative influence, both of which affect our overall well-being.

Numerous books have been written, and different techniques have been taught, on how meditation (focused positive thinking) can enable us to have a better life. Whilst many different forms of meditation exist, there is only one type of meditation that provides ultimate inner peace and overall well-being; and that is meditation on God, with God, and everything about Him.

Meditation on God always provides good outcomes from Him, in the present, and in the future, for all eternity. God guarantees this in His Word, the Holy Bible. All other forms of meditation may seem to be good; however, the benefits are only temporary, and will always fall short of God's best for us.

Meditation on God is simply committing to Him, trusting in Him, and relying upon Him, continually. Intimacy with Him is achieved through constant meditation on Him, His Word, and His will. This means focusing on our relationship with Him, knowing and practicing His Word, and doing and fulfilling His will. There are many things that we can meditate on with God including:

- Meditating on His presence while seeking Him in prayer.
- Meditating on His promises, in His Word, the Holy Bible.
- Meditating on what He is saying to me through His Word.
- Meditating on what He wants to do with me and my life.
- Meditating on what He wants me to do in the present.
- Meditating on what He will do with me in the future.
- Meditating on Him and everything He has done for me.

“Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is true food and My blood is true drink.

Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on Me will live because of Me.’ ”

When troubles come, especially trouble that is brought about by our own words and actions, we must never forget that God is rich in forgiveness, mercy, and grace, and He always forgives, redeems, and restores His people. So when we have difficulties, whether we have brought them upon ourselves or not, we must seek God, meditate on Him, and wait patiently for Him to sort them out, allowing Him to deal with them how He thinks best.

Instead of meditating on our troubles, or trying to find some kind of empowerment to overcome them, all we need is to seek God, discuss our problems with Him, ask Him for help, and then wait for His solution, focusing on what He wants us to say, or what He wants us to do, if and when required. When we do this, we are meditating on God. We are focusing our thoughts and efforts on speaking to Him, hearing from Him, and being sensitive to Him moving in us and around us, to receive ongoing help from Him.

When we seek God, we may not get an immediate solution to our problems; and when we do get solutions, they may not be what we expect. However, God will always do what is best for our present, future, and eternal well-being; and He will always give us the strength and peace of mind to persevere anything for as long as we need to. Ultimately, the more we commit to God, and meditate on Him, the more peace and strength we will have to deal with everything that comes our way. He will never, ever, let us down. He will never, ever, fail us. His Word guarantees it:

‘Peace I leave to you; My peace I give you; not as the world gives, I give you. Let you not be troubled in your heart, nor let it be fearful.’

We have the ability to meditate on God all the time, on a moment-by-moment, day-by-day basis. It is really a matter of how much we want Him to be in our lives, in our everyday life, and how much effort we are prepared to make:

“You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed (focused) on You, because he trusts in You.”

“Pray without ceasing.”

## Seeking

The Lord overcomes all evil aimed at us when we seek His face:

“Seek Jehovah (the Lord) and His strength.  
Seek His face continually.”

“You have said, ‘**Seek My face.**’ My heart said to You,  
‘Your face, O Jehovah (Lord), I will seek.’ ”

“Let the hearts of those who seek Jehovah (the Lord) rejoice.”

## Armour

The Lord has provided us with a complete set of body armour and weapons to fight against the Devil. The belt, breastplate, shoes, shield, helmet, sword, and prayer, enable us to have victory over the Devil when we go into battle against him:

“Be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, so that you are able to stand against the wiles (deceptive evil schemes) of the Devil. For we are not wrestling against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Therefore, take up the whole armour of God, so that you are able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand, therefore, having girded your loins (waist) with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shoed your feet with the preparation of the Gospel of peace;

above all, taking up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench (extinguish) all the fiery darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Pray at all times with all prayer and petition (earnest and specific) in the Spirit, being watchful to this end, with all perseverance and petition for all the saints.”

The body armour relates to protective equipment and attacking weapons that roman soldiers used to wear before going into battle against an enemy. Likewise, the Lord provides us with defensive armour and offensive weapons that help us fight against the Devil. All of the armour is needed to protect ourselves against attacks from the Devil, and all the weapons are needed to overcome him.

The belt of truth is the protective covering of the truth of God, always being prepared to defend, and being ready for action.

The breastplate of righteousness is God’s power to constantly protect us, and fully preserve us, through His righteousness.

The shoes of the preparation of the Gospel of peace is standing firm on the power of the Word of God, which brings peace to all people, and being prepared to walk in the Word at all times.

The shield of faith is believing in God to defend us against all evil when we commit to Him, trust in Him, and rely upon Him.

The helmet of salvation is the protective assurance that we are saved, and that we are being saved, and that we will be saved, and we have an eternal destiny and purpose in God’s kingdom.

The sword of the Spirit is applying God’s Word, and speaking forth the Word of God, during the course of our everyday lives.

The power of praying at all times with all prayer and petition in the Spirit is partnering with God at all times, in every situation, throughout every season, with all perseverance, for the saints.

Total commitment, constant prayer, obedience to God's Word, thanking Him always for all things, praising Him for everything, bearing fruit, proclaiming His names, using all the gifts He has given us, meditating on Him, and everything He has done for us, seeking His face, wearing all of the body armour, and using the weapons He has provided us, gives us victory in spiritual warfare:

“If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, how will He not freely give us all things with Him? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore, is also risen, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes (pleads) for us.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation (trouble), or distress (hardship), or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril (danger), or sword (war)? As it is written, ‘For Your sake we are being killed all day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.’ Yet, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

For I have been persuaded that not death, nor life, nor angels, nor demons, nor powers, nor things present, nor things coming, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord.”

‘ ‘For I know the plans that I have for you,’ says Jehovah (the Lord), ‘plans of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.’ ’

Jesus has overcome the Devil, and has given us all the weapons that we need to overcome him too. Jesus overcame the Devil when He sacrificed Himself to torture and death on the cross for our salvation. Through Jesus' death and resurrection we have the power to overcome the Devil and all his evil schemes. God has given us everything we need to overcome him, and all the evil that he throws at us. It is a fight that we can, and must win:

‘I am the light of the world. The one following  
Me will not walk in darkness, but will  
have the light of life. ’

## **10. God’s Will be Done on Earth as it is in Heaven**

God’s Word tells us that God knows the future and also shapes it. This does not mean that everything has been pre-determined. There is a delicate balance between God’s sovereign authority and our own human responsibility. We must not think that everyone and everything has been pre-programmed as if we are robots. God uses His sovereign authority to shape His creation however He pleases according to His will, but He also allows our input.

In a family, parents have the sovereign authority to do what they think is best for their children. They can use their God-given authority however they want in order to help their children grow into mature adults. They will give their children a degree of free will, depending upon each of the child’s age and level of maturity. However, the level of free will given to each child will only be as much as the parents allow, depending on how much responsibility they think each child can handle. In a similar way, this is what God does with His creation. He has the complete authority to do as He wills, and gives His children a degree of their own free will.

There are times when our free will is limited to the degree that God allows us to have it, and there are times when God gives us the free will to do what we think is best for ourselves. The main difference between God's sovereign authority over His creation compared to a parent's sovereign authority over their children is that God always remains in control. Any free will that He gives us is always limited by His sovereign authority to do what He thinks is best for us, even when He allows us the free will to do what is not in our best interests. God always wants what is best for us, but He will not force us. God's will for every one of His children is for us to be like His Son, Jesus, and live with Him for eternity:

“And we know that to the ones loving God, all things work together for good, to those being called according to purpose.

Because whom He foreknew, He also predestinated (ordained beforehand) to be conformed to the image of His Son (to be like His Son), for Him to be the firstborn among many brothers. And whom He predestinated (ordained beforehand), these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified (declared righteous); and whom He justified (declared righteous), these He also glorified.”

### **God's Choosing & Our Choices**

There is diversity and flexibility in God's sovereignty that we must seek to understand, and hold precious, while being cautious, in case we presume to believe that God has pre-determined and programmed everything, and our words and actions, either do not matter, or make no difference to what God has predestined for the future. Our eternal destiny depends upon God's sovereign will (God's choosing), as well as our free will (our choices).

God has created His children and chosen us to be holy, righteous, and loving, through Jesus, so we may be united forever in Him:

“Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies (heavenly places) in Christ, according as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, for us to be holy and unblemished (faultless) before Him in love; predestinating (determining in advance) us to adoption through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, in which He favoured us in the One having been loved (His Beloved Son), in whom we have redemption (our sins paid for) through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace, which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and understanding, making known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the administration of the fullness of the times, unite things in Christ, both things in the heavens, and things upon the earth, in Him.”

God’s children are chosen by God; however, we are given the choice of whether we want to belong to Him and be in His family, or whether we want to be independent of Him and not be in His family. As children of a natural family can choose whether they want to remain connected to their parent’s and other family members, the children of God have the choice of whether they want to remain connected to God and His family members.

When we are born into a natural family, we are automatically connected to the family unit, but we can choose whether we want to remain connected to the family when we are old enough to decide for ourselves. It is the same with the children of God.

When we are born, we belong to God; however, He gives us the choice of remaining with Him and His family. He does this by our being adopted into His family when we are born from above with the Holy Spirit, and by obeying the laws He has put in place:

‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.’

“If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. So then, brothers, we are under obligation; not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh (not doing what our sinful nature urges us to do). For if you live according to the flesh (doing what your sinful nature urges you to do) you will die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body (put the sinful nature to death), you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God; and if children, also heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer together with Him, that we may also be glorified together with Him. For I consider that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed in us.

For the earnest expectation of the creation is eagerly waiting for the revelation (revealing) of the sons of God.”

‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’

In the Old Testament, the prophet Jeremiah was instructed by God to go to a potter’s house to watch the potter make a lump of clay into a vessel. As Jeremiah observed, the clay became spoiled in the potter’s hands, so he made it into another vessel as he thought right in his eyes to do so:

“The Word which came to Jeremiah from Jehovah (the Lord), saying, ‘Rise up and go down to the potter’s house, and there

I will cause you to hear My words.’ So I went down to the potter’s house, and there he was, working at his wheel. And the vessel that he was making of clay was ruined in the hand of the potter; and returning, he made it into another vessel, as seemed good in the potter’s eyes to make it. And the Word of Jehovah (the Lord) came to me, saying, ‘O house of Israel, am I not able to do to you as this potter has done? declares Jehovah (the Lord). Behold, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are you in My hand,

O house of Israel. The moment I speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to break down, or to destroy; if that nation against which I have spoken will turn from their evil,

I will relent of (turn from) the evil that I thought to do to it.

And the moment I speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom, to build, and to plant it; if it does evil in My sight, and does not obey My voice, then I will relent of (turn from) the good that I had intended to do to it. Now, then, speak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, ‘Thus says Jehovah (the Lord), Behold, I am forming evil against you, and devising a plan against you. Return now, every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good.’ ”

God revealed to Jeremiah that just as a potter moulds his clay to make whatever he wants, it is the same with God; He is the potter, and nations, and kingdoms, and His people, are the clay. God instructed Jeremiah to tell the men of Judah, and the people of Jerusalem, that He is the potter, and they are clay in His hands.

He wanted His people to know that His will be done. He can bring nations and kingdoms down, and He can build them up, however He pleases. He can also change His will depending on how people respond to His instructions; whether they will obey His commands, or whether they refuse to obey His commands.

The potter ultimately decided the shape of the clay that he was going to make. He wanted to make a vessel, but it became spoiled in the potter's hand, and was ruined. So he decided to change what he originally intended to make and made another vessel.

When the clay would not be moulded in the potter's hands as he had originally intended, he made the clay into another vessel of his choosing. It is the same with God; He has the best intentions for us and wants to mould us. However, if we don't co-operate with Him, and allow Him to mould us, He will change His mind from moulding us into what He has intended, and make us into something entirely different.

If we refuse to submit to God, and don't allow ourselves to be moulded in His hands, and transformed into His likeness, He will change His mind, and His will, towards us. God chooses the clay and makes us into what He wants us to be; holy, as He is holy. However, He requires our co-operation, giving us the choice to surrender ourselves to Him, and be moulded in His hands.

God will always have His way according to whatever He wills, which means He can change His mind, whenever, and however, He wants. He has the power to do whatever He wants, and gives us the choice to respond to Him; either rightly, or wrongly.

When we respond to Him rightly, He brings us into a fulfilling relationship with Him, and we can enjoy all of His goodness. However, if we respond to Him wrongly, He will turn away from the goodness He has intended for us, and make us be subjected to His judgment and wrath. It is His choosing, as well as our choice.

God chooses, but also gives us choices, and we will be judged according to the choices that we make. Whilst God is all powerful and can do anything that He wills, He can be relied upon to act according to His perfect integrity. He is very personal and wants an interactive relationship with His children, so that He can relate to us, and we can relate to Him. This makes our relationship with God dynamic, and not static, as if everything is pre-determined.

God wants us to know Him, so that we may have eternal life with Him. This is why it is critically important to relate to God, recognise His voice, respond to Him rightly, and obey His Word.

In the Old Testament, Israel's redemption brought them great rewards if they obeyed God. However, their refusal to obey God brought them great retribution. Since God chose Israel out of all the nations on the earth to be His chosen people, He punished them more severely when they were rebellious and disobedient.

The conditions of the covenant that God made with His people at Mount Sinai were divine blessings for obedience, and divine curses for disobedience, which the people voluntarily accepted. Israel had the prospect of being blessed more than all the other nations, or to be cursed more than all the other nations. It is a law of God that was relevant to the Israelites in the Old Testament, and is just as relevant to us in the New Testament:

‘Everyone to whom much was given, much will be demanded from him; and to whom much was deposited, more abundantly they will ask of him.’

Extra privileges bring about more responsibility which requires greater obedience. This principle runs through the Old Testament and right throughout the New Testament. As members of God's family, whether it be the children of Israel in the Old Testament, or children of the body of Christ in the New Testament, we must obey God's commands, because He must stay true to His Word. Whomever has been given much will be dealt with more severely if God's commands are not obeyed. He will be true to His Word, and true to His will, and will hold us responsible for our choices:

‘That servant, who knew the will of his lord, and did not prepare, nor do according to his will, will be beaten with many stripes.

But he, who did not know, and did things worthy of stripes, will be beaten with few.’

Jesus tells us that He will lose none of those whom the Father has given Him; and all whom the Father has given Him will acknowledge Him, and believe into Him. He tells us that no one can come to the Father unless He draws them to Himself:

‘All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I shall not lose any of it, but shall raise it up in the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone beholding (acknowledging) the Son, and believing into Him, may have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.’

‘No one is able to come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.’

‘I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life.  
No one comes to the Father except through Me.’

‘No one is able to come to Me unless it is  
given to him from My Father.’

The Father chooses to draw us to Himself. However, He also gives us the choice to draw close to Him, and remain in Him:

‘I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.  
Every branch in Me not bearing fruit, He takes away;  
and every branch bearing fruit, He prunes, so that it may  
bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the Word  
which I have spoken to you. Remain in Me, and I in you.  
As the branch is not able to bear fruit of itself, unless it  
remains in the vine, neither can you, unless you remain  
in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. He who  
remains in Me, and I in him, this one bears much fruit;  
because apart from Me, you are not able to do anything.  
If anyone does not remain in Me, he is cast (thrown) out  
as a branch and is withered (dried up); and they gather them  
and cast (throw) them into the fire, and they are burned.

If you remain in Me, and My words remain in you, you will ask  
whatever you desire, and it will be done for you. In this  
My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit,  
and you will be My disciples.’

God has chosen to give His children the choice of eternal life with Him, or eternal death without Him. His Word tells us what He expects of His children. The choice is ours.

Throughout the Bible we see instances where God:

- commands His sovereign will.
- demands His will over our will.
- allows our will to change His will.
- lets us choose His will or our will.
- gives us our own free will.

### **God Commands His Sovereign Will**

When Jesus ministered to those in need, He used His sovereign will to heal whoever He wanted:

“There is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which in Hebrew is called Bethesda, having five porches (covered areas protected from the weather). In these were lying a great multitude of the weak, blind, lame, withered, waiting for the stirring of the water. For an angel at a certain time descended into the pool and agitated (moved) the water. Then the first one entering, after the agitation (moving) of the water, became well of whatever disease held him.

And there was a certain man there being in infirmity (weakness) thirty-eight years. Jesus, seeing him lying there, and knowing that he had been lying there a long time, said to him, ‘Do you desire to become whole (well)?’ The weak man answered him, ‘Lord, I have no man, when the water is agitated (moved), to put me into the pool; but while I am coming, another goes down before me.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Rise, take up your mattress (bed) and walk.’ And immediately the man became whole (well), took up his mattress (bed), and walked.

It was a Sabbath (day of rest) that day. Therefore, the Jews said to him having been healed, ‘It is a Sabbath (day of rest); it is not lawful for you to take up your mattress (bed).’ He answered them, ‘He who made me whole (well), that one said to me, ‘Take up your mattress (bed) and walk.’’ They asked him, ‘Who is the man saying to you, ‘Take up your mattress (bed) and walk’?’ But the one healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, a multitude being in the place.

After these things, Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, ‘Behold, you have become whole (well); sin no more lest something worse may happen to you.’”

### **God Demands His Will Over Our Will**

When the apostles and prophets throughout the Bible were chosen by God, He gave them no choice but to do what He willed for them to do. God’s sovereign will overpowered their free will. In some instances they offered excuses; like Moses and Jeremiah. Other times they tried to avoid God; like Jonah, who ran away from God to avoid doing what He wanted him to do. However, all of them, one way or another, ended up doing what God willed and intended them to do, according to His purposes and plans:

“The Word of Jehovah (the Lord) came to Jonah, the son of Amittai, saying, ‘Arise, go to Nineveh, the great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me.’ But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of Jehovah (the Lord). He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; and he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of Jehovah (the Lord).

But Jehovah (the Lord) hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest (storm) on the sea, so that the ship was thought to be breaking up. Then the mariners (sailors) were afraid; and every man cried out to his god, and threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship, had lain down, and was sound asleep. So the captain came to him, and said to him, 'What is it to you, O sleeper? Arise, call on your God; perhaps your God will consider us, so that we may not perish.'

And they said to one another, 'Come, let us cast lots (stones), that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us.'

So they cast lots (stones), and the lot (stone) fell upon Jonah.

Then they said to him, 'Please tell us, on account of whom has this evil come upon us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?' And he said to them, 'I am a Hebrew; and I fear Jehovah (the Lord), the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.'

Then the men were terrified with fear, and said to him, 'What is this that you have done?' For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of Jehovah (the Lord), because he had

told them. Then they said to him, 'What shall we do to you, that the sea may be calm for us?' For the sea was growing more and more tempestuous (stormy). And he said to them, 'Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you. For I know that this great tempest (storm) that has come upon you is on account of me.' Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to get back to dry land, but they were not able, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous (stormy) against them. And they cried out to Jehovah (the Lord), and said, 'We pray, O Jehovah (Lord), please do not let us perish for this man's life,

and do not lay on us innocent blood; for You, O Jehovah (Lord), have done as it pleased You.' So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared Jehovah (the Lord) with great fear, and offered a sacrifice to Jehovah (the Lord) and made vows.

And Jehovah (the Lord) appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. Then Jonah prayed to Jehovah (the Lord) his God from the belly of the fish, saying, 'I cried out to Jehovah (the Lord) because of my distress, and He answered me. Out of the belly of Sheol (hell) I cried, and You heard my voice. For You cast (threw) me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me; all Your waves and Your billows (breakers) passed over me. And I said, 'I have been cast (thrown) out of Your sight; yet I will look again toward Your holy temple.' The waters encompassed (closed in on) me, even to my soul; the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped around my head. I went down to the bases of the mountains; the earth, with her bars, closed behind me forever; yet, You brought up my life from the pit, O Jehovah (Lord,) my God. When my soul fainted within me, I remembered Jehovah (the Lord); and my prayer came to You, into Your holy temple. Those who regard (cling to) vain (worthless) idols forsake their own mercy (faithfulness). But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving; I will fulfill that which I have vowed. Salvation is of Jehovah (the Lord).'

And Jehovah (the Lord) spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land. Then the Word of Jehovah (the Lord) came to Jonah the second time, saying, 'Arise, go to Nineveh, the great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you.' "

## **God Allows Our Will to Change His Will**

Jesus allowed the faith of someone to change His will:

“A Canaanite woman came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, ‘Have pity (mercy) on me Lord, Son of David.

My daughter is severely demon-possessed.’ But He did not answer her a word. And His disciples came to Him, and urged Him, saying, ‘Send her away, for she cries out after us.’ But He answered and said, ‘I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’ But she came and worshiped (bowed before) Him, saying, ‘Lord, help me!’ But He answered and said, ‘It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs.’ But she said, ‘Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their master’s table.’ Then Jesus answered and said to her, ‘O woman, great is your faith; let it be to you as you desire.’ And her daughter was healed from that hour.”

God also allows people to change His mind after He has spoken forth His will. In the Old Testament, God wanted to destroy the Israelites for disobeying Him. He wanted to destroy them all, except for Moses. However, Moses pleaded with God and asked Him not to destroy His people:

“Jehovah (the Lord) said to Moses, ‘Go down (from this mountain); for your people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. They have quickly turned away from what I have commanded them. They have made for themselves a golden calf, and have worshiped (bowed before) it, and have sacrificed to it, saying, ‘These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!’

And Jehovah (the Lord) said to Moses, 'I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked (stubborn and rebellious) people. Now leave Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them, and I may finish them, and I will make you a great nation.'

But Moses pleaded with Jehovah (the Lord) his God, and said, 'Jehovah (Lord), why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people, whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, 'For evil, He brought them out to kill them in the mountains, and to finish them from the face of the earth'? Turn from Your fierce anger and relent (change Your mind) from this evil against Your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Yourself, saying to them, 'I will multiply your seed (descendants) as the stars of the heavens; and all this land which I have spoken, I will give to your seed (descendants), and they shall inherit it forever.'

And Jehovah (the Lord) relented (changed His mind) from the evil which He said He would do to His people."

Just as children have the ability to change their parent's mind, God's children have the ability to change His mind. This makes our relationship with Him interesting and incredibly wonderful.

In many ways, it is no different to a child pleading and reasoning with their parent's to change their mind about a decision their parent's have made concerning them. Often, a child can change the mind of their parent's, especially if they have been obedient.

Just as parents consider the pleading and reasoning requests of their children, urging them to change their mind, it is no different with God. He hears our heartfelt pleading and reasoning prayers, and considers all of our urgent requests; even to change His mind. He can, and does, change His mind as He wills, which is amazing.

## **God Lets Us Choose His Will or Our Will**

The children of Israel were given the choice of doing God's will, or doing their own will. There were blessings for obedience, and curses for disobedience:

"If you will surely listen to (obey) the voice of Jehovah (the Lord) your God, being careful to obey all His commandments which I command you today, Jehovah (the Lord) your God will set you high above all nations of the earth.

And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of Jehovah (the Lord) your God: Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country. Blessed shall be the fruit of your womb, the produce of your land, and the increase of your herds; the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks. Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.

Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out. Jehovah (the Lord) will cause your enemies, who rise up against you, to be defeated before your face. They shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways. Jehovah (the Lord) will command the blessing on you in your storehouses and in all to which you set your hands, and He will bless you in the land which Jehovah (the Lord) your God is giving you.

Jehovah (the Lord) will establish you as a holy people to Himself, as He has sworn to you, if you keep the commands of Jehovah (the Lord) your God and walk in His ways.

And all the peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of Jehovah (the Lord), and they shall be afraid of you.

And Jehovah (the Lord) will make you abound in prosperity, in the fruit of your womb, in the fruit of your livestock, and in the fruit of your ground, in the land which Jehovah (the Lord) swore to your fathers to give you.

Jehovah (the Lord) will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hands. You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. And Jehovah (the Lord) will make you the head and not the tail. And you shall be only above, and not be beneath, if you hear the commands of Jehovah (the Lord) your God, which I command you today, and be careful to do them. You shall not turn aside from any of the words which I command you this day, to the right or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.

And it shall be, if you will not listen to (obey) the voice of Jehovah (the Lord) your God, to be careful to do all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you: Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the country. Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. Cursed shall be the fruit of your womb, the produce of your land, the increase of your cattle, and the offspring of your flocks. Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out. Jehovah (the Lord) will send on you curses, trouble, and rebuke, in all that you set your hands to do, until you are destroyed and perish quickly, because of the evil of your doings in which you have forsaken Me.

Jehovah (the Lord) will make the plague cling to you until He has finished you from the land which you are going to possess. Jehovah (the Lord) will strike you with consumption (disease in the lungs), and with fever, and with inflammation, and with severe burning, and with the sword, and with blasting (scorching drought), and with mildew (plant disease). They shall pursue you, until you perish. And the heavens over your head shall be bronze, and the earth under you shall be iron. Jehovah (the Lord) will make the rain of your land dust and ashes; from the heavens it shall come down on you until you are destroyed.

Jehovah (the Lord) will cause you to be defeated before your enemies; you shall go out one way against them and flee seven ways before them. And you shall be a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth. Your carcasses shall be food for all the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and no one shall frighten them away.

Jehovah (the Lord) will strike you with the boils of Egypt, and with tumours, and with the scab, and with itch, from which you cannot be healed. Jehovah (the Lord) will strike you with madness, and blindness, and confusion of mind; and you shall grope at noonday, as the blind grope in the darkness. You shall not prosper in your ways; you shall be only oppressed and plundered all the days, and no one shall save you.

You shall betroth a wife (give away your daughter to be married), but another man shall lie with her. You shall build a house, but you shall not dwell in it. You shall plant a vineyard, but you shall not use its fruit. Your ox shall be slaughtered before your eyes, but you shall not eat of it. Your donkey shall be violently seized from you, and shall not be restored to you.

Your sheep shall be given to your enemies, and there shall be no one to help you. Your sons and your daughters shall be given to another people, and your eyes shall look and fail with longing for them all day long; and no power shall be in your hand.

A nation whom you have not known shall eat the fruit of your land and the produce of your labour, and you shall be only oppressed and crushed all the days; so you shall be driven mad by the sight which your eyes see. Jehovah (the Lord) will strike you on the knees and on the legs with severe boils which cannot be healed, from the sole of your foot to the top of your head.

Jehovah (the Lord) will bring you, and your king whom you set over you, to a nation which neither you nor your fathers have known; and there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone. And you shall become a horror, a proverb, and a byword, among all the peoples where Jehovah (the Lord) will drive you. You shall carry much seed out to the field, but gather little in, for the locust shall consume it. You shall plant vineyards and tend to them, but you shall neither drink of the wine nor gather the grapes, for the worm shall eat them.

You shall have olive trees throughout all your territory, but you shall not anoint yourself with the oil, for your olives shall fall off. You shall beget sons and daughters, but they shall not be yours, for they shall go into captivity. Locusts shall consume all your trees and the produce of your land. The foreigner who is among you shall rise higher and higher above you, and you shall come down lower and lower. He shall lend to you, but you shall not lend to him. He shall be the head, and you shall be the tail.

All these curses shall come upon you, and pursue you, and overtake you, until you are destroyed, because you did not obey the voice of Jehovah (the Lord) your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which He commanded you.

They shall be upon you as a sign and a wonder, and upon your descendants forever. Because you did not serve Jehovah (the Lord) your God with joyfulness and gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore, you shall serve your enemies, whom Jehovah (the Lord) will send against you, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in lack of all things.

And He will put a yoke of iron on your neck, until He has destroyed you. Jehovah (the Lord) will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flies; a nation whose language you will not understand, a nation of fierce countenance (appearance), which does not respect the elderly, nor show favour to the young. And they shall eat the offspring of your livestock and the produce of your land, until you are destroyed. They shall not leave you grain, or new wine, or oil, or the increase of your cattle, or the offspring of your flocks, until they have destroyed you. They shall lay siege to you at all your gates, until your high and fortified walls, in which you trust, come down throughout all your land; and they shall lay siege to you at all your gates throughout all your land which Jehovah (the Lord) your God has given you.

You shall eat the offspring of your own body, the flesh of your sons and your daughters, whom Jehovah (the Lord) your God has given you, in the siege and in the distress, which your enemy shall oppress you. The man who is tender and refined among you will be hostile toward his brother, toward the wife of his bosom, and toward the last of his children whom he has left, so that he will not give any of them the flesh of his children whom he will eat, because he has nothing left in the siege and in the distress, which your enemy shall oppress you at all your gates.

The tender and delicate woman among you, who would not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground because of her delicateness and tenderness, will be hostile to the husband of her bosom, and to her son and to her daughter, and her afterbirth which comes out from between her feet, and her children whom she bears; for she will eat them secretly, for the lack of all things in the siege and in the distress, which your enemy shall oppress you at all your gates.

If you are not careful to do all the words of this law which are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, Jehovah (the Lord) your God, then Jehovah (the Lord) will bring upon you and your descendants extraordinary plagues; severe and longlasting plagues, and evil and longlasting sicknesses.

He shall also bring upon you all the diseases of Egypt, of which you were afraid, and they shall cling to you. Also every sickness and every plague, which is not written in this book of the law, Jehovah (the Lord) will bring upon you, until you are destroyed. You shall be left few in number; whereas, you were as the stars of the heavens in multitude, because you would not obey the voice of Jehovah (the Lord) your God. And it shall be, as Jehovah (the Lord) rejoiced over you to do you good and multiply you, so Jehovah (the Lord) will rejoice over you to destroy you and lay you to waste; and you shall be plucked from the land which you go to possess. And Jehovah (the Lord) will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other; and there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your fathers have known. And among those nations you shall find no rest, nor shall the sole of your foot have a resting place; but there Jehovah (the Lord) will give you a trembling heart, failing eyes, and grief of soul.

Your life shall hang in doubt before you; you shall fear day and night, and have no assurance of your life. In the morning you shall say, ‘Oh, that it were evening!’ And at evening you shall say, ‘Oh, that it were morning!’ because of the fear which terrifies your heart, and because of the sight which your eyes shall see. And Jehovah (the Lord) will bring you back to Egypt in ships, by the way of which I said to you, ‘You shall never see it again.’ And there you shall offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but no one will buy you.

These are the words of the covenant which Jehovah (the Lord) commanded Moses to make with the sons of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant He had made with them in Horeb.”

Israel was later given the choice of who they wanted to rule them:

“It came to pass when Samuel was old that he made his sons judges over Israel. The name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beersheba.

Yet his sons did not walk in his ways, but turned aside after dishonest gain, took bribes, and perverted justice. Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, and said to him, ‘Behold, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king, to judge us, like all the nations.’ But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, ‘Give us a king to judge us.’ And Samuel prayed to Jehovah (the Lord). And Jehovah (the Lord) said to Samuel, ‘Listen to the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from reigning over them. According to all the works which they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt,

even to this day, forsaking Me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you. Now then, listen to their voice. Only you shall solemnly warn them, and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them.' So Samuel told all the words of Jehovah (the Lord) to the people who were asking for a king. And he said,

'These will be the ways of the king who shall reign over you: He will take your sons and appoint them for himself among his chariots, and to be his horsemen, and to run before his chariots. And he will appoint for himself commanders over thousands and commanders over fifties, and some to plough his ground and reap his harvest, and some to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots.

He will take your daughters to be perfumers, cooks, and bakers. And he will take the best of your fields, your vineyards, and your olive groves, and give them to his servants. He will take the tithe (a tenth) of your grain and your vineyards, and give it to his officers and to his servants. He will take your male servants, your female servants, the best of your young men, and your donkeys, and use them for his own work. He will take the tithe (a tenth) of your sheep, and you will be his servants. And you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, but Jehovah (the Lord) will not answer you in that day.' But the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel; and they said, 'No, but we will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.' And when Samuel heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the ears of Jehovah (the Lord). And Jehovah (the Lord) said to Samuel,

'Listen to their voice and make them a king.' And Samuel said to the men of Israel, 'Every man go to his city.' "

The Israelites were given a choice to do God's will to be blessed, or do their own will and be cursed. Likewise, God gives a choice to do His will to have eternal life, or reject His will and perish:

‘For God so loved the world that He gave His  
only Son, that everyone believing into Him  
may not perish, but have eternal life.’

God's way is not easy; however, it is the only way to eternal life:

‘Enter through the narrow gate, because wide is the gate,  
and broad (easy) is the way leading to destruction, and  
many are those going in through it; because narrow  
is the gate and troublesome (difficult) is the way  
leading to life, and few are those finding it.’

Jesus had the greatest difficulty doing and fulfilling God's will. He lived His life perfectly without sin, and yet had to be tortured, and crucified to death, for our sins:

‘My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.  
Yet, not as I will, but as You will.’

Jesus committed Himself to fulfilling the Father's will to save us from eternal condemnation. However, He also had the authority to exercise His own free will, if He had wanted to do so:

‘Do you think that I am not able now to call upon My Father,  
and He will place beside Me more than twelve legions of angels?  
How then should the Scriptures (Old Testament)  
be fulfilled, that it must be this way?’

## **God Gives Us Our Own Free Will**

Jesus healed those who, through their own faith, exercised their own free will:

“Behold, a woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His garment; for she said to herself, ‘If I only touch His garment, I will be made well.’ But Jesus turned around, and seeing her, He said, ‘Rejoice daughter, your faith has saved you (made you well).’ And the woman was saved (made well) from that hour.”

There were times when Jesus would have healed the people, but was limited because of their lack of faith:

“Coming to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, ‘Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works? Is this not the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers, James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where did this man get all these things?’ And they were offended by Him. But Jesus said to them, ‘A prophet is not without honour except in his own country and in his own house.’ And He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.”

God gives us our own free will, and we can change His will, which means there is great diversity for Him to do as He chooses, as well as considering and allowing for our choices.

Everything we do matters to God. Our thoughts, our emotions, our attitudes, our intentions, our words, our actions, our needs, and our desires, all matter to Him.

God wants us to be involved with Him, which means He wants our input. He wants us working together with Him in fulfilling His will and purpose for the future of His creation. This is why God created relationships, so that His created people could relate to Him in love, and relate to one another in love, and work towards a desired outcome; our present and future well-being.

God reveals His will to us, so we know what we need to do. The Word of God is given to encourage us to believe into God; seeking Him, understanding Him, knowing Him, following Him, practicing righteousness, being holy, being joyful, standing firm, enduring suffering, being at peace, being refined, finding rest, fulfilling His will, and being fully prepared in readiness for our future with Him in His eternal kingdom.

The other reason why God reveals His will to us is to warn those who won't believe into Him; those who are self-dependent, self-centred, and self-righteous, that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven. God's will is an offer and a demand. What God has done for us, and what we can do for Him, are both part of His eternal purposes, and both are to be given priority in our lives:

“Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast (firm in purpose), unmoveable, abounding in the work of the Lord at all times, knowing that your labour is not empty (fruitless) in the Lord.”

We serve God knowing that eternity with Him will be glorious:

‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will set you over many.  
Enter into the joy of your lord.’

## **Being a Member of the Body of Christ**

We become a member of God's family when we believe in Jesus. Salvation is an ongoing process, not an instantaneous event. It is work on God's part, and work on our part. The journey of faith commencing from our separation apart from God, to when we are united with Him for eternity, may be summarised as follows:

**REBELLION** – Independence from God; sinning in word, thought, and deed, against God.

**RETRIBUTION** – Punishment caused by the consequences of sinning against God.

**REPENTANCE** – Turning from our independence from God, to dependence upon God.

**RELATIONSHIP** – Building a close bond with Abba, our Father, His Son, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

**RENEWAL** – Turning away (repenting) from sin, with the help of the Holy Spirit.

**RESTORATION** – Progressing into God's purposes and plans; knowing and doing His will.

**RIGHTEOUSNESS** – Obeying God's Word, and fulfilling His will; becoming holy, as He is holy.

**REWARDS** – Eternal blessings from the Father as we fulfill His will and purpose for our lives.

Rebellion against God, and retribution for sinning against God, requires genuine heartfelt repentance of turning toward God, building a relationship with Him; and with His help, turning away from sin. This is an ongoing process as God restores us to Himself and reveals His will; the purpose and plans He has for our lives; and with our total commitment, helps us to obey His Word, fulfill His will, and become holy, as He is holy. This guarantees blessings and rewards from our Father for all eternity.

In a family, each and every family member has certain rights, responsibilities, and rewards, as each member is entitled to a family inheritance. It is the same with God's family. As a member of the body of Christ, all of us have certain rights, responsibilities, and rewards, as an eternal inheritance from our Father.

### **Rights of Being a Member of the Body of Christ**

In God's family every family member has God-given rights:

- Having God's Word, the Holy Bible, as our living standard.
- Having a relationship with God that is purposeful and fulfilling.
- Having God available anytime, on a moment-by-moment basis.
- Having God's pardon, peace, protection, provision, and power.
- Having special talents, abilities, and gifts, unique to anyone else.
- Having a specific role in the body of Christ that no one else has.
- Having the help of the Holy Spirit in everything that we do.

## **Responsibility of Being a Member of the Body of Christ**

In God's family every member has God-given responsibilities:

- Obeying God's Word, the Holy Bible, as our living standard.
- Building a purposeful and fulfilling relationship with God.
- Seeking God on a day-by-day, moment-by-moment basis.
- Asking for God's peace, protection, provision, and power.
- Using the special talents, abilities, and gifts, we have been given.
- Fulfilling our role in the body of Christ according to God's will.
- Co-operating with the Holy Spirit in everything that we do.

## **Rewards of Being a Member of the Body of Christ**

In God's family every family member has God-given rewards:

**‘If you remain in Me, and My words remain in you,  
you will ask whatever you desire, and it will be done for you.’**

**‘As the Father loved Me, I also loved you; remain in My love.  
If you keep My commandments, you will remain in My love,  
as I kept My Father’s commandments, and remain in His love.  
These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain  
in you, and your joy may be full. This is My commandment,  
that you love one another as I have loved you.’**

Jesus wants us to obey His commands, so that we may receive an eternal inheritance, just as He obeyed the Father's commands, and inherited the riches of the kingdom:

“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive the power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing.”

“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God; and if children, also heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer together with Him, that we may also be glorified together with Him.”

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the One, according to His great mercy, having regenerated us (given us a rebirth) to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible (will never perish), undefiled (pure), and unfading, having been kept in the heavens for you, who by God's power are being guarded, through faith, to a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, grieving in manifold (various) trials, that the proving (trustworthiness) of your faith, being much more precious than perishing gold, having been proved (tested) through fire, may be found to praise, and honour, and glory, at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom not having seen, you love; in whom not yet seeing, but believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable (inexpressible); and having been glorified, obtaining the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”

“He who does the will of God abides forever.”

‘The one overcoming shall inherit all things,’

‘I will give him authority over the nations.’

“And they will reign forever and ever.”

Just as children have certain rights, as they grow into adults, they have responsibilities; and with responsibility comes rewards. It is the same in God’s family. As we grow from little children, into being responsible sons and daughters, and mature fathers and mothers in the Spirit, we are given greater responsibilities and are rewarded according to how faithful we have been. If we use all our God-given rights, we will be able to fulfill all our God-given responsibilities, and obtain all of our God-given rewards:

“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, for you to know the hope of His calling, and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us; the ones believing, according to the working of the might of the strength of Him, which He worked in Christ, raising Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and lordship, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the coming one.

And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him filling all things with all things.”

“Christ is head of the church; and He is Saviour of the body.”

## Unity in the Body of Christ

On the night before Jesus was tortured to death, He prayed:

‘That all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in you; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You have given Me, I have given them, that they may be one as We are one; I in them, and You in Me; that they may be perfected into one, and that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You loved Me.’

God wills ‘that all may be one,’:

“For, even as the body is one and has many members, all the members of the one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptised into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, all were given to drink in one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot says, ‘Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,’ does that make it any less a part of the body? And if the ear says, ‘Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,’ does that make it any less a part of the body?  
If all the body was an eye, where the hearing?  
If all hearing, where the smelling?

But now God set the members, each one of them, in the body, as He desired. If all were one member, where would the body be? Now, indeed, many are the members, but one body. The eye is not able to say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you,’ or again, the head say to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’

But much more the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those of the body we think to be less honourable, around these we put more abundant honour. And our unpresentable members are given greater modesty, which our more presentable members do not need.

God has blended the body together, giving greater honour to the member lacking it, that there be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.

If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it.

If one member is glorified, all the members rejoice with it. You are the body of Christ, and (individual) members in part.”

God wills ‘that they also may be one in Us,’:

“You are no longer strangers and foreigners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets; Jesus Christ Himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole building, fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”

God wills ‘that they may be one as We are one;’:

“Walk worthily of the calling with which you were called, with all humility and gentleness, with long-suffering, bearing with one another in love, eager to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father, who is over all, and through all, and in you all.”

God wills ‘that they may be perfected into one,’:

“That He might sanctify it (make it holy), cleansing it by the washing of the water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself as the glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such things, but that it be holy and unblemished (perfect).”

“God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.”

“He gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, some as pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints for the work of service, for the building up of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a complete (perfect) man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; so that we may no longer be infants, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight (trickery) of men, in the cunning and craftiness of deceitful plotting, but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all respects, who is the head; Christ, from whom the whole body, having been fitted and joined together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”

“And may the God of perseverance (patient endurance) and encouragement give to you to have the same mind among one another, according to Christ Jesus; that with one accord (together) with one mouth, you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

It is God's will for His church to be one; for His church to be one in Him; for His church to be one as He is one; and for His church to be made perfect into one. Unity and perfection is God's will, so it should be the will of every christian; to obey Jesus' greatest commandments, and fulfill His will for His church:

“ ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment.

And the second, like it, is this:

‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’  
There is no other commandment greater than these.”

“For as we have many members in one body, and all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members, each one of one another.”

When we pursue unity with God, and unity with one another, we are in His will, and in His love, and we produce the fruit of the Spirit. When we produce the fruit of the Spirit, we move in the power of the Spirit. When we move in the fruit of the Spirit, and the power of the Spirit, we live in fullness of the love of God, and will have the fullness of love for one another. Unity with God comes through loving God, and loving one another. If we truly love God, we will truly love one another. If we love one another, we will serve one another, esteem others higher than ourselves, and look to one another's interests, as well as our own interests:

“Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility, consider others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”

‘Whoever compels (urges) you to go one mile, go with him two.  
Give to him who asks from you, and do not turn away  
from him who wants to borrow from you.’

Unity with God, and unity with one another, has no place for self-centredness. Self-serving, selfishness, and pride, breaks unity. When we care for one another more than we care for ourselves, we become fully united with God:

‘For even the Son of Man did not come to be served,  
but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.’

Salvation is the responsibility of every person:

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,”

Ministering salvation is the responsibility of the church to the people under its care, through teaching, and preserving the truth of God’s Word, and avoiding divisions:

“I urge you, brethren, take note of those who cause divisions and stumbling blocks, contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them. For such people do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by smooth words, and flattering speech, they deceive the hearts of the innocent.”

We are encouraged to read and study the Word of God ourselves:

“They received the Word with all readiness of mind (great eagerness), examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.”

We are instructed to be united in purpose and action:

“Now I urge you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all say the same thing, and there not be divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and in the same judgment (opinion and purpose).”

The Bible warns of the threat for unity in the body of Christ coming from division within the body:

“Beloved, with all eagerness to write to you concerning our common salvation, I had the necessity to write to you exhorting (urging) you to earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints.

For certain men crept in unnoticed; long ago being marked out for this judgment (condemnation), ungodly ones perverting the grace of God into licentiousness (uncontrollable lust), and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

But I want to remind you, you once knowing these things, that the Lord having saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those not believing.

And the angels who did not keep their beginning, but deserted their dwelling place, He has kept in eternal chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day; as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them, in like manner to these, committing fornication (sexual immorality) and having gone away after different flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the judgment (vengeance) of eternal fire.

In the same manner, these dreaming ones also defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of glories. Yet when Michael, the archangel, in contending with the Devil, disputing about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!'

But these speak evil of things that they do not understand; and things they understand naturally, like animals without reason, in these they corrupt themselves. Woe (grief) to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, and gave themselves up to the deceit of Balaam for reward, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. These are rocky reefs in your love feasts, feasting together with you without fear, tending only for themselves; waterless clouds, carried about by the winds; fruitless autumn trees, twice dead, having been uprooted; wild waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom the gloom of darkness has been reserved forever.

It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh (generation) from Adam, prophesied, saying, 'Behold, the Lord comes with myriads (ten thousands) of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.' These are murmurers, complainers, following their own lusts; and their mouth speaks boasting words, flattering people to gain advantage.

But you, beloved, remember the words spoken before by the apostles of the Lord of us, Jesus Christ, because they told you, that at the last time there will be mockers (false teachers) according to their own lusts, going after ungodliness.

These are ones separating themselves apart,  
worldly people, not having the Spirit.

But you, beloved, building yourselves up by your most holy faith,  
praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God,  
awaiting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.

And pity some, making distinction (clearly separating them).

But save others with fear, seizing them out of the fire,  
hating even the garment having been stained from the flesh.”

Jesus was persecuted by His own people, and even more by the religious leaders, who were supposed to be God’s representatives to the people, but were deceiving them:

“Jesus said to them, ‘If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God;  
for I have not come of Myself, but He sent Me.

Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to hear My Word. You are of your father the Devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own, for he (the Devil) is a liar and the father of it.

But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me.  
Which of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak the truth,  
why do you not believe Me? He who is of God  
hears the words of God; for this reason you  
do not hear, because you are not of God.’ ”

“The pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having come from Jerusalem. And they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled hands, that is, unwashed, and found fault. For the pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they wash their hands with the fist, holding the tradition of the elders; and when they come from the market place, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received to hold, such as the washing of cups, and utensils, and bronze vessels, and couches. And the pharisees and scribes questioned Him, ‘Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?’ He answered and said to them, ‘Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: ‘This people honours Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me; and in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’ You leave the commandment of God, and hold to the tradition of men, washing of utensils and cups; and many other such things you do.’ And He said to them, ‘You do well in setting aside the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. For Moses said, ‘Honour your father and your mother’; and, ‘He who speaks evil of father or mother, let him be put to death.’ But you say, ‘If a man says to his father or mother, ‘Whatever I have that would help you is Corban (a gift given to God)’ , then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother, making the Word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do.’ And He called all the multitude to Himself, and said to them, ‘Hear Me, all of you, and understand. There is nothing outside a man which by going into him can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.’ ”

Jesus warns us of persecution because of Him and His Word:

‘If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world; therefore, the world hates you. Remember the Word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My Word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you because of My name, because they do not know Him who sent Me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates Me, hates My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have seen and hated both Me and My Father.

But that the Word may be fulfilled, which is written in their law, ‘They hated Me without a cause.’ ’

‘As the Father loved Me, I also loved you; remain in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will remain in My love, as I kept My Father’s commandments, and remain in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and your joy may be full. This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

Greater love than this has no one, that anyone should lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his lord does; but I have called you friends, because all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.

You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He may give to you. These things I command you, that you love one another.'

'Truly, truly, I say to you, the one who hears My Word, and believing the One who has sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.'

"The one believing into the Son has eternal life; but the one disobeying the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him."

'I am the light of the world. The one following Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'

Members of God's family who rebel against the family values contained in His Word will be at risk of losing their inheritance, and losing their position in God's family itself. Parent's love their children, even when they choose to rebel against them, and refuse to obey them, demanding to do their own will. However, if any child does not want to be a part of the family, or does not want to obey what their parent's command, it is their own choice; and as much as it may grieve their parent's, and other family members, they cannot be made to do what they do not want to do. They can only be given the love and encouragement to be a part of the family, co-operate with obedience to the family values, contribute to the well-being of the family, and enjoy the fruit of their labour.

It is the same within God's family. He wants us to be connected together with Him, remain connected to Him and other members of the body of Christ, and obey His values contained in His Word, contribute to the well-being of the body of Christ, enjoy the fruit of our labour, and share in His eternal kingdom riches:

‘Remain in Me, and I in you. As the branch is not able to bear fruit of itself, unless it remains in the vine, neither can you, unless you remain in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. He who remains in Me, and I in him, this one bears much fruit; because apart from Me, you are not able to do anything.

If anyone does not remain in Me, he is cast (thrown) out as a branch and is withered (dried up); and they gather them and cast (throw) them into the fire, and they are burned.

If you remain in Me, and My words remain in you, you will ask whatever you desire, and it will be done for you. In this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and you will be My disciples.’

“Having a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession (acknowledgment) of our hope firmly (without wavering), for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another to incitement (take action) to love and good works, not forsaking the gathering of ourselves together, as is the habit of some, but exhorting (encouraging one another), and so much more as you see the Day approaching.”

## The Return of the King

After Jesus had died, rose from the dead, and had been seen by many people, He informed His apostles that He would return:

“It was about the sixth hour (mid day), and there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour (mid afternoon), as the sun was darkened; and the veil of the temple was torn in two.

And crying out with a loud voice, Jesus said, ‘Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.’ Having said this, He breathed His last. Now when the centurion saw what had happened, he glorified God, saying, ‘Truly, this man was righteous.’

And the whole crowd who came together to that sight, seeing what had happened, returned home beating their breasts.

But all those known to Him, and the women who followed Him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

And behold, there was a man named Joseph, being a councillor; a good and righteous man, who had not consented to their decision and action. He was from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who himself was also waiting for the kingdom of God. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. And taking it down, he wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a hewn out tomb (a tomb cut into the rock), where no one had ever laid before.

It was the day of preparation, and the Sabbath drew near. And the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and saw the tomb, and how His body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments (fragrant oils). And on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

But on the first day of the week, while still very early, they came to the tomb, carrying the spices they had prepared; and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb; and when they went in, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. And it happened, while they were perplexed (puzzled) about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. And being terrified, they bowed their faces to the earth. The men said to them, 'Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but was raised. Remember how He spoke to you, while He was still in Galilee, saying, 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.' "

And they remembered His words."

"I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Peter, then by the twelve disciples. After that, He was seen by over five hundred of His followers at once, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. After that, He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all, He was seen by me also, as if to one born out of time."

"He was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see Him. As they were looking up towards heaven, two men suddenly appeared next to them dressed in white clothing, and said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand here gazing up into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come back in the same way as you saw Him go to heaven.' "

We are told that evil will increase before Jesus returns:

“And know this, that in the last days perilous (difficult) times will be at hand. For men will be self-lovers, money-lovers, boasters, proud, blasphemers (speaking evil against God), disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholly, without natural affection (heartless), implacable (unpersuadable), slanderers (false accusers), without self-control, savage, haters of what is good, betrayers, reckless, puffed-up (full of pride), pleasure-lovers rather than God-lovers, having a form of godliness (appearing to be godly), but having denied the power of it.

Turn away from these!”

“God’s firm foundation stands, having this seal: ‘The Lord knows those who are His,’ and, ‘Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity (unrighteousness).’ But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth (clay); some for honour, and some for dishonour. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel to honour, having been sanctified (made holy) and useful for the Master, having been prepared for every good work. So flee youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, with those who call upon the Lord out of a pure heart. Refuse the foolish and uninstructed questionings, knowing that they generate quarrels. A servant of the Lord must not be quarrelsome, but be gentle to all, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may give them repentance for a full acknowledgment of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the Devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.”

“Be imitators of God, as beloved children, and walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But fornication (sexual immorality), and all impurity, covetousness (desiring what belongs to someone else), must not be named among you, as is fitting for saints. Also filthiness, and foolish talk, and crude joking, are not fitting, but rather thanksgiving. For this you know, that every fornicator (sexually immoral), impure, or covetous (greedy) person, who is an idolater (image worshiper), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore, do not be partakers with them.”

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators (sexual immorality outside of marriage), nor idolaters (image worshipers), nor adulterers (sexual immorality with another person’s spouse), nor prostitutes (sexual immorality for money), nor homosexuals (sexual immorality between the same sex), nor thieves, nor covetous (greedy), nor drunkards, nor revilers (abusers), nor extortioners (swindlers), will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed; but you were sanctified (made holy); but you were justified (declared righteous) in the name of the Lord Jesus, and in the Spirit of our God.”

“Let love be sincere. Hate what is evil. Hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Give preference to honour one another; in eagerness, not slothful (lazy); fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Rejoice in hope, enduring tribulation (trouble), continuing steadfastly in prayer.

Contribute to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another, not being high-minded, but yielding to the humble. Do not be wise within yourselves. Repay no one evil for evil; providing right things before all men. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but give place to the wrath of God; for it is written: ‘Vengeance is Mine; I will repay,’ says the Lord. Therefore, ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

“Complete (perfect) yourselves, encourage one another, be of the same mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you.”

“He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.”

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether good or evil.”

God shows no favouritism; anyone who is godly will be blessed; anyone who is not godly will be cursed:

“In truth I perceive (understand) that God shows no partiality (favouritism). In every nation the one fearing Him and working righteousness is acceptable to Him.”

“Therefore, you have no excuse, O man, everyone judging, for in what you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth on those who practice such things. And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and yet do them yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you despise the riches of His kindness, and forbearance (tolerance), and long-suffering, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? But according to your hardness and impenitent (presuming) heart you are treasuring (storing) up wrath (punishment) for yourself in a day of wrath (God’s vengeance), and revelation (revealing) of a righteous judgment of God, who will give to each one according to his works; to those who by patient endurance in good work are seeking glory, honour, and incorruptibility (genuineness), He will give eternal life; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness; anger and wrath (punishment), trouble and pain, on every soul of man working out evil, both of Jew first, and of Greek; but glory, honour, and peace, to everyone working out good, both to Jew first, and to Greek. For there is no partiality (favouritism) with God. For as many as sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as sinned within law will be judged through law. For not the hearers of the law are just (righteous) with God, but the doers of the law will be justified (declared righteous). For when nations not having law do by nature the things of the law, they not having law are a law to themselves; who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness; and the thoughts between one another accusing or even excusing, in the day when God judges the hidden things of men, according to my Gospel, through Jesus Christ.”

“Now to Him being able to keep you without stumbling,  
and to set you before His glory without blemish  
(without fault), with great joy; to the only wise God,  
our Saviour, be glory and greatness and might and  
authority, both now and to all the ages (forever). Amen.”

The last book of the Bible is “The Revelation of Jesus Christ”. The book is addressed to Jesus’ servants. It tells of future events, providing clear warnings to the church, and declaring judgments upon the entire earth; judgments which will be the most difficult times in the history of mankind, before Jesus returns to reign in His eternal kingdom, along with His servants; the overcomers:

“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show  
His servants the things which must soon take place.”

The Revelation of Jesus Christ sets out two destinies before Jesus’ servants. They will either be raised with Jesus and be joint heirs with Him in a brand new creation, or they will lose their inheritance in His kingdom and be condemned to eternity in the lake of fire. In His address to the churches, Jesus encourages His servants to overcome, because it is the overcomers; those who remain faithful to Jesus, and obey His Word, and fulfill His will through to the very end, who will be saved, and who will inherit eternal rewards:

‘The one overcoming, this one will be clothed in white garments,  
and I will not blot out his name from the scroll of life; and I will  
acknowledge his name before My Father, and before His angels.’

‘The one overcoming shall inherit all things,’

We are to overcome with the Lord's help, and are given great incentives to encourage us:

'These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation (trouble), but be encouraged, I have overcome the world.'

"Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create. For behold, I create Jerusalem as a rejoicing, and her people a joy. I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in My people. The voice of weeping and the voice of crying shall no longer be heard in her. No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who has not filled (lived all) his days; for the youth shall die a hundred years old. But the sinner who is a hundred years old will be accursed. They will build houses and dwell in them; and they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They will not build and another dwell; they will not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall be the days of My people, and My chosen ones shall wear out the work of their hands. They will not labour in vain, or bear children for terror, for they will be the offspring of the blessed of Jehovah (the Lord), and their descendants with them.

And it shall come to pass that before they call on Me, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear them. The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox; and dust will be the serpent's food. They will do no evil, nor destroy, in all My holy mountain,' says Jehovah (the Lord)."

The book of revelation tells us that Jesus is the only one who has fully overcome and found worthy to open the scrolls:

“I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel, proclaiming with a loud voice, ‘Who is worthy to open the scroll and to break its seals?’ And no one in heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth, was able to open the scroll, or look into it. I wept very much, because no one was found worthy to open, and to read the scroll, or look into it.

And one of the elders said to me, ‘Do not weep; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.’ And I saw, and behold, in the midst of the throne, and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though having been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

And He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. And when He took the scroll, the four living creatures, and the twenty-four elders, fell down before the Lamb, each one having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

And they sing a new song, saying, ‘Worthy are You to receive the scroll, and to open its seals, because You were slain, and purchased us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and made us kings and priests to our God, and we shall reign upon the earth.’

And I saw, and I heard a sound of many angels around the throne, and the living creatures, and the elders, and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, saying with a great voice, ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive the power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing.’

And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and underneath the earth, and the things that are on the sea, and all the things in them, I heard saying, ‘To the One sitting on the throne, and to the Lamb, be the blessing and the honour and the glory and the might to the ages of the ages (forever and ever)!’ And the four living creatures said, ‘Amen! And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives to the ages of the ages (forever and ever).”

Whilst Jesus reveals the awesome prospects for the future of the overcomers, He also reveals the awful possibilities for the future of anyone who fails to overcome, by not committing to Him, trusting in Him, and relying upon Him, to help them overcome.

Jesus warns us about times of great trouble; times ahead that will be worse than anything that has ever happened in the history of the world:

‘Take heed that no one leads you astray. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not disturbed; for all things must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there will be famines, plagues, and earthquakes, in various places.

All these things are the beginning of birth pains. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation (trouble), and kill you; and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will fall away, and they will deliver up (betray) one another, and will hate one another. And many false prophets will arise, and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will increase, the love of many will grow cold.

But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And this Gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout all the world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.

Therefore, when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place, (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let the one on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house; and let the one who is in the field not turn back to get his garments. And woe (grief) to those with child, and to those nursing babies, in those days.

Pray that your flight will not be in winter, or on a Sabbath. For there will be great tribulation (trouble), such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now; no, nor ever will be. And if those days were not shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the sake of the elect, those days will be shortened.

Then, if anyone says to you, 'Behold, there is the Christ!' Or, 'Here!' Do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise, and they will give great signs and wonders to lead astray (deceive), if possible, even the elect.

Behold, I have told you beforehand. Therefore, if they say to you, 'Behold, He is in the wilderness!' Do not go out. Or, 'Behold, He is in the inner rooms!' Do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For wherever the carcass (corpse) may be, there the eagles will be gathered.

Immediately after the tribulation (trouble) of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the heavens, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

Now learn the parable from the fig tree: When its branch becomes tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near, at the doors. Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.

Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away. But of that day and hour, no one knows, not even the angels of the heavens, nor the Son, but the Father only.

As the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, they were eating, and drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, and they did not know until the flood came and took them all away; so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left. Watch, therefore, for you do not know what day your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house knew what hour the thief was coming, he would have watched, and not allowed his house to be dug through (broken into). Therefore, you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.'

'Take heed to yourselves (be on your guard), lest your hearts be weighed down with feasting, drunkenness, and the anxieties of life, and that day come upon you suddenly as a snare (trap). For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the earth.

But watch at all times, and pray that you may be able to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.'

'Beware, watch, and pray, for you do not know when the time is. As a man going abroad (travelling to a far country) leaving his house and giving his servants authority, and to each one his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to keep watch.

Watch, therefore, for you do not know when the lord of the house will come; late (in the evening), or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or early (in the morning); lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!'

'Blessed are those servants whom the lord will find watching when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will gird himself and have them recline (sit them down to eat), and he will come and serve them. If he comes in the second watch, or the third (in the middle of the night, or just before dawn), and finds it so,

blessed are those servants. But know this, that if the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would have watched, and not have allowed his house to be dug through. You, then, be ready, for in the hour that you do not think, the Son of Man comes.'

'Watch, therefore, for you do not know the day, nor the hour, in which the Son of Man comes.'

During this time of great trouble, a beast, who is the antichrist, will rise up and have great authority on earth, deceiving many to worship him instead of God, as he comes from Satan, the dragon:

"I stood upon the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on its horns, ten diadems (crowns), and on its heads, blasphemous names (speaking evil against God). And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and its feet as a bear, and its mouth as the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave its power to it, and its throne, and great authority. And I saw one of its heads as having been slain to death, and its deadly wound was healed. And all the earth marveled and followed the beast. And they worshiped the dragon because he gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, 'Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with it?' And it was given to it a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies (speaking evil against God), and it was given to it authority to act for forty-two months. It opened its mouth in blasphemies (speaking evil) against God, to blaspheme (speak evil against) His name, His tabernacle (dwelling place), and those who dwell in heavens tabernacle (dwelling place). It was given to it to make war with the saints, and to overcome them.

And authority was given to it over every tribe and tongue and nation. And all who dwell on the earth will worship it, whose names have not been written in the scroll of life of the Lamb who was slain, from the foundation of the world. If anyone has an ear, let him hear. If anyone gathers captivity, into captivity he goes. If anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed. Here is the endurance and faith of the saints.”

Another beast will rise, who is a false prophet, causing many to worship the beast of antichrist, and forcing them to receive a mark on their right hand or forehead, if they want to buy and sell:

“And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and it had two horns, like a lamb, and spoke like a dragon. It exercises all the authority of the first beast before it, and it makes the earth, and those dwelling in it, to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. It does great signs, even making fire come down from heaven onto the earth before men. And it deceives those who dwell on the earth, because of the signs which were given to it, to do before the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast, who was wounded by the sword, and lived. And it was given to it, to give a spirit to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak, and might cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. And it makes all, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to give them a mark on their right hand or on their forehead, so that no one can buy or sell except the one having the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of its name. Here is wisdom: Let the one having reason calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man; and the number of it is six hundred and sixty six.”

Anyone who worships the beast and its image, and receives the mark of the beast, will be tortured by fire, day and night, forever:

“If anyone worships the beast and its image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he shall also drink of the wine of God’s wrath, being unmixed (poured out in full strength) into the cup of His anger; and he will be tortured by fire and brimstone (burning sulphur) before the holy angels, and before the Lamb. And the smoke of their torture goes up forever and ever; and they have no rest, day or night, those who worship the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name. Here is the endurance of the saints; those who keep the commandments of God, and their faith in Jesus.”

As a helicopter lifts someone who needs to be rescued to safety, the Lord will return to lift us to safety, as we hang onto Him:

“I do not want you to be ignorant (uninformed), brothers, concerning those who sleep (have passed away), that you may not grieve as the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, so also God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep (have passed away) in Jesus. For this we say to you by the Word of the Lord, that we who are living and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep (have passed away). For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will always be with the Lord.

So, then, comfort one another with these words.”

“But concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need for me to write to you. For you, yourselves, know full well that the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. For when they say ‘Peace and safety,’ then sudden destruction comes upon them, like labour pains upon a women with child, they will not escape. But you, brothers, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you as a thief. For you are all sons of light, and sons of the day. We are not of night, nor of darkness. So, then, we should not sleep, as others do, but we should watch, and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. But we, being of the day, should be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we watch, or sleep, we may live together with Him. Therefore, comfort one another, and build up one another, just as you are doing.”

We will attend the Lord’s marriage supper; the marriage supper of the Lamb of God:

“And I heard, as a sound, the voice of a great multitude, and as a sound of many waters, and as a sound of mighty thunders, saying, ‘Hallelujah! Because the Lord God Almighty reigned. Let us rejoice, and let us exult, and give the glory to Him, because the marriage of the Lamb came, and His wife prepared herself.’ And it was given to her that she be clothed in fine linen, pure and bright; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

And he said to me, ‘Write: Blessed are the ones having been called to the supper of the marriage of the Lamb.’

And he said to me, ‘These words of God are true.’ ”

When the time of great trouble has been fulfilled, Jesus Christ will return to defeat antichrist, and the armies on earth. Then the beast and the false prophet will be thrown into the lake of fire:

“I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on it is called ‘Faithful and True’. And in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes are as a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems (crowns), having a name written which no one knows, except Himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called ‘The Word of God’. The armies in heaven followed Him on white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and pure. Out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He may strike the nations. And He will shepherd them with a rod of iron.

He treads the winepress of the wine of the anger and wrath of God Almighty. On His robe, and on His thigh, a name is written:

**‘KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS’.**

And I saw an angel standing in the sun. And he cried out with a great voice, saying to all the birds flying in the midst of heaven, ‘Come and gather together for the supper of the great God,

that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of commanders, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses, and those sitting on them, and the flesh of all, both free men and slaves, both small and great.’ And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war with the One sitting on the horse, and with His army. And the beast was seized, and with it, the false prophet who did signs before it, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast, and those who worshiped its image. The two were thrown alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone (sulphur). And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.”

The Devil will be chained up and thrown into the bottomless pit for a thousand years. During the thousand years the overcomers will live and reign together with Jesus Christ. After the thousand years have ended, the Devil will be set loose for a while, and will go out to deceive the world. He will gather armies to fight against God's people, surrounding them and the beloved city, Jerusalem, before God destroys them with fire from heaven, and throws the Devil into the lake of fire. The dead will be judged, and anyone not found in the scroll of life, will be thrown into the lake of fire:

“And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss (bottomless pit), and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, the old serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the abyss (bottomless pit), and shut him up, and sealed it over him, that he may not deceive the nations until the thousand years are completed. After these things, he must be set loose for a little while.

And I saw thrones, and they sat on them. And judgment was given to them, and the souls of the ones who had been beheaded because of their witness (testimony) of Jesus, and because of the Word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast or its image, and had not received the mark on their forehead or on their hand. And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one having part in the first resurrection. Over these, the second death has no authority, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with Him a thousand years.

And when the thousand years are completed, Satan will be set loose out of his prison, and will go to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for war, whose number is as the sand of the sea.

They went up over the breadth of the land, and surrounded the camp of the saints, and the beloved city (Jerusalem).

And fire from God came down out of heaven and devoured them.

The Devil deceiving (misleading) them was cast (thrown) into the lake of fire and brimstone (burning sulphur) where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night to the ages of the ages (forever and ever).

And I saw a great white throne, and Him sitting on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the small and the great, standing before God, and scrolls were opened; and another scroll was opened, which is the scroll of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the scrolls according to their works.

And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, and death and hades (hell) gave up the dead who were in them; and they were each judged according to their works. And death and hades (hell) were cast (thrown) into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

And if anyone was not found written in the scroll of life, he was cast (thrown) into the lake of fire."

God will make everything new; a new heaven, and a new earth, and a new holy city; new Jerusalem, where God will dwell with His people. Whoever overcomes will inherit all things in God's new kingdom. Whoever does not overcome will lose everything.

God's people will live in the new creation that He has prepared for them. God's enemies, however, will be thrown into the lake of fire. In God's new kingdom there will be no pain, or suffering, or crying; but peace to everyone for all eternity. In the lake of fire there will be pain, suffering, torture and torment, for all eternity:

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth passed away. And the sea no longer is. And I, John, saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a great voice from heaven, saying,  
‘Behold, the tabernacle (dwelling place) of God is with men.  
He will tabernacle (dwell) with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them, and be their God.  
He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor shall there be any more pain, for the first things passed away.

And He who sat on the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’ And He said to me, ‘Write, because these words are faithful and true.’ And He said to me, ‘It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the one thirsting, I will give from the fountain of the water of life freely. The one overcoming shall inherit all things; and I will be God to him, and he shall be a son to Me. But the cowardly (fearful), and unbelieving (faithless), and detestable (foul), and murderers, and fornicators (sexually immoral), and sorcerers (those who practice witchcraft), and idolaters (image worshipers), and all the liars, will have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone (burning sulphur), which is the second death.’

And one of the seven angels came to me, having the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues, and spoke with me, saying, 'Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.'

And he carried me in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, holy Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Its light was like a very precious stone, as a jasper stone, being clear as crystal. It had a great high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on the gates, which are the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. On the east, three gates; on the north, three gates; on the south, three gates; and on the west, three gates.

And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them, the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he speaking with me had a golden reed, that he may measure the city, and its gates, and its wall. The city is laid out as a square; its length the same as its width. And he measured the city with the reed at twelve thousand stadia (about 1500 miles / 2400 kilometres). Its length, and width, and height, are equal. And he measured its wall at one hundred and forty four cubits (about 70 metres), a measure of a man, which is that of an angel. The structure of its wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every precious stone; the first foundation, jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprasus; the eleventh, jacinth; and the twelfth, amethyst. The twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, as transparent glass. And I saw no temple in it, for its temple is the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb.

The city has no need of the sun, nor of the moon, to shine on it, for the glory of God illuminates it, and its lamp is the Lamb. And the nations of the saved will walk in its light; and the kings of the earth will bring their glory and honour into it. Its gates will never be shut by day, for night will not be there. And they will bring the glory and the honour of the nations into it. And there will never enter into it any profane (unclean) thing, or anything causing abomination (disgust), or a lie, but only the ones who are written in the Lamb's scroll of life.

And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, going forth out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of its street, and either side of the river, is a tree of life producing twelve fruits, each month yielding its fruit. The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. And there will be no more curse. And the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His servants will serve Him. They will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. And night will not be there; they have no need of a lamp, or light of the sun, because the Lord God will be their light. And they will reign forever and ever."

The Revelation of Jesus Christ finishes with a final message of encouragement urging us to get ready, and to be prepared for the return of our Lord Jesus, who is coming sooner than we expect:

"And he said to me, 'These words are faithful and true; and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants what must soon take place.'

'Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who obeys the words of the prophecy of this scroll.'

I, John, was the one seeing and hearing these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel showing me these things. But he said to me, 'You must not do that. I am your fellow servant, and of your brothers, the prophets, and of the ones keeping the words of this scroll. Worship God.' And he said to me, 'Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this scroll, because the time is near.'

The one acting unjustly (wrongly), let him still act unjustly (wrongly); and the filthy, let him still be filthy; and the righteous, let him still do righteousness; and the holy, let him still be holy.'

'Behold, I am coming soon, and My reward is with Me, to give to each one according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.'

Blessed are the ones doing His commands, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city. But outside are the dogs, and the sorcerers (those who practice witchcraft), and the fornicators (sexually immoral), and the murderers, and the idolaters (image worshipers), and everyone loving and making a lie.

'I, Jesus, sent My angel to testify these things to you for the churches. I am the Root, and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.'

And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And the one hearing, let him say, 'Come!' And the one who is thirsting, let him come; and the one desiring, let him take of the water of life freely.

For I testify to everyone hearing the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone adds to these things, God will add upon him the plagues written in this scroll.

And if anyone takes away from the words of the scroll of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the scroll of life, and out of the holy city, and of the things written in this scroll.

The One testifying to these things says,

‘Yes, I am coming soon.’

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”

Revelation warns us against presumption and half-heartedness; and along with the rest of the New Testament, reminds us about God’s character, and what He expects from His people:

“Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty,  
the One who was, and is, and is coming.”

“According to the Holy One calling you, you also become holy in all conduct; because it has been written:

‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’ ”

“Eagerly pursue peace (strive for peace) with all (people), and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord; watching diligently (watching out carefully for one another) lest anyone falls short and fails to obtain the grace of God.”

‘You then, be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect.’

God’s fierce judgment and wrath of sin are intended to produce a wholesome fear in His servants, the saints, as an incentive to obey His commandments, and remain faithful to Jesus. When the day of judgment comes, every one of us will be held accountable:

“For we must all manifest (appear for all to be revealed) before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive the things done through the body, according to what he practiced, whether good or bad.”

“Be mindful to remember the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the command of us, the apostles of the Lord and Saviour, firstly knowing this; that mockers (false teachers) will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts (following their own sinful desires), and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming? For, ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they have from the beginning of creation.’ For this they wilfully forget; that by the Word of God the heavens existed long ago, and the earth standing out of water and through water, in the world that then existed, was destroyed, being flooded with water.

But by the same Word, the heavens and the earth that now exist, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord, one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow about His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward us, not willing that any should perish, but for all to come to repentance.

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a roaring sound, and the elements (substance of the material world) will be dissolved (destroyed) with intense heat; both the earth, and the works that are in it, will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved (destroyed), what sort of persons ought you to be in holy behaviour and godliness, looking for and hastening (eagerly awaiting) the coming of the day of God, in which the heavens will be set on fire and be dissolved (destroyed), and the elements (substance of the material world) will melt with intense heat. But according to His promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.”

God’s Word is given to encourage God’s people, who are living in an evil world, to commit to Him, trust in Him, rely upon Him, and live in obedience to Him:

“ ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment.

And the second, like it, is this:

‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’  
There is no other commandment greater than these.”

Furthermore, we are to love one another, even more than we love ourselves; loving one another, as Jesus loves us:

‘A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I loved you, that you also love one another.’

We love one another, as Jesus loves us, to the extent that His love lives inside us. The strength of His love inside us will depend on the strength of our relationship with Him. Any failure to obey God's commands will be due to self-centredness. The closer we are in our relationship with Him, the less self-centred we will be:

“Love suffers long (is patient); is kind (nice); does not envy (want what belongs to someone else); does not vaunt itself (boast about itself); is not puffed up (proud); does not behave indecently (is not rude); does not seek its own things (not selfish); is not provoked (not easily roused to anger); thinks no evil; does not rejoice over wrong, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things (patiently perseveres all things); believes all things; hopes all things; endures all things. Love never fails.”

“I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named, that He may give you, according to the riches of the glory of Him, power to become mighty through the Spirit of Him, in the inward man, that through faith, Christ might dwell in your hearts; having been rooted, and having been founded in love, that you may have strength to seize, with all the saints, what is the breadth (width) and length and depth and height, to know the love of Christ that surpasses (exceeds) all knowledge, that you may be filled to all the fullness of God.

Now to Him who is able, beyond all things, to do super abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power working in us, to Him be the glory in the church in Christ Jesus, to all the generations of the age of the ages (forever). Amen.”

Our greatest purpose in life is to know God, love Him, and be loved by Him, and love one another. Our greatest goal in life is to fulfill His will: His general overall purpose for all of us, and His specific individual plan for each one of us.

The Lord desires His children to grow into the fullness of Him. He wants His children to know His Word and apply it to our life; hearing His voice, and walking in obedience to His ways, so we may fulfill His will, and fulfill His ultimate desire; fullness as one:

‘That all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in you; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You have given Me, I have given them, that they may be one as We are one; I in them, and You in Me; that they may be perfected into one, and that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You loved Me.’

‘I am the good shepherd. I know My own, and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me, and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd. The Father loves Me, because I lay down My life, that I may take it up again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. I received this command from My Father.’

‘I am the door. If anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come, except that he may steal, and kill, and destroy. I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly.’

‘I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life.  
No one comes to the Father except through Me.’

‘I have come as a light to the world, that everyone who believes into Me may not remain in darkness. And if anyone hears My words, and does not believe (keep them), I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world.

The one who rejects Me, and does not receive My words has that which judges him. The Word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.

For I have not spoken on My own authority, but the Father who sent Me has Himself given Me command, what to say, and what to speak. And I know that His command is eternal life. Therefore, whatever I speak, as the Father has said to Me, so I speak.’

‘I am the light of the world. The one following Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’

When we come into a relationship with God, we begin to see life from an earthly perspective, and from an eternal viewpoint; seeing life as God sees it, and living it as He intends. The world’s wisdom will always be foolishness compared to God, because it lacks eternal perspective, which can only come from God.

Life is a journey to be enjoyed, as well as a battle to be won. When we come to realise that knowing God, obeying His Word, and fulfilling His will, is vitally important during our earthly existence, and crucially essential for our eternal welfare, we will live in God’s truth, with His perspective; the reality of eternity:

‘This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.’

‘My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.’

“Thus says Jehovah (the Lord): ‘Do not let the wise man glory in his wisdom; do not let the mighty man glory in his might; do not let the rich man glory in his riches. But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am Jehovah (the Lord), doing lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth. In these I delight,’ says Jehovah (the Lord).”

“Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His. He changes the times and seasons; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to those who have understanding. He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, and light dwells with Him.”

Self-development, self-improvement, and self-empowerment without God is a worthless pursuit. We will never be sustained or fulfilled apart from God. We can only be constantly sustained and completely fulfilled by being closely connected to the Father, through His Son, Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Before Jesus was about to be sentenced to death, He was asked:

“ ‘Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?’ Jesus said, ‘I AM! ’

And you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.’ ”

‘Remain in Me, and I in you. As the branch is not able to bear fruit of itself, unless it remains in the vine, neither can you, unless you remain in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches.

He who remains in Me, and I in him, this one bears much fruit; because apart from Me, you are not able to do anything.

If anyone does not remain in Me, he is cast (thrown) out as a branch and is withered (dried up); and they gather them and cast (throw) them into the fire, and they are burned.

If you remain in Me, and My words remain in you, you will ask whatever you desire, and it will be done for you.’

‘The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. The one not honouring the Son does not honour the Father who has sent Him. Truly, truly, I say to you, the one who hears My Word, and believing the One who has sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

Truly, truly, I say to you, there comes an hour, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and the ones hearing will live. For even as the Father has life in Himself, so He gave also to the Son to have life in Himself. And He gave authority to Him to do judgment, because He is the Son of Man.

Do not marvel at this, because there comes an hour in which all those in the tombs will hear the voice of Him, and will come out; the ones having done good to a resurrection of life; and the ones having practiced evil to a resurrection of judgment.

I am not able, from Myself, to do anything. As I hear, I judge, and My judgment is just (right), because I do not seek My will, but the will of the One sending Me; the Father.’

‘Everyone who acknowledges Me before men, I will also acknowledge before My Father in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny before My Father in heaven.’

‘Whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of this one the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His glory, and in the glory of the Father, and of the holy angels. But, I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall by no means taste of death until they see the kingdom of God.’

“And this is the witness (testimony), that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. The one having the Son has life; the one who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I wrote these things to you, who are believing in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may believe in the name of the Son of God.”

God alone is great and all power belongs to Him. He sacrificed Himself so we may have fullness of love and life forever in Him:

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For in Him all things were created, the things in the heavens and the things on earth, the visible and the invisible (things we can see and things we cannot see); whether thrones or lordships (kings or kingdoms) or rulers or authorities, all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and all things consist (exist) in Him.”

“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, for you to know the hope of His calling, and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us; the ones believing, according to the working of the might of the strength of Him, which He worked in Christ, raising Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and lordship, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the coming one.

And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him filling all things with all things.”

‘Fear not, little flock, because your Father was pleased to give you the kingdom.’

“According as it has been written (in the Scriptures): ‘Things which eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and has not come up into the heart of man, what God has prepared for the ones loving Him.’ ”

“Let us lay aside every weight and the surrounding sin that easily ensnares (traps) us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,”

“Now faith, hope, and love, these three remain; but the greatest of these is love.”

“Behold, now is the day of salvation.”

“The grace of God which brings salvation appeared to all men, instructing us that having denied ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live sensibly (with self-control), and righteously, and godly, in the present age, waiting for the blessed hope and appearance of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself on our behalf, that He might redeem us from all iniquity (lawlessness), and purify a special people for Himself, zealous (eager) for good works.”

‘Watch, therefore, for you do not know the day, nor the hour, in which the Son of Man comes.’

“Now may the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep, in the blood of the eternal covenant, our Lord Jesus, perfect you in every good work to do His will, doing in you that which is well pleasing before Him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory to the ages of the ages (forever and ever). Amen.”

“The One testifying to these things says,

‘Yes, I am coming soon.’

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!”

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,  
the love of God the Father,  
and the presence of  
the Holy Spirit,  
be with you all.  
Amen.”

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