

A TIME WITH GOD

Short devotionals by Reverend Joseph Dedic

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DON'T SELL YOURSELF SHORT 1-20-18

INTRODUCTION God created every person with incomparable worth. Each of us is priceless in the sight of God. So -- don't sell yourself short. Where would your family and friends be if you were never born? They could not be as happy, as fulfilled, as helped. You add a lot to their lives. Where would life be for any of us if the incarnate Christ was never born to Mary? Surely God would not be a part of our lives. Every one of us is created with a very important purpose in God's mind. He has something special for each of us to do, so don't sell yourself short. Give your best to fulfilling God's perfect plans for you.

A lot of Christians sell themselves short when it comes to the Bible. They don't expect to ever understand it very well. They think that they could never be a Bible expert such as Dr. Chris McNeilly, or world-recognized preacher Dr. J. Sidlow Baxter, or noted theologian Dr. Charles Hodge. The truth is, if we are willing to apply ourselves, study any Biblical topic in depth, we can know as much as, or more than, any of these experts on that particular subject. Try it and see. None of us have to sell ourselves short concerning the Bible.

The life we experience today may have been affected by events that happened years ago. Then again the decisions we make today may impact our lives for years to come. The lives of many others, besides ourselves, may be conditioned by how we live and the choices we make. So, don't sell yourself short.

Let me illustrate. My life has been dramatically affected by a certain man before I was born. I never met him, and he never met me. Without knowing anything about me, he determined my religion and hence my salvation. He was a Roman Catholic priest who refused to marry my father to my mother. She was Roman Catholic. As far as religion is concerned, Dad was nothing and refused to sign papers saying any children would be raised Roman Catholic. So they got married by a Baptist pastor. This led my folks to send the three of us preschool kids to a Baptist Sunday school in Westmont, Illinois. Subsequently they attended this church and got saved. As a result, all three of us children were saved. Know that your life can have great influence on other people, even without your realizing it, so, don't sell yourself short.

Now I'm going to tell you about a man who sold himself short on several important occasions. How sad. May we determine not to do as he did. King Ahab had great potential. He was the 8th king of the divided kingdom. Ahab reigned in Samaria for 22 years over the 10 northern tribes of Israel. His history is recorded in **I Kings chapters 16 to 22**. Because it is less painful to learn from the mistakes someone else makes than from our own, let's carefully examine the mistakes Ahab made and studiously avoid them.

1. I Kings 16:31 Ahab Sold Himself Short in Marriage

Ahab married Jezebel. The scriptural account says: *And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him.* Perhaps Ahab sold himself short in marriage because he had a poor self-image. He may have lacked self-respect. We sometimes see very nice girls from good families marry 'creeps' and wonder why. Perhaps because they have a low self-esteem may be the reason they sell themselves short. Fathers can and should protect their daughter's well being by personal involvement with her, by approving her as a very special person, by complementing her good character qualities, and by praying much for her.

Perhaps a second reason Ahab sold himself short in marriage is because he deliberately left God out of his life. That's too bad because **Proverbs 19:14** says: *a prudent wife is from the LORD.* Because Ahab refused to seek God's advice in finding a wife, he got what he deserved. Jezebel was a

scheming, vain, self-willed, self-centered shrew who was domineering, ruthless, and cruel. She marched Ahab down the pathway of sin, prompting him to provoke God to anger more than any other king before him especially in the matter of Baal worship. **I Kings 16:33**. Ahab demonstrates the importance of being careful whom we marry. The old adage is true: "Marry in haste, repent at leisure."

2. I Kings 16:31, 18:4 Ahab Sold Himself Short With God

Ahab figured it was more profitable to honor the gods of his neighbors than to honor Jehovah. He figured this was good business and found that it was popular with his people. He could keep better control of his people this way. While they worship Baal, they would not think of going to Judah to worship. This eliminated the possibility that they would desert Ahab.

Furthermore, Ahab determined to control his own life. He felt that Jehovah was too narrow, demanding, and legalistic. He felt that he really didn't need God. About this time God sent Elijah to him with a message: "no more rain". Did Ahab appreciate God's attempt to reach out to him? No! He called Elijah *he that troubleth Israel* **I Kings 18:17** and *mine enemy* **I Kings 21:20** when in fact he was acting as his best friend. Ahab would not listen to God's messenger and thus sold himself short with God. But one day he will have to stand before God to answer for all his deeds. Then he will understand just how foolish he was.

Ahab not only sold himself short, he sold Elijah short. He found much fault with him. This reminds me of what I heard about John Wesley and George Whitfield, both exceptionally prolific soul winners. Wesley, was Armenian, believing it was possible to lose one's salvation. Whitfield, on the other hand, was a Calvinist, believing strongly in eternal security. Since this was true of the men, a certain lady asked Wesley if he thought he'd ever see Whitfield in Heaven. John Wesley thought awhile, and then replied: "No, I don't think so. He will be so close to the Throne of God, and I will be so far away that I don't think we will meet." Though the men may have disagreed a bit, in doctrine, Wesley was wise enough not to sell short his Christian friend. He refused to find fault with him.

Like Ahab, sinners may think we Christians don't like them or they may consider us their enemies when all we are trying to do is to bring them to God. I pray daily for some 10 or 12 persons who, unfortunately, turned their backs on God, some of them living deep in sin. For many months I wondered what should be the basis of my intercession for them. I wanted the assurance God is listening to my requests for them.. Recently, it has come to mind. God loves them though He hates their sin. I can plead for them on the basis that God loves them in spite of their sin; that God wants reconciliation and renewed fellowship with each of them. Therefore, at my request, God will bind Satan and make it possible for them to turn back to Him. But of course, they must use this opportunity to choose to come back to God. God will not force them.

3. I Kings 20 Ahab Sold Himself Short in Politics.

Daniel had none of King Ahab's advantages, but he made a great difference in politics whereas Ahab failed. Daniel sought Divine wisdom and guidance in all that he did. Given great authority in the Babylonian government, he used it to bring blessing to many people especially to the Jews. With him in power, the Jews enjoyed political protection. While Nebuchadnezzar invaded Israel on three separate occasions, he extended to the Jews special considerations other pagan kings did not offer. I believe this was all Daniel's doing. For many years Daniel made a difference for good in the lives of many people. We rejoice that Daniel is a part of Divine history. May we too make a difference for good in the lives of our friends.

Ahab did just the opposite from Daniel. He did not look to God for guidance. Tested by King Benhadad's boast to destroy him, Ahab trusted to his own wisdom. Though God did give him two marvelous victories over Benhadad's huge army of 32 kings, Ahab did not recognize God or give Him

the credit. He had no convictions to keep him steady on the right path and he made God angry by treating Benhadad as a friend. (Note: do we make God angry by the friends we choose?) Why did Ahab call Benhadad brother and bring him up into his chariot? History shows us that it was for political reasons that to Ahab were so convincing. These reasons were not spiritually expedient because they left God out. Ahab wanted Syria to be a buffer state between Israel and the Babylonians whom he feared might invade them from the north. He failed to trust God for protection. Consequently, though Ahab won the war with the king of Syria, he ultimately lost his life. He sold himself short. When he came up short, Israel also came up short.

4. I Kings 21 Ahab Sold Himself Short in the Matter of Justice

They say every man has his price. That may be true for many, but there is an exception. If a man has convictions, he cannot be bought at any price. Naboth was a man of conviction. He refused to sell to Ahab his family's vineyards. This refusal did not cause Ahab to react the way he did, but was the occasion of revealing Ahab's true character.

Since Ahab was king, after all, he thought, it was his right to have people give him what he wanted. He offered Naboth money. He offered Naboth a better vineyard. He explained to Naboth that this particular vineyard was close and convenient to his palace. He made his offer sound so reasonable. Still Naboth refused to give up his family heritage. For him generations of family history and his posterity's future were at stake.

King Ahab pouted while Queen Jezebel plotted. The king lay on his couch with his face toward the wall while at his desk Jezebel wrote letters in Ahab's name to have Naboth assassinated. She would get the vineyard for her husband. What did Ahab have to say about this? He compromised with justice by agreeing with the evil his wife proposed. In so doing, he sold himself short in God's sight. **Proverbs 11:1** explains a little thing, like *a false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight*. Ultimately this dastardly deed cost Ahab his life. There always are eternal consequences that involve more than one person.

God pronounced judgment upon Ahab and Jezebel. Upon hearing this judgment, Ahab unexpectedly repented of his evil doings. **I Kings 21:25-29** *there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up. 26 And he did very abominably in following idols, according to all things as did the Amorites, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel. 27 And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly. 28 And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 29 Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days: but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house.* God softened some of the severity of His Divine sentence but Ahab paid dearly for selling himself short of Justice, Mercy, and Truth.

5. I Kings 22 Ahab Sold Himself Short with His Royal Friend

Ahab asked Jehoshaphat, who for 18 years was King of Judah, to join him in battle against the King of Syria in Ramoth-Gilead. He came to Jehoshaphat as a family friend requesting unity and assistance. in the name of brotherhood. It is true that Jehoshaphat's son, Jehoram, had married Ahab's daughter Athaliah who turned out to be as wicked as her mother, Jezebel.

Ahab was false with his friend and tricked him into being a decoy. You remember the account: Four hundred false prophets told the Jewish kings that they would win the war. But Jehoshaphat wanted to hear from at least one true prophet of God. Micaiah was sent for. He predicted that the war would be lost and that Ahab would die. So when they went to battle, Ahab remembered and purposefully dressed in disguise. He did not want to die. But he told Jehoshaphat to wear his kingly

robes. He did not care if his friend got killed. The Syrian army was expressly instructed by their king to kill King Ahab alone. Seeing Jehoshaphat in royal clothes, they thought Jehoshaphat to be he, until he cried out. The soldiers then stopped chasing Jehoshaphat. Then by chance, an archer shot an arrow at random, mortally wounding Ahab. I believe God directed that arrow. Elijah's announcement to Ahab of certain judgment came to pass as a result of Ahab's wicked treatment of Naboth and for his additional ungodly deeds. Ahab's life ended even as it began. In the end he again sold himself short by pretending to be a friend to Jehoshaphat.

CONCLUSION Ahab had so many advantages as king. He could have invested his life in doing good. But he did just the opposite, wasting all his God given opportunities. Let us be warned by his failures and seek to invest our lives serving God with all our ability. As Dr. Redpath said, it is possible to have a saved soul and a wasted life. Let's not sell ourselves short. Let's not sell God short.

THINGS 6-21-14

INTRODUCTION: We are born surrounded by things. When a baby, our parents place in our crib brightly colored toys. With this introduction, we grow up wanting more and more things. This is natural. Therefore, parents have to teach children to think beyond “mine, mine, mine!” To illustrate our innate desire for things, I'll tell you about a neighbor girl, 12, who sent me a 'thank you' for a card and some money I had given her. She informed me she was saving it to buy a truck when she got a little older. She speaks as do many of us, wanting THINGS.

Luke 12:15 beware -- a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. No wonder that God gives us instruction concerning things. Things can be tangible or intangible. They may be a blessing or a curse. Note the parable of the rich man. He was young so he expected to live many years. He made no will. He did not know who would get his goods. He never knew how short a time he had to use his things whether for God or for himself. That night his soul was required of him.

Again in the parable of the sower, **Mark 4:7**, it says: “**some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it.**” Some things will crowd out those things of true value, that is, spiritual things. There are spiritual things as well as material. Whenever things come between us and God, they become a curse. Notice the church in **Revelation 2:1-4** The Apostle John was it's pastor, so had to be a good church, and it was. But Christ faulted it for one thing: it left it's first love. Once Christ was all in all in this church. But now things took first place and Christ became 2nd, or even 3rd. This passage proves to me that the Bible is Divinely written. If it had been written by man, the emphasize would have been positive, eliminating the negative and any failure.

How can things be a blessing?

1. Things can be a blessing when they are recognized as a gift of love from God. **Philippians 4:19 God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father Mathew 6:33** When we seek the Kingdom of God above all, an abundance of things shall be added to us. Why? Because God can trust us with His rich blessings. And He loves to surprise us with things. He will do this all through our lives.

Our Heavenly Father really surprised my wife and me the first Christmas of our married life. We were so poor we did not have enough money to put food on the table all month. This did not bother us much. We were in love. Then Loretta asked me what I wanted for Christmas. This hurt a little when all we could afford was a kiss. I told her that what I would really like is a good thick steak. The only meat we could afford was tube steaks once in awhile. She said she would like that too. We forgot all about this, but unknown to us, God heard our wishes. A week before Christmas I attended a boy's camp leaders meeting, making plans for the summer. After the meeting one of the men told me he had put something in my old car. Now, Bill was a butcher. When I got home past midnight, I found two huge bags full of the finest cuts of meat. I woke up Loretta. For Christmas we had steaks so tender and large that they hung over the edge of our plates. God gave us a special gift our first Christmas together. Now we can afford any meat we want, but none tastes as delicious as those steaks. We were married fifty years before Loretta went Home, and our Heavenly Father never stopped blessing us and surprising us all through those years.

2. Things may be used to bring God's blessing into the lives of others. The Holy Spirit tells each of us with whom to share. God prompted Boaz to give Ruth **handfulls on purpose. Ruth 2:16** We can imagine what joy and new-found hope this brought into her life. Another instance of the Holy Spirit's leading us to give involved a girl, Shirley Kosatka, in our Illinois church. Shirley was from a poor family and was a student at Moody Bible Institute. A new semester was about to begin and Loretta and I wondered if she had enough money to return to school. After we prayed, I wrote a check. Shirley came home the next Sunday, and I gave her the check. Being curious, I asked her how much she needed. The words were hardly out of my mouth when the Holy Spirit forcefully rebuked me, saying that He told me how much to give. Before I could stop Shirley from replying, she mentioned the amount. It was exactly to the penny what was on the check. There are times things can bring a blessing.

3. We may have many things but no pleasure or joy. Why? Because it is God who gives us the ability to enjoy things. To enjoy, we need health and contentment. **Hebrews 13:5 be content with such things as ye have:** Heaven will be so wonderful to our senses because there will be no more sin to dull our senses. It is too bad we adults do not see through the wondering eyes of a little child. To a child wild flowers such as dandelions are a thing of beauty. I happen to love a yard full of them. God has surrounded my house with music, the sweet songs of the birds This makes me wonder, does God sing? Do angels sing? Why not? God loves music. He created even the stars to sing. **Job 38:7 When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.**

4. Things should be put to God's use and glory. **Luke 19:31 The Lord hath need of him.** The man in this text was happy to give his colt for Jesus to use. Unknown to the owner, this occasion filled Old Testament prophecy. However, there are others who want to use things for their own comfort and enlargement rather than to promote the glory of God. You remember that Jesus talks about the rich young ruler. He could have had riches in Heaven but lost out because he would not give up the things of this earth. Immediate gain brought him eternal loss.

Whenever a Christian or a church defaults on its obligation, God's Name and reputation are disgraced. But if the Christian or the members of the church willingly sacrifice to pay the debt God will reward them with many personal blessings. Christ speaks of the Church of Smyrna **Revelation 2:9 I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich)** How so? How can they be rich and poor at the same time? My good friend, Nathan Meyer told me this illustration: a New York City tramp is in rags on the street. His rich uncle dies, and leaves him \$1,000,000. A Philadelphia lawyer locates him and stands before him with a check in his hand. The beggar is still in rags and poor. But when he cashes the check, he is rich. Christians are like that. We may be poor today, but in glory we'll have great riches waiting for us.

CONCLUSION: The best riches will not be material things as streets of gold or walls of precious stones; but rather of spiritual things. We'll enjoy a life perfect without sin and an eternity with supreme happiness and joy. It is not things that make us happy, but a Person, the **Lord Jesus Christ**, our precious **Savior**.

A GRAVE IN EVERY GARDEN 8-23-14

INTRODUCTION The title to this meditation might sound depressing to some. First, we'll examine the gardens with graves. Then we'll note why the Lord allowed them to be there for our eternal good. What is life all about? Is it about ourselves or about God? Is it about things, or about God? Death teaches us to center our life upon God rather than upon the pleasant possessions and pleasant activities of this world. We are all busy building gardens and in every one of them, death makes its dreaded appearance.

1. A Garden of perfection. Mankind began its existence in a perfect garden, the Garden of Eden. **Genesis 2:9** out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Here is the tree of life and the tree of death. Because of deliberate disobedience, man experienced death. I experienced death. I worked hard to build the garden of my life and enjoyed it for many years, but the day came when I buried my beloved Loretta. For fifty years we enjoyed each others companionship. But one sad day that ended. There is a grave in every garden, no matter how beautiful that garden is.

2. A Garden of flowers. **John 19:41, 42** Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. **42** There laid they Jesus This is the beautiful garden of Gethsemane. Here too was a tomb. The most lovely of gardens can be disfigured by death and sorrow.

3. A Garden of desire. **I Kings 21:1, 2** And it came to pass after these things, that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which was in Jezreel, hard by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. **2** And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house: Covetousness can kill. We are admonished in the commandments not to covet our friend's possessions, his successes, nor his abilities. We are to be content with the garden God gives us and not covet another person's garden. To covet is to find fault with God's loving provision for us. Ahab killed Naboth for his garden and lost his own life in the process.

4. A Garden of plenty The rich man had a huge garden. His barns could not contain all his crops. **Luke 12:20, 21** But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? **21** So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. This man trusted in his wealth and possessions more than he trusted God, and by doing so he shamed God. Oh yes, God can be shamed when we set our affections on the things of this world.. **Hebrews 11:16** now they (men and women of faith) desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God. Let us honor God by trusting Him completely and not shame Him before a watching wicked world.

5. A Garden of Paradise This garden is part of God's heavenly home. Christ died to make it possible for us to enjoy this garden. It will be an eternal garden of delights in which are the Tree of Life and the River of Living waters. We will enjoy supreme happiness and delight here. We will all be radiant with joy in Heaven for the privilege of serving Him there. My Pastor, Shawn Smith, often admonishes us to serve God here and now. How? Adam and Eve served by tending the Garden of Eden. We may serve by tending the garden where He placed us and doing so in such a manner as to

bring glory to His Name.

In summary: We are all building gardens in which to live. Why are there graves in our gardens? First, because God does not want us to become too attached to the things of this world. Where our treasure is, there will our heart be also. We are rather to seek the heavenly treasure which comes as we fellowship closely and deeply with God. Second, because God wants us to praise Him for everything that comes into our lives, both the good and the hurtful. **Psalm 150:1, 6 Praise ye the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power. Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.** How shall we praise? By boasting in God as long as we have breath. We will praise Him to our last penny, our last friend, our last loved one, our last day,. We must know that God has not made any mistakes concerning our gardens. We may not know now just why they are the way they are, but someday we'll understand.

CONCLUSION: When we go to prayer, let us remember God is omnipotent. The entire Bible teaches us that God can do anything. He is all powerful, all loving, and all knowing. None of our problems are too big for Him. As impossible as our prayers may seem, none are beyond His ability to perform. **Genesis 18:14** asks, **Is any thing too hard for the LORD?** Since, as we already observed, God is omniscient and loving, His answers to our prayers will be for our perfect good. We may pray with confidence. We may live in the garden He gives to us in perfect peace.

ARE YOU HUNGRY? 1-16-16

INTRODUCTION Sometimes I get hungry for a whopper, or ice cream, or chocolate, or apple pie. But this morning I'm not going to talk about physical hunger, but spiritual hunger. Am I spiritually hungry? This is a good question to ask ourselves at the beginning of a new year. I borrowed the basic idea from Jerrod Montgomery, missionary candidate to Puerto Rico.

1. In Luke 4:2 Jesus was **forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered.** Jesus became hungry - very hungry and weak for lack of food because he with us is human. Satan tempted him in the area of his hunger. Satan always tempts us in the area of our need or desires. Food was a legitimate need. Satan suggested: make these stones into loaves of bread. Nothing could have been easier for Jesus to do. But Jesus refused saying, **man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. Luke 4:4** He experienced a greater hunger for the Word of God than physical food. Let us examine ourselves. Do we have devotions before breakfast? How strong is our hunger for the Word of God? While in college, my roommates and I made a pact: no devotions, no breakfast. This idea remained with me through the years, and I practice it today. How can we sharpen our hunger for the Word? Constant use will sharpen our hunger.

2. We all get lonesome for special people in our lives. We could be surrounded by hundreds of people, and still be lonesome. I am surrounded by many friends, yet I am lonesome for my wife, Loretta. We can get a deep longing for special fellowship. Job had a hunger for fellowship with God. **Job 23:10 - 12 But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. 11 My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food** This hunger developed over time spent with God. Job missed his wife. his children. his friends. But most of all, Job missed communion with God. This is the one thing that satisfied his soul. He enjoyed talking to God daily. We could ask ourselves, does God speak to us daily? Do we miss Him when He doesn't?

3. Matthew 5:6 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. As I get older, there is one thing I deeply abhor and regret, that is, my sinful nature, my sinful past, my sinful present. I'm so glad to know that I've been forgiven, cleansed by the blood of Christ. But the propensity to sin is still with me. I'll be so glad when that sinful nature is gone forever. Now I hunger and thirst for righteousness and know that one day I shall be filled; fully satisfied. To be righteous is simply to do right in God's sight. This is my earnest desire.

4. We need to stay hungry. Proverbs 27:7 The full soul loatheth an honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet. So how do we stay hungry? Spiritual hunger is the opposite from physical hunger. The more I eat, the less hungry I become until I am stuffed and can eat no more. But spiritually, the more I consume, the hungrier I become. The more I digest God's Word, the more time I spend in fellowship with God, the more I strive for righteousness, the hungrier I get. My capacity grows. In the end, it will take eternity to satisfy that hunger.

One sure way to stay hungry is to share with others the blessings God gives to us. Our lives should be like a sieve rather than like a bucket. The more we share, the more God gives to us.

CONCLUSION: It is the Holy Spirit that gives us the right kind of hunger. We soon find the things

of this world do not satisfy. The more of this world we have and the more occupied we become with it, the less happy we are. Only the things of God give us a perfectly fulfilled life, And these are freely and abundantly available to us. Are you hungry for God? Am I?

CHANNELS of BLESSING John 17

INTRODUCTION: Christ has nothing but what He received from the Father. Like Him, we have nothing but what we receive. What we receive, we need to pass on. **Luke 6:38 Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men (and God) give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.** The hymn, “Channels Only” says it all.

John 17 is the prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ to His heavenly Father. In this prayer the word 'give' is used some sixteen times in reference to what the Father gave His Son, and what the Son passes on to us, His disciples. **vs. 2 thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.** The Father gives His Son power, that is, authority over all flesh. To what purpose? To give eternal life to as many as God has given to Him. This tells us that eternal life is only through the Son, and that there is a definite number that will be saved: **as many as.** After this number is filled, the gates of Heaven will be closed. This could happen at any moment.

If the world population is about 7 billion and there are 20 million true Christians in the world today, that would be about 28 hundreds of a percent. No one knows the exact figures. Obviously Christians are a very minuscule minority in the world. The vast majority, one day, will stand before the great white throne to be judged for their sins and cast into the eternal lake of fire. **Revelation 20:11-15 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. 14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.** It is horrible to think that this will include our unsaved loved ones and neighbors.

What must the recipients of eternal life do about it? We are to imitate Christ. Notice Christ finished the work God gave Him to do. By this means He glorified God. **John 17:4 I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.** Notice further that Christ did not come to be ministered unto, but to minister. **Matthew 20:28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.** We are to do the same: **John 20:21 as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. In John 17:15** Christ does not pray that we be taken out of the world. Why? Because we have a job to do. We are to tell sinners of God's loving salvation. **Mark 16:15, 16 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.** Now we can't save anyone, but we can share with everyone what Christ has done for us. Everyone includes family, friends, and especially our children. We don't want Satan to get control of even one son or daughter. Future generations depend upon our faithfulness. **Deuteronomy 4:10 that they may learn to fear (reverence) me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children.** I may add, we should teach our grandchildren too. It is possible that a fellow could go out soul winning on a regular basis, yet when asked, could not tell if his own grandchildren are saved. How about you? Are all your grandchildren saved? As a church family, we could join in prayer for some of the unsaved husbands and wives among our church members.

In John 17, the word 'give' or its derivative is used sixteen times. God gives to Jesus, Jesus to

His disciples, and we His disciples are to give to others. In this we are like sieves, not containers. Beside the gift of salvation, what other of God's blessings may we pass on? Here's several suggestions.

1. Comfort: God comforts us, not to make us comfortable, but comforters. **II Corinthians 1:3, 4 Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.** This troubled world needs a lot of comforters. **John 14:16, 26 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things.**

2. Intercessory prayer: Jesus prays for us. **John 17:9 I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.** The Holy Spirit prays for us **Romans 8:26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.** And we can and must intercede for each other. **Ephesians 6:18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.** I've noticed a strange thing, that when I pray for someone over a period of time, there seems to be a kind of bond between us, even when they are unaware I am praying for them. Prayer is a great power to move the hand of God. God delights in our prayers so much, that He stores every one of them. **Revelation 5:8 And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.**

3. God's Word: Jesus received the Father's message and passed it on to us. **John 17:8 For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them.** We, in turn, are to be channels of God's message to others. First, we give it to our children. **Deuteronomy 6:5 - 7 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. 6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: 7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.** Note that it takes only one generation to break the chain of Godly living.

Second, we are to teach others who, in turn, will become teachers: **II Timothy 2:2 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.**

4. Financial assistance: All we have we have received from God. **Philippians 4:19 My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.** All our needs being supplied, we in turn supply the needs of others as led by the Holy Spirit. Speaking of this, my friend, Pastor Tim Tanner commented that some in his congregation planned to give an inheritance to grandchildren who did not share their life values but probably would spend the money in a way they did not approve. How did he know this? These grandchildren did not attend any church. How the money will be used is something for us to consider in our giving.

CONCLUSION: Matthew. 10:8 freely ye have received, freely give. The value of a gift is determined by what it costs in terms of personal sacrifice. Its value is further evidenced by the need. Finally, note that we can give without loving, but we cannot love without giving. God so loves us, He has. And God keeps on giving and giving.

CHRISTMAS GIFTS 12-19-15

INTRODUCTION Where did the idea of giving gifts at Christmas come from? From God, of course. He so loved, He gave. You probably noticed that we can give without loving, but we cannot love without giving.

1. The gifts of God -- His only begotten Son. John. 3:16 Again **Isaiah 9:6** *For unto us a Son is given.* This is a gift we don't deserve. While in our sins we could not conceive of such a gift supplying our need. It was, and is, entirely God's idea. God knows it is the only way for man's sin to be forgiven.

This priceless gift requires a decision, our personal decision. Any gift can be received or rejected. Eternal life depends upon making a decision. I know of a boy that grew up in a Christian home. When he became a teen, he told his parents, both devote Christians, that the decision he made to receive Christ was not valid because he was too young to know what he was doing.. Now he told them he was going to live his life as he choose. His seeming rejection of God's loving gift broke his parents hearts. True, a person can reject God's loving gift, but only with eternal consequences. I have a question in light of **Hebrews 6:4-6** *For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, 5 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, 6 If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.* Is it possible to reject God's gift and then later to repent and be saved? I earnestly pray that this may be the case for the young man I spoke about.

2. The gifts of the wise men Matthew 2:1-12 These men traveled many weeks to Bethlehem. If by coach, they would travel 7 miles-per-hour. If they traveled by camel, it would be 3 miles-per-hour. They were guided by a star which they first saw in the East. I believe this star was an angel. Why? Because it disappeared until they got to Jerusalem and reappeared to lead them to Bethlehem as it stood over the very house where was the Christ Child. It had to appear very low to single out a particular house in the village.

They brought gifts. A gift has to have significance to be meaningful and appropriate. May I illustrate? My Mother and Dad married during the time of the great depression. Little money was to be had. They each wore a wedding ring, but mother longed for a diamond. She hinted as only a woman can, but dad did not seem to take the hint. We three children were grown and could have bought her a ring but it would not be appropriate. Only one person in the world could give her that ring: my Dad. Then one special Christmas, Dad made her a present of a little box. Mother was so excited and happy she could hardly contain herself. No one ever opened a gift with more anticipation. But, alas, it was not a ring. Mom was almost in tears. Happy to say, a few days later, Dad took her to the jewelers and bought her her heart's desire. The wise men brought gifts that were appropriate and meaningful. You know the gifts.

GOLD This is the highest and finest of the metals and speaks of the kingship of Christ. He is sovereign of the universe. Gold speaks of Christ's pre-incarnate glory The Holy of Holies was solid gold or covered with gold. In Heaven the gold is so pure it is clear like sparkling crystal. Gold speaks of Christ's untarnished and unblemished character. He is completely without sin. Gold is a proper gift to the Lord of the world. It represents the fruit of our labor, our very life. Note that this gift of gold paid for the family's trip to Egypt. God provided beforehand.

Frankincense Frankincense speaks of Christ's purity of life. It means whiteness. It speaks of the sweet fragrance of His life. He was never hurried or upset. He treated even His enemies kindly and

with respect saying, "Father, forgive them".

Myrrh This speaks of the sweetness of His death, His suffering for our sins. Christ became a man, just like you and me. In Genesis 1, man was made in the image of God. In Matthew 1, God was made in the image of man. I've seen a lot of Christians, but not one saved apart from the shed blood of Christ. I've seen a lot of men go willfully on their way to hell, but not one that could not have been saved had they put their trust in Christ for the forgiveness of sins.

3. Your gift and mine Our first response should be to take God's gift. Our second response in loving appreciation, is to offer to God the only thing He desires: our entire selves **Romans 12:1, 2** *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.* This relationship releases us from all pressure and worry. We belong to Him who says, *come to Me and I will give you rest* **Matthew 11:28 - 30.** We are eternally secure in Him.

One Christmas, Loretta and I thought we were not giving enough to God for Christmas so we determined to give Him the value of all the gifts we gave to others. It made us careful what we spent and how we gave because we did not have much money. We gave a lot of homemade gifts that year. It was a soul-satisfying experience. You may want to try giving like this this Christmas.

Conclusion may all our gifts be meaningful and appropriate this year. They will be if they are gifts of love. God's gift of His Son is the most meaningful and appropriate of all. Let's be eternally grateful.

DEALING WITH DIFFICULTY 7-23-16

INTRODUCTION Every person looks good when everything is going well. It is when we are under pressure and have to deal with difficulty that true character is revealed. We admire the person who does not throw a pity party because of trying circumstances. Today let's learn how to rise above difficulties.

When I have difficulties, I'm glad I have friends to help me. Recently Ron fixed my weed-whacker and the bumper on my car. Dave fixed my air-conditioner. Pastor English fixed my smoke alarms. Dr. McNeilly always helps with my manger scene. Steven Smith cut my grass and trimmed my yard. Fred Pardee replaced my dusk-to-dawn sensor high up on the chimney. I thank God for each of these. But when friends and loved ones cannot help, God can. **Psalm 34:17, 19** *The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.* Let's examine some of the times only God can help us out of our difficulties.

1. People problems First, the Bible tells us to feed our enemies. **Proverbs 25:21-22** *If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: 22 For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee.* Do an act of kindness to help him overcome his problems. God will reward and deliver you. *When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.* **Proverbs 16:7** This is putting hot coals on his head. To make him suffer? No, our enemy's fire went out so we are giving him coals to start another.

If nothing works, do what my friend, John, did. John worked at GM. His boss had it in for him because he was a Christian. We prayed but the boss only got worse. We prayed harder, and one day, John came smiling. I asked him what happened. He said the boss was transferred. In all circumstances of life we are not to strive, but to be gentle and to trust God to deal with people when we cannot. **II Tim 2:24-26** *And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, 25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; 26 And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil,* Barbara Portner was a wife in my church with an unsaved unreasonable husband. He insisted she go with him to beer parties which thing she was loath to do. I suggested she offer to have a very nice party for him and his friends at their house, but without the alcohol. She prayed. I prayed. He agreed to it, and it went off very well. Later he got saved.

2. Physical problems Who doesn't get sick or physically hurt? We all do. God uses these down times in our lives to teach us valuable spiritual lessons. These lessons we may not otherwise learn. When we suffer, the Word of God opens up to us in new and deeper spiritual ways. **Psalm 119:71** *It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.*

God has a plan for every life. One of my favorite Bible stories is in **John 9:1-ff**. It tells of a man who was born blind for the purpose of bringing glory to God. How we act or react in our sickness can bring glory to God as well as comfort with encouragement to others. God promises sufficient grace for every situation. **II Corinthians 12:9**

David dealt with a physical giant in Goliath. He purposed to honor God in this difficulty, and God delivered him. **I Samuel 17:46** *This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; ---that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.*

3. Financial problems We all can use a little more money. Some of us can use a lot more. As Christians it is hard to realize we all have exactly what we need. **Philippians 4:19** God promises to

supply all our need and He has. Our wants may be another matter entirely. Yet I've seen God supply some wants and desires, too. May I share some personal experiences? Loretta was a sickly girl when we got married. We had no money for insurance so God kept us healthy. But one winter Loretta got a touch of pneumonia. We called our doctor whom we had not seen for a long time. His nurse asked us who our family doctor was. I answered, "Check your records. You are." I'm glad God kept us so healthy during the time we had no insurance and nothing with which to pay.

I was driving an old 1948 Chevy for which I paid \$85. One afternoon I visited a farm house into which a new family had moved. The lady looked past me at my car and said, "I don't think we'll be going to your church." As I walked back to my car I said to God, "This car is no credit to your Name or cause. I need another." Shortly after, God arranged for us to get a little money and a much better car. The salesman was a Christian who knew my feeble financial circumstances. He asked how I was going to pay for it. I replied, "cash on delivery." Debt was out of the question. We were too poor to go into debt. It takes money to go into debt. Besides, we had a life-long policy not to go into debt.

I have some young friends who make the mistake of borrowing money to pay for daily expenses. That is a terrible situation with no happy ending. May God show us all how to live within our incomes. God did promise us daily bread.

4. Work Related problems In this instance we should be very careful that the problem is not caused by something we do. Ecclesiastes **9:10** says, *Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.* Work hard. Be diligent. Be dependable. Give it your best. Work as though you are doing it for the Lord, because in fact, you are. Chuck was a southerner with a wife, three children, and a hound dog called 'Old Sweet Thing'. An auto mechanic, he secured a job at a new car agency. The owner instructed him to cheat by saying that he had changed the oil in the cars brought in for inspection, when in fact, he had not. Chuck was a Christian and really needed this job. He expected to be fired when he told the boss he would only do what was written on the work sheet. Realizing he had a very honest employee, the owner kept him. We should not be surprised at this because people respect a man of character.

Sometimes the Lord has to take a direct hand in the matter. Chuck Miner of Mentor, Ohio, an electrician friend of mine, took **Romans 14:8** to heart. *For whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord.* His church began a building project. Chuck, in his love for the Lord, offered to do the electrical work free of charge. Unfortunately, his union became angry and forced his employer to fire him. The employer fired Chuck. But as soon as he fired him, he rehired him this time as management. This miracle made Chuck's God look good.

Sometimes even pastors face difficulties serving their churches. This was the case with Louis Bedison. He was now an old retired pastor when I first met him some fifty eight years ago at my first church. He came one Sunday morning and sat in the back row. Other churches refused to welcome him because he was old and did not dress very well. He was a poor widower. We made him feel comfortable and wanted. He then told us the following story. He had pastored a country church. The deacon meetings were traditionally held at the parsonage. The pastor was expected to serve dinner before the meeting. On this occasion, the church had not paid him in weeks. Consequently the pastor and his wife had nothing to eat. His worried wife asked, "What will we do?" He answered, "Set the table and fill the glasses with water." The deacons sat around the table and Pastor Bedison asked one of them to lead in a prayer of thanksgiving. The deacon looked at the bare table and asked, "Where is the food?" Bedison replied that everything they had in the house was set out to eat, please pray. The next day several bags of groceries were brought and a check for his wages.

5. Spiritual troubles and temptations. Nothing we face in this life is new to mankind. But Christians have a comforting promise. **I Corinthians 10:13** *There hath no temptation taken you but such as is*

common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. Temptation means testing. Therefore, when testing comes our way, excuses won't satisfy God. One day we'll stand before Christ and give an account for how we handled testing and with what attitude we faced the situation.

Little Hocking, Ohio cemetery had a headstone which read: "Stranger pause, as you pass by, as you are now so once was I. As I am now, so you shall be. Prepare to die and follow me." My answer, in view of the judgment to come was: "To follow you I'll not consent until I know which way you went."

II Corinthians 5:10 *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.* May we be able to give a good account of ourselves to God Who promised never ever to leave us nor forsake us.

Conclusion Job reminds us: *Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.* Jesus said, **John 16:33** *These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.* Isaiah said in **Isaiah 40:31** *But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.* James concludes: **James 1:2-4** *My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; 3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. 4 But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*

We do not know what a day will bring our way, but God knows all the difficulties we shall experience.. **Matthew 6:31, 32** *Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? 32 ...for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things*

We do not need to worry about our daily difficulties whether physical (health), financial (money), or spiritual (relationship to God). Our Heavenly Father knows all about our trials and promises to provide for us. To trust Him completely is the best way to deal with every difficulty.

DEEP ROOTS 4-21-18

INTRODUCTION: Roots. Tree roots vary in depth and can spread out three times as far beyond their branches. Pine roots are about a foot deep; sugar maple roots from 1½ to 3½ feet deep; and black walnut roots 11 feet deep. The deepest roots are those of the wild fig which go up to 400 feet deep. Hmmm...Try pulling up the wild fig or this one that the Lord plants. **Jeremiah 17:7, 8** *Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.* The tree the Lord plants brings continual blessing. It's fruit never fails because it's roots are by the river. God makes this tree bear sweet fruit.

The Bible speaks about another root more difficult to pull up than that of the wild fig. But the Bible also gives hope even so.

Did you ever hear someone say, "I resent that!"? This comes from the depths of a very bitter heart. His unhappiness is devastating and very difficult to describe. He is choking on a grudge. This bitterness can cause mass murder. This bitterness can cause even a Christian to turn his back on God and quit church. Such a bitter person has cut off the grace of God to his own discomfort. Do you not think it is foolish to forsake the help God freely provides? Resentment takes deep root. **Hebrews 12:15** *Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you.* This verse implies that every man may be tempted to bitterness. It goes on to describe bitterness as a defiling sin most difficult to remove. This bitter person refuses to forgive and forget. He finds it difficult, if not impossible, to overlook a fault. He will blame everyone else rather than himself for his feelings. He is like a woman Dr. Vance Havner tells about who went to see a noted psychiatrist with a strip of bacon over each ear and a fried egg on her head saying she came to see him about her brother. All the while she's the one who really needed help. The bitter person is usually unaware of just how bitter he is, though it is often obvious to all others. The bitter person is in critical need of help.

1. What may cause bitterness?

Pride. Someone hurts my feelings so I may become bitter. This is offended pride. My mother used to say: "Don't stick your feelings out so far." She was quite right, of course. Modern young people who are so quick to say "I'm offended" would do well to take my Mom's advice. Moses, we know from Scripture, was one of the most humble of men that lived. Yet, like the rest of us, he was weakest in his strongest point. **Psalms 106:33** *they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.* On this occasion, speaking unadvisedly with his lips, he did not give God the credit for the miraculous provision of water. As a result he was prohibited from entering the Promised Land. Resentment will cause all of us to do foolish things causing us untold problems.

We have unfulfilled expectations. A waitress at Outback Steak House restaurant deeply resented not getting the tip she expected, and may I say, deserved. She experienced the pain of unrealized rights. A church had ordered many expensive take out meals. She assembled them, and brought them out to the waiting car. She was paid, but without a tip. The church driver did not know he was expected to tip. She made the mistake of posting her grievance on Facebook, and was promptly fired. Outback does not allow any reference to customers on public media. When the church heard about this, it immediately apologized and gave her a large tip. Had she followed the Bible, and said something to the church, or driver, all would have been well and she would still have her job.

Sometimes promises are made to us that will be broken. This can cause bitterness. Parents need to take care that when they promise their children something, they do it as quickly as possible. A

habit of unfulfilled promises to a child, could easily result in a warped personality and making this child bitter the rest of his life. Unfortunately, he may take this bitterness with him into his own marriage.

Someone hurt us or took advantage of us. In a moment I'm going to tell you about an elderly lady who felt cheated by the township when it took her house from her. She was wronged. She was treated unjustly. We hear of governmental entities that take a legal seizure of property without due process by using a law designed to curtail the drug cartel. Wrongful use of such a law can hurt innocent victims. Then we heard of the use of eminent domain to confiscate a woman's property for the sole benefit of a private business. This action violates the original purpose of the law. Who would not feel abused when his property rights are violated?

Someone wrongs us or wrongs a loved one. The classic Bible case here is that of Ahithophel. He was King David's wisest counselor, but turned on David later in life choosing to side with Absalom, David's rebellious son. You remember how Absalom plotted to be king in place of his father. But when Absalom was killed in battle, Ahithophel went home, set his affairs in order, and hung himself. Why this tragic end? Because Ahithophel was Bathsheba's grandfather. He resented David for violating Bathsheba and killing her husband. His anger toward David resulted in him taking up a reproach against David and then taking his own life. **Proverbs 14:29 says: *He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.*** Even smart people like Ahithophel sometimes act in anger because of bitterness. Their involved loved ones live to regret it.

Someone points out our failings. Job had three miserable friends who went to great pains to point out his faults. They hampered his goals and they thwarted his ambitions. I suppose on Job's part this touched his pride or must have hurt his feelings. Pastors can become the object of dislike when they feel the need to recommend discipline of a sinning and unrepentant church member. The resentful person in this instance may justify his feelings by accusing the pastor of a lack of love or of unfairness. He usually can get a number of others to side with him against the pastor and the church. Thus his anger is reinforced by sympathetic friends. What he does not realize is that by constantly thinking and dwelling upon an erring person, over a period of time, he will become increasingly just like him and act just like him.

2. What are the effects of bitterness?

I have a hole in my throat. It is caused by an acid re-flux that I have experienced for many years. Food gets caught in this hole and I cannot do anything about it. This food rots causing me to have a vile smelling breath. My poor Loretta endured it only because she loved me. But other people keep their distance and I don't blame them. People harboring bitterness can be just as offensive forcing others to avoid them. Listening to a bitter person will make one miserable. Listening to someone's bitterness has sometimes spoiled an entire day for me. May I illustrate? Years ago, while pastor in this church, I visited an elderly lady in her home near the airport. She was the most unhappy person I have ever met. Week after week she constantly let me know why she was so miserable. She was full of grief and grudge because she was forced to sell her home when the airport needed to enlarge its runways. This was against her will. She could not forget. She would not forgive this wrong in a million years. She carried this angry bitterness to the grave. She made everyone around her feel unhappy as they listened to her. I wonder what would have happened if she had left this circumstance in the hands of God.

Bitterness can lead to deadly consequences. It seems as though it causes some maladjusted people to mass murder. We only have to examine the recent Florida school shooting where seventeen were murdered. Unfortunately, controlling guns will not control these angry bitter people. Guns don't kill. Uncontrolled, bitter and angry people do kill.

Physical consequences of bitterness include a chemical imbalance in our bodies, contorted facial features, and deteriorating health. Spiritual consequences include a limited ability to love God as we

should. Then there is emotional depression. Resentments use up emotional energy. Mentally, the bitter person allows another to control his thoughts and actions. Decisions become distorted. After 20 years, as I said, the bitter person will become just like the one they so dislike. Why? Because he thinks of this person much of the time. Finally, we note that God's purposes are hindered by bitterness. Temporal and spiritual values become greatly distorted.

3. What is the cure for bitterness? If we are prone to resentment, we need to seek a cure. After all, why should we allow someone else to determine how we think or feel? Years ago I was involved in church extension in Ohio by starting new churches. I drove many miles crisscrossing the state. Often I would pass through a small town south of Cleveland. It seems every time I did, a car would pull out of a drive just ahead of me so that I would have to apply the breaks, hard, to avoid an accident. This day, as I approached the town, I gritted my teeth and hoped it would not happen again. Then I saw it. Up ahead I saw a car in a drive to the right. It just sat there until I drove close. Suddenly it pulled out in front of me. Again I had to slam the breaks to avoid an accident. I'm ashamed to say, I lost the victory, and became very angry. Call it road rage. About that time the Lord tapped me on the shoulder. He said: "Do you see that old fellow just ahead of you who pulled out in front of you? See how happy he is? Now why should you let him determine how you are going to feel the rest of the day and the rest of your life?" I got the point. I calmed down and got right with God. Ever afterwards, to my surprise, I never had trouble in that town again.

Bitterness has five fellow-travelers. Count them. **Ephesians 4:31** *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:* Who wants to carry a load of wrath, anger, clamor, evil speaking, and malice like a monkey on his back the rest of his life? Sometimes the people who have the root of bitterness exhibit certain characteristics. They may wade in self-pity, show pride, drown in animosity and resentment, desire to make someone else suffer, or become vindictive. Often they have a hard time enjoying life. They have a hard time enjoying a good meal.

Ephesians 4:32 shows us how to get rid of this unmanageable monkey: *be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.* All we have to do is be kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving. In other words, treat others just as Christ has treated us. Is that so hard?

So how do we cure bitterness? 1) Determine, by God's grace, to take control of our attitudes and actions. Thus we will please God. 2) Determine, by God's grace, to forgive fully, freely, unconditionally, and forever, just as Christ has forgiven us. 3) Determine, by God's grace, to yield all our rights to Him, and not to ever take them back. 4) Determine, by God's grace, to thank God for this hurtful situation knowing that He allowed it for our spiritual growth. 5) Finally, determine, by God's grace, to invest something of value in that offending person, without ever expecting anything in return. Begin by meeting some of that person's needs.

A cure is possible when we lay all on the altar. **Romans 12:1, 2.** Unfortunately, altogether too many Christians enjoy being bitter and offended. I don't know why. They refuse the cure no matter how miserable their malady makes them. This results in the unhappiness of their loved ones, friends, and everyone close to them.

If anyone had a legitimate excuse for being bitter, it was Joseph. He was sold by his brothers into slavery and he was wrongly jailed and put in chains. It seemed God forgot him for thirteen years. But he refused to become bitter. In the end, he could say, *But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.*

Genesis 15:20

CONCLUSION: I repeat God's clear directive found in **Ephesians 4:31** *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice.* When a determined Christian will do this; when a determined church will do this, all its members will show love one for another, and will enter into the full unity of the Spirit that God expects of His children. Most believers do not realize God has promised His own special blessings for the church that enjoys this unity of the Spirit. Read **Psalm 133:1-3.**

FINGER IN THE FROSTING 12-20-14

INTRODUCTION I had a well known pastor of yesteryear in my pulpit several times. He is Dr. William McCarrell, pastor of the great Cicero Bible Church. With his church he started over twenty-two other churches in the Chicago area. He tells this story about one of his sons. Apparently his wife caught the lad putting his finger in the frosting of the cake and licking it. She told her preacher husband who simply said, "He has a foretaste". As children of the King of Kings, we have some wonderful things to experience, and sometimes, our Lord gives us a foretaste of what is to come. It is like a finger in the frosting.

1. Mark 13:23 *behold, I have foretold you all things.* What things? That this earth and the world system is going to come to an end. Why should it come to an end? To make place for something far far better. **25** *And the stars of heaven shall fall,* **26** *And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.* **27** *And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds,* What an exciting experience to meet the Lord in the air and forever be with Him. Note: Ever since I was a boy I hoped that during the rapture on my way up I would be able to stop and walk on the moon. What will we experience in Heaven? **I Corinthians 2:9** *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.* **I Peter 1:4** *an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,*

In heaven time will be no more. Yes, there will be months and seasons because the trees along the river will bear a different fruit each month. But in view of eternity, we will be under no time constraint to get a job done. Today God sees us in light of eternity. Perhaps that is the reason He does not answer our prayers on our time schedule but on His own.

2. We shall be changed I Corinthians. 15:51 Why? So we will be enabled to enjoy the glories of Heaven. A blind man cannot understand the beauties of a sunset, of flowers, of mountains and lakes. In our natural state we cannot enjoy the wonders of Heaven. Sin has deadened our senses. We need to be revitalized. And we shall be. Also, we need to be healed, healthy and happy. My grandfather when he was dying of cancer did not want to see me. His pain was too great. God will prepare us so that we are able to enjoy Heaven. **2 Corinthians 5:17** *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

3. Hope, the expectation of future good shall be realized.

Suffering shall give way to consolation: **II Corinthians. 1:7** *our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation.* We have little comfort here, but will enjoy perfect bliss in Heaven. When times were difficult, Loretta once received a card that said: "keep your chin up". It helped to dry her tears to know that someone cared. It would be nice if an angel would wipe away our tears. Even better, God Himself is going to do that. He is not going to leave this loving act to another.

God will remove all our pain. When I think of pain, I think of Steve Rene'. Why has God allowed him to suffer so deeply for so long? In view of heaven's health and happiness, the joy set before us will wipe away all remembrance of suffering. The early Christian martyrs welcomed suffering as a means of greater eternal rewards. When we get to Heaven, these martyrs may ask us how we have suffered for Christ's sake. What would we be able to tell them?

As we age, our strength and our health leaves us. But we have the hope of the resurrection: **I Peter 1:3** *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant*

mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, Strength and health shall forever be restored. More than that: **Titus 2:12-14** We are redeemed from all iniquity and will be purified at His glorious appearing. **I John 3:2, 3** We shall be like Him. How so? We shall be without sin or any imperfection to spoil our lives.

4. We shall speak to Him face to face. It is wonderful to communicate with God and Him with us. Recently I had a different kind of experience. Someone phoned me saying they needed some money. I asked how much. They replied, \$100.00. They wanted to exchange some articles for the money. It was something I could use and worth more than the \$100.00. But I found myself saying, “No, I don’t want to go that route. I’ll just give you the money.” Strange, but it did not seem to me like I was making the decision or talking, but that the Holy Spirit spoke through me. To this day I feel the Lord put that in my mind. Won’t it be wonderful when we come face to face with the Holy Spirit and with our Lord and speak to them directly? What a wonderful privilege. What a wonderful experience.

Conclusion: some of our experiences on earth can be a little foretaste of what we shall experience in Heaven. It is a little like the finger in the frosting. A pastor friend of mine once said to me: “If we have no faith in the future, we have no power in the present.” Let us exercise our faith in Christ and rejoice in the happy anticipation and expectation of the best things still to come.

FRESH STARTS or THE GOD OF SECOND CHANCES 9-19-15

INTRODUCTION All humans sin and come short of the glory and the expectation of God. This is as true of the saved sinner as the unsaved sinner. Where does that leave us? Does God give us another chance? Yes, He does. He does more than forgive: He forgets. God goes far beyond forgiveness. God imparts the righteousness of Christ to us. This means He now sees us without blemish or the taint of sin. He sees us sinless and perfect just as He sees Christ. Let's look at some men, all great sinners, who were given new starts in life.

1. PETER: Peter's sin is the sin of broken promises. Now a man of integrity will keep his word. He will do what he says he will do even without written contract or witnesses. It is a matter of personal honor. He will keep his word though it is inconvenient or costly.

Peter loved the Lord Jesus. He offered never to leave or forsake Jesus though his life was at stake. **John 13:37** Peter meant what he said. Then when Jesus was arrested, a set of circumstances arose where Peter became ashamed to admit he was a disciple of Jesus. He went back on his word. He broke his promise to God.

Circumstances may arise in our lives where we are ashamed to own up to the truth. We tell a lie. All of us have faced this sometime in our life. Can God forgive us? Yes. Will He forgive? Yes. It took a long time for Satan to sift Peter and cause him to sin. But one brief look of sorrowing love from his Lord, and Peter went out and wept bitterly. The resurrected Lord approached Peter three times to restore him. Understand that Peter had denied Him three times before the cock crowed. Peter was reconciled to God and went on to faithfully serve Him the remainder of his life. He got a second chance and did not fail.

His report card in the end showed that Peter did well. I had a six year old neighbor boy. His name was Timmy. One school day I saw him sitting on my back step with his report card in his hand. He looked so dejected, so defeated. He had never received a report card before, and now he had to show this one to his Mother. I faced him and he reached the card up to me. I looked at it, and said, "Why Timmy, this is a good report card. Your Mother will be proud of you." He said, "She will?" He reached up, grabbed the card and ran home.

I'm sure our Lord gave Peter a good report saying "Well done my good and faithful servant." We too are given a second chance when God deals with us about lying or other matters important to Him. May we faithfully use our new opportunity so that we will hear a well done from our Lord.

2. JONAH: Jonah's sin is the sin of rebellion. Jonah knew exactly what God wanted him to do. God's instructions are precise. But Jonah said "no" and did the opposite thing. Jonah was a prophet, but first and foremost, he was a servant to our Lord. Each of us are servants to God today. In that sense we are deacons. In the New Testament the word deacon refers to a servant thirty-eight times. The basic Greek meaning of the word is "to kick up the dust". This means to serve with alacrity and swiftly so as to make a dust cloud. **Ecclesiastes 9:10** *Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might;*

Are there times when the Holy Spirit speaks to us and we understand what He wants us to do, but we refrain because of pride, or fear, or simple unwillingness? Perhaps the Holy Spirit tells us to witness to a particular person. It may be to a relative. Once I had a good opportunity to witness. It was at Schoenbrunn, Ohio, a Moravian settlement. God's acre is a cemetery plot that had a restored log chapel. Some of the tourist there said, "To bad there's not a preacher here to preach to us." I was a pastor but I was afraid to speak out. I have always regretted it with shame. Time and opportunity pass and we sometimes fail to do it. While God dealt sternly with Jonah, He may not be so stern with us. God did give Jonah a second chance. If we fail to witness, it is not the end of the world. God most certainly will

give us another chance. Let us thank Him and take the new opportunity to obey and please Him. It will rejoice our soul.

3. **DAVID:** David's sin is the sin of adultery and murder. We know David to be a man after God's own heart. Could he remain so after his moral failures? We know what happened. David repented **Psalm 51, and Psalm 32** God forgave him and gave him a second chance. God allowed him to remain as king and to author Scripture. But there were devastating consequences and spiritual scars. We may be forgiven for sin, but we are never the same afterward. There are always scars. I know well the scars I received, when as a boy, I fell out of our old family car as we went down the road. David's consequences for his sin were terrible. His baby boy died. His sons rebelled against him. His wives were publicly humiliated. He would never fully be the Godly man he could have been because of his sin. Yes, God gave him a new beginning, but he experienced much heartache and pain. He lived and died with regrets. So let's avoid willful sin with all the strength we have.

4. **MOSES:** Moses' sin is the sin of pride. You and I may not admit it, even to ourselves, that we are full of pride. Moses was called the meekest of men **Numbers 12:3**. But he had hidden pride that attached to him like glue. He told God he was slow of speech when in fact he was well educated and articulate. The five books attributed to his pen attest to that. Pride made him angry with God's people **Psalm 106:33**. So he smote the rock and acted as though he himself brought forth the water. The fact is that God in mercy gave the water. But as a consequence of not giving God the glory, Moses was forbidden to enter the promised land. Even so, God gave Moses a new start and used him to bring blessing to millions of people through the Scriptures he wrote. Moses saved all Israel from destruction by creative prayer. Have you tried creative prayer recently? Loretta and I used to give two fine little neighbor boys some candy. Their Mother instructed them, strictly, never to ask us for candy. One day we came home from the store and they ran to meet us. They said, "You gave us candy once." Now, they never asked for some. But you know we gave them candy. That was creative praying.

If a mighty spiritual giant like Moses had pride, let's take a careful look in the mirror of God's Word. Let's let God show us our own hidden pride, seek forgiveness, and serve Him with true meekness and humility.

CONCLUSION: Whatever our failure might be, whether broken promises, rebellion, moral failure, pride or some other matter, let us seek God's face for forgiveness and restoration. In love and mercy, He will give us a fresh start with a new beginning and a second chance. Praise His Name.

GOD NEVER SAYS “OOPS” 5-28-17

INTRODUCTION Some of us say “oops” pretty often because we make a lot of mistakes. God never makes mistakes. He never has to say “oops”. God is perfect in every way, every day.

1. God does not lie. He is the truth. **John 14:6** *I am the truth,* **John 16:7** *Nevertheless I tell you the truth;* **Titus 1:2** *which God, that cannot lie, promised* So when God says He loves me, I know He does. When God promised to forgive my sins, I can depend upon it. His fingers are not crossed. God always says what He means, and means what He says. Therefore I live in peace knowing every one of God words is true. This includes the entire Bible. Don't you wish that this was the case with everyone you know? If everyone always told the truth as does God, we would not have to make them sign the dotted line in business matters. Their simple word would be sufficient no matter the thousands of dollars involved.

2. God never made a mistake when He created the world and the universe. It did not take Him long to create, just six days. God did not make junk. He did not have to revise or improve upon anything that He created. He did not have to have any recalls just because something wasn't working as it was supposed to work. That's why I can't believe global warming is a problem. **Genesis 1:31** *And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.* God provided everything man would ever need as far as this earth is concerned. He knew ahead of time we would have automobiles and coal fired generating plants and planed ahead of time. Therefore global warming or global cooling does not concern Him.

We love God's creation and see His infinite planning and handiwork on every side. When we carefully examine the flowers, we see God. When we observe the stars, we see God. A waterfall, the oceans, the mountains, the forests, the birds and animals all remind us of God's wisdom and perfection. His creation is a visual delight and food to delight our souls. Mere man is incapable of making any adjustment or improvement to God's creation. Whatever man did to creation would be imperfect. And why should it not? Man does not have the wisdom, judgment, or power of God at his disposal. Man can't do much to help himself and nothing to improve this earth. Why does man want to tinker with God's creation after God examined it and called it good?

Many mornings as I walk I see the sun rise. First comes the glorious bright colors across the sky. These colors make me rejoice with the promise of a new day full of God's love. Then the shining sun itself arises. The thought comes to me that nothing can stop the sun. Just so, nothing can stop God from doing His will or working His plans. There is no room for “oops” in the sunrise. And there is no room for “oops” in the day God plans for me.

Psalm 124:8 gives us one of the reasons that it is important that His creation be flawless from the moment of its conception. It says: *Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.* Here we see that the quality of God's help to us is equated to the perfect quality of His creation. Man's help may come short or be defective, but not God's. His help to us is well timed and suited to our individual needs.

Some critics claim God admitted a mistake, an “oops”, in **Genesis. 6:6**. Here it says that *it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.* Actually, what grieved the Lord here was not His act of creating, but man's ubiquitous evil. **vs. 11** describes how uncontrollably violent man had become. Man behaved totally debauched morally and physically. For man's own sake, God destroyed all life with a universal flood. Had man continued downward in his sin, his ultimate punishment would have been that much greater.

Other critics claim God erred when He approved Saul to be King of Israel. Admittedly Saul

made a mess of things. The prophet Samuel said to Saul: **1 Samuel 15:23** *For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.* What these critics overlook is that the LORD used Saul to eliminate some of His enemies, and to train David and prepare him for the kingship of Israel. David became a king after God's own heart.

3. God never made a mistake when He created each of us just as we are. After God created the heavens and the earth, He inspected it. **Genesis 1:31** *And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.* This can also be said of everything He has made since the original creation including the generations of mankind. There's not an "oops" among the billions of people on earth. A few may be born handicapped according to our way of thinking. Others may look in the mirror and not like what they see. But this does not mean a mistake was made. God has the highest purpose and plan for every man. His plan will only be revealed in eternity. There will be a day when every Christian is conformed to the image of Christ. **Romans 8:29** *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son,* I never understood what this meant until recently. I always wondered how we could be in the image of the Divine. Now I know it means that we will be in the image of Christ in His perfection as a human being. We will be as Adam and Eve in the Garden before sin entered. Then will we mortals fully understand and appreciate God's love and wisdom. Until then we need to trust Him with our lives.

But, you say, "Why did God make me or allow me to be so poor? Isn't this a mistake? Does not God have the ability to do much better by me?" I would like you to observe, that with God, your poverty is not an "oops". Remember He is looking ahead much further than you can see. His plan is for your highest good and blessing that as we already noted, will be revealed in eternity. Jesus on earth was very poor. Then you remember the very poor widow. **Luke 21:2-4** *And he (Jesus) saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.* We don't know whether this widow was young or old, whether she had children or none. We do know that all she possessed in life was two cents. This she freely and lovingly gave to her God. We do know God took care of her in this life and is greatly rewarding her now in glory. So don't waste any time feeling sorry for her. Just so, we too can trust God no matter how much or how little of material things He gives us in this life. None of us has missed a meal. We have clothes on our back and a roof over our heads. What more could we want? Let's be full of gratitude as we enjoy it all every day.

4. God does all things well. **Mark 7:37** The people who observed Jesus, Who Himself is God, *were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well:* There is no room for "oops" here. Although this is true with God, there are still those who will ask:

a) **If God does every thing well, why is there a Satan and sin?** We may never know this side of Heaven why God allowed Satan and sin. We do know God did not cause sin. In fact, God never sins because He is holy, and He never tempts anyone to sin. **James 1:13, 14** *Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: 14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.* Some Bible commentators think that God wanted man to have a free will so that man could truly love God. Having this free will enabled man, because of his pride, to willfully enter into sin. But God in love provided forgiveness and restoration through His Son.

b) **If God does every thing well, why do people get sick?** Is it because God can't help them and says "oops"? Of course not. Sickness and death are the direct and indirect result of sin. Jesus

never got sick because He was without sin. Jesus healed hundreds, even thousands of people while on earth. I think He did this for two reasons. First, to show us that He could heal; and second, to reassure us that in the resurrection we will all be healed perfectly and forever. **Psalm 103:3** *Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;* **Revelation 21:4** *And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.* God did not create us to suffer. In His love for us He will restore us to the original condition of the Garden of Eden before the fall.

c) If God does every thing well, why does God allow wars and terrible tragedies to happen such as 9/11? Is God impotent? Is “oops” the best He can do? No. Until God sets up His own kingdom in the millennium He allows man to show what he can do. But man is an utter failure in his efforts to establish a good society. Consequently there will continue wars and rumors of wars without end until God does take over. It is obvious that in our present political situation Satan is stirring the pot. How else can we explain the violent and unaccountable actions of so many uncontrollable protesters and evil doers? They act without reason, justice, or mercy.

During WW II I was a teenager. It seems that a patrol of US soldiers came upon five Japanese who proceeded to run away as fast as they could. The Americans threw a lot of lead after them without hitting any of them. The comment was made that if it had been a deer that they were shooting, it would have been so full of lead it couldn't be eaten. Obviously they missed on purpose. It seems that if our soldiers had shot to kill, the war would have taken only half so long to win. Later I had a Japanese roommate in seminary. Perhaps he was one of those who escaped.

5. God never makes wrong assumptions. I make wrong assumptions all the time often to my discomfort. I was in a city new to me: Wilmington, Delaware. I inquired as to which bus to take to go to the public library in the center of town. I was told to take the #10 bus. I did. But soon discovered we were traveling out in the country away from the city. It was the correct # 10 bus, but going in the wrong direction. I was sincere but made the wrong assumption. Some make sincere but wrong assumptions about salvation. Consequently they never get saved.

Years later a church in rural Ohio asked me to come to help them settle a dispute. As I gave them the Scriptural instruction about having a woman pastor, I noticed a little old grandmother in the front row glaring at me. I thought that I might be getting through to some, but certainly not to her. When I finished, she was the first to comment. I thought I was in for it now. But she said that she never heard anything like that before, and that I was absolutely right because what I told them was from the Bible. She told everyone they ought to get rid of the lady pastor, which they did. I was then able to recommend to them a good pastor who served them well. His name: Ralph Cherry.

I made another wrong assumption every Christmas until recently. I read **Luke 2:7**, where it says she *laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.* I always thought that this was an inn like a motel with an inn-keeper. How wrong I was. **Luke 10:34** does tell of an inn like a motel with an inn-keeper. Here the good Samaritan brought the beaten and robbed victim to this inn. But in the Nativity narration, 'inn' is a completely different Greek word. In the account of the Nativity, the word for 'inn' is the same as in **Mark 14:14** and **Luke 22:11** where it is translated guest chamber. Apparently Mary and Joseph came to relatives who had no room in their guest chamber, and they had to use the family stable for the birth of Jesus. So it seems I have a not scriptural 'inn-keeper' among my Nativity set. And this mistake set me back a bundle of money too. This marble hand-painted figure holding a lantern, is quite expensive.

Why doesn't God make wrong assumptions? Because He knows everything about everything. He is infinitely wise. I'm so glad He makes no mistakes about who should go to Heaven and who should

not. Everyone will spend eternity exactly where they should. No one will ever say, not even those in hell, that God got it wrong. It is good to know that all through life God has us in mind. He wants us happy. But it is up to us as to whether we will allow Him to make us happy. In His presence is fullness of joy.

CONCLUSION: Poem:

He Maketh No Mistake

**My Father's way may twist and turn,
My heart may throb and ache,
But in my soul I'm glad to know,
He maketh no mistake.**

**Tho' night be dark, and it may seem
That day will never break,
I'll pin my faith, my all in Him,
He maketh no mistake.**

**There's so much now I cannot see,
My eyesight's far too dim;
But come what may, I'll simply trust
And leave it all to Him.**

**For by and by the mist will lift
And plain it all He'll make,
Through all the way, tho' dark to me
He made not one mistake.**

by A.M. Overton

GOD NOTICES WORMS 3-18-17

INTRODUCTION Do you notice worms? Perhaps you are thinking of the worms on the driveway after a heavy rain, or the worms of hell that die not, or the worms that killed King Herod. Whether you and I notice worms, or not, God does. Did you know that worms are called animals? There are over 4400 varieties of worms on earth. I think God takes close notice of just one, the human variety.

The Hebrew word for worm means: 'caterpillar' or 'larvae'. This is an inferior animal and lowly in rank. The Bible teaches us that we are not much better and several times refers to us as worms. To evaluate our status in life, we need to know three things: what we think of ourselves; what others think of us; and what God knows us to be. These evaluations may be three completely different accounts.

1. What we think of ourselves. Many books are written about the value of self-confidence, self-assurance, and self-esteem. We should not be surprised about this because man is naturally a lover and an admirer of himself. After all, if you don't toot your own horn, who will? It is observed, however, that the fellow who toots his own horn usually plays a solo.

God dislikes divorce. **Malachi 2:14-15.** God prohibits murder. **Exodus 20:13** God forbids immorality and adultery **Exodus 20:14.** These are all bad, very bad sins. But the sin that God hates worse than any of these, is pride. In **Proverbs 8:13** God says, *pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.* Pride is vain glory, that is, empty glory. Why does God hate pride? Because pride is the source of all sin, first with Satan and then with mankind. Christ gives this warning: **Luke 6:26** *Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you!* The description here is of a man that fits in perfectly with the world's crowd. He is one with them. He is a self-centered, self-made man of pride.

Now it is natural for us to think highly of ourselves. But is this good? Paul observes in **Romans 12:3** *For I say, ... to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly.* While it is of little use to belittle ourselves or to be shrinking violets, we must realize the world does not stand in awe of us. In fact **Job 25:5, 6** says of us: *yea, the stars are not pure in his (that is, in God's) sight. How much less man, that is a worm? and the son of man, which is a worm?* These verses speak of generations of worms. It is an attempt by his friends to show Job that he is of no account and that he deserved to suffer. It also attempts to show to Job the infinite distance between himself and God. So how dare Job to think he is worthy to stand in God's presence as he evidently aspired to do?

I don't particularly like being compared to a worm even by Job's erstwhile friend, Bildad the Shuhite. He is labeled by some observers as a consummate traditionalist. Still, there are some advantages to being a worm. A worm is so low-down it can't fall any further. Any change in position has to be upward. There are also some spiritual advantages to not being so high and mighty. Some good advice to a new young aspiring pastor would say: "Be nothing, brother. The devil can't hit nothing." What is nothing? It is a zero with the rim rubbed off. We do well to walk humbly before our Lord and the world. When we do not have anything to prove about ourselves, men's opinion of us does not seem to matter very much. In fact, our own opinion of ourselves is not important. Paul says in **1Corinthians 4:3** *yea, I judge not mine own self.*

What we think of ourselves and what others see of us may be quite different. Would you really like to know what others think of you? I'm not sure that I would like that information. It may not be complementary. Yet others are forming opinions of us every day. Let's look into this.

2. What others think of us. While Mr. Robin Red-breast may value worms highly, most people don't.

Christ observes in **Psalm 22:6, 7** *I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. 7 All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, but I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.* It hurts hard to be scorned and despised by the people we know. It shatters any remnant of self-esteem we may have left. In this Messianic Psalm, Jesus, as a man, calls Himself a worm. He is not denying that He is the Lord of Glory and the Creator of the Universe. Rather it is His realization of what others think of Him: that is, He is despised of the people, laughed to scorn. This assessment of Christ was predicted in **Isaiah 53:3** *He is despised and rejected of men;he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

Man's opinion of Jesus has not changed over the years, but it will change dramatically when they see Him face to face. Then He will not be a lowly Savior, but Almighty Sovereign of mankind and Judge of all. What men may think of Jesus now does not alter the fact of Who He really is. But what they think of Him now will greatly matter as to where they will spend eternity. Wrong careless thinking can put them in hell forever.

What do these same unsaved worldly-wise people think of the followers of Christ? They think much the same of us as they think of Christ. Did the Apostle Paul care what men thought of him? Should we care? Paul says in **1 Corinthians 4:3** *But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self.* Paul was not going to bother living his life by what others thought of him. What did matter to Paul is what God thought of him.

How do we determine true worth? Suppose my old 2002 used car is for sale. I may think it is worth \$10,000. All my friends may agree with me. But in fact it's actual worth is only what someone else is willing to pay for it. And that may not be much. We previously noted what we think of ourselves and what others think of us. Now let's take the final step.

3. What does God think of us? I was taken aback when I realized God called Jacob a worm. **Isaiah 41:14** *Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD,* Now why would God call Jacob a worm? He included those few men with whom Jacob was associated. Was it to cut Jacob down to size? Was Jacob too proud of himself? How could he be so proud? Jacob was helpless; unable in any way to help himself. Perhaps it was God's way of informing Jacob that He would help him though Jacob was completely unworthy. This makes sense to me. No matter how highly man may think of himself, or others like himself, man is not much. After all, he is created out of dirt. We all need God's help, and this help is promised to us though we are as low as worms.

Does God value man at all? Yes He does. Man is of no value in himself because of what he is or what he can do. His value comes from what another thinks of him. That other is God. I said earlier that something is only worth what someone is willing to pay for it. Now we see that God is willing to pay the ultimate price for man, that is, the death of His only beloved Son. **Colossians 3:12-14** *Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: 13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: 14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:* This salvation alone gives man great worth. Angels can't lay claim to a Savior. Nor can any of God's creation; only man has a Savior. Man is created in God's image and ultimately will be conformed to the image of His Son. This is of incomprehensible worth.

From worm to butterfly. This is called metamorphose. We will experience our metamorphose when we receive our new life and new bodies in Heaven. I think that since she is now in Heaven, Loretta, and many others like her, are shining brightly as Adam and Eve did in the Garden of Eden before the time of sin. Why? Because in **Daniel 12:3** we read: *And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.* In that heavenly glow, Loretta will look very beautiful. I love to see her looking beautiful. I

think, at the same time, she will also be feeling very special. Why? Because she **is** special to God. This is the experience in store for every Christian when we get to Heaven.

CONCLUSION: Just as we may learn industry from the ant, we may learn humility from the worm. Let's not try to elevate ourselves, but let the Lord elevate us if He thinks best. However He may choose, God recognizes and promotes even the least and the lowly. He has His reasons that we do not now understand. We shouldn't be surprised if, in Heaven, the first become last, and the worm becomes first.

GOD'S CHARIOT New Years Eve 2017

Pastor Shawn Smith asked me to speak tonight and since my mind isn't as elastic as it used to be, I'm going to read my devotional. I don't feel bad about reading, when I remember Jonathan Edward's famous sermon, "*Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*" was read every word. The Holy Spirit so used that sermon, that the unsaved grasped the pillars of the church and the backs of the pews lest they slip into the flames of hell. They felt the flames, and a great revival broke out. This is my introduction to my introduction.

INTRODUCTION Every planet that has atmosphere has clouds. That includes any moon. Clouds appear white because they reflect the sun's light. The average cloud droplet is .02 mm in diameter, about five times smaller than the thickness of a sheet of paper. Clouds can be up to fourteen miles tall.

Clouds can contain millions of tons of water. The recent hurricane Harvey dumped some thirty-two million tons of water on Houston. That's over nine trillion gallons, enough water to meet New York City's needs for sixty-nine years.

Clouds make the earth warmer. They trap the heat reflected from the earth. A 2009 Stanford University study indicated that aircraft, which create small clouds, are accountable for 4% to 8% of the warming that has occurred since record keeping began in 1850. I find this so-called study very difficult to believe. I believe this study was crafted primarily to bolster the humans warming the earth theory.

Why do I say clouds are God's chariot? Because the Bible does. **Psalm 104:3** *Who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind:*

1. Clouds are very special. They make rain. Scientist have yet to figure out the wonders of a rain drop. It falls a mile or two out of the sky and when it strikes a delicate flower, it splatters without harming the flower. Man's rain from hose or sprinkling can is like little bullets doing great damage and we have to take care lest we break the plant. **Job 36:28** tells about the rain *which the clouds do drop and distil upon man abundantly.* That is, we get all the rain we need, that is, all the rain God wants us to have. There would be no vegetation or animal life on earth without rain.

Sometimes God uses the amount of rain He gives to either bless a people, or to withdraw His favor. Israel was a land flowing with milk and honey when first occupied by the Jews. But because the Jews disobeyed God, by worshiping false gods year after year, God gradually withdrew the rainfall until the land became barren and arid. Today it is doing somewhat better, and one day, the Bible assures us, will once again blossom like a rose.

2. Clouds are balanced. **Job 37:16** *Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of him which is perfect in knowledge?* God has all His clouds numbered. We should not be surprised at this since He has numbered and named all the trillions of stars in space. Man doesn't even know how many clouds there are. It says in **Job 38:37** **Who can number the clouds in wisdom?** Obviously no one can. The Bible tells us exactly how God forms the clouds and storms in His wisdom. **Jeremiah 51:16** *He hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heaven by his understanding. When he uttereth his voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens; and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth: he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures.*

God *maketh lightnings with rain.* The lightning we see comes from the ground up. It is produced when the positive particles from earth reach out to the negative particles from the clouds. It lasts a fraction of a second carrying some ten million amps of energy. That's why it is so destructive. Thunder is caused by the rapid expansion of the air surrounding the path of a lightning bolt.

In China, in the United States, and in other countries, scientists have tried to produce rain by seeding the clouds with various compounds. Just as the Bible implies, they were not very successful. Notice **Job 38:34** *Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, that abundance of waters may cover thee?* Scientists cannot create clouds nor can they produce rain. Scientists do not control the weather. When teenagers, my brother and I were helping Dad build our house. Black clouds came and it looked like a storm coming. We asked Dad, “What will we do?” He said, “We’ll do what Grandpa did.” “What was that?” we asked. “He let it rain.”

3. Man does not understand God’s chariots. Job 36:29 *Also can any understand the spreadings of the clouds, or the noise of his tabernacle?* The noise of His tabernacle speaks of storms. You say that was back in Job’s day. Today we are pretty smart and quite scientific. Really? If scientists are so smart, why can’t they predict the weather accurately? Why can’t they moderate even slightly the increasingly devastating storms? Why? Because they do not know much about clouds and their distribution. They know more than they did before, perhaps, but realize there is abundantly more for them to learn.

The recent hurricane Harvey produced a lot of water as we already noted, causing billions of dollars of damage. She registered 6 inches of water per hour in some places flooding thousands of buildings. But this rate of water rise does not compare to Noah’s flood. I figured it out. The highest mountain is 348, 690 inches tall. Therefore, for 40 days the water rose an average of 363 inches per hour to cover these mountains. This amounts to over 10 feet each hour. Remember, the best Harvey could do was 6 inches per hour. As my scientific friend, Dr. Dave Stone pointed out to me, much of this water came from under the ground. The wicked people of Noah’s day had no time to prepare for, nor to escape God’s judgment. Although alerted to the fact that the storm was coming, Houston, Texas and Florida cities were likewise uncontrollably devastated.

As a matter of curiosity, suppose the earth was perfectly round like a ball, with no mountains or valleys. How deep would all the waters of the lakes and oceans be today? Google says: 1.7 miles. Interesting. I was just thinking, in the area of science, more than the wisdom of Solomon is at my fingertips when I use Google on the computer. If Solomon was so wise, why was he so foolish when it comes to family affairs? It is because he only asked God for wisdom to govern the people. In this he was superbly wise. When it came to how to live with his family he was not so wise.

4. Clouds with rain come in answer to prayer. 1 Kings 18:45 *And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain.* Elijah was a man just like us. Doing God’s work, he prayed once and it stopped raining for 3 ½ years. But to get it to rain again he had to pray repeatedly, seven times, in fact. Then it poured rain. This teaches us not to give up praying after only four or five times.

I personally believe there was spiritual warfare raging on Mt. Carmel. Elijah had just destroyed most of the power of Baal worship and Satan was doing all he could to hinder God’s further plans. Though Elijah became discouraged at Jezebel’s threats, God won. God always does and He always will. Read Revelation.

5. Clouds with rain teach everyone to love God more. Matthew 5:45 *That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.*

As noted before, we cannot live without rain. Rain is just one of God’s many expressions of His love toward us. As His children, we love Him dearly because He first loved us. It is a sin not to love God. Years ago, I was visiting some patients in a hospital in Charleston, West Virginia. In one

room I came across a young Japanese woman. I was immediately interested because in seminary I had a class-mate from Japan. I wondered if this woman was saved. I approached her by asking her if she knew what was the greatest sin that it is possible to commit. She suggested murder. I answered, “No, the greatest sin we can commit is to break the first and greatest commandment: that is, we are commanded to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, and mind.” **Mark 12:30** *And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first (greatest) commandment.* Looking right at me she answered with a question: “Do you love God that way?” I answered, “No, but that I had confessed it as sin and prayed for help to love God that way.” Then I was able to explain the way of salvation to her.

6. The meaning of the rainbow **Genesis 9:13, 14** *I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: Genesis 9:16* *And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.*

The beautiful bow is a constant reminder to us of God’s continued love and promise never to destroy the earth again with a universal flood. We see the bow most often when it rains. God looking from above sees it all day everyday. Thus, God reminds Himself constantly of His loving covenant with mankind.

Revelation 10:1 *And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire.* This angel, more than likely, Christ, reminds us of the portrait of Christ seen in the first two chapters of Revelation. Here He is clothed with a glorious cloud. His head is crowned with a rainbow. Rainbows are spoken of only four times in the Bible. What is the significance of this rainbow upon this mighty angel’s head? This rainbow, as that about His throne, is a reminder to God of His Noahic covenant of mercy with man. Though about to begin the great tribulation as a judgment upon sinful man He remembers there is still a remnant of the righteous on earth. Punishment is on the way. But in the midst of this punishment, Christ loves and protects His own.

7. Christ’s coming **Revelation 1:7** *Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.* What are these clouds with which Christ returns? Are they literal? Some observers think they may be multitudes of redeemed believers. Baptists alone would make a cloud. There are some 33 million Baptists of all kinds in the United States today. Sixteen million of these are Southern Baptist which constitute the second largest group in the United States.

When Jesus ascended from the grave, He showed Himself to only a small limited number of believers. Shortly after, when He ascended to Heaven in a cloud, only a relatively few disciples saw Him. But when He comes back with clouds, the whole world will view this great event. He will be riding His chariot. He will forever shake up complacent world events and take complete control.

Conclusion I think we are all familiar with this song: “*There Shall Be Showers of Blessing.*” God has showered upon us many wonderful blessings, both material and spiritual. He does this, not so much to show us His favor, as to bring honor and glory to His Name. True, there are times we may experience storms in life. These pass. And through it all, we have God’s faithful promise never to leave us nor to forsake us. As we gaze at His numerous chariots traveling across the sky, let us glory in His wonderful works and praise Him forever.

GOD'S FAVORITES or SPOILED BY THE LORD 5-19-18

INTRODUCTION Have you ever been spoiled by the Lord? At times God does play favorites, you know. God favored Jacob over Esau. Jesus favored John over the other disciples. We'll see that God favored the virgin Mary above any other woman of her time. But when it comes to a different Mary and her sister, Martha, we are informed He loved them both equally. He also loved their brother, Lazarus. As a matter of fact, He loves every one of us.

It is so much fun being a grandparent because then you get to spoil your grandchildren. When you are tired of playing favorites, you can send them all home. It is so much fun that it is no surprise that a good many grandparents move to follow their grandchildren across the country.

Perhaps it is even more fun to be spoiled. That is an advantage all children should enjoy. Have you ever considered this: we are children. And as God's children He loves to favor us? How so? We can go to Him at any time day or night and He is never too busy for us. We can ask Him for anything, and He will give it to us within reason. We can ask Him to spend quality time with us, and He does it without making excuses or limits. God loves to spoil His children, all His children. That is why He enjoys giving us many gifts and surprises in this life. This has been my experience and yours too, I'm sure. And He will continue doing this all through eternity. That's the pleasant part of being spoiled by God. There is no end to it. The feeling of being wanted and loved will always be with us.

1. God Favors A Divine Son: Jesus Let's begin with Jesus, God's Son. **Luke 2:52** *And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.* **2 Pe 1:17** *For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

It is interesting to note that even after being favored in an eternity past, now on earth, Jesus still increases in favor with God. He always enjoyed the favor of His Father. But now, as the incarnate Son, that favor continues to increase. How could this be? As God's love for His Son grows, His pleasure in Him also becomes greater. Why? Because Jesus always and perfectly fulfills His Father's will. He pleased His Father when He provided salvation for sinful men through His death on the cross. The Father demonstrated His favor publicly by giving the Son honor and glory. The Son, in turn, worked exceedingly hard for His Father's glory. That helps explain why the Son fulfills so many of our prayers. These constantly promote His Father's glory. **John 14:13** *And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.* So we are given to understand that Jesus answers our prayers that His Father may be glorified by men. Did you know this is a good reason our prayers are answered so often?

2. God Favors A Devoted Man: King David Acts 7:46 *David found favour before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob.* David's intense desire to build a temple for God often interrupted his sleep. While God would not allow David to build this temple because he was a man of war, David did prepare for it by setting aside millions of dollars worth of materials for his son, Solomon, to use. This stockpile included a wealth of silver and gold. David devoted himself wholeheartedly to prepare for God's house. Why? Because he loved and honored God.

We may wonder why God would use such an imperfect man as King David. David lacked moral freedom. He engaged in sensual impurity and even murder. Yet God trusted him to write many of the Psalms and promised that he would be king in the future millennium. What did God see in David? **Acts 13:22** *And when he (God) ...gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will.* God uses sinful men, saved by grace. That is all He has to use. He sees the secret heart of man and knows perfectly how much each of

us loves Him and how perfectly we desire to obey Him. God favors those devoted to Him who desire to do His will with all their hearts.

King David valued God's favor and did not think there was any worth to life without it. We get this insight into David's thinking in **2 Samuel 15:25** *And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me again, and shew me both it, and his habitation.* David realized he needed God's blessing to have a successful and happy life. To paraphrase **Psalm 127:1** *Except the Lord build a life, they labor in vain that build it.*

3. God Favors A 'Mercy and Truth' Man: Proverbs 3:3, 4 *Let not mercy and truth forsake theeSo shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man.* What is it about mercy and truth that gives God so much pleasure? It is because these are attributes of God Himself. His throne is built on mercy and truth. He gives mercy in our misery. When those about us have needs, and we help meet those needs, we are showing mercy. Every day we should seek to make someone happy. Every day we should seek out Christians to encourage. Kindness, thoughtfulness, and helpfulness should be a constant goal of life with us.

Second, let our lips always speak the truth. **Proverbs 12:22** *Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight.* A truthful man is a trusted man. Dad and Mother wanted us kids to always speak the truth. Mother always knew when we told a lie, I don't know how. At such times when we lied, we discovered what a bar of soap tasted like. God knew our falsehood and failure also, and caused our conscience, even though we were children, to make us miserable. It is not difficult to make God happy with us. We just need to be truthful. His favor is important to me, and I trust it is to you too. Therefore, let both of us purpose to always tell the truth.

4. God Favors A Virtuous Young Woman: Mary Luke 1:28 *And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.* **Luke 1:30** *And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.*

Notice, in **Ezekiel 22:30** God says: *I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none.* God had a very important and special job for a man to do, but in this case, He could not find a man to do it. How different it was when He looked for a woman for an amazingly important and unique assignment. She was to be the instrument to bring the Savior into the world. Mary met the requirements perfectly. She found great favor with God. She did not disappoint God at any time. She was blessed among women as no other woman ever was.

5. God Favors A Wise Man: Proverbs. 8:35 *For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD.* Wisdom is speaking here personified as a young woman. Happy is the person who earnestly seeks wisdom, for he shall become one of God's favorites. God wants every man to be wise therefore He freely offers wisdom to everyone who asks for it. God is very forthcoming with this gift. **James 1:5.** *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally.* We all know that the fear (reverence) of God is the beginning of wisdom.

6. God Favors A Righteous Man: Proverbs 12:2 *A good man obtaineth favour of the LORD: but a man of wicked devices will he condemn.* Should not a ruler favor good men over wicked men? **Proverbs 29:12** says that if a ruler listens to lies, his whole administration is full of falsehood and his servants are wicked. Though written some 3000 years ago the truth of this statement is seen in our present-day government. God's throne is wonderfully different. It is unsullied by shameful deceit or wickedness. **Psalm 89:14** *Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne.* God has nothing to

hide. He never did. All His actions, forever, are above reproach. I could wish righteous men were at the head of our government, men we could always trust without question.

Was I a doing-right (righteous) son? Being the oldest, I sometimes think I was my Mother's favorite. But I got spanked anyway -- every time I needed it. Once I asked Mother why she never spanked Philip, a neighbor boy, for doing the same thing. She replied, "I do not love him. Besides, I want you to be good." It did not take me long to discover that when I was good, I received a lot more pleasant favors from Mother. Why was this? Because she found she could trust me. Just so, we all enjoy many more of God's favors when we can be trusted by God.

7. God Favors A Married Man: Proverbs 18:22 *Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD.* I did not find my wife, Loretta. The Lord found her for me. She was some years younger than me, so I never considered her although I thought she looked quite pretty. But the Lord prompted her to give me a little encouragement one day, and that settled it. We were bound by love for life. And it was obvious to me that God favored me and that He favored our marriage. It became a little taste of Heaven on earth. I believe that God also blessed my ministry because of her. God gave her wise counsel for my good.

We men need God's favor to be a good husband and a good father. We need His wisdom. We need His patience. We need His provision and protection. Why? Because Satan is out to destroy marriage and the family. Look at society today with its many ungodly laws that destroy marriage and the family all the while protecting evil homosexuality, transgender folly, abortion, and same-sex marriage. Our government does not care that such evil laws destroy the family. Satan knows well that the church and any nation is only as strong as its families. Weak family values result in weak social values. Weak social values have led to mass murder in the schools. Weak family values make weak work ethics. No wonder employers complain that it is difficult to find capable employees willing to work. Socialists wrongly teach that everyone should be provided an income or at least a job by the government. On the other hand, the Bible teaches that if a man won't work, neither should he eat. We must pray for strong families with strong traditional values. If Christians won't act to protect our society's future, who will? The well being of future generations depend upon us.

8. God Favors A Humble Man: Moses Numbers 12

Some years ago I read that one of the common attributes of United States presidents is that they are very proud men. The article seemed to indicate that this pride was necessary for success. If that is the case, our present president should be very successful because he appears to be quite proud. Our previous president was extremely proud, but his social accomplishments, in my view, were not good for our country. I hope they will be short lived. Sad to say, I'm not proud of them and I'm concerned about what they will do to future generations.

Moses, **Numbers 12:3** says. was most meek. (*Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.*) Yet he was one of the greatest leaders the world has ever witnessed. His name is widely known today, and will be through the ages. Paul also, a fantastic intellectual and author of more than a dozen books of the Bible, was at the same time very humble. He says of himself that he was the chief of sinners. **1Timothy 1:15.** Both men are favorites with God. (I didn't say were.) Both men achieved more in their humility than many 1000's of talented men in their pride. Why? Because God favored them. God has blessed us with these two Godly men and others like them.

9. God Favors A United People: Psalm 133 *Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.*

God's special favor is upon our Christian brotherhood when it is united in spirit. Satan uses every wile in his stock to break up churches, marriages, homes, friendships, and godly enterprises. Altogether too often believers assist Satan in his devious divisive tactics by criticizing fellow Christians. To achieve his purposes, as Vance Havner pointed out, Satan does not avoid churches: he joins them. Let's make sure everyone knows which team we are on.

CONCLUSION: Heaven will be filled with Gods favorites. Today our churches also can be replete with God's favorites. This fact is evidenced by His close fellowship with us and the wealth of good things both spiritual and material that He showers upon us every day. What shall we then say? Let it continually be: "Praise God from Whom all blessings flow."

GOD'S MUSEUM PIECES 8-26-17

INTRODUCTION I like museums. I believe God has a very special museum in Heaven. It will be great fun to explore it.

God's museum pieces reinforce and illustrate the truth of the Scriptures. Yet many Christians do not value the Bible very highly. I believe, were we to do a study on the subject, that even church goers do not read the Bible daily. Obviously the Bible is not important to them. While it is estimated 88% of church goers own a Bible, the Pence foundation found that 82% of Christians read their Bibles only on Sunday. I know that in my church, the Heritage Baptist Church, percentages are much higher. Our church life is vibrant.

Years ago I was visiting a church family one summer afternoon. As was my custom, I asked the mother for a Bible so I could read a passage from their family Bible before prayer and before leaving. She told her children to bring her the book mother loves. They came back with the Sears catalog. We were both surprised, but it makes my point. Even for Christians the Bible is often a neglected book.

Christians have two strong but mistaken propensities. One is to forget what we should remember, and the second is to neglect what we should teach. We should teach the next generation concerning the works of God past and present. Why? Because they need to know the importance of this information and what it means to continuing Christianity.

What are we to remember? **Psalm 77:11** tells us: *I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders of old.* **Psalm 145:4** *One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts.* This last verse speaks of this next generation. Will they be first generation children? We may witness the mighty works of God in our own lives. We must explain these to our children so that they also understand what God has done. But what about the grandchildren? Will they have any personal experience of how God works? Will they see in their own lives how God works? This is what I mean by first generation children. They are those who experience God for themselves.

God gives us many objects with which we may remember His works, and using them we give instruction to young people. These tools I call God's museum pieces. I always did enjoy museums. Two I especially remember are the Chicago Field Museum, and the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry. This latter museum had hands-on displays. They were a delight to me in my youth. Parallel to these museums, I enjoyed Biblical archaeology whose artifacts helped me understand the Bible better.

1. View a partial list of some of God's museum pieces It is probable we will see all these in Heaven's museum.

Gideon's lamps with which he conquered the Midianites.

Goliath's sword that later David used so effectively.

Samson's jawbone of an ass that he used to slay 1000 men.

Jonathan's bow and arrows which he gave to David.

The widow's cruse of oil with the miraculously filled pots.

The Ark of the Covenant containing the commandments, Aaron's rod, and the pot of manna.

Moses' rod used in Egypt to do so many miracles.

Shoes still new after being used 40 years walking in the wilderness.

The giant's iron bedstead which is 13.5 feet long by 6 feet wide. Imagine, living all your life and the only thing you are remembered for is having a big bed.

Balaam's donkey who preached quite a sermon to him.

David's sling with 5 smooth stones. Do you know why there were five?
Judas' 30 pieces of silver
Jacob's pillow, which was a rock, and the ladder to Heaven full of angels.
The Samaritan woman's water pot, the one she forgot.
Joseph's carpenter shop - I'd really enjoy exploring this.
Jonah's huge fish - no fish story equals this one.
Samples of Dorcas' clothes made for the poor.
Daniel's lions which were very hungry and very fierce.
The widow's mite - you'd be surprised how small the coins were.
Peter's net bursting with swishing fish.

Or, perhaps, you might be interested in examining some other museum displays such as a replica of: Solomon's temple, or Noah's ark overshadowed with the rainbow, or the 12 baskets of loaves and fishes, or perhaps the Tower of Babel which needed some 9000 builders. May I also point out several other interesting items?

2. Twelve huge boulders from the Jordan River Joshua 4:1-3, 20-24 *the LORD spake unto Joshua, saying,.....Take you hence out of the midst of Jordan, out of the place where the priests' feet stood firm, twelve stones, and ye shall carry them over with you,* Why should these have any teaching value? Obviously God foresaw that children would ask their parents "what mean these stones." This gives the parents the perfect opportunity to explain God's miracles done in behalf of Israel when entering the Promised Land. The truth is that God never fails His own. God is the same today as He was yesterday. When God, in a miraculous and loving way, answers our prayers today, it is best we discuss this miracle with our children. Do we encourage them to expect miracles from God for themselves? Do they see miracles in our lives on a regular basis? Every answered prayer is a miracle.

3. Elisha and the borrowed ax head II Kings 6:5-7 *But as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water: and he cried, and said, Alas, master! for it was borrowed. 6 And the man of God said, Where fell it? And he shewed him the place. And he cut down a stick, and cast it in thither; and the iron did swim.* Lesson: never loan me anything. I either lose it or break it. However, this sorry story had a happy ending. The ax head was recovered from the water. It had to swim to shore. I would have liked to see that.

Now why, I wonder, did God include this account in His Scriptures? It wasn't just to relate an interesting story. Perhaps God wants us to know that His man doing His will in His way will experience His miracles. I'm sure the young prophets of Elisha's day were powerfully impressed. Their faith was thus enabled to serve God and to serve Him well all their lives. Miracles continue today. And why should they not? We are engaged in spiritual warfare and can only win with God's supernatural help.

4. Eli and the new unused spanking switch I Samuel 3:13 God said to Eli: *I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.* Today many parents refuse to restrain their children although they do wrong. Spanking is not loving, modern society says, and the poor child may actually cry if you spank him. But the Bible says to do it: *He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes. Proverbs 13:24* Again, in **Proverbs 23:13, 14** it says: *Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. 14 Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.* Saving his soul is a result worth every effort.

Eli refused to use the rod even though it would save his sons' souls. Eli refused to use the rod even though the honor of God was at stake. Without parental constraint his sons did very wickedly. As a consequence God had to punish Eli and his two sons with death, and generations of priests following were made to live shortened lives and to live in poverty. To spare the rod is to spoil the child. Spoil as in ruin.

5. The Hebrew girl's scrub brush II Kings 5:2, 3, 8 tells the story. This little Jewish girl did not feel sorry for herself although she was a captive in Syria and made to work hard. She demonstrated responsibility and aptitude with her scrub brush. Consequently her mistress listened to her suggestion that her master, General Naaman, could be healed of his leprosy. She said: ***Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy.*** Her confidence in the power of God to do miracles was justified. She is credited in Heaven with the salvation as well as the healing of Naaman. To us she is an example of Godly behavior which through the ages leads to the salvation of souls.

Concerning winning the world to Christ, on average, 1000 missionaries have left the mission field each year since 1950. This sounds like a lot. Their replacements fall far short of the number of those who leave. There are approximately 29,000 Evangelical missionaries world-wide. These include 5000 Baptist families. The countries having the most Baptist missionaries are Brazil, Mexico, and Canada. Would you believe that the average American Christian gives only 1 cent a day for missions? That's not much of a sacrifice to see souls saved. How is your, how is my faith promise doing in behalf of missions? And what about praying?

6. Paul's lethal snake Satan tried to kill Paul several times but God had a job for him to do in Rome. It was impossible for Paul to die before-hand. **Acts 28:3-5** **And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. 4 And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live. 5 And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm.**

It looked bad for Paul when the poisonous snake hung from his hand. The islanders concluded him to be a murderer. After all, they felt, he was a prisoner of Rome with good reason. With such a perceived reputation, Paul could not have much influence for the truth of God's love to these islanders. But God quickly rectified this situation. Paul did not die. Now the islanders thought him someone special with spiritual powers. And when they ***saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.*** Their idea was reinforced when Paul healed their sick, albeit, through the power of God. Because of Paul, all 276 survivors were well treated by the islanders who took care of all their needs making them comfortable in the cold wet weather.

Like Paul, none of us can die while God has a job for us to do. Commander Dave Meshke of the Navy, is a friend of mine. He was a chaplain in the Viet Nam war. While he was home on furlough, we asked him if we should pray for his safety. He said no, that he did not fear for his life as long as God had need of him. Later, we learned just how God protected his life. As an officer, he was expected to ride in the second vehicle in case the first struck a road mine. Dave chose to ride with his men in the first jeep. It was the second jeep that hit the mine and exploded. Dave's work was not done. We need to train our young people to be strong for the Lord and not worry about the consequences. God will protect us.

7. Egypt's frogs Exodus 8:2-3 ***if thou refuse to let them go, behold, I will smite all thy borders with frogs: 3 And the river shall bring forth frogs abundantly, which shall go up and come into thine***

house, and into thy bedchamber, and upon thy bed, and into the house of thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thine ovens, and into thy kneadingtroughs:

In God's museum we see the display of Egyptian frogs large and small. When the Egyptians experienced God's plagues, frogs filled all their houses. Cut a slice of bread, and they are there. Go to bed and they are there, cold and clammy. Walk outside and the Egyptians could not avoid stepping on the squishy things. These disgusting frogs were ubiquitous. The noise they made sounded day and night. And to think, the Egyptians worshiped a female frog goddess. It appears that our God has a sense of humor.

In **Exodus 12:12** God says, *against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD.* The frog goddess was called "heket". It was a female goddess with the head of a frog. The name may mean 'ruler' or 'scepter'. God Almighty was showing the Egyptians how powerless all their puny gods were. Their ten gods could not help them but rather became a curse to them. It was no surprise when all the frogs covering the land died, gathered in heaps and stunk. God Almighty takes strong measures against those who oppose His will. His honor He will not give to another.

8. The sinner's hell Luke 16:19 ff Though doubtful, we may catch a glimpse of hell in God's museum. Many people think that the worst thing the unsaved sinner can experience is eternal suffering in hell apart from God. It is not. There is something far worse. In Christ's account of the rich man and Lazarus in **Luke 16:19 ff** the rich man asked only for a drop of water for his tongue. He got none. Lazarus had asked for the crumb that fell from the rich man's table. He received none. Notice, the rich man did not ask to be delivered from hell. He did not want to leave hell. He could not stand to be in God's presence in life, and as a wicked sinner, he would find his eternal position in the presence of a holy God utterly unbearable now that he is in death. **Nahum 1:6** *Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire,* Further, in **Revelation 6:15, 16** we read: *And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:*

Thus, far worse than hell for a wicked soul would be his experience of God's presence for eternity. God's transcendent holiness would be, for him, unendurable. For this reason Christ has to change the Christian's character for him to take pleasure in God's infinite holiness. However, in God's museum I believe there will be no mention of the Lake of Eternal Fire because that would be a constant source of unhappiness to us. That's because we may have loved ones there. I think God's museum will bring us nothing but pleasure.

CONCLUSION: Perhaps we should furnish our homes with instructive objects that would be a constant reminder of spiritual values and events. Wise parents could plan to have interesting things around the house that speak to their children about the mighty works of God. A Christian's home should look like a Christian home, don't you think? It could be a testimony to all who enter. God's 'stones' have a glorious story to tell. I rejoice in God's museum pieces. They thrill my heart.

GOD'S SIGNET 12-16-17

INTRODUCTION A signet is special. A signet is a small seal, especially one set in a ring. It is used instead of, or in addition to, a signature in order to give authentication to an official document. When his nobles plotted against Daniel, they requested king Darius sign a decree that could not be changed. *Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree. Daniel. 6:10* A signet was probably used by the king as it was used a bit later at the lions' den. *vs. 17 And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel.*

There is an unusual man, and only one, that God chose to be His signet. In a moment I'll tell you who this man is. I would like to be called God's signet, wouldn't you? That would be a special honor. This noteworthy man God called His signet is Zerubbabel, the governor in Jerusalem. **Haggai 2:23** *In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the LORD, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the LORD of hosts.* Zerubbabel, along with Joshua the high priest, was expressly chosen to rebuild the temple for God. It is a wonderful privilege to be chosen by God for a special job. I wonder what special jobs He will have for each of us in Heaven.

1. A Job to be Done: Build God's House Haggai 1:8 *Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD.*

At this time the foundation of God's house was covered with debris and weeds. It all began 16 years before when Cyrus, in 536 B.C., made a proclamation of release for the Jews to return to Jerusalem and build the House of the "Great God". Some 50,000 returned to Israel with Zerubbabel and Ezra. In 7 months, the altar was built. Then after 2 years and 2 months the foundation was laid. The work then stopped for some 12 years until Haggai the prophet jolted them back into action once again. If the people of God have a zeal for God, it will show in their attitude toward the House of God. The state of repair of God's house is very revealing concerning the spiritual level of God's people.

God's house is important to Himself. His glory is at stake. He expected His people to rise up and build. Instead He got excuses. Persistent excuses. In **Haggai 1:2** they all agreed to tell God, "Not yet - - wait awhile. The time has not yet come to build." They may have felt too busy, or too poor to do it properly. Yet God noted that they had time and money enough to build their own houses.

What excuses does God hear from our lips when we fail to execute His clear orders? Perhaps we tell Him that we are fearful; or inexperienced; or over-extended already; or that no one else is helping; or that someone else can do it better; or we don't have the means. Satan will put these and a lot of other excuses in our minds. Let's recognize the source of all our excuses, put them from us, and enter into God's project with wholehearted energy and do the very best we can. God will help and strengthen us every step of the way. And He will be pleased.

vs. 5 *Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways.* He is speaking to those who make excuses. "You forfeited God's blessings and hard times have come upon you. You must work overtime just to feed your families. You put your money into a bag with holes. The heaven withheld its rain and the earth its fruits. This is My doing said the Lord, because of the hardness and indifference of your hearts." This quote is my summery of **Haggai 1:5-11**.

There can be a further costly calamity as a result of such indifference. As usually happens in such cases, parental lack of obedience also took a spiritual and emotional toll on their children. Children will follow in their parent's footsteps. For instance, when parents find fault with the pastor or the church on a regular basis, notice that often their children will forsake church as they get older. Some parents wonder how this could happen. All the time it is due to their own constant fault-finding

and negative attitude toward the things of God. Children strongly sense their parent's priorities and live their lives accordingly often to their parent's surprise.

In this present instance, the Jewish people, faced with the facts, decided to obey the voice of God as they heard Him speaking through His prophet. They rose up to build. **Haggai 1:12** *Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God.* Now, finally, they are on the path to God's blessing.

2. Encouragement Given "I Am With You" Haggai 2:4 In every endeavor, God's presence is very important. **Psalm 127:1** says: *Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it:* They could build with strength because God was with them and keeps His promises. In addition, God gave to them some surprising future promises concerning this House. **Haggai 2:6-9** *For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; 7 And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts.*

The glory of this future House is the glory of King Jesus. This future house will be built in the millennium "*in a little while.*" All nations shall come to it. In the Bible there are three symbols of Christ's personal glory: 1) In the Old Testament: a star. 2) In the New Testament: an empty grave. 3) In eternity: a crown.

3. Divine Confirmation "I Will Bless You" Haggai 2:10-19 This confirmation was given in spite of the fact that the people were unclean sinners. Notice **vs. 14** says as much: *So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith the LORD; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is unclean.* It is heartening to know that God is willing to use imperfect people, even today. Though defiled, they were accepted by God's grace after they experienced His cleansing enabling them to serve.

They worked hard for three months building the temple and still there was no noticeable increase in their prosperity. God is under no obligation to a time table. Perhaps He was testing their love and purpose of heart. But suddenly they did experience the material blessing just as God promised. **Haggai 2:17-19** *I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labours of your hands; yet ye turned not to me, saith the LORD. 18 Consider now from this day and upward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, even from the day that the foundation of the LORD'S temple was laid, consider it. 19 Is the seed yet in the barn? yea, as yet the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree, hath not brought forth: from this day will I bless you.*

Obedience always precedes and always procures God's rich blessing. Obedience did this for them and it will for us too. They finished building the temple in 4 ½ years. God was pleased and I'm sure it gave the Jews a great sense of satisfaction. Prayer also procures God's rich blessing. Missionary BJ Schultz of Tanzania gave a list of things needed to start a new church which he plans to do this January, 2018. (Note: the church has been built and is growing.) He will need such things as hymnals, chairs, Bibles, tracts, posters, a PA system, and rental funds. I suggested to him a stack of money would help. He answered, "*Ha ha! Yes, a stack of money would always be a help. But prayer is the number one thing we need here. I have thrown lots of money at ministries with no success. But I have never been disappointed with the results of prayer.*" To build God's temple, God's people needed to pray hard as well as to give and to work hard. And Christians should pray for the Schultz family.

Sometimes prayer and hard work are not enough. Man's weakness needs more than this. **Zecharia 4:6** explains that the temple shall be completed with the aid of God's Spirit. *This is the word*

of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.

The people became discouraged because their work seemed so puny in their eyes compared to the original temple. God rebuked them saying (vs. 10) ***For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice.*** Small beginnings are not a sign of failure. In fact, as I look around at Bible believing churches today, most are 100 or less. Jesus said that where two or three are gathered in His Name, there He is in the midst of them. God's Spirit does what we cannot do alone.

4. Divine Assurance "In That Day I Will Make You" Haggai 2:20-23 *Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth; 22 And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother. 23 In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the LORD, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the LORD of hosts.*

Zerubbabel is promised two things. First, the powerful heathen enemy which they feared would be overthrown and destroyed. Second, that Zerubbabel would be God's chosen signet. This means he would be a representative of David's line and given authority. The signet is a sign of this authority. We note that the Bible tells us that Christ, the greater son of David would impress His authority over all nations. Therefore, Israel need never fear the nations of the world. Christ, who loves Israel is in control.

When we get to Heaven I look forward to hearing Christ sing. Now this will be an event worth witnessing. He will sing because He is pleased and happy with what happens in Jerusalem including the building of the temple. **Zephaniah 3:17** *The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.* Almost 70 years ago when I was in Wheaton College, I heard the sweetest singing I ever heard in my life. It was by a coed seated in the entrance to the dinning hall singing softly to herself. She had just become engaged and was completely happy and completely in love. I think Christ will sing because He loves the people of Jerusalem, and He is happy. He loves us too and is pleased and enjoys His relationship with us.

Conclusion It is an old saying. When God has a job to be done, He does not look for better methods. Rather He looks for better men. Knowing men cannot succeed by themselves, God works alongside of them. He gives them help and blessing. Finally, when the work is completed, God rewards His faithful men. What is that reward? God made Zerubbabel His signet. By this He gave Zerubbabel more authority and more responsibility. God will reward us in the same way when we are faithful. Zerubbabel was a man God could trust with responsibility. May God see His way clear to trust you and me just like that giving each of us the responsibility appropriate for us to have.

GOD'S STRANGE WORK 1-17-15

Have you ever considered Isaiah 28:21? It reads: *For the LORD shall rise up as in mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act.* The two words for strange in this verse are two different words in the Hebrew, but mean almost the same thing. Mount Perazim and the valley of Gibeon are where King David conquered the Philistines. Earlier, Joshua asked the sun to stand still over Gibeon, where he defeated the Ammonites. There is nothing strange about God judging Israel's enemies. So what does this all mean?

Earlier verses in **Isaiah 28:7, 8** gives us a clue: *But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment. 8 For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean.* Israel's spiritual leaders knew full well that it was wrong for them to be overcome by strong drink and drunkenness, but they did it anyway. Is our attitude much different? The Holy Spirit witnesses to our spirit that we are doing things contrary to God's will, but we persist in doing them.

What was the consequence to Israel for this flagrant disobedience? As God's judgment fell upon Israel's enemies at Perazim and Gibeon, so will His judgment now fall upon Israel even though they are God's covenant people. Assyria will take Israel captive and ruin her causing great pain and loss. The prophet Isaiah tells Israel that her pain and suffering might be somewhat mitigated if she stops her scoffing. **Isaiah 28:22** *22 Now therefore be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong:* It seems God is slow and reluctant to punish His beloved, but chastise her he must. It is a strange act on His part, but repeatedly forced upon Him by the rebellion of His people. Even today Israel is suffering the consequences of unbelief and rebellion.

If Israel does not escape God's spanking, what about us today? Our laws permit the murder of babies, prohibit prayer and the Bible in our classrooms, and will not allow an open display of Christianity in the military. Our courts make sodomy legal. Use of drugs are permitted. But the public display of the Ten Commandments is prohibited and declared to be unconstitutional. Consequently we have succeeded today in raising a generation of self-centered, and totally selfish children. They do not respect authority, people's property, parents, or even God. They insist on having it their way. Period. Family life is fractured. Many couples now live together without marriage. Christians are called extremists. God must punish our nation sooner rather than later. He did not spare Sodom or Gomorrah. He did not spare His chosen people, Israel. I believe He will not spare the USA much longer.

Job 28:11 *the thing that is hid bringeth he forth to light.* All shall be revealed for all to see. **Numbers 32:23** *behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out.* There is no cover large enough to cover sin. We will, we must give account for our sins both personally and as a nation.

Over the course of my 86 years, God has had to deal with me about a number of things. Sometimes I obeyed as soon as He brought them to my attention. At other times I did not. At these times the Holy Spirit pressed upon me harder and harder. The longer I delayed to conform to His will, the heavier His rod became, and the greater the suffering and shame when I did get right. Delay is never good. I'm glad God loved me enough to stick with me until I got right with Him. His rod may seem strange, but it is the best possible thing that could happen to us when we are doing wrong. How so? None of us can serve Him if there is known sin in our lives. The vessel God uses must be clean. His reputation is at stake. The wicked watch. Satan watches. Abraham said in **Genesis 18:25** *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?* His servants must do right also.

CONCLUSION If God must correct us to bring this about, He will. It may seem like strange work

for God to spank the children He loves so much. Yet let us thank Him for it. Correction restores fellowship. Correction brings us close to Him and enables us to serve Him acceptably and well. Just as our parents treated us, we know God loves us when He corrects us.

GOD'S WISH LIST 10-21-17

INTRODUCTION We all know what we wish for. These desires may vary over time. As young adults we may wish to be married, have a family, a good job, a nice house, a good-looking car, decent health, lots of adventure, and a pleasant happy life. Other desires occupy our prayers from time to time as we age. The list continues without stopping as long as we are alive. Suppose God offered to give us anything we wished for three different times. That would be wonderful beyond description. We would choose very carefully. But He does not give us three opportunities. Instead He offers us an unlimited number of requests. That's what prayer is all about. These wishes are fully granted to us and are only limited by His love and His knowledge of what is best for us

But more important than our wants is this: what does God wish for Himself? Do you know that God too has longings and desires? Have you ever thought about what God may desire? Just as interesting as it is important, there may be something we can do about it. Would you be willing to help God realize His desires?

Often Loretta asked me what would I like for supper or what would I like to do. Why? Because she loved me and wanted to please me by making me happy. She felt she could do this best by satisfying my desires. Do we love God so much that we try to satisfy His wishes? What does God wish for?

1. God desires our love We all want to be loved. More than that, we all need to be loved. This is true with God. Without love life is pretty bland and empty. It is good for us to have someone as the object of our special affections. This is someone we enjoy being around, someone with whom we are comfortable under all circumstances. We trust this special person with our lives, our innermost thoughts, and make available to him or her all we possess. We continually do everything we can to make him or her happy. We share good times together. Now when was the last time you told God you loved Him? Do you love Him for Who He is more than just what He can do for you? How do you show that love?

God created us in order that He might love us and that we in turn, could love Him. How shall we love Him? **Luke 10:27** *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind.* How shall we love Him? We shall love God without measure or limit to the full extent of our ability. This love is permanent, increasing in intensity with time as we fellowship together. My love for precious Loretta remains as strong as ever though we have been separated by death for more than 10½ years. I expect our love for each other to last for eternity. Though I am presently separated from Loretta, it is good to know that I'll never be separated from the love and presence of God even for a moment. **Romans 8:38, 39** *For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Since He loves us so much, He desires to take us Home to live forever with Him. **John 14:2, 3.** Love enjoys companionship. Therefore, He is preparing a home for each of us because He loves each of us. In **Genesis 5:24** *Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.* God wanted him continually close. God took Enoch to His Heavenly home without Enoch having to go through the door of death. If we are alive when it happens God will do the same for us in the rapture which we hope to experience very soon.

2. God not only desires our love, God desires our salvation **II Peter 3:9** *The Lord isnot willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.* Why does God desire our salvation? It is the natural result of His love for us. As I already said, He desires us to be with Him forever and forever. When I was a boy, about 8 years old, I had a neighbor friend, named Richard. He was older. I looked up to him, imitated him, always followed him and hung around him But one day, as

we were walking together in town down Main Street, Richard turned and said to me: “Please walk behind me. I don’t want anyone to think you are my brother.” That broke my heart. I’ll never forget the terrible feeling I experienced. My whole world was shattered.

God will never turn His back on us like that. He promises: ***I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*** **Hebrews 13:5.** Now, we’re not perfect and never will be, yet Jesus is not ashamed of us and doesn’t mind calling us His brothers. **Matthew 28:10** ***Then said Jesus unto them: ...go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee*** Is it possible for brothers to be more than brothers? Yes indeed. Jesus goes on to say we are His friends, friends in whom He confides His secrets. **John 15:15** Friends never fail each other no matter how difficult the situation.

3. God not only desires our love and our salvation, but in the third place **God desires our happiness.** For this reason He listens to and answers our prayers. **John 16:24** ***Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.*** Did you know it is possible to experience full and perfect joy? When I was a boy, my brother, Jim, and I loved the Fourth of July. With great excitement we anticipated the shooting off of fireworks. One Fourth of July, our Uncle Frank came to visit us with a huge bag of fireworks. Talk about anticipated fun. Talk about happiness. Talk about excitement. I remember it well to this day.

Another time, Christmas at grandmothers was pure joy. I loved going there for the great meals and gift of games we would receive. Then again, camping and fishing with Dad made Jim and me excited and perfectly happy.

Now what would it take to make you happy today? How would you like to experience perfect joy? You can. Win a soul to Jesus. That does it every time. Get a smile in your heart by giving out tracts and witnessing. God will help you do it. This gives Him joy also.

4. God desires our fellowship **Luke 22;15** ***And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer.*** It meant a lot to Christ to commune with His disciples before He suffered on the cross. We all like to know that loved ones and friends are along side of us when we face great trials. It helps to know that we are not alone. Though He knew, and His disciples knew, that He was about to die, He gave them comfort and hope telling them that after all this was over, He would meet with them once again in Heaven. Just as our Lord enjoys His fellowship with us now at the Lord’s table, He will in a special way once again join us at the Supper of the Lamb in Heaven.

5. In the fifth place, **God also desires our faith** **Hebrews 11:6** ***But without faith it is impossible to please him.*** This verse does not say that without faith some things we do may please Him. It doesn’t say that without faith it is difficult to please Him. It says, that without faith it is impossible to please Him. God is pleased to know we trust Him. In this life it is essential for us to trust Someone greater than ourselves. There are many times we need help. We cannot always help ourselves. Because my unsaved folks, as young parents, knew such times would come, they wanted us children to learn how to pray. We three kids were preschoolers at the time. Not knowing how to pray themselves, they asked neighbors to take us children to church, a little Baptist church in Westmont, Illinois some 20 miles West of Chicago. My parents soon followed and our entire family became saved. This was a wonderful miracle of God. We were saved by faith, yes. But now every day we live by faith. Our faith does not remain static. Each day it grows stronger or weaker. How is your faith progressing? Is it stronger this week than last week?

6. God desires to enjoy His creation **In Genesis 1 verses 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, and 25** God examines His creation in each instance ***and God saw that it was good.*** God liked what He saw. And why should He not? It was all perfect and beautiful from the beginning. God makes no mistakes. All the stars, the

incomparable earth with its plants and animals, together with all the wonders of nature do exactly as He created each to do. God loves beauty and harmony and music. He has the birds singing everywhere every day. He has the rainbow of flowers blooming everywhere every day. He has the stars shining like diamonds in the sky every night. For me, it is all a magnificent wonder that I constantly enjoy. Have you ever closely examined weeds? Do you see how beautiful and exquisite all their flowers are? I have studied the flowers weeds produce with astonished wonder.

To this creation God added man. The earth is man's home for now, but later, Heaven can be his eternal home when he is saved. Man is given certain responsibilities respecting the earth. These began in the Garden of Eden and continue until today. We are to enjoy His wonderful creation, thank Him for it, and see His glory in all He has made. **Psalm 19:1** *The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.* God rejoices in our appreciation and worship of Him as we view His creation.

7. God desires to give us gifts **James 1:17** *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.* **John 3:16** *God so love the world that He gave...* **1 Corinthians 2:12** *Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.*

In James the gifts are largely earthly material gifts. They come from the Father. Saved and unsaved benefit alike. In **Matthew 5:45** it says: *That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.* The gift of God's Son in **John 3:16** is for the entire world. For this reason men are without excuse if they go to hell. They have only themselves to blame.

But the gifts in **I Corinthians 2** are spiritual gifts of which natural men know nothing. **vs. 14** *But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* God's children will never be understood by Satan's crowd. Nor will Satan's sons understand God and His judgments. If they did, they would rush to Him for salvation. They need a new nature to understand God. We all need a new nature to be able to even exist in the presence of an absolutely holy God.

8. God desires Jerusalem for His habitation **Psalm 132:13-16** *For the LORD hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. 14 This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it. 15 I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread. 16 I will also clothe her priests with salvation: and her saints shall shout aloud for joy.* Zion is God's home away from home. Here He is comfortable and content. Here all who reside with Him will shout for joy. Blessings are abundant and salvation universal. His ultimate desire for Jerusalem is not completed as yet, not until the millennium. Just so, our wishes and desires have to wait for the right time. But they are certain to come about as all the promises of God are sure.

9. God desires mercy on the part of everyone **Hosea 6:6** *For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.* God's throne is upheld by mercy. **Proverbs 20:28** *Just as God is merciful, He desires His children to show mercy at all times; not just to the deserving, but also to the undeserving.*

For this reason every sinner, no matter how despicable or vile his sin, who requests forgiveness, is freely and fully forgiven by our Lord. God's mercy is infinite and eternal. Once forgiven the sinner remains forever forgiven. Our sins are never held against us a second time. Therefore, we, who are forgiven so much, must freely forgive all those who may wrong us. This is God's expectation and command. God explains that if we won't forgive, He won't be able to forgive us. **Matthew 6:15** *By*

this we understand that bitterness and blame is a double-barreled sin both against others and ourselves.

Moreover this verse in **Hosea 6:6** says that God desires mercy and not sacrifice. What does this mean? It means that worship is no substitute for the act of mercy. The two go hand in hand. The Lord tells us that hardship cases deserve our mercy and help. God often uses His children to meet the needs of a suffering world. In Texas, Baptists sent semi-trucks loaded with supplies to help the Hurricane Harvey flood victims. Southern Baptists handed out many meals in Texas. It is the nation's third-largest disaster relief organization which prepared more than one million meals after Hurricane Harvey. Christians gave more aid to victims after the Hurricane Irma hit Florida than did FEMA. When the world sees our good works it glorifies our Father which is in Heaven. **Matthew 5:16** The world takes careful note of these things.

CONCLUSION God has a strong desire for many interesting things. Many of His surprising desires benefit us. It is our privilege to be able to fulfill some of these wishes of His, such as practicing mercy, faith, fellowship, and love. When in partnership with Him we become very happy and content. Life in participation with God is exceedingly wonderful and delightfully new every day.

HOODWINKED 6-24-17

INTRODUCTION Try as we may, everyone has been hoodwinked at some point in their lives. What does it mean to be hoodwinked? It means to be ensnared, to be cheated, to be caught, to be swindled, to be defrauded, to be bamboozled, or for someone to gain some personal advantage over us. It particularly means to be DECEIVED. The Bible has a lot to say about being hoodwinked or in Biblical terms, deceived.

1. Who is hoodwinked? Everyone. Well, not everyone. **I Timothy 2:14** tells us *Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.* So Adam was more guilty than Eve because he knew exactly what he was doing when he went along with her by disobeying God's clear instructions. Eve did not try to hoodwink her husband. She actually thought she was doing him a loving favor. She was convinced that eating the fruit would be to their mutual advantage.

Others are not so kind when they hoodwink us. **Proverbs. 24:28** tells of those who deliberately deceive with their lips. Now some few may lie without meaning to, or knowing it. These accommodating folk are sometimes deceived themselves and are used by charlatans for illicit gains. For instance, they may be those who are initially and intentionally benefited by ponzi schemers. They encourage friends to get in on the action and ultimately all are ruined financially.

2. Who are hoodwinked? First, many are deceived by Satan often without realizing it.

Satan deceives the unsaved. **2 Corinthians 4:4** *In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.* This is the reason it is necessary for us to pray for the unsaved that they be released from the hold Satan has on them so that with clear minds these dear friends can hear and understand the gospel. Only then can they make a valid choice to receive Christ. After we pray for them they may choose not to accept Christ but at least they will no longer be hindered by Satan from doing so.

Satan deceives the unsaved, not only about salvation, but about many things, including, for instance, abortion. He causes them to think the unborn child is of no value, and simply a piece of tissue. Since 1973 when abortion became legal, there have been enough babies aborted in the United States to populate Australia 2 1/2 times. That's more than 61 million babies. No wonder Satan is called a murderer. As we consider these numbers we need to pray about this wanton killing. Abortionists do it for the money.

Second, Satan deceives the nations. How many nations are deceived? **Revelation. 18:23** All nations. *for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.* Satan has his agents assigned to every nation. Some world leaders actively seek Satan's advise having their own personal medium such as Canada's former Prime Minister, Mackenzie King.

Some 62 years ago I learned that during the 1st World War, Satan reassigned his demons from China to the war in Europe. Missionaries in China discovered this while engaged in spiritual battle there. The demons informed the missionaries that they would not be so successful except for the fact that their, the demon's strong ones, were sent to Europe's war. Until then, the missionaries had no idea there was a war going on. You and I realize God limits Satan's hold on the nations. We are told in **Revelation 20:3** *that he (Satan) should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled* Today he acts like the god of this world; *the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience* **Ephesians 2:2**

What is Satan's agenda for the world today? It is to harm Christians and to prepare the world

for the Antichrist. Today's progressives are preparing for the Antichrist without realizing it. They seek for a one-world government. They are trying for a one-world economy, a one-world court, a one-world army, a one-world religion. The progressives want everyone of the world to live freely anywhere they choose. Muslims are working to control the whole world and impose sharia law. Until last year the progressives were making great headway in the USA and around the world. This explains why the progressives, adamant globalist that they are, feel so strongly against Russia's Putin. They dislike Putin because he is working for Russian national sovereignty. President Trump also wants USA national sovereignty. So the liberal progressives of both parties continue to oppose Trump tooth and nail, and will do so as long as he is President. Don't expect this opposition to be mild, short lived, or reasonable. But God, who saw to it that Trump was elected, is able to keep him in office. Still we should pray for him and his staff daily. He needs God's help. Period.

Third, Satan deceives Israel. How has Satan hoodwinked Israel? By tricking her into worshipping false gods thus bringing God's righteous anger and judgment upon her. **Deuteronomy 11:16, 17** *Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them; 17 And then the LORD'S wrath be kindled against you, and he shut up the heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit; and lest ye perish quickly from off the good land which the LORD giveth you.* The pain of God's judgment is still felt by Israel today. Someday God promises to restore her to peace and prosperity in her land, but the time is not yet come.

In the end times, Satan will trick Israel into entering into a false peace compact proposed by the Antichrist during the first 3 ½ year period of the tribulation. Examine **Daniel 9:27**. At this time the third temple will be built.

3. Who are hoodwinked? Many deceive themselves.

I Corinthians 3:18, 19 *Let no man deceive himself. 19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.* Some people live as though they think they are as smart as, or even smarter than, God. They are not. For instance some pride themselves that they don't sin. They say they are just fine, thank you. But the Bible tells us in **I John 1:8** *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*

Sometimes people deceive themselves by rationalization. They rationalize that the way we live doesn't make much difference, but **Galatians 6:7** tells us: *Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.* How we live is very important to our present and future happiness.

Interestingly enough, God provides a remedy to men who are susceptible of self-deception. That help is his wife. God often will tell the wife something before He tells the husband. Her cautions should be carefully considered, even when they don't seem to be rational. In **Luke 1:30-33** Mary was informed before Joseph concerning the birth of Jesus. In **Matthew 27:19** Pilot's wife warned him not to condemn Jesus, saying *Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.* Unfortunately Pilot did not listen to her.

I personally heard Jim Sammons give this account of the cautions of his wife. He had an employee who turned out to be a drunkard. This employee often called in 'sick with the flue'. He refused any help. They both agreed that if he ever got drunk again and was unable to work, the employee terminated himself by so doing. A few months later, he failed to show up at work. Three days went by and he did not come. Before supper time, Sammons said to his wife: "Well, I guess he fired himself." She responded, "Did you try to call him?" A bit irritated, he said, "No, and that he would not". At supper she pressed him again to call saying maybe the fellow would harm himself. Sammons became angry and stomped over to the phone. It rang and rang with no answer. He said,

“Honey, that is eight rings. He is not going to answer.” About that time, a very gruff voice said “Hello.” Sammons almost did not recognize him. He asked the employee what he was doing. The man said he had a gun to his head, but was waiting for the phone to stop ringing so he could pull the trigger. Sammons talked him into putting the gun down and went over immediately with his pastor. The man is alive today because Sammons called. Sammons asked his wife how she knew. She said she just felt something was wrong. It never hurts to listen to the cautions of our wife. We need her impute when we are buying something like a house or car, making a change in our lives, getting a new job, or entering a business deal. She feels needed when we value her views.

Just a further thought. Have you ever wondered why speakers get such glorious introductions? There’s a purpose behind it. The speaker is introduced as an expert, a very successful and talented individual. This is done so the audience will accept his message without critical thought or much examination. After all, he is supposed to know so much more than the rest of us. As Christians, we do well to examine everything by the Word of God. By this we are able to judge whether what we hear is true or not.

4. Who are hoodwinked? Those who are deceived by sin.

Sin is a great deceiver. **Romans 7:11** *For sin, taking occasion ...deceived me, and slew me. I Corinthians 6:9, 10* **Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, 10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.** This is quite a long list of people who won’t be found in Heaven because they have been deceived by sin. Sin, for a season, seems to bring pleasure and advantage. That’s why so many engage in it. But in the end it brings ruin.

5. Who is hoodwinked? He who is deceived by wine and drugs. How is he deceived? He doesn’t think the use of alcohol or drugs will hurt him or control him. But **Proverbs 20:1** says ***Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.*** It is not possible to use these substances with impunity. Such use has caused many to lose their jobs, their health, their homes and even their marriages. Such use has opened the door to greater sins and careless living. Some have become thieves and murders to finance this kind of life style. As the Bible notes, this is not prudent.

6. Who are hoodwinked? Those who are deceived by bad companions. **Jeremiah 9:5, 6** *they will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity. 6 Thine habitation is in the midst of deceit; through deceit they refuse to know me, saith the LORD.* Any friend who seeks to turn someone away from God is a bad companion. Any friend who is not guided by the Word of God is a bad companion. This goes for a number of young men of my acquaintance who encourage each other to do things contrary to the Word of God. Their mutual friendship is more important to them than obedience to God. This will end in heartache. It is a waste of life.

7. Who are hoodwinked? Those who are deceived by unsaved preachers. **Jeremiah 29:8** *For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Let not your prophets and your diviners, that be in the midst of you, deceive you,* Many modernistic preachers of our day do not believe the Bible to be without error. Many do not believe in the miracles of Jesus nor in salvation through His shed blood. These are false deceiving preachers. Paul said, let them be anathema. **1 Corinthians 16:22** John said in **2 John 1:10** ***If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed:*** This is good advice should the Jehovah Witnesses or Mormons

come to our door. We are warned not to listen to them, receive them, or even try to reason with them. They are too far gone. So what if they shake the dust off their shoes at our door as they leave. That's what happened to me. I've tried to give them the truth without effect.

CONCLUSION: Our constant prayer should be: *Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue.* **Psalm 120:2** In answer to this prayer, Jesus says: **John 8:32** *And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.* Free from what? Free from everyone and everything that would try to hoodwink or to deceive us in any way. The Holy Spirit gives us a warning in our spirits when something is false. The Bible, God's Truth, also gives us timely warning. God will bring circumstances to bear so that we learn the truth. Dr. William Ashbrook, late pastor of the large Calvary Bible Church in Columbus, Ohio, took me with him when he went to deliver the church's offering to a visiting missionary. This bearded missionary claimed to be a representative of an African orphanage. He showed slides of the work. For some reason this pastor friend of mine decided not to give him the money Sunday night, but would deliver it Monday morning. When we arrived at the address, we discovered he was a fake and a charlatan. Of course he did not get the money.

Just so God delivers us from many a swindle both financial and spiritual. I hope no one will be swindled out of salvation by smooth talking friends. Satan will always try to make decisions against God sound reasonable. But we need to always follow the clear teaching of the Word of God and the direction of the Holy Spirit. With God's help there is no excuse for being hoodwinked.

HUMPTY DUMPTY 9-22-18

INTRODUCTION: We've all heard this nursery rhyme since we were little:

*“Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall.
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
All the King's horses and all the King's men,
Couldn't put Humpty Dumpty back together again.”*

This is a perfect picture of pride as described in (**Proverbs 16:18**) ***Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.*** When Daniel was expected to do evil he said, “NO”. To eat the king's meat would have given him a strong sense of pride. Like Daniel, let's each of us say “NO” to pride in any of its many forms. I have had to do this more than once or twice. Pride has too often taken me by surprise. With God's help I sought to put it down.

Pride is so pervasive and so destructive that the Bible warns us about it 46 times, and of being proud 47 times. The humble are only mentioned 24 times, and humility only 7 times. Pride entered creation very early when it overcame Lucifer in spite of the fact that he was the wisest of all sentient beings that God made. Wisdom is no guarantee against pride. In fact, it is often the cause of it.

‘Pride’ is an Old English word variously translated as “excellent, splendid, arrogant, haughty.” Pride is having, it seems, a much too high opinion of oneself. Lucifer wanted to be equal with God. It says of him in **Isaiah 14:13** ***For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north.***

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary gives a positive definition of pride: “A feeling that you respect yourself and deserve to be respected by others.” It also gives an unhealthy aspect of pride: “A feeling that you are more important or better than other people.” This was Satan's opinion of himself. He considered himself to be better than all the rest of God's creation. Pride says, “Look at me. I'm successful. I'm rich. I know it all.” God warns all of us about having such an attitude. No one with such an attitude will listen to God or be directed by Him. They feel that their own opinion is supreme. In **Judges 21-25** ***every man did that which was right in his own eyes.*** This is also so true of prideful men today.

When can we relax about pride in our own lives? Josh Bond recently said: “We should never consider pride dead until we are.” He went on to illustrate telling of a 21 year old matador who won the popular applause of the people because of his excellent performance. One day this matador made a fatal mistake. Using his sword, he knifed the bull into subjection. The bull was bleeding profusely and went down dying. The young matador turned his back on the bull and bowed to the cheering crowd. But the bull was not dead. He got up and gored the young man through the heart. Just so pride is a fearsome foe and will deal us a blow when we least expect it.

1. Pride will lead to strife. Proverbs 28:25 ***He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife.*** Self-indulgent pride has ruined many a marriage simply because the proud person loves himself more than he will love anyone else. He feels his idea is the only right opinion. Unless he gets his way all the time, he stirs up strife making his family most miserable. Anger results as pride clutches his so-called rights, rights which he refuses to give over to God. His self-centered life often leads to heartache, to separation, and then, to divorce. There are no winners in divorce unless it be the lawyers.

How can love and unity be restored? If the troubled couple is sincere they can try this experiment.

It has worked in the past and can work again. Instruct each to privately take two sheets of paper. On the first sheet he/she should list all the things they do not like about their partner. On the other sheet he/she should list all the good qualities they do like in their partner. They should try to make this second list at least 10 items long. Then, for one month, privately, and by themselves, let them take the first list of faults and fully forgive each and every item every day. At the same time, have them take the second list, and thank God for each and every good quality every day for a month. As an added insurance to success instruct them to give their partner a sincere compliment every day. While doing this little exercise of hope God will help both of them to realize some amazing changes in the appreciation they have for each other. They will actually begin to love each other once again.

This simple experiment works. It brought revival to a church in Ohio, and renewed unity and love to certain families in Michigan. I personally know this church and these families.

2. Pride may lead to suicide. Uncontrolled anger or rage brought on by pride may contribute to suicide. The rate of suicide has increased greatly these last few years. Strangely, it is most prevalent in the middle years of life. In 2016, the highest suicide rate, 19.72 %, was among adults between 45 and 54 years of age.

3. Pride is quick to take offense. Have you noticed how easy it is for the average college crowd to be offended these days? They are so touchy. And when they get offended, they often resort to violence to vindicate themselves. They become loud, demanding, and quick to find fault with those of another persuasion. They demand to be heard but refuse to listen to an opinion different from their own.

In this regard I remember what my Mother used to say. My Mother instructed us children not to stick our feelings out so far. While we were proud to be Polish, we were taught to get along quite well and to appreciate those who were not fortunate enough to be Polish or Bohemian. This enabled us to be the object of Polish jokes with equanimity and laugh along with the others. We never took offense. In fact, we rather enjoyed this humor. How different was the attitude in a Baptist Sunday school class a few years ago. The teacher, giving an illustration, mentioned what Brazil nuts were called when he was a boy. Consequently a lady in the class berated him loudly, with heated temper, and angry language such as I never heard from a Christian before. I was shocked by her powerful emotional performance because it was obvious the teacher meant no harm. He was merely stating a fact about his youth without any thought of the race factor. Perhaps, as my Mother said, her feelings stuck out a little too far. Pride can do that to a person, to any person. Pride can make them mad.

4. Pride makes quick use of lies. **Psalm 119:69** *The proud have forged a lie against me.* Making others look small or petty, puffs pride. Here's where 'fake news' comes in. Those who shape public opinion know that a lie repeated often enough will persuade shallow thinkers to receive it as the truth. However, the continual din of a loud drum does not prove a point. Let's look beyond the blaring headlines. Let's dig deeper for the truth seeking help and understanding from God Who knows the truth. Let's recognize the cause for these lies. It is pride.

5. The proud seek to ruin others. **Psalms 119:85-87, 122** *The proud have digged pits for me, --- they persecute me wrongfully;--- They had almost consumed me upon earth.* We can almost hear this Psalmist say "my only hope in in you, dear God. *Help thou me,* and please do it quickly. **Let not the proud oppress me.**" Again in **Psalm 56:5** King David was heard to say: *Every day they wrest my words: all their thoughts are against me for evil.*

In politics, the press is trying to destroy the reputation of the President himself. They wrest his words; their thoughts are against him for evil. Members of the press have also gone after his wife, Melania to whom he has been married since 2005. In response to these critics, she has conducted

herself graciously. She knows the best way to respond to such unjust indignities, is not to respond in kind. Her gracious thoughtfulness shows itself in the way she conducts herself with all people. This includes foreign dignitaries. She appears to be a wonderful hostess.

When Moses experienced similar attacks as did King David and as do the Trumps, he did not defend himself or try to get even. He let God defend him. And God did, quite forcibly on more than one occasion. **Numbers 12** gives one such account. *And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: --- Vs 2 And they said, Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the LORD heard it.* The Lord immediately, and strongly rebuked Aaron and his sister, Miriam. **Vs 9** *And the anger of the LORD was kindled against them.* Miriam was stricken with leprosy. Their wrong doing became known to the entire camp. Pride was no friend to Aaron or Miriam nor is it to us.

CONCLUSION Paul practiced the secret of success over pride. What did he do? He said, ***“I die daily.”*** **1 Corinthians 15:31** In other words, Paul is saying “I am nothing; Christ is everything.” Paul realized pride must be dealt with on a daily basis. Jesus told each of us to do as much every day when He said we should take up our cross daily.

When we are able to say, “Not my will, but Thy will be done, dear Lord” then pride will find little room in our lives. When we do our best to live for Jesus, and try always to please Him, pride cannot gain a lasting hold on us. I heard it put it this way: “Be nothing, brother. Satan can’t hit ‘nothing’.” What is nothing? It is a zero with the rim rubbed off. That’s when Christ becomes everything.

I will conclude these thoughts on pride with this poem:

“None of self, and all of Thee.”

Oh, the bitter pain and sorrow
That a time could ever be,
When I proudly said to Jesus,
“All of self, and none of Thee.”

Yet He found me; I beheld Him
Bleeding on th’ accursed tree,
And my wistful heart said faintly,
“Some of self, and some of Thee.”

Day by day His tender mercy,
Healing, helping, full and free,
Brought me lower while I whispered,
“Less of self, and more of Thee.”

Higher than the highest heaven,
Deeper than the deepest sea,
Lord, Thy love at last has conquered:
“None of self, and all of Thee.”

None of self, and all of Thee,

None of self, and *all* of Thee,
Lord, Thy love at last has conquered:
“None of self, and all of Thee.”

By Theodore Monod

(Romans 14:7, 8) *For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.* Notice, there's no room for pride in this.

I LOVE THE LORD BECAUSE... 4-16-16

INTRODUCTION One day my wife, Loretta, asked me “Why do you love me?” Did your wife ever ask you that? It set me back on my heels and I had to think fast. Why do I love her? Is it because she is so pretty, such a good cook, a wonderful housekeeper, a fine artist and crafts person, an excellent seamstress, a lover of beauty, a generous hostess, a kind and gentle companion? Other people may have some of these qualities but I don’t love them. Why do I love her? I love her because she loves me. I love her because that is exactly what I decided to do the rest of my life. She is the perfect companion to me, the joy of my life. I like to be with her.

What does it mean to love the Lord? It means we know Him for who He is. We have fellowship and a close relationship with Him. We understand His likes and dislikes and have a good idea of what He thinks of us. Most of all, we want to please Him and be with Him. Love is a daily thing. So we love the Lord, not only for what He does for us, or gives to us, but most of all for our relationship with Him. This is intimate love, very personal.

1. We are commanded to love the Lord, without reservation. Luke 10:27 The most important word in this verse is the word 'all' and it occurs four times. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind.* This requires constant communion with Him. We put aside anything that would interfere with our love. Mary loved the Lord Jesus like this. You remember Mary and her sister, Martha. Mary was perfectly content to put everything aside and to sit at Jesus’ feet and hear Him.

In addition to loving without reservation, we are told in **John 14:15** *If ye love me, keep my commandments.* This is where Adam and Eve failed. They did not keep God’s commandment because their love was not deep and mature. It takes time for love to mature, and they may have known God for only days. There are degrees or levels of love. Jesus said to Peter, *lovest thou me more than these?* that is, more than family or friends or things. We cannot hope to love God the way we should unless we spend a good deal of time with Him.

2. Reasons we love the Lord Psalm 116:1 gives us the psalmist’s reason for loving the Lord. It is this verse that gave me the idea for this little devotional. *I love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications.* Answered prayer is so important to our well being and happiness. He gives us answers without limit. I was in college and had a week between semesters that had no classes. I needed some money to begin the next semester so went to town looking for a job. Though I prayed, no one would hire me just for a week. Snow covered the ground and as I walked back to college, I passed a construction site where a new store was being built. I asked to see the foreman, and got a job and earned the exact amount of money I needed. Not being a union member, I could not pick up a hammer or pound a nail. I unloaded the trucks and made the building materials available to the carpenters. I brought them hot chocolate. When the week was over, the foreman kindly offered me a summer job.

Sometimes our Lord answers prayer unasked. Loretta was dying of cancer. She did not have much longer to live. I started to weep. I don’t know if I was feeling sorry for myself or for her. Maybe both. She said, “Don’t cry.” But I did. For months after she died I kept a lot of hankies handy. Jesus said to the widow of Nain “Don’t cry.” **Luke 7:12** Her only son was dead and they were in the funeral procession to bury him. Though she never asked, Jesus had compassion on her and restored her son from the dead. Jesus is able to do anything for us. While the Bible does not tell us, I think she loved the Lord all the more for this.

What is the most important answered prayer we can experience? It is: “God be merciful to me

the sinner, and save me for Jesus' sake." This is one prayer the sinner makes that the Lord always hears. God is not obligated to answer any other prayer for the sinner though He sometimes does.

I love the Lord because I chose to love Him and He loves me. It is an activity of the intellect, not of the emotions. How do I love God? **Luke 10:27** *with all my heart, and with all my soul, and with all my strength, and with all my mind;* That is love without reserve. That is love without end. That is love from my total being. This is the way Enoch loved God. His walk with God was a love relationship. God did not want to leave him so He took Enoch home to live with Himself without his dying.

Though God loves the world, **John 3:16**, and though *God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* **Romans 5:8**, most of the world chooses not to love Him. Why? Because they want to live their own way and not according to His will. Some 40 years ago I went door to door in a community 20 miles west of Chicago and a few miles from my church. I discovered only one in a 100 homes had true believers. Many unsaved may claim to love God but that does not save them. To be saved they must personally receive the benefits of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. Their sin must be dealt with.

I mentioned that God loves the world. A family was having devotions, taking turns reading the Scriptures. A little preschool sister asked if she could read. Her big brother said, "Mother, she can't read." The wise mother told the girl to go ahead and read. The little girl opened the Bible to Genesis and read, "Jesus loves me." Then she turned over several books and read, "Jesus loves me." Again she turned to the New Testament and read, "Jesus loves me." Finally, she turned to Revelation and said, "Jesus loves me." Her big brother said, "See, I told you she could not read." But the mother wisely said, "She is exactly right. The love of God is through the entire Bible." Furthermore, God loves us no matter what. If we obey Him or disobey Him, He loves us. If we read the Bible and pray, or fail to read the Bible and pray, He loves us. If we witness to the lost or fail to witness to the lost, He loves us. If we serve Him earnestly or fail to serve Him, He loves us. No matter what, He loves us.

We love God because of what He does for us. **Psalm 31:23** tells us God preserves the faithful. We enjoy His perfect and continual protection. **Deuteronomy 30:16** God blesses us in the land. He fully provides for us, We have nice houses and plenty to eat and to wear. He gives us health and strength and with it, happiness and friends. Not only do we receive physical blessings, but spiritual. **James 2:5** He makes us an heir of the kingdom. This begins with salvation. **Deuteronomy 7:9** *which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him* **James 1:12** *We shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.* **I Corinthians 2:9** *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.* **John 14:28** Christ and the Father love us and make their abode with us.

Conclusion: How did all this begin? **I John 4:19** *He first loved us.*

IN WHAT GRADE ARE YOU? 6-13-15

God takes us through His school all our lives. Of what sort of person are you becoming? You can determine that to a large extent by how you react in God's school.

1. FINANCES. God has four purposes for money:

1) provision of basic needs. We know what these are: food, shelter, clothes. Everything else is a luxury. Unlikely as it seems, even a car is a luxury. 2) to confirm direction for our life. A lack of funds may mean that a change is in order. 3) for fellowship; that is, to meet the needs of others. The Holy Spirit gives direction to our giving. 4) God demonstrates His great power through finances. Miraculous supplies and surprises come out of His riches is glory.

For most of us, this is our 1st grade. God deals with us in the area of finances before other things. Money matters. Are we in debt? That could be a sign of failure. After setting aside our tithe each week, do we also put aside some money into savings? Do we loan money to anyone?

The Book says that if we don't tithe, we rob God. **Malachi 3:8-9** *Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. 9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.* If we are in debt, we are slaves to the lender. **Proverbs 22:7** *The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.* If we co-sign or loan to anyone, we are in trouble. **Proverbs 6:1-3** *My son, if thou be surety for thy friend, if thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger, 2 Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth, thou art taken with the words of thy mouth. 3 Do this now, my son, and deliver thyself, when thou art come into the hand of thy friend; go, humble thyself, and make sure thy friend.* If it is wrong to borrow, it is wrong to loan even to children or to grandchildren or to Christian friends. A long time friend of mine, Joe Heron, wanted to borrow some money from me so he could rent and equip an apartment. The bank would not loan it to him because he was on social security. To his surprise, I just gave it to him without asking for repayment and have never regretted it.

As with everything else, we will give account to God for how we use our money. We will not have to give account for our sins. The sin question is forever taken care of. We will never be ashamed at our sins being exposed. But we will give account for all our blessings financial and spiritual. Have you thought of this? Do you plan for this?

Now we should be clear on these things and use our money wisely. If we are unselfish, and depend upon God for all our needs; if we share with others, and if we purchase as the Holy Spirit leads us; we have passed this first grade about money. I hope for the record, you all got A's.

2. FRIENDS. The next grade level is that of friends. This is important because our kind of friends often indicates our relationship to our Lord. We do well to pick Godly and spiritually minded people for our friends. Such friends will encourage us to walk with God. The Bible asks, in **Amos 3:3** *Can two walk together, except they be agreed?*

The Bible tells us who to avoid. 1) The angry man. **Proverbs 22:24** *Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go:* 2) The adulterous woman. **Proverbs 20:30** *Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths. 26 For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her. 27 Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.* The proud and the wicked. **Proverbs 16:19** *Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.* **Job 21:30** *the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction? they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath.* **Psalms 7:11** *God is angry with the wicked every day.* Among the seven things God hates, He hates the covetous **Psalms 10:3** *For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous,*

whom the LORD abhorreth. You get the point. It is true today. We can know a man by the friends he keeps. Like-minded friends quickly recognize each other simply by looking into each others' eyes. When God has finished dealing with us about friends, He brings us to the next grade.

3. TIME. How do we use our time? One day we will give an account for our time. Otto Koning was a missionary to the head-hunters of New Guinea. He thought he was wasting time fixing a lot of things for the natives. They pressed upon him with all their broken objects, leaving him little time to study the language. To his surprise he later discovered this very activity resulted in relationships that put his mission station years ahead of the others.

We need to spend time on people rather than projects, or possessions, or hobbies, or sports.. Why? Because people are eternal. Too many of us are wasting our lives on non-essentials. Once God convicted me of spending too much time on a craft project. In spite of His clear prompting me to desist, I continued in self will. What happened, you ask? Well, I just finished the project, a beautiful lamp from cut stones, when it fell off the table and smashed. I knew why. From then on, I listened most carefully to what God was trying to say to me. By the way, I did piece the lamp back together and it hangs in my house today as a reminder of God's dealing with me.

When we ask God what He would have us to do, it always involves time. As in the rest of life the Holy Spirit will guide us in the use of our time. Do we spend enough time talking to God? **Psalm 90:12** We need to number our days. God does.

4. PRAYER and BIBLE READING. Meeting daily with God is not by accident, but choice. We must plan and prepare for it, and then work our plan purposefully and consistently. We may begin with a few minutes every day, say ten or twenty. That soon grows into an hour or more until we are in the attitude of fellowship and prayer throughout the day. Corporate worship on Sundays and Wednesdays becomes a welcome delight. We look forward to the sermons. Meeting with fellow believers becomes a joy and blessing.

Speaking of prayer, what answers have you received recently? Do these answers come regularly? While reading the Bible do you receive fresh and exciting insights even from old and familiar passages? This will become the norm as each of us spend regular time with God.

CONCLUSION. Are you living life with a purpose? Is God pleased with your life? These are just some to the grades God takes us through. We will remain in His school until the day we die. I wonder what lesson the Holy Spirit has for me tomorrow. Day by day becomes a day of discovery. It is impossible to be bored as a student in God's school.

IS OUR CONSCIENCE or THE HOLY SPIRIT SPEAKING? 5-21-16

INTRODUCTION 'Conscience' is used 30 times in the New Testament but never in the Old Testament. What is conscience? It is not a person, or a spirit, or a still small voice. Nor is it the voice of God, nor a divine spark, nor the only remnant of God in us after the fall. Our conscience is God given, God-ward, stimulated by God's Spirit, restrains all men both saved and unsaved, and acts upon the basis of a knowledge of the law.

It means 'with knowledge', and 'joint or double knowledge'. **Romans 2:15 reads: *their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.*** It brings actions to the light of understanding and evaluates actions as to right or wrong according to the individual's code of ethics. **John 3:21 says *he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.*** Conscience is not active in a baby, It can be trained, is distorted by the fall, and is affected by the will.

The goal of every person should be to have a clear conscience, that is, a conscience without offense. It is not wise to try to be someone's conscience or do the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. **Isaiah 57:20, 21 notes: *the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.*** For this reason wrong doers must play intellectual games in order to sleep at night. They play the blame game, but that only brings temporary relief because guilt is not a matter of the mind, but of the spirit.

1. The Bible speaks of many kinds of conscience, saved and unsaved. We shall examine some of them. First there is the natural conscience which Adam experienced before the fall. Adam is the only one who could trust his conscience to be his guide. Since the fall no man can fully trust his conscience to be his guide. Why? Because we often adopt the moral standards of the society in which we live. For example, some countries are cannibalistic while others practice abortion. The Code of Hammerabi is acclaimed by some, but is not a faultless help because it is of human origin. It says that if a woman was thought to be unfaithful, she should be thrown in the river. If she drowns she is guilty. If she survives, she is innocent. The Bible is a much better guide. In fact it is the only perfect guide.

2. The unregenerate conscience of the sinner.

There is the defiled conscience. **Titus 1:15 *Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.*** The defiled conscience is like a muddied river. It delights in off-color stories, and has a wicked imagination. To listen to wicked stories is like getting gum on the shoe and is equally difficult to remove from the memory.

Next is the evil conscience. This conscience accents to evil. We must not seek the advise or counsel of a wicked man. **Psalms 1:1 *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners,*** Therefore use Christian lawyers. Now, don't be surprised if the wicked try to force you to partake along with them of their wickedness. Why do they act this way? So you won't prick their conscience by a godly life. We should do as it says in **Hebrews 10:22 *having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience,***

An evil conscience is followed by a convicting conscience. **John 8:9 *And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.*** Note that the conscience cannot be destroyed, but by neglect it can become dormant.

Next is the accusing conscience. When we are headed for trouble God gives warning signals. In

the body it is pain. In the spirit it is conscience. For this reason many will not come to church. They try to squelch their conscience. But because of conscience, no one will enjoy hell even for a moment. The accusing conscience will greatly torment lost souls.

3. The regenerate conscience. First, there is the purged conscience **Hebrews 9:14**, followed by the conscience toward God **I Peter 2:19**, followed by the good conscience mentioned in **I Timothy 1:5** *Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:* After this is the clear conscience. To have a clear conscience, we must seek forgiveness and make restitution to everyone we have wronged, whether God or man. *He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.* **Proverbs. 28:13**

The arrow continues to go up with a pure conscience. **I Timothy 3:9** *Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.* Then a witnessing conscience. **Romans 9:1** *I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,* and finally, a conscience void of offense, **Acts 2:16.**

Now the arrow turns down again. This is still a saved conscience. There is an emboldened conscience, **I Corinthians 8:10**. Often what parents do in moderation children do in excess. The wounded conscience, **I Corinthians 8:12**, and the weakened conscience, **I Corinthians 8:7**. You know the story of the frog in hot water. Next, the seared conscience, **I Timothy 4:2**. And the shipwrecked conscience, **I Timothy 1:19** A lady who claimed to be a Christian visited my church one Sunday evening with a man who was not her husband. She admitted they were having physical relations but told me it was not wrong because she was a hot woman. I read Bible verses to her but it was like water off a duck's back. Her conscience was shipwrecked.

4. Before we conclude, I'd like to ask this question: how do we know the difference between our conscience and the Holy Spirit speaking to us? My thoughts are these. The Holy Spirit reveals Divine truth. **I Corinthians 2:10** *God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.* We understand the Bible by the Holy Spirit, not by our conscience. Our conscience, on the other hand, gives us warning when we disobey God's law as we understand it.

Satan, the accuser of the brethren, brings past sins to mind to make us miserable and defeated. Our only remedy is to appropriate the truth of the Word of God that we are forgiven completely and forever. The Spirit witnesses to us that we are the sons of God and brings us peace. **Romans 8:16.**

The Holy Spirit is the Lord of the harvest. **Luke 10:2** *The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.* The Holy Spirit at times speaks to many of us telling us to witness to a certain person. We should obey promptly. Jim, a student friend of mine, told me he was on his way back to school by bus. They stopped in a Canadian city where he got a hotel room for the night. Going out to the street, he met a very ill, poorly dressed man. The Holy Spirit told him to witness the Gospel to him, now! He resisted, had supper, and returned to his hotel room. Watching the news on TV, he saw this man attended to by police. He had died. Jim felt terrible he failed the Lord of the harvest..

Years ago Loretta and I visited Schoenbrunn, a Moravian settlement in Ohio. The log cabin village had been restored, including God's Acre which is the cemetery and the church. While in the church, we viewed the plain oak benches, candle fixtures in the wall, and the huge fire place. Other visitors there said that it was too bad there wasn't a preacher to preach to them. The Holy Spirit told me to speak up but I was afraid, and did not. To this day I regret that I did not speak up. Perhaps someone could have been saved. **Proverbs 24:11, 12** gives us a warning: *If thou forbear to deliver them that*

are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; 12 If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?

The Holy Spirit sometimes speaks like an actual voice. My wife and I, after prayer, gave a gift of money to a needy Moody student. When I handed her the check, I heard myself asking how much she needed. Immediately the Holy Spirit rebuked me. I heard a voice saying "I told you how much to give." Before I could stop her from answering, she gave the exact amount on the check. A similar experience came years later when a friend asked for some money needed immediately. She offered to give some valuables in exchange. I found myself answering, as though someone else was speaking through me, that I did not want to go that route. I did not want anything in return but would give the money outright. The thought surprised even me. It came like an audible voice. I believe it was the Holy Spirit.

I think the subject matter helps determine who is speaking. If it is a conviction of sin, it is the Holy Spirit. **Micah 3:8** *I am full of power by the spirit of the LORD, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin.* But if it is a caution against sin, it is probably our conscience. Yet if we do not heed the caution, the Holy Spirit may step in as happened when the Lord was trying to speak to me about pride in my life in five areas. Conviction will work in the young. When I was about 9 years old, I was walking to church with 2 cents in my pocket for the offering. Passing a store, I spent the 2 cents on penny chances. My conscience convicted me so hard that later I restored the money and never did such a thing again.

Conclusion: If our conscience is well instructed by the Word of God and we seek to do His will in all things, then it may be a reliable guide to godly living. If we are in any way rebellious, it will not be a reliable guide because we can always justify what we want to do. I hope these ideas give you something to think about. They did me.

IT'S NOT MY FAULT 3-21-15

INTRODUCTION We often hear someone say: "It's not my fault! Don't blame me!" Just what are they saying? "I'm not responsible!" The sad part about this is, they actually believe what they are saying. Worse still, most of our country feels and acts this way. Everyone else is to fault.

Responsibility is defined as 1) The fact of being accountable or to blame for something 2) The ability to act independently and make decisions without authorization 3) The state of having a duty to deal with something or having control over someone (that is, himself). America became great because people shouldered responsibility for themselves. Unfortunately, the very opposite is true today.

1. Don't blame the thief. The environment made him do it. So he goes on stealing, harming and hurting, destroying property with relative impunity.

2. Don't blame the poor. It's not his fault though most able-bodied persons can get a job of some sort even in these days. After all, why should he work? The world owes him a living. Today, society, from our top leaders on down, believe it is right to take money from anyone who has it and give it to those who do not. They do this through rules, regulations, taxation, and laws. Obama care is a prime example of taking money from one to give it to another person.

3. Don't blame parents for unmarried daughters with lots of children. A very young unmarried woman came to my church some years ago with two small children. She told me social services got her an apartment, paid for her food and medical needs, and gave her a clothes allowance. She could not have been much more than 20 or 21 years old. My question was: where were her parents? Why didn't they take her in and support her? Obviously they did not feel it was their responsibility.

4. Don't blame ISIS for it's sadistic murder, mayhem, and torture. All they need are jobs according to state department spokeswoman Marie Hart. They can't help themselves.

5. Don't blame the gays, the homosexuals, or the sodomites for their debauchery. It's not their fault. They were born that way. The fact is that they were not born that way according to the Bible and according to other social studies. They can change.

6. Don't blame me for not going to church. When I was young my parents made me do it. (Note: My parents also made me eat, take a bath, go to school, and tell the truth among other things.)

7. Don't blame me if my neighbor is not saved. I'm not the one to tell him about Jesus. It's not my fault if he goes to hell. I had a tooth ache a week ago, that hurt harder and harder as time went on. I thought I couldn't stand it much longer and began to think what forever in hell would be like. That changed my feelings toward my neighbor.

The consequences of a nation of people not taking responsibility are staggering.

1. Laws are made concerning discrimination against homosexuals and sodomites. Now they have the right by law to marry same sex partners. Whenever a right is given to one person, something is taken away from another. Christian florists and bakers are ordered by the court to service same sex marriages or pay a huge fine. They could lose their homes and businesses. Florist Stutzman was sued for not providing flowers for a same sex wedding. She does sell to gays. With her, it is the principal

of free speech and freedom of religious expression. The Oregon Bureau of Labor & Industries said a Christian baker violated state nondiscrimination laws by refusing to sell a wedding cake to a lesbian couple. He was fined \$150,000.

2. Individual responsibility is needed today as much as ever it was. Seventy years ago we were children who could freely purchase and shoot off fireworks. Back then, we went sledding in the streets. As kids we were responsible for our own safety. Today, because of sledding lawsuits, Dubuque, Iowa closed 48 of 50 public parks. Boone, Iowa was fined 12 million in one season over sledding incidents. Omaha had to pay 2 million, Sioux City paid 2.75 million. In the USA, 20,000 are injured per year, mostly scrapes and bruises, and yes, some broken bones. As kids, when we experienced an accident, we blamed ourselves for not being careful enough. But people like to blame someone else. It is always another person's fault. Once, I watched as a pastor's daughter was apprehended by her mother for squirting water from the fountain. Her mother asked, "What will Jesus think of you?" She quickly answered, "Satan made me do it". She would not admit it was her fault.

3. God will hold nations to account for their deeds. The U.S. will give account to God for abortion, gay rights, same sex marriage, and the removal of the Bible and prayer from schools and public places. She is destroying herself. Our founding fathers knew that while individuals will give account in eternity, nations must give account in the present and so made their laws accordingly. We are inviting God's judgment if we continue our profligate ways.

4. Exodus 22:6 tells of **personal individual responsibility**. *If fire break out, and catch in thorns, so that the stacks of corn, or the standing corn, or the field, be consumed therewith; he that kindled the fire shall surely make restitution. Matthew 1;2:36 But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. Hebrews 13:17 Parents must give account: Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you. Romans 14:12 So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.*

CONCLUSION: "It's not my fault so don't blame me" won't hold up in the judgment when every man must give account of himself to God. Whether we accept the fact or not that we are individually liable, makes no difference, God will hold every one of us responsible for our deeds according to what we've done or failed to do. So, *we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world. Titus 2:12* Then, and only then, would we as a nation once again enjoy the blessings of the Lord as we did years ago.

JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS 11-18-17

INTRODUCTION Some people get a lot of their exercise jumping to conclusions. I think we all are guilty of this sport at one time or another. We just won't take the time to seek out the facts. Perhaps personal prejudice skews our conclusions. Jumping to conclusions can be a costly mistake, or at times, a cause for later regret. The Bible tells us to examine ourselves, that is, our motives **1Corinthians 11:28** Next we need to examine the facts and look to God for the proper interpretation of them. **Proverbs 3:13** *Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding.*

1. Some unfortunate conclusions (Note that these are random examples listed in no particular order.)

Some years ago, a Scottish friend of mine correctly noted that Jesus is a God of love. Therefore, he concluded, wrongly, that Jesus never got angry. The Bible tells us that there were times Jesus was moved to anger. Jesus wanted the little children to come unto Him but the disciples forbade it. **Mark 10:14** *But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased.* On another occasion, Jesus went into the temple, made a whip, and drove out the money-changers. In this instance Jesus was more than a little displeased. His Father's house must be a quiet place of prayer for all nations, not a place of boisterous business. **Psalms 2:5** indicates Jesus' anger may be very strong at times: *Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.* In this Psalm Jesus is seen as the sovereign ruler and judge of the whole world. These verses show times when He does exercise righteous indignation toward a sinful world. To conclude that Jesus never gets angry is simply wrong. While He loves the sinner, He is angry with sin every day.

Methodist Bishop Garfield Bromley Oxnam jumped to the conclusion that the God of the Old Testament is unkind and unfair. On one occasion, back in the early fifties, over in Wilmington, Delaware, I listened to him refer to the God of the Old Testament as a dirty bully. He concluded that the God of the Old Testament is not the same as the God of the New Testament because, he said, the Old Testament God was vindictive requiring the Israel to destroy the nations around them whereas the God of the New Testament is a God of love and would never do so. Jumping to this false distinction he contended that our Old Testament God was morally reprehensible.

He was wrong, of course, because the God of the Old Testament is the same Person as the God of the New Testament. God instructed Israel to destroy these nations for two important reasons. First, their destruction was His judgment upon them. Why? Because they continued in utter wickedness for a long period of time. **Genesis 15:16** tells us there was a time *the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.* But now the time had come that their wickedness is full, So God's judgment was to have them completely destroyed. **Ezekiel 16:50** says of wicked peoples: *And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good.*

Second, God warned that if Israel allowed these idolatrous nations to continue in their midst, Israel would soon copy their ways forgetting God which would result in severe punished by Him because of their folly. This actually happened to Israel exactly as predicted because she neglected to eradicate these false-god worshipers as told to do. Instead Israel mingled with these nations adopting their gods as her own. She suffered God's righteous anger as a severe consequence. God is absolutely just in all that He does both to the wicked and to the righteous. Notice, God first gave them warning.

King Herod jumped to the conclusion that he was a very worthy person, and assumed he was rather high and mighty. His feeling of superiority was augmented when a lot of people bragged about him. These people fed his pride extolling what they said were his many virtues. Unfortunately we too

might think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think perhaps because we are being favored or flattered by others. There is great danger in accepting such praise. Pride will precede a fall.

When King Herod, dressed in his royal robes, gave a splendid oration, his subjects told him he sounded like a god. He then made the mistake of accepting this praise. It says in **Acts 12:23** *Immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.* Even worldly kings are to give God the glory. This king's death was the result of some wrong assumptions. The people were wrong to give him the praise due only to God, and he was very wrong to accept it. The consequences were deadly.

Many people jump to the conclusion that they need more money. Christians often forget that as God's children they are already provided all they need and told to be content with what they have. **Hebrews 13:5** God will never leave us destitute.

What is the truth concerning the money people in the U.S. possess? The magazine, *Dollars and Cents*, relates the following statistics: (note: I verified that these statistics are generally accurate.) They state the financial status of men, nation-wide, up to the age of 65 is as follows:

36% are dead already (some say 20% are dead).

54% are worth less than \$1000 at age 65.

5% are dependent on someone to care for them or they continue working after 65.

4% are financially comfortable, that is, they can live a year without working.

1% are well off. They own a comfortable \$250,000 which includes the value of their house.

Compare these statistics with those of Forbes which says: Total savings/investments, of workers age 55 + are:

Less than \$10,000: 31%

\$10,000 to \$99,999: 29%

\$100,000 to \$249,999: 18%

\$250,000 or more: 22%

I must observe, from these statistics, that most of us are doing pretty well and have nothing to complain about. We don't need more money, we just need more contentment with what we have.

Progressive, globalist liberals predict President Trump will fail. Then they do everything in their power to ruin him. They have jumped to the conclusion that the American public was all wrong to have elected him. Two things amaze me: first is their unreasonable violence in their hatred of him. Many actually say they wish him dead. Second is their filthy dirty language and immoral demonstrations against him and those who agree with him. At times they act as if they are out of control and 'possessed' in their frenzy. Many of these distorted progressive views are regularly taught in universities across our country. It seems to me that much of this unreasonable reaction is Satan inspired. Why? Because Satan is the father of lies, full of hatred and murder.

I believe these progressive, global liberals are wrong. I believe that the only reason Trump got elected is because God wanted him to be. There is no other rational explanation. God decided to give Christians a short reprieve from the persecution that is surely coming. Years ago, when her husband was president, I remember Hillary Clinton saying she hated Christians. She still seems to. Obama is no friend to Christianity either, striking out at Christians in many ways. It seems to me he introduced many evil things to our country including moral perversion, same sex marriage, intensified racism, and 'political correctness'. He appointed court justices whom he knew would rule according to their personal political preference rather than according to the Constitution or the laws of our land.

Conservatives were marked by his displeasure and wrongly treated by the IRS. He declared the USA is not a Christian nation. It seems he does not want it to be Christian.

So far, as I write this, Trump has been relatively good for our country. The stock market attained new highs, illegal immigration is reduced, the military is being strengthened, Christians are being protected in more cases in court, Washington's control of our lives is being limited a bit, and we are a country going back to law and the Constitution instead of practicing so called 'political correctness'. What we really need is a nation-wide revival and a return to God. We realize our problems cannot be solved in Washington, but by God alone. Christ is the answer.

You well know that many people jump to the conclusion that when they are suffering, they have every right to complain and feel sorry for themselves. In so doing, they make others around them miserable. The Bible teaches us in **John 12:28** that this is no time to complain, but a time to give God the glory. Jesus said: *Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. 28 Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.*

God can be, and should be, glorified in the midst of our suffering. When we do glorify God instead of complaining, the world will see and wonder. Our entire attitude is affected when our goal in the midst of suffering is to glorify God. It will put joy in our heart and a smile on our face that no amount of pain can erase. As a result we will receive eternal rewards in Heaven. While others may jump to the conclusion it is proper and beneficial for them to murmur and complain, we who honor God will never find fault with God by complaining about our problems. Jesus, facing ultimate suffering on the cross, desired most of all that His Father would be glorified through Him. **1 Thessalonians 5:18** *In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.* This includes giving thanks while in the midst of suffering.

2. Is it ever good to jump to conclusions? Have you ever noticed that cats, coons, and dogs react very differently to the same set of circumstances? Given a very loud explosive noise the dog instantly flees but the cat and the coon turn around and look first. Perhaps that is why cats need 9 lives. We could say the dog jumps to the conclusion that there is danger, while the cat and coon stop to ruminate a bit before making a decision.

With tongue in cheek, I notice the Bible has a lot of references to dogs, but, as Dr. Walter Wilson points out, only one reference to cats. He said this reference is demonstrated in **Psalms 91:6** where it tells of *the pestilence that walketh in darkness.*

When it comes to judging people we seldom take the time to do it properly. Hannah Bond didn't take time to consider when she first saw Josh. When I asked her how she met her husband, she said that when she first saw him, she did not like him. In fact, she said, she hated him. Obviously, when she got to know Josh better, she found he had many wonderful qualities. They've been joyfully married ever since. When it comes to people, we do best not to jump to conclusions too quickly.

Sometimes we may dislike a person we have just met. Why? It may be because they remind us, though subconsciously, of a person who wronged us in the past. Now we have in our church some people who are determined to like everyone. They assume everyone is nice. We all look at the outward appearance while God looks at the heart. God alone comes to the perfect conclusions. The best we can do is judge by visible fruit.

In the parable of the publican and the Pharisee **Luke 18:10-14**, the Pharisee jumped to the conclusion that he was so much better than the publican because, unlike the publican, he was very religious. The Pharisee did not realize that it was not wise for him to think so highly of himself. In this

case, God observed his heart. Notice what the text says: *And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.* This Pharisee's self-exaltation reminds us of King Herod's folly. Both had eternal consequences. Both died with out God.

Sometimes it is necessary to make quick decisions. We need to decide quickly about what to do if our house is on fire, or if a gun is pointed at us, or if we see someone in danger of drowning. In such cases, the sooner we jump to conclusions, the better. And pray that we come to the right conclusion. I had taken a group of boys camping to Starved Rock State Park, Illinois. On our way home the boys wanted to go swimming. I found a swimming facility that employed three life guards. Our boys loved it there. One 10 year old, who could not swim, swung out over the deep part of the water on a merry-go-round. He fell off, and started swallowing water. I looked at the life guards who were not paying any attention to his emergency. Quickly, I rushed over and reached out to the boy asking him what he was doing. He replied "I'm drowning." I was so glad I was there to help him. I liked my boys.

A new car salesman wanted me to jump at his offer. He said the price quoted was only good right then-and-there and would be no good once I left the showroom. I did what you would have done. I walked out. If a business can't hold its price for a day or two, they won't get my business. I figure the price they offer must not be as good as the price of the competition.

You've heard of love at first sight. **Proverbs 30:18, 19** says: *There be three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not: one of these four is: the way of a man with a maid.* I never could understand love. I know I loved Loretta, and still do. She loved me. I never could understand why. I believe God put this love in our hearts for each other for eternity. God brought us two together. Did I love Loretta at first sight? No. I thought she was very pretty. But love? That came later. I guess I acted more like the cat that ruminated a bit rather than like a dog that jumped to a conclusion. I've never regretted my decision to love her. It is one of the best things that ever happened to me.

I suggest that couples who fall in love suddenly, like falling into a lake, should take time to consider their ways before making permanent decisions. Likewise, a married couple who jumps to the conclusion that they are not in love any more should carefully consider its actions. The Bible does not say love is a condition for marriage. But after marriage, a man is required to love his wife. **Ephesians 5:25** *Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;*

Once Loretta asked me, "Why do you love me?" I immediately wondered what to say. Did I love her for her pretty looks? Those will change with the years. Did I love her for her excellent cooking or her nice little ways or her wonderful housekeeping and hospitality? Most of this could be hired. Why did I love her? I loved her because I wanted to love her and I believed she was the wife God gave me as His special gift. She was easy to love. I suspect I was hard to love.

CONCLUSION Many people jump to the conclusion they are going to Heaven because they are religious, or because they go to church, or because they believe in God, or because they are sincere. But the Bible says: **2 Corinthians 13:5** *Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.* Obviously this is not a time to jump to a false conclusion. With eternity at stake, self-examination using the Word of God as our guide, is essential. Praise God, the Bible makes it clear that we can know we are saved. Without this sure knowledge, happiness would elude each of us. We have no need to jump to reach this wonderful conclusion. We can be positive about our eternal destination because it is God that gives it to us.

LOOKING IN THE MIRROR 5-16-15

INTRODUCTION You remember this line: “Only one life, ’twill soon be past; only what’s done for Christ will last.” Today we will look in the mirror and discover why we serve and how we serve God. **Job 28:11** *and the thing that is hid bringeth he forth to light.* What are our true motives for serving God. Do we really understand ourselves? Are they the right motives?

It is a truism that God uses men, not machines, not angels, not better methods. He uses men with all their failings, faults, limitations, and weaknesses. We are saved to serve. It is not optional. We note that all Christians are willing: some are willing to serve, and the rest willing to watch them serve. Those who do not serve are failing God.

The IRS asks us for our occupation. What do we list as our occupation for God? Are we the light of the world, or the salt of the earth, or soldier, or ambassador, or shepherd, or servant? Being servant is most important.

What is our motivation for service? Many years ago, when I was in seminary traveling home for Christmas by train, a group of Roman Catholic seminarians entered the coach.. I struck up a conversation with them by asking them what motivated them to become priests. They responded: 1) parents 2) book of martyrs 3) example of great men 4) to help the suffering 5) it is as good as any other profession 6) a teacher inspired me 7) I do not know. So what motivates us to serve God?

1. Great need (an appeal to pity) **Romans 10:14** *How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?* Untold millions are still untold. The U.S. is an ever expanding mission field. The fields are white unto harvest. God is able to save. The Holy Spirit’s hands are not tied. Millions are dying and going to hell. They cannot win with sin. Are we motivated by the need of the lost? We should be.

2. Great commission (an appeal to duty) **Mark 16:15** *And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.* Are we a part of God’s army of disciplined disciples? God’s various Pauls are God’s shock troopers. For them no sacrifice is too great, no fire too hot, no jungle too dangerous. No sickness, privation, or sorrow is to be considered. God has not withdrawn His command to go. We are to take up our cross daily. This is the spirit of the martyrs. This results in souls won. Are we motivated by the great commission? We should be.

3. Great reward (an appeal to priorities) **I Peter 5:4** *And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.* Earth knows no joy as great as Heaven’s “well done, thou good and faithful servant.” He is no fool who invests his life to win souls. He is no fool to deprive himself of some present pleasures or plans for eternal gains. When his church needed to enlarge to accommodate the crowds, Rev. Sinclair of Downers Grove, Illinois once said: “We may have to delay some private plans that we may build.” Some may think “I can’t win souls.” How do you know that? Offer yourself to God and just see what happens.

It is no sin to seek reward. We’re told to lay up treasurers for ourselves in Heaven. Again it says in **John 12:26** *If any man serve me, him will my Father honour.* Are we motivated by reward? We should be.

4. Great love (an appeal to loyalty) **Galatians 5:13** *but by love serve one another.* God does not need uncommon men, but uncommon love. As in the church of Ephesus, the love of many has grown cold. Church services are not populated, prayer meetings avoided, soul winning all but abandoned.

Yet God dearly loves sinners and yearns over them. So should we. He rejoices over every sinner that is saved. So should we.

Conclusion: Let's look in the mirror of our own mind. What is our motive for service? Do we serve just enough to get by, or do we serve faithfully out of a deep love for God? King David said he would not offer to God that which cost him nothing. All of us have a responsibility to serve. We can't do everything, but all of us can do something.

I ask myself, am I in the exact spot doing what God desires of me? Am I enjoying it or simply enduring it? As I look into the mirror, I see my motives for service, and remember, "There's only one life, 'twill soon be past; only what's done for Christ will last." ... C T Studd

ARE YOU MAKING GOD LOOK GOOD? 2-20-16

INTRODUCTION All we do in life reflects on ourselves, or on others, or on God. When I tell the DeFouw sisters, or perhaps, Charis Joy how excellent their music is and how much I appreciate it, they always deflect the praise to God. I think the better of them for it because they seek to make God look good rather than themselves.

1. Making ourselves look good: This is a natural characteristic but that does not make it right. In **III John 1:9** *I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.* This misguided Christian fought for power and personal position. There is no place for such an attitude in the church nor in Heaven. Once again in **Isaiah 14:14** we read that Satan said: *I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.* He exalted himself. He tried to make himself look good in the sight of everyone around him. Now either we will make ourselves look good or make God look good. We cannot do both at once. We cannot lay up any treasure in Heaven while exalting ourselves. To exalt ourselves is pride in open public view.

2. Making others look good: It is the job of every employee to make his boss look good. When we do this, we secure an enjoyable workplace atmosphere. When we do this, we are more likely to get promoted ourselves. Praise and appreciation has to be sincere and free of all flattery. As Christians it behooves us to make fellow brothers and sisters in Christ look good. It is a poor testimony to do nothing but find fault with Christians. Finding fault is Satan's work. In this sad world Christians need to look for the good in each other and to encourage each other.

3. Making God Look Good: You are familiar with the parable of the talents. **Matthew 25:15-21** *And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.* Every man had a different level of ability and a different level of responsibility. **16** *Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents.* **17** *And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two.* **18** *But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.* **19** *After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.* **20** *And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.* **21** *His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant:* Which of these three made his master look good? Obviously the man with one talent missed his opportunity. He not only had the least ability, he had the least character. He was not to be trusted with responsibility.

On another occasion some who made God look good include three Jewish youth. They were willing to lose their lives for the sake of God's reputation. As Christians how we do our job determines how others think of our God. **Daniel 3:12** *There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.* Even King Nebuchadnezzar was forced to magnify the Lord after the three survived the fiery furnace. He said in **Daniel 3:29** *Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort.*

In little ways we may make God look good,. Years ago, during the depression, my dad walked two miles to return two cents to an A&P store that gave him too much change. This made a deep

impression on me. One I never forgot over the years.

When we publicly pray for our food in a restaurant we may make on-lookers think favorably about God. A Christian truck driver stopped to eat at a dinner. He ordered his food, then bowed his head and thanked God for it. A motorcycle gang was present and began to mock him loudly. The truck driver quietly got up and left without eating. The gang said, "He's not much of a man." A fellow looking out the window said, "He's not much of a truck driver either. He just ran over six or seven motorcycles."

John 9:2-ff **And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? 3 Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.** The world marvels when they see the work of God in our lives. Again, **Matthew 5:16** *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

It is possible for us to make God look bad when we complain about our health, our possessions or lack of them, or our life in general. We make God look bad when we habitually go into debt because it appears God hasn't provided for us our daily needs as He promised to do. Contentment with a happy spirit makes God look good to those who are watching us. When we make God look good we lay up treasure in Heaven.

Conclusion. Our lives are a continuing testimony. Who are we making look good by our lives? Have you ever thought about this? Let's live with the purpose of making God look good to a watching world.

NOW, WHO IS THAT? 8-18-18

INTRODUCTION: There are scores of lesser known names in the Bible. Some of these lived very interesting lives. Most have special meanings. I picked a few at random to share with you. I trust we can learn from their life experiences.

1. **Ebedmelech** "slave of the king"

This black Ethiopian eunuch, who served in the palace, intervened with king Zedekiah on behalf of Jeremiah **Jeremiah 38:1-13**. The prophet Jeremiah sure could use some friends. His life was at stake. I believe God raises up some special friends when we need them, and Ebedmelech was one of these for Jeremiah in his extremity.

This is the story: The Chaldeans surrounded Jerusalem to destroy it. Their king was Nebuchadnezzar whose chief of staff was Daniel. Speaking for God, Jeremiah recommended the people surrender to Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah realized that Daniel would counsel and influence the Chaldean king to show great leniency. However the leading princes of Judah called this treason, and pressured King Zedekiah to have Jeremiah put to death. The king said: "OK". He did not feel he could go against them. Then the princes arrested Jeremiah, and dropped him into a muck filled dungeon to die of starvation. The city had no food and was starving because of the siege.

Ebedmelech must have been a believer. He was a black man, an Ethiopian servant. His appeal to the king for Jeremiah's life was successful. Taking 30 men with him, he pulled Jeremiah out of the dungeon using ropes and old rotten rags under the prophet's arms. For this act of kindness and bravery, God rewarded him saying: ***For I will surely deliver thee, and thou shalt not fall by the sword, but thy life shall be for a prey unto thee: because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the LORD. Jeremiah 39:18*** God notices everything we do, how we feel, and everything we need. Also, sometimes, as with Jeremiah, He provides help for us from unexpected sources.

2. **Jehosheba** is a princess, the daughter of King Joram, king of Judah. **2 Kings 11:2**. She is also sister to King Ahaziah of Judah and wife of Jehoiada the priest. She safeguarded her little brother, Josiah, from Athaliah, a very wicked power hungry woman. **2 Chronicles. 22:11-12**.

Who is this Athaliah, this most wicked woman? Athaliah was the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. Both were very evil, and so was she. They brought the judgment of God upon Israel. She married Jehoram, the King of Israel. When he died, she wanted to rule Judah, so she killed all her husband's children, except one young son who escaped her notice. This boy, Josiah was hid by his sister Jehosheba in the temple until he was seven years old. At this time, in a fascinating manner, the high priest made him king. Thus God fulfilled His promise of a future Messiah from David's line in the tribe of Judah. God used a young woman, Jehosheba, to do this.

3. **Cyrus** means 'sun, or throne'. Cyrus the Great reigned from 576 – 530 BC. He is mentioned 23 times by name and alluded to several times more. As King of Persia, he ordered the Jews to rebuild the temple. **2 Chronicles 36:23** ***Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? The LORD his God be with him, and let him go up.*** (also see **Ezra 5:13, 17**).

Cyrus recognizes God **Ezra 1:2**; returns the sacred vessels **Ezra 1:7-11**; and helps the Jews financially to rebuild the temple (**Ezra 3:7**). Here are three prophecies concerning Cyrus. He was 'Anointed' **Isaiah 45:1**; 'Liberator' **Isaiah 45:1**; and 'Re-builder' **Isaiah 44:28**. The date for the death of Christ is predicated upon the time Cyrus declared Jerusalem and her walls would be rebuilt.

Daniel 9:24-26 *Know this, understand this: from the time that the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem is issued, there will be seven weeks and then sixty-two weeks until the Anointed One, the ruler comes. Jerusalem will be rebuilt with streets and a trench but in times of distress. After the sixty-two weeks the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing at all.* This period of time covers 483 years. Cyrus is very important to God's program and prophesy. Question: in God's eye are we also important to His program? What does God see when He sees us? Answer: we must be necessary or He would not have created us.

4. Joseph of Aramathea Who is he? Apart from some apocryphal stories conjured up during the Middle Ages, Joseph of Aramathea is only spoken of in the Bible. He is mentioned in all four of the Gospels. **John 19:38** says: *And after this Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave.* What sort of a man was this Joseph?

He was devoted **Luke 23:50, 51** Dr. Luke says he was **a counsellor; and he was a good man, and a just.** He did not consent to the unjust claims of the Jews against Jesus; and he earnestly looked forward to Christ's coming kingdom.

He was a secret disciple **John 19:38** He was *a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews.* Perhaps he was the first of many secret believers down through the ages. The fear of man is common enough. Years ago I experienced shyness myself. It kept me from serving our Lord fully, completely, and openly as I knew I should. I regretted it then, and I regret it now. I believe a right trust in God and a deep relationship with Him solves that problem.

He secured and prepared Christ's body **Mark 15:43** Joseph *went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.* Pilot, surprised that Jesus was already dead, called for the centurion. When the military officer certified that Jesus was indeed dead, Pilate delivered the body to Joseph. Joseph took Jesus down from the cross and wrapped Him in some burial cloth he had prepared.

He received Nicodemus' help **John 19:39, 40** *there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight.* It seems that Nicodemus was another secret believer coming to Jesus under the cover of darkness. The two men wrapped the body of Jesus with the spices in the linen as the custom of the Jews was. This was done hurriedly since the Sabbath was soon upon them.

He placed the Lord's body in his own new tomb **Luke 23:53** *and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid.* We are informed that this tomb is somewhere close to the place of crucifixion. We are also told that it is in a garden. As we look at life, we notice that often there is a tomb in a garden. The Garden of Eden experienced death. Cain's vegetable garden held death for Able. Naboth's garden witnessed his death. Death will appear in the most beautiful of places. It knocks at the door of the happiest of homes. But, praise God, death is not final. **I Corinthians 15:54** *So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.*

5. The Etheopian Eunuch **Acts 8:26-40** If this account in Acts teaches us anything, I think it teaches us that every person who sincerely seeks after God, shall find Him. God will see to that. Years ago missionaries went to long lost tribes in Africa only to find, when getting there, that someone in that village longed to know God. One such case was a native who closely examined his thumb. He realized it took a God to create such a marvel and wondered if he would ever learn who that God was. Since he had this strong desire, it was not difficult for the missionary to teach this native about the Creator and about Jesus and salvation. God sent the sincere seeker help.

I think this was the case with the Etheopian Eunuch. He was searching for God. He went to

Jerusalem hoping to find Him. He was disappointed, but did purchase a portion of the Scriptures. As he read in Isaiah, his mind was still in the dark. He kept seeking and trying to understand. At this point God intervened and sent him help in the person of Philip. Philip was not a pastor, but he was a Holy Spirit filled deacon. He was in tune with God and obeyed His voice **Acts 8:26** *And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.* Philip promptly left the revival going on in the city of Samaria where hundreds were involved to go and witness to just one man. This man was *an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure.* Here we're told he was a man of great authority, therefore greatly trusted and of fine character. Even so, he needed Jesus. He needed salvation. He felt a lack in his life and sought after God with all his ability.

This Eunuch was in charge of all of Queen Candace's riches **Acts 8:27**. Just who is this royal Queen Candace? In his famous Church History, Eusebius mentions the biblical account of Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch, and writes that it was customary for Ethiopia to be ruled by a woman. Kandake, which means "great woman", was used as a royal title or dynastic name for the queens of Meroë, the capital of Kush. Kush, and other African nations such as Egypt were sometimes ruled by women. These women were often effective military leaders

The Ethiopian Eunuch's search for God was fulfilled. Philip taught him the truth using the very passage he was reading in Isaiah. The Eunuch publicly proclaimed his belief in Christ by being baptized. We can only speculate what this meant to the queen's court when he returned home sharing his testimony. Bringing the Gospel to Ethiopia may have been the reason God sent Philip on this special assignment.

CONCLUSION God has a purpose for everything He does and for everyone He has created. These lesser known people may not seem so important to us, but everyone of them is important to God and to His program. There are some mysteries we will never fully comprehend until our arrival in Heaven. Only in eternity will we begin to understand a little of God's ways. His ways are always perfect.

OUR CHURCH'S MOST IMPORTANT ASSET 7-18-15

What is the church's most important asset? Is it her bank account? Her buildings? Her general membership? No, her most important asset is her youth. Our government recognizes this and wants control of our youth from three years and older. Perhaps you heard the news report of an 11 year old Florida boy arrested in his own back yard because his parents were 1½ hours late in coming home. They were caught in traffic. He was held for a month and his parents harassed by human services. This outrage by local authorities would have never happened when I was a boy 80 years ago. Back then we walked a mile to school and after school would roam the town without adult supervision.

In the Bible, youth are very important. **I Timothy 4:12** *Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.* Young David said: "Is there not a cause?" Young Daniel said: "I will not defile myself with the king's meat." Another young lad said to Jesus, "Here's my lunch". These are examples out of the lives of three brave sons and daughters true. Even the young can do anything God wants them to do. These had faith that God can do anything and they wanted to please Him.

1. Rhoda, the sister of John Mark **Acts 12:11-16** *when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews. 12 And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying. 13 And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda.*

You remember Rhoda. She was about 12 years old and had a big brother named John Mark. She was a very bright cheerful girl, trusted by her parents. They even gave her the keys to the house. They even sent her to the door often to inquire who was knocking. They trusted her to be cautious and not allow the wrong people entrance. They knew her to be polite and courteous.

This night she was up late past midnight. The house was full of people, all of them Christians. They were praying for Peter who was put in prison by King Herod and was to be executed by morning light. Rhoda just knew God would hear their prayers and that Peter would not die.

As they prayed, a loud knock came at the gate. Rhoda arose to see who was there. She recognized Peter's voice but was so excited she neglected to let him in. She ran and told the others that Peter stood without, but they did not believe her. When Peter entered, he told his story. Rhoda learned that night that it is wise to trust God to answer prayer even if it takes a miracle and may be past midnight. God never sleeps.

2. The little maid -- let's call her Mary. **II Kings 5:1-3** *Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the LORD had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valour, but he was a leper. 2 And the Syrians had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife. 3 And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy.*

I would guess Mary to be about 11 years old. She loved God with all her heart. Before they died, her Mommy and Daddy taught her to always trust God no matter how difficult life was. They told her that God would always be with her to help her even when they could not.

One day a great army of Syrian soldiers, enemies, came and conquered her city. Her house was burned and her mother and father were killed in the fight. She did not know what was going to happen to her.

As she stood outside her burning house, a big uniformed soldier came on horseback. He picked her off the ground and raised her to the saddle in front of him. She cried but that did not matter to the soldier. He was the general of the army. He took her many miles to the north, to the city of Damascus, an important Syrian city. He gave her to his wife to be a maid servant. She was to scrub and clean and help with household chores.

Mary did not mind. She knew that God would protect her and be with her even in a foreign land. She knew that God knew she missed her parents and her home. Through it all she was pleasant and cheerful doing her chores without complaint. Everyone grew to like her because she was so happy and unselfish. She tried to help everyone.

One day the doctor discovered that the general, her master, had leprosy. This was a dreaded disease for which there was no cure. Naaman's wife was very sad. While brushing her mistress's hair, Mary said, "I wish my master was in Samaria. There is a prophet of God there that could heal him." She knew that nothing was too hard for God.

But would the great captain go? And if he did go, would he be healed? You know the account. Naaman did go and was healed. When he returned, he rewarded Mary by treating her more like a daughter than a slave girl.

3. The hungry boy with a little lunch. John 6:5-10 *Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? 7 Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. 8 Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, 9 There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?*

Ever see a boy that wasn't hungry, especially a 10 year old? They eat as though they had hollow legs. His mother had packed him a lunch: two fish sandwiches and several pieces of bread for good measure. His mother's bread tasted so good. He especially liked the crust.

This boy saw crowds of people rushing along and understood that Jesus was near by. Now he had put his trust in the Father God ever since he was little. Often his mother read to him stories from the Old Testament before he went to bed. He loved God the Father.

Now he heard some people saying this Jesus was the son of God, and that He was doing some very amazing miracles like healing the blind and raising the dead to life. He wanted to hear this Jesus for himself. He was so glad his mother had packed him a lunch.

When the little lad pressed close to Jesus, he heard him talking about a time when the graves would be opened and the dead would rise again, some to everlasting life and some to everlasting judgment. It was all so strange to him. Then Jesus declared with a loud voice words to this effect: "Moses wrote of me. If you had believed him, you would have believed Me. Since you don't believe Moses, how shall you believe My words? He that believes in me shall be righteous."

The little lad thought: "I was taught to believe Moses. My parents believe Moses. I do believe this Jesus. He truly is God's son and I love Him. I'd do anything for Him. Perhaps He will give me this eternal life."

Just then, the big shadow of a man fell across the lad. He looked up to see the weather beaten face of a muscular man, Peter, looking down on him. "What have you here, boy? Something to eat? May I have it for Jesus?" "Oh, yes Sir. I'd give anything to Jesus." Well, you know the rest of the story, how Jesus took the loaves and fishes and fed 5000 men, women, and children.

Conclusion: The youth of our church are our most valuable asset. They are the next generation to take our place and fill our shoes when we are gone. We would do well to pray a hedge of God's protection about them so that Satan cannot lead even one of them astray. We would do well to give our

young people positions of leadership so that they too can learn to serve. Let's pray daily for them. Let's thank God for every one of them.

PICK A PRIZE 11-19-16

INTRODUCTION You too can win all the prizes you want. Just what prizes or rewards does God make available to us?

1. The Prize for running the Christian race 1 Corinthians 9:24 *Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. Philippians 3:14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.* In most races only one wins. In this race we all can win. The prize is the reward to those who successfully complete the race. Paul likens our Christian life to a foot race where looking back would be disastrous. We must keep our eyes on the goal. At all cost we must avoid the distractions of the world. To 'press' is to pursue; the 'mark' is the spiritual target we give our best efforts to reach. Each of us needs to have spiritual goals toward which we strive. Your goal may be somewhat different from mine. God's gifts and plans for each of our lives vary.

Just what is the high calling of God? It is our heavenward calling to which we should always give heed. Though still on earth, we live for eternity. Ultimately this prize is our Lord's 'well done'. And with this well done comes a tangible reward. It consists of the added talents, the added responsibilities and added authority He gives to us. These are wonderful prizes to be highly sought after and highly valued.

2. The Prize for Benefiting the poor Proverbs 19:17 *He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.* Pity is love which always bears interest. The poor are the lowly in whom God takes a great interest. To meet their needs is to lend to the Lord. This kindness never goes unnoticed by the Lord who promises to return in kind to the giver. With our government shoveling out money on every side, how do we know who is deserving of our help? That is easily answered. We listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit Who not only tells us to whom to give, but how much to give. Consequently, as we meet the needs of the poor, we shall have our own needs met in this life and later will receive added rewards and treasure in Heaven.

3. The Prize for paying the Tithe Malachi 3:10, 11 *Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, (like a pouring rain) that there shall not be room enough to receive it.* (that is, until there is no more need). **11** *And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes,* We may easily understand how important the tithe is when we see that Satan does everything in his power to keep us from tithing. Satan whispers to us that we don't have enough money to tithe; or that we should tithe at the end of the week knowing our money will be all spent. Once a pastor was asked how many of his people tithe. His reply: "All do. Some tithe to God, but others by paying what equals the tithe for costly troubles". He found that those who took the time to check, discovered their financial loses usually equaled the tithe, almost to the penny.

The Bible is very clear about the fact that God does not need our tithes and offerings. It is for our own sake God instructs us to tithe. Where our treasure is, there our heart is also. The tithe helps us focus our love on God. Some folk ask whether parents should give their little children pennies to put into the offering plate? I think a better way is to arrange for them to earn a few cents and then to tithe out of that. They will love the Lord more for it. Where their treasure is, there will their heart be also.

Will we be rewarded in Heaven for tithing? No, because it is required of us. Not to give is to rob God. The tithe enables God's programs. Any reward is given here on earth such as His promise to *rebuke the devourer for our sakes.* That is why the tithing Christian's wash machine, cars, clothes,

etc, etc, last longer. It is like the Hebrew's shoes that did not wear out in the wilderness. Sacrificial offerings given above the tithe, however, when prompted by the Holy Spirit, will be rewarded in Heaven.

4. The Prize for being kind to those who do not like us Proverbs 25:21, 22 *If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: 22 For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee.*

This might be a hard one. We may not have any enemies. But if we do, we're told to love them. **Matthew 5:44, 45** *Jesus said, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;* In so doing, we may show ourselves to **be the children of our Father which is in heaven:** Think of this: Christ loved us when we were yet enemies. He has never stopped loving us. Christ started giving to us when we were still His adversaries. He has never stopped giving to us. God is kind to the just and to the unjust.

What is our reward when we are kind to our enemies? It pleases the Lord and He makes them to be at peace with us. That removes a lot of aggravation and worry. We gain a host of new friends because every 'enemy' has lots of friends who in turn become our friends. Now we may be in a position to win some of these people to Jesus because we are no longer finding fault with them.

5. The Prize for persecution. Most people would rather not be persecuted, but there is a prize for it. **Matthew 5:10-12** *Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. 12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven:*

This reward is something for which to look forward. We will not receive it in this life. It is big. It is eternal. It denotes the fact that we did not fail to honor God before a wicked world even when threatened with death. Every day we observe that the followers of Satan hate those of us who are Christians and seek to harm us all they can. We have come to expect this godless society to turn on us. **II Timothy 3:12** *Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.* As Pastor Shawn Smith noted, if conditions continue in America as they are now headed, the church will have to go underground. But we take courage, because the Lord has wonderful things planned for us in Heaven. As the hymn says, "It will be worth it all when we see Jesus.". Patience is needed for this reward which will be received in Heaven from God's own hand.

6. The Prize for engaging in Secret prayer **Matthew 6:6** *But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.* I believe intercessory prayer to be the hardest work we can do for God. It is spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and physically taxing. When Jesus interceded for us in the garden, His sweat was as drops of blood. Public prayer has little value if it is not accompanied by much private prayer. The effectiveness of prayer increases with constant practice. The effectual prayer of a righteous man avails much, James tells us.

What are these open rewards for the world to witness? Miracles! You have experienced them and so have I. The bus the church acquired recently is an example of the miracle of answered prayer. There was prayer for the funds, and then prayer for the perfect bus itself. Today it is being used to bring boys and girls to church and to Christ.

7. The Prize for Faithful service **Matthew 16:27** *For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.* **Colossians**

3:24 *ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.* Christ will find something good to say about everyone at the Bema Seat. Each will receive appropriate recognition and rewards. Salvation is a gift through faith in Christ. Awards are given for faithful service. Every believer can take part. These rewards will be distributed at the judgment seat of Christ to be enjoyed for eternity. They will be appropriate to the service rendered.

8. The Prize for having a family of children **Psalm 127:3** *Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.* Children are not a curse, they are a blessing from God. Companionship and children are two of the reasons God created the family. As I get older, I have come to understand that with God, family comes before employment or ministry. In fact it is the most important occupation committed to us. When our children stray from God, it may be because employment or ministry was put first and family was neglected. It may be better not to give birth to children than to allow them to grow up unsaved and doomed to an eternal hell.

God watches carefully what we do with our sons and daughters. He took note of Abraham and said: **Genesis 18:19** *For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD.* To fail to teach Godly truth to one generation has spiritual consequences for many generations. I pray for 20 plus pastors and churches every Saturday. Several of these pastors endure the heartache of children who turned away from God. The success of parents in raising their children for God is judged, not only by how their children turn out, but also by how their grandchildren turn out.

9. The Prize for Fasting **Matthew 6:18** *That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.* We often wonder why the prayers of the average Christian are so lukewarm. Perhaps it is because fasting is so foreign to most Christians. Fasting gets God's attention. Fasting focuses our attention on the need. Normal physical activities are put aside to concentrate on spiritual issues. Jesus noted that some spiritual battles are only won by fasting and prayer. Time is not wasted when we fast. Some spiritual goals can not be attained except by fasting. The reward? Answered prayer! Impossible prayers are answered when we fast.

10. The Prize for the care of little children **Matthew 10:42** *And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.* In Scripture Christ reveals His tender regard and love for little children. He says that of such is the kingdom of Heaven. He assigns an angel to them as soon as they are born. He picks just the right parents for them and helps those parents bring up their children, if they will allow Him.

We may assist those parents by giving the little ones a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple or better, in the name of the Lord. Do not faithful Sunday school teachers share the water of life with these little ones? Persons who help parents shall in no wise lose their reward.

11. The Prize for Soulwinning **Proverbs 11:30** *he that winneth souls is wise.* **Daniel 12:3** *they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.* In Heaven the soul winner will be distinguished by shining as the stars. It will be a particular and eternal joy to them and to our Savior. Nothing is so rewarding as taking the gospel to the world. Loretta, just before she died, expressed the deep wish that she had won more souls to Jesus. You and I still have this opportunity before us.

CONCLUSION I wanted to make these eleven thoughts available to you so you could choose your rewards. There are plenty to go around. Some of the rewards are earthly, some Heavenly treasure. Some are both. I wish God was a little more clear as to exactly what constitutes the prizes and rewards. However I am quite willing to leave the choice with Him. He will choose for me a lot better than I can choose for myself. Finally, the question remains: how do we intend to use our opportunities while here on earth? **“Only one life, ‘twill soon be past; only what’s done for Christ will last.”** This is a sentence taken from a poem by missionary, C.T Studd.

HOW WE SHALL PRAY IN HEAVEN 4-19-14

INTRODUCTION Prayer is very important to the spiritual welfare of a Christian. Why? Because prayer is a time of fellowship with God. When we pray, we are intimate with Him. Effective praying is the prayer that reflects the heart of God. This is the reason Abraham and Moses, for instance, were so effective when praying for the forgiveness of Sodom and for the welfare of Israel. They knew God well enough to pray according to His own desire. Do we know God that well?

Just a thought for your consideration. Sometimes, though seldom, the Lord leads me to pray for something after the event. Could this possibly be helpful? Yes, **Isaiah 65:24** *And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer.* There are times I have taken advantage of this little remembered fact, that God will answer some of our prayers before we know to ask them. Most of our prayers are at the point of need. Therefore, the Bible instructs us how to pray while here on earth, but it also prepares us for prayers in Heaven.

I Thessalonians 5:17 encourages us to *Pray without ceasing.* I know my own heart. I'm no expert in prayer. I also know I will continue to pray after I get to Heaven. Someone asked me, how do I know this? In **Luke 16** we see an unsaved rich man praying. In **Revelation 6:9, 10** those martyred under the altar prayed God would avenge their blood. Then I told you about my Loretta coming to me two years after she died telling me she was praying for me in Heaven. When I get to Heaven I'll have to ask her how she knew my needs. Did my guardian angel tell her? Did she look down on my life as some think Hebrews 12 indicates? One thing I do know is that in spite of all the glories of Heaven, she hasn't forgotten me. That is nice to know.

Our prayer in Heaven will be different than how we pray on earth. (I'm going to use a little sanctified imagination here). Today 99% of our prayers are for the sick, the financially needy, the worried and troubled. Read our prayer prompters. There will be little of that in Heaven. How then shall we pray there?

1. We'll continue to pray that God's will be done on earth as it is in Heaven (Matthew 6:10) Here are several areas of God's will that we shall cover in our prayers. **a)** We'll pray that lost loved ones be saved. **b)** that the works of Satan will be defeated. **c)** that Israel will be restored. **d)** that God's kingdom will be established. **e)** that Christian friends will walk together in God's will in the full enjoyment of His mercy and grace. Note this: when we pray in Heaven we'll have clear minds, make no mistakes, and will not be forgetful. We'll have greater empathy for those we pray for and the decisions they have to make. Not all prayer will be intercession. Much time will be spent to give God praise, glory, and thanksgiving. As new blessings abound, so will our praise and thanksgiving abound. We'll understand more fully God's miracles in our lives while we lived on earth and the working of angels in our behalf even when we were not aware of it, protecting us from Satan's agents both demonic and human.

2. We'll continue to pray to the Father in Jesus Name Matthew 6:9 *Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.* Note: when children pray "my Father" they do not worry about the cost. That's the Father's responsibility. I've heard Otto Koning tell about a young West Virginia boy who prayed to God for an impossible miracle. He came from a poor family. It was Easter time, and though so poor, the boy had given his church three dozen eggs for their Easter hunt. That left the family two dozen, plenty to color since he was the only child. To help his mother, the lad put the pot of water on the stove to boil. He got the eggs from the refrigerator, but found one box was empty. He placed five of the cold eggs in the boiling water. Fortunately, the pot was not large enough to hold more. To his surprise, the eggs cracked, burst open, and the contents spread through the water. They

had no money for more eggs, so he wondered what to do. As he stood over the boiling pot, he asked God to heal the eggs. God did. The parents ran in asking what happened. The boy said that just as the eggs oozed out their contents, the matter squeezed back into the shells. And I think God got the right insides into the right eggs, don't you? Those five eggs were marked, and later, when eaten, were no different from the whole eggs. Even the membranes were intact. That little boy believed and God came to his rescue. My friend, Otto Koning adds: "When Christians don't pray, they leave God in Heaven with nothing to do."

How can we pray effectively while on earth? First, we'll reason with God using Scripture. **Psalm 147:3** *He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.* **Philippians 4:19** *But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.* Our Heavenly Father will fulfill His every promise and keep His every word

Second, we will pray in Jesus Name. **John 16:24** *Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.* JOY! So few Christians experience the joy of the Lord. Why? Perhaps they are not praying through Jesus. God wants us joyful. **Nehemiah 8:10** *for the joy of the LORD is your strength.* With this verse in mind, one friend commented that the average Christian could be defeated by a chipmunk. Few seem joyful in the strength of the Lord. But in Heaven it will be pure joy to pray, for there will be no more sin, or selfishness, or pride to hinder our prayers. **Isaiah 59:1, 2** *Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: 2 But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.* In Heaven we won't have this impediment.

As I have grown old, there has been a big change in my sense of the valuable. No longer do I prize fine jewelry, fine clothes, a fine house or a fine car, nor fine china or fine furniture. I have grown to appreciate spiritual blessings a good deal more. This is reflected in my prayer life as I pray for myself and friends that we will enjoy God's spiritual blessings. **I Corinthians 1:3, 7** *Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.-- So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: Jude 1:2* *Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied.* These verses list a few of His spiritual blessings.

Some pray according to **Hebrews 11:35** where it says: **and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection.** This verse teaches us that we should make every effort, every sacrifice this side of Heaven to have a better resurrection. I believe this is important because how we pray and serve God in Heaven will largely depend upon how we live on earth. **Matthew 25:21** *His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.* I believe we will experience this when we get to Heaven.

CONCLUSION: Prayer not only is fellowship with God, but fellowship with our friends. I have noticed that people I pray for, even though they are not aware I am praying for them, seem to have an unusual closeness to me. They are much more friendly than I would expect. I rejoice that I am retired so that I have more time available to pray. In almost every case, God somehow makes known to me how He is answering my prayers. This, of course, vastly increases my incentive to pray.

RESOLUTE MEN 8-15-15

INTRODUCTION:

**A son said: I go sir.-- But he went not.
Peter said he would -- but he didn't
Samson said he could -- but he couldn't
Paul said he would -- and he did.**

Paul said, in **Philippians 3:13, 14** *this one thing I do, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.* I like a man who says what he will do and does it. The world respects a man who announces a goal and backs it up with resolute action. All of us *can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.* **Philippians 4:13.** Every one of us could accomplish so much more if we put a little bit of old fashioned determination behind our plans. Resoluteness brings us a better, fuller, more rewarding abundant life. Let's examine some resolute men by age groupings.

1. YOUTH - Daniel

1) Resolved to be pure. **Daniel 1:8** Daniel *purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself* Why? He had a strong sense of self worth which required character and conviction. He determined to honor God with his life.

2) Resolved to study. It is difficult to get a good paying job today without diligent study. Daniel studied -- hard. **Daniel 1:17-20** They acquired and God gave them -- *knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: King Nebuchadnezzar found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.* Every one of us should *Study to shew himself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed,* God can use everything we possess, even everything we know in His service.

3) Resolved to worship. Why? He valued personal communion with God. **Daniel 6:10** *he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed.* His habits of devotion were formed early in life. When I was a student in college, I had a personal rule: no devotions, no breakfast. I discovered I could not do without either one. I needed devotions and I needed breakfast.

2. YOUNG MANHOOD - Caleb

1) Resolved to be faithful to duty **Numbers 14:24** **He purposed to wholly follow the LORD his God.** It is worth living for this goal. Caleb did right even when it was not convenient to do right.

2) Resolved to trust God no matter the circumstances or the consequences. He feared not the faces of men. He never sought honor from man, but from God alone.

3. PRIME OF LIFE - Peter

1) Resolved to serve -- That was his offer when he said he was willing to die for Christ. We can never really live for Christ until we are ready to die for Him, to give up all for Him. Thus we put our all at His disposal. Peter's failure need not stop us. And it did not stop Peter. Peter kept on to victory serving Christ.

2) Resolved to sacrifice -- Peter did not own many things in this life, for he noted "silver and gold have we none." Unlike Balaam, he had no desire to be rich. Nor was he ever bitter or sour over his prison experience. His was a joyful life though one of deprivation and sacrifice.

Are you striking mighty blows for God? Am I striking mighty blows for God? Is our church striking mighty blows for God? Paul did. How?

1) He resolved to keep on keeping on. For some these latter years of life are full of complaint but not

for Paul. His thought was, *as thy days, so shall thy strength be.* **Deuteronomy 33:25** Christ would be his strength **Philippians 4:13** He spent much time and effort in helping younger men to achieve. He was constantly praying for fellow workers and churches. He determined to constantly *press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.* **Philippians 3:14**

2) He resolved to provide leadership. He replaced himself and multiplied himself by training able men to carry on after him. The work of Christ did not end with Paul's death. That's what it means when we're told *I will build my church; and the gates of hell (that is death) shall not prevail against it.*

3) He resolved to die in harness for God. I wish we all could say with Paul, *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:* **II Timothy 4:7** Paul lived a long life and never once did Christ disappoint him. Paul lived a long life without regrets. He had no unfinished tasks, no unfulfilled dreams. He looked behind and saw GLORY. He looked ahead and saw GLORY!

For Paul service was far more than a duty. For him and for us, it is a privilege. We are possessed with the wonderful privilege of serving God. This privilege is why Paul continually resolved so serve. So should we.

CONCLUSION Where ever we find ourselves on this pathway of life, whether youth, middle age, or senior, good resolutions are always in order and help us achieve for Christ and His Kingdom. Then as we enter the portals of Heaven, may each of us hear "well done, my good and faithful servant."

SECRETS 2-17-18

INTRODUCTION A black preacher walked into the pulpit one Sunday and announced to his congregation: “Today I’m going to unscrew the inscrutable.” I feel a little like that this morning. I’m going to try to unscrew the inscrutable. I’m speaking on the subject: “God’s Secrets.” Everyone has some secrets. Does God ever reveal some of His secrets to us?

1. Deuteronomy 29:29 *The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.*

The secret things that belong unto the Lord are the counsels and purposes of God regarding persons or nations. God reveals to man the things man needs to know for his well being. The things not revealed concern not man, but God alone. For instance, we may like to know how many will be saved before the door to Heaven is shut forever. Or we may like to know when the Lord is coming back for us. Will His coming be in our lifetime? It would be interesting to know if the Antichrist is already alive today. None of these things are told to us. They are God’s private secrets.

There are several things about Himself that God keeps secret. We have a very limited mental capacity to understand much about His nature or activities. Unlike us, He exists in an eternal “now”. He sees the activity in the Garden of Eden as though it is today and He is walking with Adam and Eve. He sees events future to us as though they are today and He is even now experiencing them. Generally He won’t let us see the future. Even so, God does make a few future things known to us through the Scriptures. These are enough to make us impatient to know more.

Notice that in the last half of the above verse that there is a generational significance here. “*Those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children.*” Things revealed to us and to our children enable us to fully obey God’s will, that is, to do all the words of His law. Jesus once said: ***If ye love me, keep my commandments.*** One of our songs say that to trust and obey is the only way to have happiness. Who doesn’t want happiness?

2. Judges 13:18 *And the angel of the LORD said unto him, Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?*

‘Secret’ here expresses the peculiarity of His nature; thus His Name is ‘incomprehensible’ or ‘wonderful’. Note that ‘Wonderful’ is the very name of Jesus in **Isaiah 9:6**. Most names have meanings. Joseph means ‘to add or do again’. Delores means ‘sorrows’. Ruth: ‘companion, friend’ Richard: ‘leader, strong’. Patricia or Pat: ‘noble’. Shawn (Irish) ‘gift from God’. Robert ‘famous, shining’. Kern: ‘grain, farmer’. Nikki: (short for Nicholas) ‘victory’. Mark: ‘warlike’. Joshua: ‘God is salvation’. Gordon: ‘spacious fort’. Clyde: this name comes from the name of a European river. Mary: ‘wished-for child, beloved’.

Jesus fully lived up to His many names. How are we doing today with our name? When people think of us, what are they thinking? The angel’s name was secret, that is, private. He never did reveal it to Jacob. Some day we will receive new names in Glory perhaps more in keeping with our new perfected characters. **Revelation 2:17** *To him that overcometh will I give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it* I wonder, why give someone a name and then keep it secret? When babies are born, parents broadcast its name everywhere. Some Bible students think this new name is one of adoption. Adopted persons get a new name. My private opinion is that this is a pet name Christ has for His valiant over-comer. Only He and His ‘pet’ know what this name is. It speaks of the very special and private relationship the two enjoy.

3. Job 15:8 *Hast thou heard the secret of God? and dost thou restrain wisdom to thyself?* Job's false friends asked him that. Eliphaz finds a great deal of fault with Job and had some hard things to say about Job's character. In essence, he says to Job: "Are you so intimate with God that you are part of His inner council and can give better reasoning's than the rest of us? Do you claim wisdom to yourself and to none besides? What do you know that we don't know?" For one thing, Job knew his own heart and knew that he tried his best to please God with everything he did. You have probably noticed, as I have, that it is all but impossible to convince the ungodly of any spiritual truth. It appears they don't have the capacity to comprehend any of it.

4. Job 29:4 *As I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle.*

Is Job's youth in focus here, or is this during the autumn time of his life when he was in his prime? At this time he is seen to enjoy God's full and rich blessings. Then comes the winter of life, when all these blessings are departed from him.

The secret of God's counsel speaks of His intimacy and friendship as He watched over Job. God communed with Job as friend to friend. This is why Job finds his present predicament so perplexing. Job wondered where he went wrong in this friendship.

5. Psalm 25:14 *The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant.*

God Who planned and created this earth so precisely, also has a plan and purpose for each of our lives. Please observe the wonders of God's nature. The eye of the fly has some 350 lens with 1000s of light sensitive receptors. So the fly does not see one swatter coming at him, but hundreds. No wonder he is so quick to escape.

The butterfly's wing has some 2000 triangular shaped structural pieces when seen under the electronic microscope. No wonder the wing is so strong, efficient, and beautiful. As sunlight penetrates these layers of overlapping scales, various beautiful colors appear depending upon their spacing. In the book, *Discovery of Design*, by Donald DeYoung, page 30, says: "Cosmetics are available that mimic the beauty of butterfly wings. The company L'Oreal has copied the butterfly design by inserting tiny layered flecks of either mica or silica into eye shadow, lip stick, nail polish, and mascara. The spacing between the layers of internal flecks determines which particular color reflects back. This 'butterfly effect' replaces the standard uses of pigments, waxes and oils to produce various cosmetic colors. The iridescent butterfly effect is also used for car paint, credit card security, and optical computing." God sometimes allows man to discover the secrets of nature and to benefit from them. After all, He planned nature and created it all to perfection. And to think, He created it for our enjoyment. God had us in view all the time He was creating.

This same God has the perfect plan for each of our lives. His covenant is no secret to those who fear Him. This plan may be secret, that is, private and unknown to those about us. But it is clearly shown to those who reverence Him. Incomparable happiness is to know God's will and to cheerfully fulfill His will.

6. Psalm 27:5 *For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me.*

This Psalm is a declaration of belief in the greatness of God during a time of frantic fear. Faith is needed most in the midst of life's formidable difficulties. Problems drive us to God. In God's pavilion the believer receives the gracious protection of the perfect Host. Here is the best shelter in the worst danger. And we may stay in His house as long as we wish and as often as we wish.

7. Psalm 31:20 *Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.*

Here we see God's loving, personal, and private protection of His own. Tongues can hurt. Terribly. But God takes us quietly, secretly, home out of reach of anyone who would disparage us. My nephew, Dr. Alan French, owns an eye clinic. One day a lady verbally viciously attacked him because he refused to double bill her insurance companies. He felt this was unethical. This false accusation ruined his relationship with many of his friends. He was miserable until I read to him **Psalm 31:20** and he then entered the secret room of protection God had for him from this strife of tongues. This special room God provides is available to all of us.

8. Psalm 91:1 *He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.*

Here is a Psalm of protection. It is called 'The Soldier's Psalm.' During World War I, the 91st Infantry Brigade of the U.S. Expeditionary Army was preparing to enter combat in Europe. Most of the men were novices who never saw combat. Their commander was a dedicated Christian. He gave each of his soldiers a little card on which was printed Psalm 91. This they recited every day. They were engaged in three very bloody battles. While other units suffered up to 90% casualties, they did not experience one combat related casualty.

Being in the secret place is being in the shelter of the Most High. In this instance, secret means 'covered;' 'covert;' 'under the protection of.' If we live in the shadow of the Almighty, we are living close by His side. We are under His wings. Close to Him, we have nothing to fear. He personally protects us. It is a blessing to stand and to serve at His right hand fully protected by Him.

9. Matthew 6:6 *But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.*

God is our Father. We are His children. Here it is taken for granted that all of His children pray. You may as soon find a living man that does not breathe, as a living Christian that does not pray. Prayer is strictly personal and private. It is between the child and his Father alone. Secret prayer is often rewarded openly.

'Closet' is any room in the interior of the house, as opposed to public churches and the streets. The door is shut. Private prayer excludes all but our Father. This secret place; is perhaps, an allusion to God's presence in the dark Holy of Holies. We are there in the place from which all fellow-men are excluded.

Our Savior does not specify the times when we should pray in secret. He does not say how often it should be done. We come because pressed with a burden we cannot lift ourselves. We don't tell others about it. They cannot help. Only our Father can help. And He who sees in secret shall reward us openly. God's blessing on our lives will be noticed by others.

Conclusion: There's one secret many Christians keep hidden; a secret God wants known the world over. That is His gift of salvation to anyone and to everyone who receives Jesus Christ as his personal Savior. This amazing provision to sinners was planned by God before He created the heavens and the earth. This offer is only good for a limited amount of time. It ends forever at the time of death whether a man be just or unjust. If we Christians have any regrets just before we die, it will be that we haven't done more to make this loving secret known. Today can be a day of salvation for the entire world.

SELECTIVE MEMORY 4-15-17

INTRODUCTION Memory is a very good thing. Our lives do not function very well without it. I believe that some 95% of the things I do every day are by rote. It makes my day go smoothly. Memory also profits my prayer life a great deal. For instance it helps me pray for Christian friends. **Philippians 1:3** *I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,* It makes me appreciate my God a lot more. **Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, Ecclesiastes 10:1** Memory reminds me not to be tied down to this world's offers and values. **Luke 17:32** *Remember Lot's wife.*

Speaking of memory, some past experiences can bring great joy to our hearts. Should we lose our memory, they say we have Alzheimer's. This is a terrible handicap for any person and makes him completely dependent upon others. The wonderful thing about memory, though, is that we can have a selective memory. There are some things I do not want to ever forget. There are other things that I do not care to ever remember. I do not think Heaven can be full of joy without selective memory. Let's notice some things about selective memory.

1. God has a selective memory

God decides what to remember and what not to remember. He chooses not to remember sin when it is forgiven. **Psalm 79:8** *O remember not against us former iniquities:* This is our daily prayer. What is God's answer? **Hebrews 10:17** *And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.* After we are saved it is comforting to know that the Father sees no fault in us. Rather He sees the righteousness of Christ. Therefore, when we stand before His throne, it will be without fear or shame. Satan constantly tries to accuse us before God and to shame our conscience. He does this to turn God against us, and to make us feel like a miserable failure. If Satan succeeds in making us feel like a failure, we are of little use in God's service. But Satan's efforts are to no avail. Why? Because Christ says something like this: "Father, I died for them. I removed all their sins. They are now my brothers and sisters. Thank You, Father, for forgiving them completely for My sake." Now since God refuses to remember forgiven sins, we should forget them too. Why should we worry about something God refuses to remember?

God chooses to remember what we do that pleases Him. How do I know? I know because He gives rewards. He also gives compliments. **Romans 2:6** *Who will render to every man according to his deeds: Vs. 10 But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, 1 Corinthians 3:14* *If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.* Christ complemented the poor but generous widow when He noted in **Mark 12:43** *this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury.* God sees to it that she is forever honored and remembered in Scriptures through thousands of years as an inspiration and example to all of us.

God's Son remembers to pray for us. Christ intercedes for us with the Father. He is our High Priest. In **John 17:9** our LORD says: *I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.* He is constantly concerned with our relationship to the Father. **Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. Luke 23:34** He said this on the cross even before we asked for forgiveness.

The **Holy Spirit intercedes for us. Romans 8:26** *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.* The knowledge that God's Son and the Holy Spirit are praying for us is a great comfort because they know our needs far better than we do ourselves and they are able to do something about it.

God remembers and keeps all His promises to us. We can claim 10 different Bible promises

every single day of the year and still not exhaust them all. Our future is as bright as His promises. His promises never fail to fit and fill our every need.

John 3:16 God promises eternal life to everyone who believes on His Son. **Philippians 4:19** After we are saved, God promises to supply all our needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. In **Psalms 91:1-11** God promises to protect us day and night. *I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. 5 Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; 7 A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. 10 There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. 11 For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.* These promises allow us to sleep easy at night, all night, every night without fear.

I'll give one more example. God's triple promise to hear and answer all our prayers. 1 **John 16:24** *Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.* 2nd) **John 15:7** *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.* 3rd) 1 **John 5:14, 15** *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: 15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.* With promises such as these I wonder why Christians do not pray more. I wonder why they worry so much -- is it perhaps because they do not think God will see them through every difficulty? It is no loss to pray, and praying, we have everything to gain.

2. We too need a selective memory because there are some things we should forget.

We need to forget the faults and failures that sometimes characterize spouses and friends. We may say that we forgive them, and we think that we mean it, but do we ever really forget? Our brain is like a computer in that when we feel offended again, perhaps years later, suddenly all the past wrongs come to mind. We can't let them go. They are forever etched in our memory bank. This causes us to react strongly and more harshly than the situation would suggest. Something like this could happen to a wife. Things are going along great when her husband, without thinking, may say something stupid, or unkind, or thoughtless and suddenly she remembers all the times he misspoke in the past. She remembers these in great detail. Now she becomes quite miserable. It takes a lot of prayer and grace for both of them to once again forgive each other, and to lovingly forget every wrong. What is grace? Grace is God's enabling. He gives sufficient grace to make every husband and wife perfectly happy living together.

We also need to forget our past miserable failures and sins. It would kill our joy in Heaven were we to remember our past sins and failures. It vitiates our ability to serve our Lord on earth, and to serve Him well. Constantly dwelling on past failures ruins our happiness today and our ability to do God's will effectively. We must not allow this to happen. What God forgets we must forget. It is well to continually remember that the Lord sees in us the righteousness of Christ.

3. There are some things we need to remember 2 Peter 3:1 *This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance:*

We should stay focused on what we need to remember. Ever follow a friend's car to the restaurant, or to another place? It is not easy. You must carefully note what the leading car looks like and stay not far behind. You must be focused on every turn it makes, on every thing it does. I was thinking there would be few divorces if couples would focus on the good points of each other, the things that encouraged them to get married in the first place. If necessary, they could list 10 such good points and thank God for them every day for a month. At the same time, they could refuse to entertain any negative thoughts. They would fall in love all over again. A few days ago I got this note at the end of a rather long letter. "P.S. I just want you to know I have never forgotten the advice and story you told

us shortly after we got married about never having a fight or responding sharply to each other. By God's grace, we have been married for 5 ½ and have never had a fight, nor do we ever plan to! Thank you for your impact on our Marriage!" It may be strange, but I don't recall talking to them. I only shared with them a little advice that Loretta and I followed for 50 years.

Remember past blessings Speaking of blessings, I'll never forget God's Christmas gift to Loretta and me on our first Christmas together. We were poor. We hungered for meat we could not afford. I told you how God gave us big bags of meat that first Christmas, including huge delicious steaks. So He has continued to surprise us with many loving provisions during our 50 years of married life. God blessed us with health and happiness and spiritual joys. I'm sure you also can think of blessings He gave to you for which you are eternally thankful.

Remember past spiritual victories This will encourage our present and future life with God. Christ, who befriended us in the past, never changes. He will continue giving us victories as long as we live. Praise the Lord! We live in victory.

Remember answers to prayer I've had so many, many answers to prayer, many of which I've already shared with you. While in seminary I prayed for a wife. After all, the Bible says a pastor should be the husband of one wife and I was very willing. I also prayed that I might intern at a church during the summer break between school years in order to get some practical experience before I graduated. I never knew that God would answer both prayers by sending me to a church in St. Albans, West Virginia. There, to my surprise, Loretta took to me before I ever thought of her for a wife, though I did notice she was very pretty. Also the church experience at the Highlawn Community Chapel proved to be a great spiritual help and blessing to me, preparing me for the ministry. My marriage to Loretta also proved to be an amazing asset in my pastoral work.

Remember good things others have done for us How can we ever forget our parents and the countless good things they brought to our lives? For instance, have we ever thought to thank the person that brought us to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior? Have we thanked the sweetheart that cooks our meals and cleans our house? There are many other people we should think to thank. There was a time when Loretta and I did a lot of things for other needy or elderly people. Now that I am old, praise the Lord, other people do a lot for me that I no longer am able to do for myself. I thank the Lord for such thoughtful and loving friends.

CONCLUSION A selective memory can be a good thing. In fact, I'd say it is essential to our happiness. I've often asked the Lord to help me remember some things such as the many blessings I received, and to forget other things such as some unhappy things I sometimes experienced. I've said a lot about this already, but I'm so glad God chooses not to remember my short comings. Are not you? **Hebrews 10:17** *their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.* Further, I'm so glad He remembers me in my need. You are too, I'm sure. **Isaiah 49:15** *Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.*

Thank God that He never forgets us. Thank God that He gives us a selective memory!

SURPRISING CONTRASTS 8-27-16

INTRODUCTION It seems strange that the Lord of Glory, Creator of this world, should be born in a stable in an obscure village. One would think He would arrive in Rome or in Jerusalem meeting with kings, princes, and other potentates. Note some other astonishing contrasts, first in the Scriptural accounts.

1. Joseph - Owner of nothing, responsible for everything. You remember the account of Joseph in Egypt. Taken from prison he was put in charge of all of Egypt by the King. Total responsibility.

Joseph was a nobody, but was the man God enabled. Are we not just like that today? In **John 15:5** Jesus said: *without me ye can do nothing*. Apart from God we are nothing. We have nothing. All we have belongs to another, to God. Yet God makes us responsible for it all and we will have to give account to Him. God expects us to use everything to His glory and service. Faithful stewardship will bring eternal rewards. Like Joseph, we are owner of nothing, responsible for everything.

Let me add this thought: Joseph refused to become bitter about his brothers' terrible treatment of him. He said: **Genesis 50:20** *But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good,to save much people alive.* **I Peter 2:20** *if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.*

2. Gideon - Least of all, master of many. **Judges 6:15** *Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house.* **Judges 7:2** *And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many* About 22,000 soldiers followed Gideon, The Lord thought these were too many. With this number, should He give Gideon the victory, Gideon might think he won it by his own hand.

There is something we must understand. God must get the glory. **Isaiah 42:8** *I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another,* Our pride stands in the way of giving God the glory. Believe me, we have a lot more pride than we are willing to recognize. There are times I've been astonished when God has revealed my pride to me. Pride of possessions (forgetting God gave it all); pride of reputation (forgetting God made me what I am); pride of accomplishment. Consider your own pride for awhile, if you dare.

3. The Widow Woman - poorest of all, giver of most. **Luke 21:1-4** *And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: 4 For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.* That means she gave all she had to live upon. We all had this opportunity to give like that a few Sundays ago at our Anniversary Sunday. I didn't give like that. Did you?

Have you ever noticed that sometimes the smallest churches give the biggest offerings to guest speakers and missionaries? That happens. When we get to Heaven, we'll be surprised at who will get the rewards and the value of the rewards they get. Why? Because God judges what we give by what we keep. This poor widow cast in all the living that she had. I've never done that, though I've come close a couple of times.

What do we learn from this account? God watches every offering. It is of interest to Him. It may be the criteria of how He gives to us. I'm sure the Lord saw to it that this widow did not lack for something to eat. Implied is the fact that God is aware of the motive for giving. The widow gave out of love. Some of the rich gave to be approved of men, or out of habit, or to ease their conscience. I

was standing in the doorway of my first church. A drunk came walking by and offered some money in order to ease his conscience. I refused it so he threw it in the door. Unfortunately for him that did not get him any closer to God.

4. Balaam The diligent donkey displayed more sense than the disobedient Prophet **Numbers 22:1-ff** You recall the account of Balaam and his talking borrow. Balaam's lust for money and disobedience almost cost him his life. And it would have, had not his borrow stopped and lay down before the avenging angel. This borrow spoke intelligently in contrast to Balaam's angry bluster. Have you ever noticed that all of God's creation does exactly what it was created for -- except man? What an astonishing contrast! Man that enjoys so much more intelligence and opportunity than the brute beasts; man that will give an account for all that he does, falls so far short in pleasing our Lord and Creator. The story of the talking donkey teaches us that we can learn much from God creation.

5. The Little Lad His small lunch made a fabulous feast. You recall the feeding of the 5000. Little is much when God is in it. We may not have much to offer to God, but He takes that little and accomplishes great things with it. Moses had a little stick but God performed miracles in Egypt with that stick. Little is much when God is in it. The widow of Zarephath, had a little meal and a little oil, but fed her family and Elijah for years with that little. Little is much when God is in it. **I Kings 17:9-ff** Another widow with two sons had a bit of oil in a cruse, and at the prophet's direction filled many containers with it. She sold the oil to pay her debts and live of the rest. Little is much when God is in it. Years ago I heard of a poor couple with a very little baby. The father could not work because of illness. Every day they took the bottle of milk from the ice box to feed the baby. They never thought about it at the time, but after some weeks, they realized that bottle of milk never emptied. And the baby was well fed. Little is much when God is in it.

Now notice some contrasts in the spiritual realm:

1. Saved versus Unsaved The changed life of the believer. I'll mention some people I know well: my folks. Mom and Dad got saved when I was about five. Immediately they attended church every time the door was open. They stopped playing cards or going to the movie house. While they did not use alcohol, they stopped serving it at parties for their friends. These old friends soon dropped off and my folks soon got a new set of Christian friends. Prayer, Bible reading, and family devotions were practiced every day.

Note another changed life. Saul became Paul. Once very religious, he became righteous. Once a sever enemy of Christ, he became Christ's greatest defender. Once a determined killer of Christians, he became a diligent Christian himself and that without apology. Once he lived for himself, now he lived only for Christ.

2. Hell versus Heaven The changed destiny of the believer. The two men knew each other well, but could not be more diverse. One was rich -- very rich. The other was poor -- very poor. One ate at a banquet table, the other had to be satisfied with what was thrown to the dogs. The rich man was surrounded by family and friends. The poor man was shunned by all. The wealthy man was honored, happy and healthy. Lazarus the beggar was weak and sick, the dogs licking his wounds. **Luke 16:19-31** tells us that both died. The angels carried Lazarus to Abraham's bosom. The same angels conducted the rich man to a lake of fire and torment.. Now notice the far reaching contrast of the two.

Lazarus was content and happy at last. He was among those who respected and loved him. All

his comforts and needs were cared for; he lacked for nothing. No more thirst -- he could drink all the water he wished. No more hunger -- he enjoyed plenty to eat. No more pain -- his whole body was healed. No regrets -- if anything, he could look forward to the rewards of the righteous.

The rich man opened his eyes in hell. He was astonished. All he saw around him was misery and suffering. He heard no music; only moaning, wailing, and the shrieks of the damned. The suffering was so great no one cared or even tried to talk to him or anyone else. For all eternity he would be left completely alone. Hot flames tortured his flesh. He longed for a drop of water to cool the tip of his tongue, but this was denied him. He longed for a way to escape, but there was none. Now he who formerly had everything he could want, became the beggar. He considered his five brothers and begged Abraham that someone would warn them of this horrible place. His eternity would forever be full of regrets: regrets for missed opportunities to get right with God, regrets that he used his massive wealth only for himself.

Conclusion There is a great contrast between serving our selves and serving our Savior. In view of Heaven, let's take heart and offer ourselves and whatever we have to God. We can do no more. We should do no less. In return God will richly bless our lives. We should never be surprised what God can do with our lives while here on earth. But we will be eternally surprised what He will do for us in Heaven.

THANKSGIVING 11-16-13

Two little words in the English language can never be overused. Whether addressed to man or God, these words insure success and happiness. "Thank you". Gratitude insures spiritual success, while thanklessness brings spiritual ruin. **Romans 1:21** *Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.* Again, **Psalm 100:4** *Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.*

Christians are grateful people because of four impossibilities:

1. It is impossible to destroy him. **Psalms 91:2, 7** *I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.*

- 1) Jews – were unable to kill Paul though he was shipwrecked and bitten by poisonous snakes.
- 2) Fire – was unable to burn the three young Hebrews: Shadrach; Meshach; and Abednego.
- 3) Lions – were unable to chew Daniel.
- 4) Giant Goliath – was unable to smite young David.
- 5) Whale – was unable to digest Jonah.
- 6) Flood – was unable to drown Noah.
- 7) Waves – were unable to sink the disciples in the storm.
- 8) Gas leak -- in St. Albans was unable to kill me. God miraculously spared my life.

2. It is impossible to starve him **Psalm 37:25** *I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.* God keeps the store and supplies all the believer needs.

- 1) Elijah – was fed by the ravens and by the widow.
- 2) Jeremiah – was put in the pit to starve, but rescued by Ebedmeleh.
- 3) Israel in the wilderness – was fed with manna which is called angel's food.
- 4) Joseph fed a nation, Egypt -- with God given wisdom.
- 5) Jesus -- made fish and bread faster than 5000 could eat it.
- 6) George Muller -- fed 5000 orphans through prayer alone.
- 7) I could only afford a kiss for Loretta on our 1st Christmas, but God gave us steak too.

3. It is impossible to defeat him **I Corinthians 15:57** *But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Just when it seems the believer is about to be overcome, God gives victory through the Lord Jesus Christ.

- 1) Israel, caught between the Egyptian armies and the Red Sea, was delivered by the Lord.
- 2) Paul and Silas in the jail at Philippi were released with apologies.
- 3) King Hezekiah was told by Sennacherib that he shut up Jerusalem like a bird in a cage, but he could not conquer it.
- 4) Peter was chained in jail, but released by an angel.
- 5) Christ was crucified and buried, but arose triumphant over death and the grave.

4. It is impossible to discourage the believer **Philippians 1:6** *Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:* When the Christian is in trouble, he just starts praising the Lord, counting it all joy. Man's extremity is God's

opportunity. “Here’s your chance, Lord!”

- 1) Everything was lost; all property, health, family, and friends. Job declared: “I will trust”.
- 2) In sorrow for the loss of his loved son, David said, “I will go to him”.
- 3) The Christian has no fear in trouble; God is bigger than any problem.
- 4) The Christian has no fear in death. You can’t frighten the Christian with heaven.
- 5) The Christian has no fear of judgment. All our sins are forgiven and forgotten. When we stand before His judgment seat, God will say, “What sin?!”

Sometimes we do hurt. In God’s mercy He permits us to endure pain to make us tender, patient, kind, understanding and thoughtful.

Christians are grateful people because of Five Thrilling Realities

1. God given friends. **John 15:13** *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.* Friends accept us just as we are, and continually pray for our blessings.
2. God given ministry. **I Corinthians 3:9** *For we are labourers together with God:* If called to serve, don’t stoop to be a king. Evangelism solves most church problems. Two boys were seen going door to door. “What are you doing?” asked an observing man. They answered, “We’re converting the world to Christ”. I like that optimism.
3. God given eternal life **John 3:16** Only God can give something that lasts forever. He created everything in six days. Now He has been working 2000 years on our Heavenly home. It has to be a fantastic soul-satisfying place.
4. God given Word **Psalms 1:2** *Our delight is in the law of the Lord* **Jeremiah 15:16** *Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart:* God’s Word is the answer to all our needs.. It gives us hope and brings contentment and joy.
5. God has given us Christ **Romans 5:8** *But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* Christ is our Savior who died for us; a true Friend that sticks closer than a brother. He makes our life worth it all, and eternity a wonder of happiness.

CONCLUSION There is no people in the world so grateful and thankful as the Christian. It feels so good to be thankful. And it seems that the more we express our thanks to God, the more we enjoy receiving His abundant blessings.

THE ADVANTAGES OF BEING POOR 2-18-17

INTRODUCTION Do any of you, my friends, have a testimony concerning the advantage of being poor? Much of the devotional this morning is Scripture, especially the last half. We'll let the Bible itself teach us.

God does not mind people being poor. He places under every poor believer His helping hand. We observe that God takes great care of, and great interest in, the poor. There are advantages to being poor and not having much money. This is what the Bible has to say. First....

1. Some comparisons Proverbs 19:22 *a poor man is better than a liar.* Some rich men and not a few politicians think it is fine to tell lies to get ahead. Last year's presidential debate and e-mails underscore this observation. This verse speaks about character and reputation both in the sight of men and in the sight of God. Note that poor men find favor with God, but liars never do. **Proverbs 12:22 *Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight.*** Note also that liars may advance in this world for a time, but in eternity they are relegated to perdition. **Revelation 21:8 *all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.***

Rich or poor, old or young, it is sometimes difficult to acknowledge the truth. I was in the eighth grade. I had described one of my lady teachers as 'hatchet face'. She confronted me with this. I was ashamed and denied it. She believed me rather than the informant, but God knew I said it. Fortunately God will forgive a young, repentant, 12 year old liar. He forgave me this and many other things through the years. In God's sight, a truthful, though poor, man is highly esteemed. In the world he may be held in low regard. I'd rather have God think well of me.

Proverbs 15:17 *Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.* This Biblical comparison says that the poor who can only afford vegetables to eat, but have love, are far better off than those who sit down to porterhouse steak, and potatoes with gravy, but lack love. Love brings joy to the heart. Hatred brings anger and bitterness. We may not always be able to buy steak, but we can always choose to love. Love makes life worth living.

Big houses do not always make happy wives. Note the following observation: **Proverbs 21:9 *It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house.*** If we choose to, we can be happy where ever we live, even if it is in a little apartment on the second floor, back. In the early years of our marriage, that is about all Loretta and I could afford. Fortunately, for me, she was not the "brawling woman" type and we were happy. To this day, since I had such a good marriage, I don't understand why everyone does not. From the beginning, Loretta always wanted me to build her a house. She knew that what she was asking was fiscally impossible. Just before I retired, it was financially possible for us to have that house. She picked the lot and she picked the plans. And she decorated the house very nicely. It is a practical, convenient house. Unfortunately, cancer cut short her enjoyment of it. But I continue to enjoy it.

2. God takes a special interest in the poor, and that's nice. Notice some examples.

God defends the poor Jeremiah 20:13 *praise ye the LORD: for he hath delivered the soul of the poor from the hand of evildoers.* God is watching. He is like a concerned loving parent. The poor may seem like an easy prey but they have a Mighty Defender.

God listens when the poor cry Psalm 34:6 . *This poor man cried, and the LORD heard*

him, and saved him out of all his troubles. This may be speaking of financial difficulties, but not necessarily so. It is a time of any inadequacy, a time when a fellow can't help himself. The Lord is ready to rescue.

The poor have equal standing with God. The rich and powerful have no advantage. **Proverbs 22:2** *The rich and poor meet together: the LORD is the maker of them all.* God's ways are opposite to the world's ways in so many ways. This is one of them. That's why we need to use the Bible as our text book. It instructs us on how to get along in this world. In most cases we'll do the right thing if we do the opposite from what the world would do. There is a place where we have equal standing with the rich. It is at the Cross. It is in the Judgment. God does not have favorites, but if He did, it would probably be the poor.

Psalm 140:12 tells us **God gives the poor certain rights.** It says that the **LORD will maintain the right of the poor.** They have rights because they are His creation. God has a purpose and plan for them in His kingdom. Abuse the poor if you want to get in trouble with God. On the other hand, bless the poor and God will bless you. **Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble.** So says **Psalm 41:1**

Proverbs 19:17 says: **He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.** The poor may never be able to repay you, but God will take it upon Himself to make it up to you. Scripture teaches us never to loan to anyone, even to our family brothers and sisters. If they have a need and we have the money, we should give it to them outright. When we do give money, make sure it is for Biblical basics such as for food or clothing. Once again, the Holy Spirit will direct our giving as we carefully listen to Him.

The poor man may be wiser than the rich. **Proverbs 28:11** *The rich man is wise in his own conceit; but the poor that hath understanding searcheth him out.* In what way is this possible? The rich man takes his own advice, while the poor man takes God's advice. Ever think about how many more poor people are saved compared to the rich? The rich feel like they don't need God. The poor know that they are dependent on God every day and in every way. Note **vs 6** *Better is the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than he that is perverse in his ways, though he be rich.*

3. God's special association with the poor

James 2:5 *Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?* They are God's choice.

Matthew 11:5 *the poor have the gospel preached to them.* Here we see the Lord of the harvest has a special concern for them.

Matthew 5:3 *Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* This shows the Lord has a special reward for them.

Matthew 19:21 *If thou wilt be perfect, give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven:* The Lord encourages generosity with the poor.

Isaiah 29:19 *the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.* The poor rejoice, not in their non-existent possessions, but in God.

II Corinthians 8:9 *For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor.* Here we see Jesus identifies Himself with the poor.

4. Finally, note the Levitical legislation to care for the poor.

Leviticus 19:9, 10 *The right to glean the fields: And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. 10 And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the LORD your God.* This is God's method of caring for the indigent. But notice, they had to exert effort and work in order to eat.

Exodus 23:10, 11 *The poor are to utilize the produce of the sabbatical year: And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather in the fruits thereof: 11 But the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie still; that the poor of thy people may eat:*

Leviticus 25:25-30 *The poor recover their property in the year of Jubilee: that which is sold shall remain in the hand of him that hath bought it until the year of jubile: and in the jubile it shall go out, and he shall return unto his possession.* In this case the poor is poor no longer: his property is restored to him. He may begin life all over again.

Exodus 22:25, 26 *Rules concerning interest and collateral where it concerns the poor: If thou lend money to any of my people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury. 26 If thou at all take thy neighbour's raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down.* In the New Testament Christians are instructed not to loan; but if they do loan to fellow believers, they are never ever to charge interest. Tilly Rogers gave widow Naomi Berwaldt, who was about to lose her house, an interest free loan. I asked Tilly why she did this and she told me about **Exodus 22:25**. I wonder if we sometimes forget God is watching everything we do. He wants us to demonstrate the love of Christ in all our activities and business.

Deuteronomy 15:1,2 *The length of loan is not to exceed seven years: At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release. 2 And this is the manner of the release: Every creditor that lendeth ought unto his neighbour shall release it; he shall not exact it of his neighbour, or of his brother; because it is called the LORD'S release.*

Leviticus 19:13 *Wages are to be paid promptly: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning.* The working man eagerly looks forward to the paycheck. I know I did.

For the Christian, begging is discouraged: I Thessalonians 4:11 *work with your own hands, as we commanded you; II Thessalonians 3:10* *this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. Ephesians 4:28* *let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.* The truth is clear. It is God's will that all of us work for a living. This needs to be taught to boys and girls when they are young. Unfortunately, today, if a lazy fellow does not feel like working, the government more than pays his way. The government gives him a better income than many who work hard. By this means character is corrupted and society decays.

CONCLUSION: No matter how much or how little money a person has, he always feels poor. How much does he want? Just a little more. Ask anyone you know: "Are you rich?" He will always answer "No". It is a little like drinking salt water. The more you drink, the more you want. Possessions never satisfy for long. We are spiritual beings that only God can satisfy.

Concerning earthly riches, Jesus said that we would always have the poor with us. This is because of the universal blight of sin. Because He loves us, God makes ample provision for the poor as we see by the verses we have read. We have a part to play in the scheme of things: God may use us to meet the true needs of the poor. Let us allow ourselves to be guided by the Holy Spirit and have

compassion on those who may have less than ourselves. And let us thank God for what we do have and be content with it.

THE BLAME GAME 10-17-15

INTRODUCTION The term ‘reproach’ is used 84 times in the Bible. What does it mean? It means, basically, to find fault, but especially to blame. More particularly it means “to criticize or find fault” “to speak of someone in such a way as to express disapproval or disappointment.” “to censure”.

The Bible puts it this way: **Psalm 15:3** to take up a reproach against a neighbor. **Proverbs 14:34** sin is a reproach to a nation. Note, our country is experiencing this now in world opinion. **Luke 6:22** Men may reproach you as evil. You may recall the Christian baker fined thousands of dollars for not making a cake for the wedding of two homosexuals. **I Timothy 3:7** We may fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. **Hebrews 11:26** Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the wealth of Egypt.. **Hebrews 13:13** We are to go without the camp bearing Christ’s reproach.

Satan wants us to blame each other. Adam blamed his wife for giving him the apple. Eve blamed Satan for tempting her. The widow blamed Elijah for her son’s death. Ahab blamed the prophet for the 3½ year lack of rain. But in **Job 10:2** Job refused to blame God for his troubles and suffering. Now we may bring blame and discredit upon ourselves by the way we live and act. That would be entirely our own fault because we are so to live that our testimony is beyond reproach.

I am most interested in one aspect of this blame game. Just suppose we have a friend who feels injured or harmed by another person. He tells everyone, including us, how miserably misused, abused, and wronged he has been by this person. His faultfinding is severe. Now since we are friends, and we like our friend, we believe him and side with him. We continue the blame game by spreading our friend’s evil report about this person. Thus we are guilty of taking up a reproach. In effect we begin to do Satan’s work of criticism for him. How so? Satan’s object is to discredit and find fault with all believers. **Revelation 12:10** *the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.* Fault finding cannot be pleasing to our Lord who promised to find some good in every believer. **I Corinthians 4:5**

Let me illustrate it this way. Thirty-five years ago I preached a sermon about divorce in the Holt Baptist Church. After the service a lady came to me requesting I meet with her about the subject of divorce. She informed me that she and her husband were in the process even then of getting a divorce.

Of course, as in all such situations, she had her friends who sided with her. They were convinced that her husband was a no good cad. He too had his friends who thought the wife had grievously wronged him.

I replied to her request that I would meet with her on the condition that she brought her husband so that I could speak to them together. She did this and I met with them both. As a result, they both understood what God wanted them to do according the Scripture. They forgave each other. They were reconciled and both fired their lawyers at great expense to themselves. They came together in a very loving way. Their marriage was saved.

At the time, I gave them a warning. I told them that God has given them grace to forgive each other and forget the past wrongs. I told them that this they have done freely and gladly. But, I said, your friends who have taken up a reproach in your behalf will not receive such grace so they will continue to find fault and blame and try to constantly remind you about that. You forgave each other and God helps you forget. Your friends receive no such help so they never forget and will continue the blame game for years to come.

Perhaps for this reason alone the Bible instructs anyone who has been injured by another to go to that person alone. The grievance is to be kept confidential and not broadcast to the world. God will help us make every wrong right. Our observing friends get no such help.

CONCLUSION: Remember, the blame game is doing Satan's work for him. That should give us no pleasure. If you hear a reproach, do not pass it on. Keep it to yourself. If you must speak, speak only to God about it, privately.

THE FEW 10-20-18

INTRODUCTION: We're impressed with a big crowd. God isn't. With us, large numbers mean success. Not with God. We feel miserable and defeated when we find ourselves standing alone. This situation doesn't bother God in the least. My, how often we pray for large church attendances thinking that huge crowds will honor God. How does God really feel about **THE FEW**? We will find out as we search the Scriptures.

**** The majority is not always right.** The majority insisted on crucifying Christ. The majority followed Hitler and Stalin. The majority elected President Obama. It is my personal opinion that as president, he showed himself to be against Christians and for Islam. He appointed judges across the land that made rulings according to their political bias and not according to the Constitution. He degraded the morals of our country by promoting abortion, same sex marriage, the LGBTQ crowd, and increased racism in our Nation. He developed harmful trade agreements, wide open borders, and globalism that sent hundreds of companies and thousands of jobs overseas. He turned our country against our law enforcement officers endangering these officers lives. Personally, I find all this progressive government appalling.

Exodus 23:2 says: *Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment:*

How can we know what is right? Not by majority opinion, but by a careful study of the Word of God. **Jeremiah 10:23** *O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.* **Psalm 119:105** *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.* We don't have to wander in circles wondering what to do. If we seek His help, God will show us what is right. The founders of our country sought and received Divine help. That's why our country prospered more than others for over 200 years.

**** The biggest crowd deserted Christ; only a few continued to follow Him.** **John 6:66** *From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. 67 Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? 68 Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.*

To follow Christ, we need to humble ourselves. The natural man finds this very difficult. Christ does not make it easy to be His disciple. For instance, He says we're to love our enemies and to pray for those who wrong us. We are to forgive, repeatedly, even for the same offense. We are to turn the other cheek. We are to be ready to sell what we have and give to the poor. We are to always tell the truth. We are to be perfect. It is impossible for us to do all these things apart from the help of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

**** Gideon's army was to be few in number, so that God would get the glory.** **Judges 7:2** *And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me. Judges 7:4* *And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many; --- whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go.*

The question is not how many there are, but what is the character of those who would serve. God is looking for men who will do anything for Him no matter the cost. The goal of these men is to give God the glory. Obstacles do not stop these men until the goal is achieved. "Our greatest fear should not be of failure, but of succeeding at something that doesn't really matter". D.L. Moody. I don't remember where I first heard the admonition: "Failure is, there's no use denying, the person who

fails to keep on trying.” Perhaps it was from my Mother. When we fail, it is not because we are few. Though he only had a few, Gideon did not fail, he could not fail, because God was with him. Nor will we ever fail when God is with us. We like to sing as though the Church is a mighty army. Then we look at reality, at the paucity of our small congregations and wonder where we got a hymn like that. How easy it is for us to forget that God does not look at numbers, but at character. He does His miracles with the devoted few just as readily as He can do with the many.

**** The road to Heaven is narrow; few there be that find it.**

Matthew 7:14 *Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

Does this verse mean that God restricts the number of people who get to Heaven? No, because **2 Peter 3:9** plainly says, *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, --- but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.* This verse recognizes the fact that most people chose not to go to Heaven. But God has made provision for even the few. I truly believe that Christ would have died if even only one got saved. There is great rejoicing in Heaven over every single one that is redeemed. The individual is not neglected nor forgotten in Heaven.

**** There were only a few on Noah’s ark.** It is interesting to note that before the flood, Noah was in the extreme minority. After the flood, Noah was in the absolute majority. God used these eight occupants of the ark to repopulate the entire earth. For the second time in human history man started out with everyone knowing, worshiping and loving God. Unfortunately, for the second time, most of mankind has turned against God. God promised never to destroy the earth again with a flood. We are told that at the end the earth will be destroyed by fire. **2 Peter 3:7** *But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.* Everything this side of Heaven that we treasure so much will be burned up. True and lasting treasure is Heavenly treasure which will never end.

The Jews were a few to begin with. **I Chronicles 16:18, 19** *Saying, unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance; When ye were but few, even a few, and strangers in it. Zechariah 4:10* *For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice.* God promised that one day Israel would become a great nation, as sand of the sea. **Hosiah 1:10** *Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered.* And one day Jerusalem will become the capitol of the world with all nations coming to it.

**** The Lord sought for a MAN. Just one.** **Ezekiel 22:30** *And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none.* We can feel God’s deep disappointment that He could not find even one willing man. It would not take an army to protect the land from destruction. One man would do it but there was not one.

In reality, at that time, the land was given to carnality and ungodliness. No one stood for the right. Princes, prophets, priests and even the people all did wickedly. God’s wrath and judgment was imminent. Obviously God was reluctant to consume them with the fire of His wrath. In this situation one person would make a great difference. But God lamented: **“I found none.”** This reminds me of the verse that asks this very important question: *Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?* **Luke 18:8** I am determined to be that man of faith. How about you?

**** God works “with many, or with few.”** **1 Samuel 14:6** *Jonathan said to the young man that*

bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the LORD will work for us: for there is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few.

I wonder at Jonathan's faith. Though trained in the art of combat, he wasn't trusting in himself but in His God. And I marvel that his young man, his armor bearer, was just as full of faith. Neither hesitated to face the challenge before them. As a consequence they won the victory though outnumbered ten to one. I don't know how it was, but according to verse **15** *there was trembling in the host, in the field, and among all the people: the garrison, and the spoilers, they also trembled, and the earth quaked: so it was a very great trembling.* God sent an earthquake and a feeling of panic and fear upon the entire Philistine army. The end result was total victory for the Israelites. Nothing is impossible with the God of the few.

2 Chronicles 14:11 *And Asa cried unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee.* King Asa possessed the same faith exhibited by Jonathan and his armor bearer. And he needed it. Humanly speaking, it was sure stupidity to think his meager amount of men could withstand the vast superiority of his enemy. The account in **2 Chronicles 14:9** says: *And there came out against them Zerah the Ethiopian with an host of a thousand thousand, and three hundred chariots.* Count them. That is a million warriors plus horses and chariots. Asa's few had no chance to withstand them. But the God of the few gave Asa the victory. God fought for them.

CONCLUSION There are times in life when we too will face impossibilities. Can we, as Asa, face them without worry or fear believing God will see us safely through? Let us live from victory to victory. God is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. His Almighty protection and love for us will never cease through all eternity. Praise His Name!

THE INFALLIBLE DETECTIVE 6-16-18

INTRODUCTION: There was a time I liked detective stories. In the stories I read, the detective always apprehended his man. Does God have someone like that, someone that always gets his man?

Satan is God's arch enemy. He wants everyone of us to think that we can sin with impunity; that we can sin and God won't notice. Whatever the devil wants us to believe, the opposite is always true. Notice these instructive verses. **Matthew 12:25** *And Jesus knew their thoughts,* **Psalm 7:11** *God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day.* **Genesis 6:5** *And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.* These verses show that God sees sin, all sin, every day. But it is impossible that God will look with favor upon sin. He must judge it. He must condemn it. And He does.

You can be sure your sins will find you out. So says **Numbers 32:23** *behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out.* Who is this Infallible Detective? He is none other than the Holy Spirit who knows us better than we know ourselves. The Holy Spirit loves us and intercedes for us daily. He knows that we cannot make a new beginning, but that we can make a new ending. Therefore, whenever we do wrong, He lets us know about it forcibly and immediately. This is all for our own good. Also this is to protect God's reputation. Now let's watch this Infallible Detective at work.

1. King David King David propositioned Bathsheba. I'm surprised Bathsheba did not refuse him. I wonder: did she really and deeply love her husband? Or was she persuaded by the flattery of David's attention? I think I know something about how God works. At the moment David looked to lust after Bathsheba, God gave him a warning in his spirit. "Don't do it. You are the king of Israel. For My sake don't do it. If you do this wickedness it will bring disgrace on my Name among unbelievers." But David blew by God's stop sign and engaged in sin -- sin he lived to deeply regret -- sin that brought tragedy to his family for years to come. At the same moment there was a divine warning sign given to Bathsheba, a stop sign she too ignored. By this she caused the death of her husband and grandfather as well as her own ruined reputation. Sin always has consequences and though it may be forgiven, it leaves scars. Remember: sin always leaves scars.

2. Ananias and Sapphira This account is preceded by the story of Barnabas selling land and giving the proceeds to the Apostles for them to distribute to those in need. There were many new believers at that time, not a few who lost their livelihood because of their new profession in Christ. Wanting to be celebrated as being especially generous, Ananias and his wife, Sapphira decided that they too would sell some property and make a donation. They wanted their donation to be public and applauded. They gave for the wrong reasons. They gave in a sneaky fashion. **Acts 5:1-3** *But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, 2 And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?*

This husband and wife plotted in the secret of their home. They figured no one would know of their plan to withhold part of the price. Who would ever find out? Peter had no human way of knowing of their secret agreement to lie about the price. But The Infallible Detective knew. And He, the Holy Spirit revealed this sin to Peter. Why? God gave us this as an example because He wants us to realize even today how serious lying is. Deceit of any kind is most abhorrent to the God of truth. Think of this: if God should punish by death every liar today, would any be found guiltless? I'm so

glad God is merciful to us even as He is faithful to correct us.

3. King Saul determined to save his kingdom even if it meant to disobey God's commandment. After all, he was King. Who would dare to fault him? But Saul discovered no one can put something past God's Infallible Detective. What happened?

Saul's enemy, the Philistines, set their massive army in array to destroy Saul's small security forces. Saul waited seven desperate days for Samuel to come to offer the sacrifice and seek God's help. When Samuel did not arrive at the expected time, and Saul's meager forces melted away for fear, Saul decided to officiate at the sacrifice himself. This was wrong. Saul defended his wrong action. **1 Samuel 13:12** *Therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering.* **13** *And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever.* **14** *But now thy kingdom shall not continue.* Saul failed his first assignment given to him by God.

Next, God gave another assignment to Saul. *Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not;* But Saul reserved the best of the spoils of war. By so doing, he violated God's known will. Confronting Saul with his sin, Samuel said: **1 Samuel 15:22**, *Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.* **1 Samuel 15:23** *For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.* The result of his persistent disobedience is that Saul lost God's approval. He also lost his kingdom and he lost his life.

We may be tempted to feel sorry for sinners such as Saul. But Saul brought all his problems upon himself. No one can sin with impunity whether secretly as did David, or openly as did Saul. All sinners can be sure of one thing. Their sin will find them out.

4. King Ahab plotted with his wife, secretly, to kill Naboth and steal his garden. But God's Infallible Detective told Elijah all the details and had Elijah declare to Ahab and Jezebel what their punishment would be. Here again power, prestige, and royalty is no protection for sin. It would be instructive if our own high governmental officials would study this account very carefully. Just because a thing can be kept secret by persons in power, does not make it right. As we see in our own government today, God can and does make secret practices public knowledge.

5. Adam and Eve had no pressure to sin. Therefore, they had no excuse. So why did they sin? Because they wanted to. Don't fault them. Had any of us been Adam and Eve, we would have done exactly the same thing with the same results. We can be sure our sin will always find us out. No matter how good we've been all our lives, one sin, no matter how small, brings its consequences. A U.S. Army veteran who served two tours in Iraq was deported to Mexico for a felony drug conviction, ICE officials confirmed on Sunday. Miguel Perez, 39, was escorted across the Texas-Mexico border on Friday, CNN reported. His commendable army service did not protect him when he subsequently did wrong.

The Infallible Detective is no respecter of persons. He not only points out our sin to us, it is His purpose to bring us to repentance and to provide the way for our forgiveness. This Divine Infallible Detective loves us and wants God's best for us.

6. Sodom & Gomorrah went years with out detection, or so they thought. Society today is just like

these two wicked cities. Both then and now our society figures that the public sin that everyone found acceptable was no sin at all. How wrong that was, and is. The stench of Sodom reached up to Heaven. **Genesis 13:13: 18:20, 21** The moral filth of today is grievous in God's sight and reaches up to heaven. **Psalm 7:11. *God judgeth -- and God is angry with the wicked every day.*** Our wicked society has spawned many mass murderers. Schools are not safe. Work places are not safe. We ask ourselves, where is our Infallible Detective in all of this killing today? For the time being He is allowing wicked men to proceed. **Romans 1:21-32.** Thinking themselves to be wise, they become fools. Their folly will be their self-inflicted punishment. There will be a day of reckoning in time and in eternity. God keeps records, accurate and permanent. Every act has eternal consequences.

7. Achan plotted with his entire family to secretly steal the accursed thing all the while knowing it was forbidden by God. While I was a pastor, something surprised me. If someone in the church did wrong secretly, God often revealed it to me. This added nothing to my happiness, but did add to my responsibility.

In Achan's case, The Infallible Detective revealed his sin to more than a million of his countrymen. The longer Achan went hiding his folly, the more Israel endured God's growing wrath. About 36 men died unnecessarily at Ai because of this man's secret sin. The longer Achan continued with sin not confessed, the more shameful, embarrassing and sever was his exposure. Tribe after tribe, family after family, were eliminated from guilt until it came down to one man: Achan. I can imagine how he felt as it narrowed down to him. Denial was impossible. The Infallible Detective always gets His man. Sin will be exposed and punished.

8. Judas, the betrayer of Jesus, plotted in the secret of his heart. He was such a clever hypocrite that even his closest friends did not recognize him for what he was. He talked the talk. He walked the walk. He sounded sincere and real. He did everything, even the miracles, just like the other disciples did. All the time he was a pretender, dissembler, and deceiver, that only Jesus recognized.

I wonder how many in the church today are like Judas, deceiving their friends and perhaps even themselves? This may explain, in part, the lack of spiritual power and victory in some Christian assemblies today. Apparently neither red hot preaching, in-depth Bible study, nor consecrated service will expose them. They seem to fit into it all. But I truly believe The Infallible Detective, Who is the Holy Spirit, seeks to personally reprove them of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. **John 16:8** Before He publicly exposes these pretenders, The Detective encourages them to get right with God. Unfortunately, Judas never did get right, though he later regretted his treacherous deeds.

9. Moses and Aaron This is a long passage about how Moses and Aaron had a wrong spirit while serving God. **Numbers 20:10-12** *And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? 11 And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also. 12 And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them. Psalm 106:32 - 33* *They angered him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes: 33 Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.*

This shows that the longer the Believer continues in known sin, the more shameful and sever the chastisement will be. Certain exposure will become extremely embarrassing and humiliating. Though painful to Moses, it was necessary that his self-aggrandizement be dealt with. God will not share His glory with another, not even with a Moses. Personally I was a bit surprised that after Moses

acted the way he did, God still let the water flow.

Our Infallible Detective also sees the good and noble things that are happening and rewards them. I heard this story about a high school basketball game. Toward end of the game, the coach called his student manager in to play for the very first time. This boy was a little mentally challenged. He was instructed to stand by the basket while his team mates fed him the ball. Three times they tossed the ball to him, and three times he missed the basket. He was still standing under the basket when the opposing team was bringing in the ball. A rival team player called his name, and threw the ball directly to him. He made that basket. Everyone cheered. But this is not the end of the story. A university coach happened to see the game, and thought that that rival team player showed character. The coach contacted him, put him on his university squad, and gave him a scholarship to the school. (Note: you can see a two minute video of this game at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e4zRJIp2wcM>). Our 'Detective' not only punishes the bad, but rewards the good. He loves to expose the good more than to expose the bad.

CONCLUSION: We've all had personal dealings with The Infallible Detective, but do we know The Infallible Savior -- the Remedy for Secret Sin? This Infallible Savior is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. It is good to know we all have Someone who loves us and wants to help us. He has our best interests in mind both for time and for eternity. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. I John 1:9* This verse is just what we need in time. But what about eternity? In eternity, we who are saved shall be made sinless and perfect just like Jesus. *I John 3:2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. PRAISE THE LORD!*

THE PERFECT CHURCH 3-19-16

INTRODUCTION The goal of every Christian, in a word, is to be Christ-like. Satan's attack can stop a church cold in its tracks and ruin its testimony for years. Satan is often successful as he attacks internally and externally. For this reason we must pray for Job's hedge to protect our church. Neither Satan nor any of his agents, whether human or demonic, can penetrate this hedge. When in heaven I hope to ask God of what that hedge consists. It would not surprise me if it is the protection of the Holy Spirit. We need to honor Christ in what we do. He makes the perfect church possible.

External factors cannot stop our church. Such things as lawsuits, taxes, or governmental programs cannot of themselves hinder our church. Internal factors are different. They can, and often do, hinder a successful growing church. I'd like to bring seven conditions to your attention which make up the perfect church. Satan seeks to destroy a church by introducing the opposite conditions..

1. A Grateful Church **Psalm 100:4** *Enter His gates with thanksgiving* In Romans 1 we notice that the long slide down into the abyss of sin begins with thanklessness. **Romans 1:21** *Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful.* Such people are bad company and can ruin the testimony and reputation of a church very quickly. **II Timothy 3:2** *These men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy.*

The opposite to being grateful is to complain. **Numbers 11:1** *And when the people complained, it displeased the LORD: and the LORD heard it; and his anger was kindled.* On the other hand, it pleases the Lord when we are content and grateful. **Hebrews 13:5.** *be content with such things as ye have.*

We should *let the peace of God rule in our hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.* By this we see that we enjoy the peace of God when we are thankful. Furthermore, when we have the peace of God we are at peace with everyone around us.

2. A Happy Church I spoke of the blame game earlier. In the unstoppable church there is no faultfinding or *complaining in the streets* (or pews). **Psalm 144:14.** If we feel someone has wronged us we speak to them privately and quietly about it. **Matthew 8:15** We don't gossip about it nor threaten a lawsuit. **I Corinthians 6:7** *Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?* God can and will take care of us. If there is a problem, how do we restore harmony and friendship? **Galatians 6:1** *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.* This is acceptance in action. This is a church united in happiness.

3. A Prayerful Church How do we pray? **I Thessalonians 5:17** *without ceasing.* **James 5:16** *fervent prayer.* **Ephesians 6:18** *watching.* **Matthew 26:42** repeatedly. Jesus prayed *the second time*, A good habit to form is the habit of prayer. The praying church is the church that sticks together. A praying church is a church loved and blessed of God.

4. A Fearless Church What does love have to do with fearlessness? **I John 4:18** *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: II Timothy 1:7* *God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.* Our times and our future are in God's hands. He will take care of us financially insuring we receive all that we need. God blesses us physically by keeping us well and safe, and spiritually by giving us victory over sin and temptation. Neither Satan nor any of

his agents can cross the hedge of His protection.

5. A Patient Church Hebrews 12:1 *let us run with patience the race that is set before us*, Here, life is likened unto a race. Though we may get tired and feel like quitting, we keep on keeping on. **Luke 8:15** It takes patience to bear fruit. **Romans 5:3, 4** It takes patience to win out over tribulation. **James 1:3** The trying of our faith works patience. To develop the character of patience, we are sometimes exercised rather severely. A church of patient believers is a healthy wholesome church.

6. A Church Strong in Adversity When things are not going right, is the time believers need to really stick together. **Proverbs 24:10** *If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small*. Every church doing something for God will experience adversity. Many a church has fallen apart when they are sued for some reason. The way society is going we are very likely to get sued over our beliefs. The perfect church does not allow adversity to stop them.

7. A Church With a Forgiving Spirit Bitterness is the opposite of forgiveness. **Ephesians 4:31, 32** *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: 32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you*. Bitterness is a sin that is hard to give up. A bitter spirit is so harmful because it is an angry, selfish, unforgiving spirit. It leaves deep scars. A person overcome by bitterness thinks of his hurt constantly. He believes he is a victim. He believes he deserves entitlement. No matter how much he receives, he will never be satisfied. He finds fault continually. His joy and happiness are spoiled. It shows on his face and in his conduct. If a church entertains a bitter spirit then fellowship is destroyed. Church leadership is often faulted by the bitter person.

The perfect church will not tolerate bitterness. **James 3:14, 15** *But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. 15 This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish*. The only remedy for bitterness is to forgive, to love, and to get help from the Holy Spirit. A forgiving spirit is a healthy happy spirit. Recently Pastor Shawn Smith gave an excellent sermon on forgiveness. All pastors should teach this from time to time.

Conclusion: Pastor Smith has often said that there is no such thing as a perfect church. But I can't see the harm in trying to be perfect. In fact, it may be a lot of fun. Let's go for it.

THE SECRET PLACE 10-22-16

INTRODUCTION God has some very special secret places. Only those who walk close by His side are aware of them. Only those God trusts will enter into them and are benefited by them.

1. The Secret Place of the Most High Psalm 91:1 *He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.* What is this secret place? It is the council chambers of our God. Here He planned creation, made a way for our redemption, drew up the plans for a New Creation and for Eternity. Here He arranged work projects for the angels and for us who will inhabit Heaven. While we have no participation in making these plans, we are honored to be able to participate in the fulfillment of them.

Abiding under the shadow of the Almighty means to be under His protection and enjoying His loving provision. Positioned under His wings takes the worry out of life. Here we enjoy the fierce protection of a powerful father for a beloved son. It is stronger protection than a she bear provides for her cubs. The Psalm goes on to say, therefore, that nothing can harm us and concludes that we shall enjoy a long satisfying life.

2. The Secret Place in the Dark In my childhood I was afraid of the dark. Yet, it says in **Psalm 18:11** *He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies.* The storms of life are brought to mind here. The Lord is present in our dark difficulties. The Lord was present with the disciples in the boat while it was whipped by wind and wave. They were surprised to discover He controls the weather. And He does. History tells us that when Israel sinned more and more, God send them less and less rain until the land of milk and honey became dry and arid. By these means He sought to get their attention.

Today the USA is experiencing the fact that God uses the weather to His purposes. The recurring floods, the destroying forest fires, the giant tornadoes, the shattering earthquakes, all cost us billions of dollars in damages, and are designed to get our attention and focus it on God. As we return to Him (**vs. 16**) He delivers us from His wrath and the dark storms of life. He will rebuke that which devours for our sake. But what if we, as a nation, do not pay attention. Then the weather will only get worse and worse and worse. In His love our Lord would much prefer to bless us. He wants our joy to be full even this side of Heaven. Note **Psalm 16:11**.

3. The Secret Place of His Pavilion Psalm 27:5 *For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me;* In time of difficulty the best place to be is in His pavilion. It is like going home. At home we are comforted and protected. We are with those that love us. They accept us just as we are. We have no need to put on a good show. They stand up for us and help us overcome all our troubles. At home we are never alone. "To hide" is to remove us from the presence and power of trouble, safe in His keeping and love. God comes between us and our difficulties.

4. The Secret Place of His Presence Psalm 31:20 *Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.* The hurt here comes from man. It is cutting unwarranted slander. We experience these verses, both the hurt from our critics and the help of our Lord. The tongue can hurt more than the thrust of a sharp sword. A young dentist was experiencing the abuse of a very vocal critic. He was asked by a church-going lady to collect from two insurance companies for the same procedure and give the increase to her. As a Christian, he felt this was improper and so refused. That is when fiery

vitriolic words were heaped upon him privately and publicly. He was distressed. I referred him to this verse, **Psalm 31:20** and pointed out the protection God provides from the strife of tongues. This truth helped him greatly, and he stood firm in his decision

5. The Secret Place of Thunder Psalm 81:7 *Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee; I answered thee in the secret place of thunder: I proved thee at the waters of Meribah.* God speaks to us here and assures us that He hears our worried call. He knows all about our trials and tests. Thunder is very unsettling. It shakes us to the core. In **Psalm 29** thunder is repeatedly called the voice of God, and His voice must be listened to.

In view of what happened at the waters of Meribah, it is a wonder that He pays any attention to us at all. At these waters the people of Israel, including Moses, became very impatient and accused God of deserting them. These are called the waters of strife because the people strove with God. Yet, in love, God did not turn His back on them. In the storms of life, in the secret place of thunder, He is there to help though we may not deserve it.

Tested (proved) at the waters of Meribah, the people failed. What about us? Until we die we will experience the Lord's testing. Will we be obedient, faithful, trusting? The hymn admonishes us to trust and obey declaring it to be the only way to be happy in Jesus. Even though we often fail, God still loves us, and always will.

6. The Secret Place of His Covenant Psalm 25:14 *The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant.* This speaks of the confidential communication we may have with the Lord on an individual basis. This is what Adam and Eve experienced in the garden before the fall and what Enoch enjoyed before being translated to Heaven. Wouldn't you like to know what Adam, Eve, and Enoch talked about with God as they walked along with Him? I would. As Christians we have fellowship with God that the world knows nothing about. This relationship is secret, wonderful, and personal. The witness of the Holy Spirit is that we are the saved and the beloved children of God. His covenant with us who are saved is that we shall never be lost. We are saved forever and for all eternity. Praise the Lord.

7. The Secret Place of the Righteous Proverbs 3:32 *his secret is with the righteous.* When saved we are called righteous. We are assigned a guardian angel to assist us. Did you know that we may also have a demonic angel assigned to us by Satan? This could account for our continued propensity to sin.

We need to be very careful about how we live because, according to this verse, the wicked are an abomination to the Lord. In contrast, His secret is with the righteous. The wicked experience God's curse, but the righteous His blessing. His blessings are without sorrow **Proverbs 10:22**. His blessings make us rich: spiritually for sure, materially sometimes.

To continue in His favor we must be obedient to His commandments. How do we know what they are? They are contained and explained in the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit makes them known to us. We don't have to guess about them or look for some sign. A fellow student of mine told about a lad who said he was called to preach. "How do you know?" he was asked. He replied, "I saw a sign in the sky, a large **G P C** -- it meant: 'Go Preach Christ.'" His friend responded: "Maybe not. Maybe it meant -- **G P C** 'Go Plant Corn!'" The Holy Spirit will reveal the true will of God for us individually using the Word of God.

We need to have a tender heart to know God's will. The word 'tender' is only used once in the Bible in connection with the word 'heart'. It means to have a soft, pliable heart, amenable to His will. Is our heart like that? Is our heart toward God? Do we want to please Him more than anything else in life? I hope so.

Conclusion: We started with **Psalm 91:1**. Let's end with **Psalm 91:1**. When we dwell under His shadow, He is Almighty in our behalf. When God can make of us what He desires, He protects us and fellowships with us in the intimate location of His secret place. It is here that we find perfect comfort, rest, and fulfillment.

THEY ASSUMED 10-18-14

INTRODUCTION: We've all made assumptions at some time in our life. Assumptions can be very dangerous: they can cause death, even spiritual death. Let's take a few moments to examine the subject and see how it may affect our lives.

1. Harmless embarrassing assumptions.

>>> A young woman, with a small son, was going up on an escalator. Suddenly she turned and slapped the man standing a little behind her. Her son smiled and said: "Mother it was I who pinched you."

>>> The deacons called a Baptist pastor in to answer charges of beating his wife. It seems one deacon, passing the parsonage at night, heard the pastor's wife screaming and saw the silhouette of the pastor on the bedroom window shade. He was swinging a stick. The pastor quietly explained. There was a mouse in the bedroom which made his wife scream. He killed the mouse with a stick.

>>> I was new to Wilmington, Delaware. I asked directions to the library. I was told to board the #10 bus to the library. So I did. But discovered I was on a #10 bus going in the opposite direction. My wrong assumption.

>>> An Ohio church called me in for consultation. It seems a woman, who noticed the church was without a pastor, took control of the church saying she was pastor. I was brought to teach what the Bible said about woman pastors. One old grandmother glared at me. I thought if anyone was against what I had to say, she was that person. Then in the question period, she was the first to speak up. To my surprise she said that I was right, because that was what the Bible taught, and that they should get rid of the lady pastor. And with her advice they got a man, a pastor that I recommended.

>>> **Luke 7:42-48** *And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? 43 Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. 44 And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. 45 Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. 46 My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. 47 Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. 48 And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.* Simon had wrongly assumed that Jesus did not know what he was doing, but He did. Jesus taught Simon a lesson he never forgot.

>>> **Luke 12:57** *Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division.* One day Christ will come as the Prince of Peace. But that time is not yet.

>>> **Luke 13:2** *And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things?* Unfortunately, most people assume that if you are experiencing trouble, you are doing something wrong or that God is angry with you. Jesus taught that nothing could be further from the truth. In this world, distorted by sin, man experiences troubles as the sparks fly upwards: that is, showers of them. **Job 5:7** *Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.*

>>> **Acts 2:15** *For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.* It may have been the first time, on Pentecost, but it is not the last time believers are accused of being out of their minds. Today's progressives think all Christians are mentally deficient.

2. Assumptions with grave consequences.

>>> **Lose of financial gain:** Acts 12:20-23 *And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished by the king's country. 21 And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. 22 And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. 23 And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.* The people of Sidon and Tyre thought they could flatter King Herod and he would make them rich. But their very flattery ruined it for them.

>>> **Presuming on the future by going in debt.** Anytime we become responsible for debt, we assume the future will be good to us: no loss of job, no sickness, no unexpected accidents or loss. **James 4:13, 14** *Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: 14 Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour,* I know of a Baptist church in Indiana today that owes over a million dollars on the building and is struggling just to pay the interest. They fired their pastor -- and he was a good one -- hoping to find someone that could raise more money and build a bigger congregation. They haven't as yet. One danger of a church going in debt is that clever lawyers could, and have, held church leadership and its membership hostage for the money. Being a corporation does not always protect them from individual liability.

Suppose we do have a need for money. God promises to meet the needs of the saved who are His sons and daughters. God never orders anything that He does not pay for. Churches need not, should not, go into debt to build a new building. If the new building is of God, the church will be able to pay for it as it is built. Million dollar churches have been built debt free.

>>> **Assuming God does not matter in our life.** Psalm 10:4, 6 *The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts. 6 He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved: for I shall never be in adversity.* He has lost any assistance God could give. For myself, I would not want to live without God's help and blessing.

>>> **Lose of life because of a wrong assumption.** Joshua 7:3-5 *the spies returned to Joshua, and said unto him, Let not all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; and make not all the people to labour thither; for they are but few. 4 So there went up thither of the people about three thousand men: and they fled before the men of Ai. 5 And the men of Ai smote of them about thirty and six men: for they chased them from before the gate even unto Shebarim, and smote them in the going down: wherefore the hearts of the people melted, and became as water.* They made the mistake of taking for granted God's continued favor and blessing without examining their current relationship to Him. Many Christians assume God is pleased with them, when in fact their life is not what it should be to obtain His blessing.

>>> **Loss of eternal life because of a wrong assumption.** Romans 10:3 *For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.* No man comes to the Father but through Jesus Christ. God's grace comes from heaven above through Christ. It does not come from the dance floor, beer parlor, or Masonic lodge. No man can be cleansed or forgiven of sin but through the blood of Christ. Through Christ alone God's righteousness is conferred upon us. Our own good works can never avail to bring us eternal life. Eternal life is a gift of God. A false assumption here can bring nothing but eternal grief and suffering. Unfortunately, many people assume they are saved because they are religious, but they are not saved. Do I assume I am saved? No. I know I am saved because of God's sure word, and because of the witness of the Holy Spirit in my heart.

CONCLUSION: Sometimes Christians assume they cannot pray effectively. At such times I am

reminded of something John R. Rice once said: “You may have faith only the size of a mustard seed, and a wheel borough full of doubts, yet God will answer your prayer.” This wise old saint is right, of course. So let’s put aside our fears and doubts and believe God hears and will answer our prayers. As with prayer, so with all our lives, let's be careful not to make wrong assumptions.

TWO THINGS 4-19-14

There are two things no servant of God should ever do:

1. Covet the ministry of another. Numbers 16, 17 Korah, Nadab, and Abihu coveted Aaron's ministry to God's great dissatisfaction. We should not wish to preach like, have a church like, sing like, or have the success of another. We should be content with what God has planned for us.

2. Criticize the ministry of another Romans 14:4 *Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.* In **Numbers 16, 17** Korah, Nadab, and Abihu faulted Moses, but God was pleased with him. Famous Christian leaders sometimes fault others. I remember when Dr. John R. Rice along with Dr. Bob Jones faulted Billy Graham. At the time, I remember fellow students joked that Bob Jones University refused to serve 'graham crackers'. **Proverbs 30:10** *Accuse not a servant unto his master, lest he curse thee, and thou be found guilty.* **John 8:6** *This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him.* Two thousand years ago the religious leaders found fault with Jesus. It mattered not to them that Jesus was perfect in every way. They still criticized Christ.

There are two things every servant of God should always do:

1. Examine himself to see if he is a worthy participant in God's service. He should examine himself to see if his relationship to God what it ought to be. **I Corinthians 11:28** *But let a man examine himself* concerning his involvement in the things of God **II Corinthians 13:5** *Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.*

2. Pray for and encourage other servants of God John 17:9 Here we see Christ's example. *I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.* **Philemon 1:22** Here we see Paul's request. *I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you.* **Ephesians 6:19** *Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; 19 ¶ And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,* Paul desired to preach boldly and he did, when partners prayed. Here is something to think about: we'll never pray meaningfully for someone we are criticizing.

When we pray for each other, God gives us lives full of miracles: We will experience His protection, His provision, His direction. His miracles in our behalf will fit our situation exactly.

CONCLUSION: Every day the Lord is molding us, preparing us for the work He has for us to do in eternity. When this preparation for eternity is completed, God takes us home. **Philippians 1:6** *Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.* Loretta died years before me. Why? Perhaps she was a faster learner or more yielded to His will. We are God's handiwork. He wants to show us off in Heaven to the angels and others. If we examine ourselves, if we pray for others in God's service as we ought to do, He will say of us "well done My good and faithful servant." This commendation will be public in front of all His angels.

WHAT MAKES GOD CURSE? 1-21-17

INTRODUCTION: Question. Since God loves us so much and so deeply, why would He curse anyone? Yet God cursed so often I haven't time to mention every instance. I'll just list a few representative times. Notice these occasions:

1. True, God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, yet **God curses the house of the wicked** **Proverbs 3:33** *The curse of the LORD is in the house of the wicked: but he blesseth the habitation of the just.* This section of Proverbs is a series of contrasts. To be cursed is the opposite of being blessed. The house of the wicked is cursed. Since we never know just when God's curse will strike, it behooves us not to spend much time in the houses of the wicked. Why should we suffer along with them? We witness many wicked people with all sorts of problems. This is God's way of dealing with them in an effort to turn them to righteousness. The wicked will reap what they sow. For them to pray for crop failure never works.

2. Though a very beautiful environment, **God cursed in the Garden of Eden** Some excerpts from: **Genesis 3:14 - 19** *And the LORD God said unto the serpent, ...thou art cursed above all cattle, ... Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow And unto Adam he said, ..., cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;* In these verses we note that Satan was cursed; Eve was cursed; Adam was cursed; and the ground was cursed. Later Cain was cursed. If we learn anything from this, it is that no one can sin with impunity. Further, we learn that every sin committed affects other people as well. **Exodus 20:5** *I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.* Even so, God loves us and one day the curse will be lifted. One day God will create a new Heaven and a new Earth not defiled by sin. Here the redeemed will forever enjoy perfect happiness in a far better garden than Eden. This new garden never has, and never will, be blighted by sin and the curse.

3. Even our blessings may be cursed: **Warnings in Malachi 2:2** *If ye will not ...give glory unto my name, saith the LORD of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings.* Thus we must not take God's blessings for granted. Now this is not just an Old Testament problem, but also a New Testament problem. **Matthew 15:8** says: *This peoplehonoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.* The Lord convicted me of this sin back in 1950 some 67 years ago. Until the Holy Spirit showed me the true condition of my heart, I thought I was living a fine Christian life. While I enjoyed a good Christian reputation, the truth was that God was not as important in my life as He wanted to be. I did not realize this because I thought I was doing well. Why? Because I observed daily devotions and daily reading the Bible with prayer. I faithfully attended all the church services. I witnessed to people and taught a Sunday school class. My sincere purpose was to fulfill His will and please Him.

Yet, without my realizing it, I was falling far short of what the LORD expected of me. During the revival at Wheaton College, where I was a student, the Holy Spirit convicted me of my sin, using **Matthew 15:8** to do so. The Holy Spirit always uses Scripture when He convicts us. When I accepted God's assessment of myself, I experienced great spiritual freedom and joy. This joy is only possible when we are fully in harmony with Him. Then our blessings will continue to flow. Our cup will be full and running over. My whole view of life and the world was revolutionized. I did notice that though I experienced revival, with God's full forgiveness and consequent blessing, I was still not perfectly sinless. God always deals with us one sin at a time.

Malachi 1:13, 14 tells us that to give God less than our best brings on a curse: *ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; should I accept this of your hand? saith the LORD. 14 But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, saith the LORD of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen.* To offer to God anything less than our best is hypocrisy, deception, and brings a curse. It ruins our testimony among the unsaved. God must be supreme in our respect for Him. This is a clear delineation of our true attitude toward God.

Malachi 3:9, 10 our failure to tithe makes God curse: *Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse,* I was surprised to learn of some Christian families who told me they did not tithe. I was not surprised to see they were having troubles financial and otherwise. If you want God to turn against you, don't tithe. There is nothing complicated about this commandment. We can follow the way of blessing or the way of the curse; it is all up to us. We choose to tithe or we choose not to tithe. It is as simple as that. My dad is a good example of this principle. He received an unusually large increase in salary. The tithe on it appeared very large to him, so he decided to cut back on the tithe. A couple of weeks went by and he lost his big salary. He and mother talked about it, prayed about it, and restored the full tithe. Shortly thereafter, his large salary was restored. You can imagine that this made a huge impression on us children.

4. God curses those who do not have moral freedom: II Peter 2:14, 15 *Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; cursed children: 15 Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray,* It is my opinion that President Obama, using all the powers of government, has made immorality legal and forced it upon our country. He sought by presidential decree and financial pressure, to make wrong right and right wrong especially with regards to the LGBTQ crowd.. Unfortunately our congress allowed this and our courts upheld it. God's judgment has already begun to fall upon us and although our country has never been invaded by foreign armies since its inception, it soon could be. God will see to it that our military cannot save us. Safety comes from God as a consequence of our honoring Him The history of civilization teaches us that no nation has ever endured when given to evil such as we now experience in our land. God will not be mocked. Perhaps now, with our new president, some of this evil will be reversed for awhile. Let's pray to this end.

5. God curses those who wrong Israel. Genesis 12:2 to Abraham it was said: *And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: Genesis 12:3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee:* In Numbers 24 Balaam declared under the inspiration of God: *Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee.*

Until President Obama our nation has always stood up for Israel in the United Nations. This is one reason we have been especially blessed of God. God promised Israel her land in perpetuity. Our new president is favorable toward Israel and may even move our embassy to Jerusalem I don't think he will cater to the Arabs. Perhaps we will experience God's renewed blessing to the extent of a nationwide revival. That would be wonderful.

6. God curses those who ONLY keep the golden rule: Galatians 3:10, 11 states: *For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: no man is justified by the law in the sight of God,* that is, just by doing good works. We can't save ourselves by trying to be good. It is a useless activity that will send us straight to hell. Men applaud a self-improvement kind of life style. It feels so good. It looks so good. But in the end it will fail because it only treats with the outward man and not the inner soul. Man-made religion does not remove sin from the soul. Men are foolish to continually seek

to establish their own righteousness. **Romans 10:3** *For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.* No wonder they have no peace: they have no forgiveness.

7. Note some further casual observations:

a) in **Deuteronomy 27:15 - 28:19**, Moses uttered 18 curses all for Israel's benefit.

b) in **Numbers 23:8-ff**, Balaam refused to curse Israel whom God would not curse. He said: **How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed?** You know the story very well. Israel was God's servants. Here we learn not to disparage another man's servants. **Proverbs 30:10 states: Accuse not a servant unto his master, lest he curse thee, and thou be found guilty.** We Christians are prone to find fault with other believers who may be a little different from us. Yet God may be quite pleased with them. We would do well to find something in each of them that for which we may thank God. It would help heal our relationships. Remember that in the final judgment God will find something in each of us that He can praise.

While God's curses are designed to help us, our curses are not helpful; in fact, they are prohibited.

1. We curse father or mother on pain of death. **Exodus 21:17**
2. To curse our leaders is forbidden. **Exodus 22:28**
3. To curse the deaf is also forbidden. **Leviticus 19:14**
4. To curse God is punishable by death. **Leviticus 24:10-16**

CONCLUSION: God is very reluctant to curse and very ready to bless. The knowledge of His curses are a very needful warning to us who have a propensity to stray from His way. May we so live that we will always receive His "well done." His blessings make us rich, both materially and spiritually. To them He adds no sorrow.

WHAT'S NEW IN REVELATION? 3-17-18

INTRODUCTION: Is there any new thing under the sun? Ecclesiastes **1:9** *The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.* This verse tells us that everything that has been done will be done again, and again, and again. Consequently we assume nothing new is going to happen as time rolls along. We say, and heard it said, *there is no new thing under the sun.* We would be wrong, of course. This verse is an absolutely true statement where man is concerned. But is not a true statement where God is concerned.

I'm glad God will make some things new because I like new things. For instance, I like a new car. I like the way it looks; I like the way it smells; I like the way it drives. I feel special in a new car. Don't you? On one occasion when Loretta and I were trying to purchase a new Chrysler at the lowest possible price, she said to the salesman, "Push the subtraction button." He said: "Lady, I've already pushed it." She answered: "Push it again." But Solomon was right. New cars do not qualify for something new under the sun. Chariots existed long before Solomon.

I'm glad God will make some things new because if He did not, an eternity in Heaven might become boring. God delights in giving His children new things to experience all through their life. Now let's examine some new things that shall come to pass according to the Book of Revelation. "New" in every verse is the same Greek word 'kainos', meaning fresh, recent, or newly made. God is the doer of it all. God originates some exciting things.

1. Revelation 2:17 *To him that overcometh will I give ---- a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.* Pergamos is where Satan's seat dwells. Overcomes means to be victorious over evil. Can every Christian be victorious? Ephesians 6:10, 11 tells us to *be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. 11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.* Christians can be over-comers, that is true, but it is not a simple spiritual procedure. God's personal involvement is absolutely necessary for every victory we may experience.

This verse in **Revelation 2:17** promises that those that do overcome, will receive special rewards. These awards include the hidden manna, the white stone, and the new name.. I'm curious as to the character of that new name. Will this new name stick for eternity? I'd like to know. Will any of us be recipients of this new name? I'd like to know.

2. Revelation 3:12 *Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.*

In this verse the new name of the new Jerusalem and God's new name is not written upon a stone, but more intimately, upon the person himself. This person has a special position in the temple of God. This temple is in Heaven. There will be no temple in the New Jerusalem (**Revelation 21:22**). He is made a pillar in this temple. He is a fixture who will no more go in and out.

It seems to me that this person who "overcomes" has accomplished something very special. He has a crown coming **vs. 11** and will be personally protected by God in the hour of trial, which trial shall come upon the whole earth **vs. 10**. What has he done that is so pleasing to God? God observed that he *kept the word of my patience* during the time of sever Satanic attack. He was pressured, oppressed, and buffeted by Satan because he stood solidly against the evil forces of this synagogue of Satan and those who claimed to be Jews but were not **vs. 9**.

In this same verse it talks about a New Jerusalem, coming down from Heaven. I wonder if the Palestinians are going to try to claim this New Jerusalem as their capitol city? They have no rights to any Jerusalem. In God's sight Jerusalem, whether old or new, will belong to the Jews forever. This is His sure promise to them.

In **Revelation 21:2** this *new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, (is) prepared as a bride adorned for her husband*. What does this mean? Nothing in life is so beautiful to the groom as his bride that he sees coming down the aisle to join him. She fills his heart with pride and pleasure. Their future together will be one of joy and love. She is not looking at the lovely gown she is wearing, the gown the groom has given to her, but up into his kind face.

In **Revelation 21:10** she is called holy, that is, without blemish or defect of any kind. Her wedding gown is a robe of pure white referring to the righteousness that Christ has given to her. Again in **vs. 11**, she exhibits the glory of God. Radiant shafts of light spring from her as from one great diamond. *Her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal*. John uses the words "a stone most precious . . . clear as crystal" in trying to describe the "light" he saw radiating from that beautiful city. It will be quite an experience for us to be there. We will see high walls with 12 gates, 3 gates on each side, N. S. E. W. But we will notice some things are missing: **Revelation 21:22** *And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it*. Neither will we see a sun or moon. *For the glory of God did lighten it*.

Revelation 21:24-26 *And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it*. Gentiles will be in this city as well as Jews both honoring God together.

Revelation 21:27 *And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life*. We should live every day so as to be worthy of walking the streets of that city. We shall be made perfectly righteous. God says, in essence, all sins and iniquities I will remember no more. This is said three times: by the Father **Jeremiah 31:34**, by the Son, **Hebrews 8:12**, and by the Holy Spirit **Hebrews 10:17**. Just an after thought; if God refuses to remember ours sins, why should we bring them to mind? Furthermore, if other people sin, let us put all their sins out of our mind just as God puts our sins out of His mind. We'll live freer and happier. And that is another reason Heaven will be so special.

3. Revelation 5:9 *And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation*.

Christians may sing new songs every day of our lives because God's wonderful mercies toward us are new and fresh each and every day. When we think about this, we cannot help but rejoice. But this new song is different for a different reason. It is sung by the four beasts and the 24 elders seated in the proximity of God's throne. This scroll with the seals thereof is the title deed to the earth. Domination of the earth was forfeited to Satan when Adam and Eve sinned. Since that time Satan has been the prince of the power of the air. He has wrecked havoc without much resistance working his will over the lives of the majority of men. But now, in the end time, Christ who is Creator of Heaven and earth and is earth's rightful owner, is taking back what belongs to Himself. This is something worth singing about. The beasts and the elders, representing all of saved mankind, burst out in song. Men and nature shall be redeemed. **Revelation 5:13, 14** *And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and*

unto the Lamb for ever and ever. 14 And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

4. Revelation 14:3 *And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.*

In this instance it is the 144,000 Jewish men redeemed from the earth who sing before the throne in the presence of the four beasts and the elders. They had a new song which they sang that no man could learn, except themselves. They could sing this new song because of what they experienced, things we have not experienced. Not sharing their experience, we cannot sing their new song. It will be a grand thing to hear this all-male choir.

5. Revelation 21:1 *And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.*

Why will God go through all the trouble of making a new heaven and a new earth? The reason is simple enough. The first heaven and first earth were contaminated by sin. Sin left scars impossible to erase. The taint of sin will never touch this new heaven and new earth. Life, therefore, will be perfect and sinless whether in the new heaven or on the new earth. Haven't you always wanted to live in a perfect environment? Here's your chance. This is a life untouched by wrong thoughts or actions. This life always produces good things.

6. Revelation 21:5 *And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.*

He who created the original heaven and earth will now replace it with a new heaven and earth unspoiled by sin. There will be a new government where Christ is King. Believers will be glorified and enabled to participate in many new and wonderful sensations and experiences before impossible to us. We will enjoy a life without worry, or fear; without oppression, or fault. Our service to God will be without sweat and will always be full of joy. Never again will we be misused, cheated, lied about or hated. We'll freely eat from the tree of eternal life. There will be no more death, no more graves, no more tears. A life full of peace will reign supreme all about us. It will be so wonderful we cannot even imagine it today.

CONCLUSION: We are told in **1 Corinthians 2:9** *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.* Everything will be new: new names, a new Jerusalem, two new songs, a new heaven and a new earth. We can't experience the wonders of Heaven with our present senses. Our five senses are made for us to understand and appreciate the things of earth. God will give us new capabilities when we get to Heaven: new abilities to experience all the new sensations He has prepared for us to enjoy. It will be wonderful. The best is yet to come.

WHEN GOD GIVES UP 4-18-15

INTRODUCTION: God is love. Love suffers long and is kind. But there comes a time when even love's patience is exhausted. We would be a fool to take God's patience for granted. After long forbearance even God gives up! Mind you, it isn't God who departs from us, rather we remove ourselves from God. **Isaiah 59:1, 2** *Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.* God stops listening, stops blessing, stops convicting. He lets us go our own way in our self-will. Who will experience this neglect and sometimes punishment?

1. The wicked. Romans 1:21, 24 *Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:* This is the state of America today. Humanism has prevailed over America today. One of the basic tenants of humanism is unisex. They introduced women to men's clothing, namely to men's pants in order to achieve this. I saw girls and women in pants in church last Sunday. Unisex also brought in the transgender movement, and the gay / lesbian phenomenon. This week the Obama White House opened unisex bathrooms at taxpayer expense.

Baring the miracle of a national revival, morals will only get worse and worse. Finally Christians will be persecuted just as they are now in other countries. What seemed impossible 30 years ago is on our doorstep. This is what happens when God gives up on us. And if God does not judge our country severely, He will have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah.

2. The pre-flood civilization. Genesis 6:3, 6-7 *And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. 7 And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth;* God did a favor in destroying the wicked in Noah's day. Had they lived longer they would have sinned more grievously and their eternal punishment would have been that much more severe. You understand that death by drowning is not the worst thing that their sinful rebellion brought on. Eternal punishment is a far worse consequence of people that turn their back on God. Have you recently considered what the unspeakably terrible unending and unbearable torments of hell are? This thought leads to the next.

3. The removal of names out of the Book of Life. Revelation 22:19 *God shall take away his part out of the book of life.* This is the fate of those who do violence to the Scriptures, but also to those who continually reject the Gospel invitation. As noted above, God's Spirit will not always strive with men. **Hebrews 6:4, 6** *For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance;* If these verses instruct us in anything, they teach us we need to pray a hedge of protection about our children lest Satan or his agents, demonic or human, should snatch them away. So many youth of Christian parents are turning their backs upon God. And it is increasingly difficult to reclaim them for Christ.

4. Psalms 106:21, 23 Israel in the wilderness Think of sons and daughters of Christian families here. *They forgot God their saviour, which had done great things in Egypt; Therefore he said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them.* In these verses we see that the prayer of the righteous can turn

God's mind back to look favorably upon the wayward. To do this the righteous must be close to God themselves and pray fervently for wayward sons and daughters. Jimmy Dedic was my brother's oldest son. He grew up in a Christian family having devotions every day, going to church several times a week, and knowing the way of salvation. But as a senior in high school, he turned away from God because of the influence of a teacher he respected. Years of earnest prayer were made for him. I'm happy to report that now he is back with God and serving Him with his whole heart. This warns us of the spiritual dangers of a public school education.

How does God feel about the consequences when those He loves turn away from Him? **Judges 10:15, 16** *And the children of Israel said unto the LORD, We have sinned: do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee; deliver us only, we pray thee, this day. 16 And they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the LORD: and his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel* God is grieved. I'm so glad that there is hope and help for those who repent and turn back to him.

Conclusion; It is a very dangerous and foolish thing to presume upon God's forbearance. His love never comes to an end, but His patience with sinners does. There can come a time when God will give up on them. We should never take Him for granted.

WHEN I WAS A BOY 9-23-17

INTRODUCTION: I suppose this is something of a history lesson: my history. 80 years ago I was only eight. I've changed. The church has changed. Society has changed a lot; but the Bible has not changed an iota. It is the one constant in a forever changing chaotic needy world.

A. What a Christian Mom and Dad taught me.

1. How to treat my brother and sister fairly. Ephesians 4:32 says And be ye kind one to another." When a single slice of cake remained, and two of us wanted it, Mother had one of us cut it and the other to be the first to choose his piece. Your mother did that too, I suspect. We learned to be considerate of each other.

2. Dinner manners. Luke 11:3 Give us day by day our daily bread and we were very thankful to get it. It was shortly after the Great Depression. Usually we had butter to put on the bread. Dad loved butter. We were very conscious all we had to eat was from God.

So different from today's modern family, our entire family sat down together for supper, and we gathered on time. We were required to eat only what Mother cooked and were taught to like it. We had to eat everything we took on our plate or it was the first thing there for the next meal. We could not leave the table without being excused. Any guests were offered the serving dishes first. When we had guests, since it was near depression time and food was limited, we practiced FHB: that is, Family Hold Back.

3. Personal rights: We children could not go through our parent's dresser, or mail. We needed permission to play with another sibling's toys or wear his clothes. I could not read my sister's love letters without permission even though she left them opened on the table. **Genesis 18:25** teaches us: **Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?** Can we do any less than to do right to others? "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" is a pretty useful maxim.

4. Family devotions, prayer, and church attendance. This was expected without question. The whole family did these daily and weekly activities together. In **1 Thessalonians 5:17** we're told to **Pray without ceasing.** **Hebrews 10:25** adds: **Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together.** Our parents led the way in these worship activities. I often heard my folks praying together at night usually for us children. We always went to church as a family to all the meetings. No exceptions were tolerated.

5. Respect for adults We were taught to stand when adults entered the room and to remain standing until they were seated. We were told to listen quietly and not interrupt their talking. We were expected to respect authority. That included our teachers, police officers, and elected officials. We respected and obeyed Mother and Father. We lived according to **Ephesians 6:2 Honour thy father and mother."** Father made sure we respected Mother.

6. We were expected to work for a living We were taught not to depend upon a handout from parents, or friends, or even from the government. **2 Thessalonians 3:10** says **that if any would not work, neither should he eat.** When we did work as teenagers, still living at home, we were expected to help with household expenses and to tithe our earnings. As a family, we shared in everything.

7. Society considered it a family disgrace if a daughter got pregnant outside of marriage. And should a girl do so, her parents took care of their daughter and her child financially and socially. She and her child lived with her parents. The government did not pay for her housing, living expenses, or health needs.

B. What public schools taught me.

I began 1st grade in a 'central' school. Until this time, there had been one-room schools with a single teacher who taught all the grades. About this time schools were brought together and localized instead of scattered throughout the community.

Most of my teachers were Christians. We began the day with the pledge to the Flag with everyone participating. Every day a Bible verse or short devotional story and prayer was included. Teachers were expected to visit the student's homes and meet their parents. Instruction centered around the three R's, and not about politically correct conformity, or about today's so called diversity and racial issues. Sex education was left to the parents. Today sex ed and the LGBTQ movement training begins in public kindergarten. Evolution with its attendant materialism and marginalization of God was not taught. But we were taught to be self-reliant. We were given skills that enabled us to work productively for a living.

Godly parents today understand the Biblical admonition: **Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge. Proverbs 19:27** All the atheistic materialism and evolution taught today needs to be corrected every day by Godly parents. So does indoctrination concerning society's immorality and teaching about Muslim beliefs presented to all school students at every level. I strongly urge Christian parents to give their children a Christian education either by home schooling or church schooling. One day all parents will answer to God for their children's education.

C. What society offered me.

Consider our living conditions. When I was a boy horse drawn vehicles were not uncommon. We had no telephone, no hot water, no central heat nor air-conditioning. Ice boxes were just that. Ice was delivered every other day. Milk was delivered by the quart. The cream rose to the top of the bottle. There was no TV and no microwave. We were taught not to covet the pleasures or things of this world. God tells us in **1 John 2:15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.**

Clothes were often home-made, usually hand-me-downs, and well patched. Socks were often full of holes and always mended. We kids made most of our own toys. Mom washed clothes by hand on a scrub board. Years later she got a washing machine and a used an electric sewing machine. We never ate at restaurants. Doctors regularly made house calls. Our dentist treated all our needs, even root canals. Ordinary living was less expensive. Still, we did not miss today's conveniences.

Consider financial conditions. A pay check of \$21.00 a week met all our family needs and that was after tithe. One could buy two big bags full of groceries for a dollar. Of course this was shortly after the depression. Bread was 10 cents a loaf, haircuts 15 cents, and we paid \$10.00 a month for house rent. Our neighbor bought a brand new car for a few hundred dollars. Neighbors knew each other, had time for each other, and helped each other. My dad avoided all debt. Stores were closed on Sunday. Allowances, if any, was a cent or two. A man's word was his bond. You could depend upon it. We were quite content with what we had and never felt poor or deprived. We knew the world did not owe us a living. We were guided by **Hebrews 13:5** which says: **be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.** Unfortunately, most people now think that the government owes them a living and owes them medical insurance. Most universities now teach that minorities were victimized. Blacks are taught that they are deprived and ought to be compensated for past grievances. This appeals to selfishness. As children we were poor and did not know it. It never bothered us. Poverty is an attitude of the mind and not the lack of possessions. I'm glad we were taught to be self-reliant.

Consider moral conditions Neighborhood moral conditions were such we children could play in the streets, roam the town unaccompanied, and not have to worry about locking the doors at night.

Marriage was always between a man and a woman. Divorces were few. Abortions were not legal. Recreational drug use was largely unknown and frowned upon. Homosexuality was despised. Christianity was respected. The Bible was sought for personal and public instruction and advice. Rulings by the courts of law were based upon the law and the Constitution and not upon someone's political opinion such as is often the case today. Our President was expected to attend church and could not be divorced if he wanted to be elected. We expected elected officials to have high standards of morality.

Mom and Dad taught us not to go to the Hollywood movies. They gave us the reasons why. They felt they degraded our moral and spiritual well-being. It says in **Psalm 119:37 Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity. Genesis 6:5 the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. Matthew 6:13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.** Hollywood teaches a degraded depraved way of life as the normal way of life.

What about moral standards today? Transgender activity is legal today. Today it is against the law to give transgender youth Biblical counsel. I'm happy that 8 in 10 children who experience gender confusion grow out of it. Christians are belittled for believing the Bible and speaking against the LGBTQ life style. So today it is popular and permissible to discriminate against people of faith. And tomorrow? Don't be surprised if Christians won't be allowed to buy or to sell unless they are politically correct. Study Revelation. Such opposition to Christians never happened when I was a boy. **2 Timothy 3:13 But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.**

About half of the people in America have no respect for God. This is obvious from their determined efforts to remove every vestige of the Divine from all public forums including schools, the military, public buildings, the courts, and even from town hall meetings where pastor's invocations have been interrupted.

Our founding fathers respected God. They sought His help in founding a new nation. During the first three days of the Constitutional convention they fasted and prayed. They also read **Psalm 35** repeatedly. Did you know that the Ten Commandments are pictured four times in the Supreme Court building: on the marble floor, on the door to the chambers, on the walls, and on the back of the chair used by the chief justice? We face a lot of social problems today, but our God is bigger than any people problem. As a Christian, I have hope of, and I pray for, a national revival.

When I was a boy, a large majority of the population was Christian. It was once the largest group in the United States. Today white Christians are a minority. Most young people in their early twenties got a job and left home. Today one in 3 young people live with their parents, Young people are also delaying marriage. Most will eventually marry. Years ago 8 out of 10 people married by the age of 30. Today, 8 out of 10 people are not married until the age of 45.

Addressing the matter of drugs, the Communists always claimed they could destroy our country with drugs. Today this is happening. And our government seems helpless to stop it.

D. What churches and religious experience offered me.

Back when I was a boy people took time to go to church, perhaps because of the difficulties of the depression. Church attendance is important. **Hebrews 10:25** says: **Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.** Attendance is not optional for us: it is commanded in the Bible.

Special meetings usually lasted from Sunday to Sunday or longer. Pastors preached more on hell, heaven, and prophecy than they do today. Back when I was a boy there was a possibility of getting saved in some of the old line denominations such as the Methodists, Presbyterians, or Lutherans. There is little possibility of that today because these denominations no longer teach the Bible as the inerrant Word of

God. Today, Muslims are the fastest growing religious group in the USA at the rate of 18 to 1. Their growth far outdistances Bible believers. Some 90% of the world's pornography comes from the United States. Our abortion rate is greater than any other country. God will not let this pass unnoticed. We should expect His judgment at any moment.

Christian Martyrs: It is sobering to realize there are more martyrs around the world today than in the days of the early church.

E. Does modern scientific inventions make up for the spiritual loss?

When I was a boy, TV, computers, and smart phones, did not exist yet we were happy. We enjoyed life even though we did not have microwaves, LED light bulbs, or rockets to the moon. Sewing machines were foot powered. Mother used a scrub board and hung clothes outside on a line to dry in the wind. Sheets smelled so fresh and clean. We did not have central heating and no air-conditioning of any kind. Lawn mowers were powered by pushing. Doors to stores did not open automatically. There were no shopping malls with escalators. Milk was not homogenized and lasted only 3 or 4 days in the ice box. Trains, not planes, were the most used means of public travel. There was no atomic bomb or men on the moon. Farming was not so technical and farmers did not need a college education. Today tractors are guided by GPS and tell the farmer how much fertilizer to use on different sections of his field. Today crops are planted without plowing, or cultivating. Though we did not have all these inventive marvels, I repeat, we were happy and content.

Talk about cars: When I was a boy, cars still had a crank hanging in front in case the starter did not work. My dad taught me how to crank a car so as not to break my arm should the motor kick back as it sometimes did. Tires had split rims and inner tubes, and lasted about 2000 miles. Because we used leaded gas, spark plugs had to be replaced regularly. Plugs cost about \$1 each. Today I hear plugs can cost as much as \$700 each. Most older cars took a quart of oil every 100 miles. Ours did. They all had manual shift, manual breaks, windows, and manual steering. But we did receive full attendant service at the gas stations where gas was about 18 to 20 cents a gallon. After pumping your gas, attendants cleaned all your windows, checked your oil, and the air pressure in the tires at no extra charge. At first windshield wipers were vacuum. When you stepped on the gas, the vacuum wipers stopped. Electric wipers are much better, safer, and now automatically deploy. Cars were very hard to start in the winter using only six volt batteries. They tended to rust out after 3 or 4 years in spite of undercoating. Today a lot of plastic is used in our cars. The Bible is true. It says in **Daniel 12:4 many shall run to and fro.** Our freeways are crowded. People are in a great hurry, but not happy.

CONCLUSION I sometimes think I'd like to go back to the good old days both socially and especially, spiritually. My brother agrees with me. Now, how are we going to explain to our grandchildren what we have lost as a nation? When we were kids we could walk the streets and play outside with complete safety. The principles our parents taught us were based upon the truth of the Bible. Back then, even unsaved parents valued these Biblical principles and to some degree practiced them. And that's how life should and could continue today. The Bible is all the guidance we need for successful living.

You and I realize the salvation of America is not in Washington, but in our God-fearing churches. Dedicated Christians can make the difference. God is willing to help us all the way day by day. Nothing is impossible for Him to do. We can experience revival in these United States of America. We have not because we pray not. We pray not because we expect not.

WHEN PRAYER IS A WASTE OF TIME 11-21-15

INTRODUCTION: These thoughts are inspired from a message by the Rev. Bob Magee, and used with his permission. **We are to walk as wise, redeeming the time. Ephesians 5:15-16. We are to number our days to apply our hearts to wisdom. Psalm 90:12** In other words, we're not to waste our time. When is prayer a waste of time? Prayer is a waste of time when we:

1. Pray to the wrong party Isaiah 44:17 And the residue (of wood) thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god.

I went up the side of a mountain in Guatemala where a witch doctor was praying with an Indian to false gods for safe travel. He got no help from our God. Fifty-five years ago a rich business man who invented the automobile horn was giving free organs to churches that requested them. I pastored a small church. We discovered the name of the man doing the distribution and applied to him for an organ. We never got one. Why? We asked the wrong person. We should have asked the business man. Just so, to ask favors of false gods such as the Virgin Mary, or St. Andrew, or Buddha is a waste of time.

2. Pray with our back toward God. Ezekiel 8:16 there were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east. They were in the right place but their hearts were wrong toward God. When we knowingly fail to do God's will, we are turning our backs toward God. In **Matthew 15:8** God who knows the truth about every man observed they **honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. Proverbs 28:9 He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.** God is no fool and will not listen to any prayer made by a man with his back toward God and his heart far from the Word of God.. Such prayers are a complete waste of time.

3. Sideways praying _In **Matthew 6:5, 6** we are told the hypocrites prayed to be heard of men, that is, they prayed sideways. The verses say: **when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.** These pray to be heard and seen of men. That is sideways praying. This man, in Marion, Ohio in a prayer meeting, prayed long and loud, around the world twice. Finally I said we would sing a hymn while he finishes. Each of us needs our own prayer closet where we get alone with God. In secret we can pray for hours, if we wish. But all prayers made to be seen and heard of men are a waste of time.

4. Praying with known sin in our lives Psalm 66:18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. If I am toying with sin in my life, God can't trust me with His blessings. It is not a case of more prayer needed, but removal of sin. Disobedience will always hinder the good favor of our Lord. We simply spin our wheels trying to pray while God is convicting us of sin. **Joshua 7:10 ff** Israel was defeated at Ai. Joshua fell on his face before God. **And the LORD said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? Israel hath sinned.** Deal firmly and forcibly with the sin first, then pray.

5. Selfish praying James 4:3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. True prayer honors God's name, furthers His kingdom, and is in harmony with His well.

True prayer is God-centered, not self centered. Ever ask God how to pray? Ever reason with God from the Scripture and tell Him why He should answer your prayers? It is difficult to make a case when our objective is selfish. 'Gimmy' prayers are a waste of our time and God's time.

6. Proud prayers Luke 18:10-14 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. **11** The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. **12** I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. Pride bursts out of every word of this prayer. No wonder it says he prayed with himself. His prayer got no higher than the ceiling. God gave him no ear. He wasted his time for he was not justified. The publican on the other hand humbled himself before God and was justified.

CONCLUSION: James 5:16 informs us that **The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.** This is time well spent. Pastor Bob Magee's illustration: A woman bought medicine for her very sick daughter. She found her car locked with the keys inside. She prayed for help. A man, poorly dressed, having an old car, stopped. He offered help. She asked if he could open the car door with coat hanger. In less than a minute he had it open. She hugged him and thanked him as a good man. He told her he was not a good man, that he was released from prison an hour ago for car theft. She hugged him again and thanked God "for sending a professional."

The best sincere prayer I ever heard came from a 5 year old Indian boy. He was visiting our house with his parents from India. He was asked to say the blessing. He looked at the food and said, "Thank you God for chicken. I like chicken". Would that all our prayers were so sincere and to the point. So as not to waste time, let's make **Psalm 19:14** the prayer of our life. **Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.**

WHEN THE WICKED REPROVE THE RIGHTEOUS 11-15-14

INTRODUCTION: When we're about to do wrong, God always gives us warning signs; and sometimes stop signs. We don't mind when it is a warning from a friend, such as our wife. **Proverbs 27:6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend.** But when the warning comes from the wicked, it becomes hard to swallow. This verse goes on to say: **the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.** So we refuse to trust them or listen to them. After all **Psalm 1:1 says: Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly.** Yet, at times, God uses the wicked to rebuke the righteous. This seems like a contradiction. Actually, both statements are right. We'll never go wrong when the Holy Spirit is our Guide.

1. Nebuchadnezzar's officer rebukes the prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah 40:2-3 And the captain of the guard took Jeremiah, and said unto him, The LORD thy God (He did not say "my god" or "our God" because he worshiped a different god.) hath pronounced this evil upon this place. 3 Now the LORD hath brought it, and done according as he hath said: because ye have sinned against the LORD, and have not obeyed his voice, therefore this thing is come upon you. How did they sin? By both forgetting the true God, and taking on false gods. Where did this foreign military officer get this information? Possibly from Jeremiah himself, or from Daniel, an important figure in the king's court at this time. It came to Jeremiah as a stinging rebuke that an unbeliever knew 1) why God was angry with Israel, and 2) that Babylon was used of God to punish Israel.

2. Jonah was rebuked, first by the captain and then by the sailors: Jonah 1:6 So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not. Next, the sailors: Jonah 1:10 Then the men said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them. These pagan sailors gave more obedience to their false gods, than Jonah did to the one true God. Jonah was no ordinary man, but a prophet in the service of God Almighty. His failure to obey his God almost destroyed the ship with great loss of cargo and lives. Jonah, because of his disobedience, lost any chance to witness to these people.

3. The Egyptian king, Necho, tells king Josiah not to fight. 11 Chronicles 35:20-24 After all this, Necho king of Egypt came up to fight against Carchemish by Euphrates: and Josiah went out against him. For some reason known only to himself, Josiah wanted to defend the king of Babylon. **21 But he (Necho) sent ambassadors to him, saying, What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? I come not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war: for God commanded me to make haste: forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with me, that he destroy thee not. 22 Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself, that he might fight with him, and hearkened not unto the words of Necho from the mouth of God.**

Divine inspiration teaches us that here God was actually speaking through an unrighteous man having commissioned him to fight against Carchemish. Here is an ungodly king knowingly serving the God of glory, and telling God's good king Josiah not to interfere. Unfortunately, Josiah would not listen, and lost his life at an early age ending prematurely his good work for God. I'm sure God gave Josiah some warning signs in his soul, but he would not listen. How many times are these warning signs disregarded by people seeking marriage, or a job? There are times the unsaved know better what should be done.

4. The Endor witch rebukes King Saul I Samuel 28:3-25, vs. 12 And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice: and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for

thou art Saul. God rejected Saul from being king and would no longer answer his prayers. Saul sought a witch to bring up Samuel. She rebuked Saul for his deception. Sometimes the wicked act with more honesty than the so called righteous. It is a shame to God's reputation when His people practice deception. Such deplorable actions have eternal consequences and they are not good. One time, years ago, a Christian friend of mine, Jerry B., did the unthinkable. He deceived an unbeliever in the matter of some business. I tried to reason with him, but he would not get right about the matter. Then God stepped in and he had a severe stroke. I visited him in the hospital, where he told me the stroke was the result of his deception. I offered once again to help him make it right with his business partner. To my surprise, he refused a second time. King Saul found out he could not deceive with impunity, and neither could my friend.

5. Abimelech rebukes Isaac Genesis 26:8-11 **And it came to pass, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out at a window, and saw, and, behold, Isaac was sporting with Rebekah his wife. 9 And Abimelech called Isaac, and said, Behold, of a surety she is thy wife: and how saidst thou, She is my sister? And Isaac said unto him, Because I said, Lest I die for her. 10 And Abimelech said, What is this thou hast done unto us? one of the people might lightly have lien with thy wife, and thou shouldest have brought guiltiness upon us. 11 And Abimelech charged all his people, saying, He that toucheth this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.** Here is an ungodly man with higher moral standards than God's man. Again God's reputation is sullied. And Isaac lost his reputation and could not witness to Abimelech about spiritual things from then on. I wonder what this cost Isaac spiritually?

CONCLUSION: The world is watching us very closely. Satan wishes to point out every mistake we make. He even has the audacity to go to God with our failings, accusing us as he did Job. Satan makes sure our faults are known as widely as possible. He works so that our failures will bring as much harm to God's cause as possible. If we will but listen to the warning voice of the Holy Spirit we will not fall into such situations.

If today Christ walked this earth as He did 2000 yrs ago, what would make Him want to visit our church? Would it be the music, the youth activities, the bus ministry, our missions program, or even our Bible teaching? I think that He would rather be persuaded by personal relationships as He had with men like Enoch, Moses, Daniel, David, Paul, and Job. Would He want to commune with us?

WHY DON'T WE? 2-21-15

INTRODUCTION: We say we believe the Bible, the whole Bible. We say we should obey the Bible, the whole Bible. So I ask why don't we fast? Both the Old Testament and the New Testament teach fasting. I believe the church has little power today because it forgets to fast. We cannot enjoy the Lord's feast until we practice the Lord's fast. Why fast? I'll give you three reasons for fasting.

1. The Lord's fast teaches us to control our fleshly appetites.

1) God created us body, soul and spirit. The highest part of man is his spirit. The lowest is his body. The soul must control the body, the spirit the soul. When it is the other way around, we are spiritually defeated, carnally minded, and living for the flesh. Daniel knew this truth, that he could not sit at the king's table and then stand in the king's court. Daniel disciplined himself and refused to compromise.

2) In his time of temptation, Jesus gained victory over his body before He gained victory over Satan. **Matthew 4:2-4** And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. **3** And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. **4** But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. **Matthew 17:21** Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting. Many years ago, during a time of great spiritual battle, I gave myself to prayer. The hours went by and I missed meals without realizing it. This was a true fast. And in this situation, God gave the victory.

2. The Lord's fast teaches us a godly sorrow for sin.

All of Israel's pre-exilic special days were feast days with one exception. These festival days were 10 in number. The exception was the Day of Atonement which, after affliction of soul, ended with a joyous feast because sins were forgiven. Post-exilic Israel had 12 new days, half of which were fasts. The fast was always a time of public mourning for sin.

1) **Isaiah 59:1, 2** Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: **2** But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. Man is a sinner and sin separates us from God and from each other. Modern thought that says "I'm O.K. you're O.K." is not O.K. There are no short cuts to holiness or to heaven. The cross shows us that. The fast is that godly sorrow for sin that enables us to appear before the Lord and have power in prayer and success in service. This is a victory that each of us must gain personally. No one can do it for us. The emerging moth has to do it all my himself though it is a difficult struggle for him. Once a man with a knife thought to help making it easier for the moth. The moth emerged, but it came out a blob with shriveled wings.

2) Daniel confessed his sins and those of his nation. **Daniel 9:5.**

Nehemiah confessed his sins and those of his father. **Nehemiah 9:2.**

Isaiah said he and the people were men of unclean lips **Isaiah 6:5** One day the Lord showed me just how deeply sinful I was. It shook me to the bottom of my soul. I'll never forget that day or how totally filthy I felt before God. In **Romans 12:1-2** we are told to present ourselves and especially our bodies a holy sacrifice unto the Lord. It was such a relief to get total forgiveness and total cleansing from the Lord.

3. The Lord's fast develops a deep hunger for the Lord

1) When the appetites of the flesh are under control, and when the attractions of this world have lost most of their charm; when the torment of sin is completely removed, there is nothing between my soul and my Savior. At that time I find full contentment with Christ. **As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. 2 My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God Psalms 42:1, 2 Psalms 63:1, 2 O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; 2 To see thy power and thy glory.**

2) **Psalm 16:11 In thy presence is fullness of joy** When in His presence there will be no more fasting. He will gather all believers unto Himself and there will be a great feast at the marriage supper of the Lamb. Everything in its time and place.

CONCLUSION: Today we need to spend more time making a life than a living. Today we need to behold Him feeding our souls with eternal values rather than the trinkets of this world. Today we need all the benefit's the Lord's fast would provide for us.

YES, BUT GOD 7-21-18

INTRODUCTION: Sometimes we see things one way BUT GOD sees them in another way. I'm glad God knows everything there is to know, and of this everything, He knows exactly what is best.

1. 1 Corinthians 15:38 But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him. When God first created Adam, He molded his body out of the dust of the earth. We are forced to conclude that there is no evolution here, no imperfections. Then when Adam died, his body reverted back again: dust to dust and ashes to ashes. Wonder of wonders, this is not the end of Adam. One day God is going to restore him from the dead and give him a new body. We, like Adam, will be raised from the dead with new bodies. We would like our new bodies to be pretty much like our original bodies, only without sickness, pain, or growing old. Perhaps we'd like to look a little more handsome.

So we speculate: **How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? I Corinthians 15:35** That is a good question. Now **1 Corinthians 15:58** informs us that the choice is not ours to make, God gives us a body as it pleases Him. I rather like that because God's choice will be so much better than my own. He will give us a body that will last for eternity without any service calls. This resurrection body will not be a 'plain Jane', but a Cadillac because it will be just like Christ's glorious body. **Philippians 3:2** And what will that be like? Our resurrected Jesus could do everything He could do before He died including eating. But now He could go through walls and travel without effort. He could appear or disappear at will. By this observation I think we will be quite comfortable in our new resurrection bodies. At my advanced age, I'm almost 90 now, I'm looking forward to my new and improved body.

2. Ephesians 2:3 - 6 We ... were by nature the children of wrath, But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us ... hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. If any of us got what we deserved, as children of wrath, it would be hell. I'm so glad for the 'buts' of the Bible. Instead of giving us what we deserved, God lovingly raises us up to sit with Him in heavenly places. Think of all the wonders this position in Heaven affords. Most amazing, we don't have to work for it or merit it, because it is a gift. It is a priceless gift because it will continue through eternity. We, who by nature were the children of wrath, are now the children of love. Praise God for this new exalted position He gives to us.

3. Philippians 2:27 For indeed he (Epaphroditus) was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. In this case, in mercy, God postponed death. The devil would have us think God does not care when we are sick and hurting, but He does. At such times He pours upon us abundant grace and mercy so that we are able to endure the suffering and pain and to come out victorious. This verse shows that God also cares how loved ones and friends feel. At the grave of Lazarus, Jesus wept with Mary and Martha and with all their sorrowing friends.

4. Galatians 6:14 But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world God forbids our pride in anything or anyone except it be in Christ. Therefore we should strive to succeed in dying to self and to the world. Life's highest attainment is not the successes of this life nor of this world. Our goal here is to please God and to fulfill the purpose for which He created us. Fortunately, we have His help doing this.

Proper pride in Christ enables us to boldly speak of Him to others. It is not a chore to speak of Christ to our friends. This comes naturally without planning or effort.

5. 1 Corinthians 3:6, 7 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. Paul worked hard. Others also work hard in God's vineyard. Paul gave credit totally to God for any fruit he realized. Because we are not able of ourselves to produce fruit, we are not required to have many huge successes. But we are required to be faithful. Therefore it matters not to God if a man pastors a large or a small church, or heads a huge, medium, or tiny Christian enterprise. What delights God is a person's devotion and faithfulness in service. By careful fulfillment of our responsibilities each of us can capture God's attention and approval. And I might add, to our joy, we'll experience a God-given abundance of fruitfulness.

6. 1 Corinthians 10:13 but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. What is one time we are required to be faithful? In the difficult time of testing. At such a time we will experience God's loving intervention. The test can be of many sorts and come upon us at any stage of life. Sickness, failing finances, lost loved ones, or acute accidents are just a sample of the problems common to man. God is able and willing to assist us in every difficulty.

How does God do this? First, He makes sure the particular test we experience is not more than we can handle with His help. He makes sure the end result will be to our benefit. He will provide us with friends, or information, and always, His abundant grace sufficient for us. At times He will do miracles in our behalf. We never have to go through trials alone. God is by our side. How we go through these trials can bring glory to God's name. His glory should be our constant prayer and goal. It is better to ask for strength to endure the trial victoriously rather than to ask that the trial disappear. How deeply we love God is evidenced by how much we are willing to suffer for Him.

If we fail in the midst of trial, we'll grow bitter and become most miserable. Sometimes life may bring us shadow and deep disappointment. Those who seek God's help always find Him to be faithful. He never fails. Because He loves us, He does not fail us. Therefore, we need not fear what may come our way nor be overcome by worry.

7. 1 Corinthians 1:27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty. All we have to do is take a look at President Trump's cabinet to see he tried to pick the brightest and best for advise and leadership. I'm glad he chose a number of committed Christians. God does not look for talented persons, but instead chooses people of spiritual character and Biblical insight. True, God sometimes chooses a wise Solomon, a diplomatic Daniel, a talented David, or an educated Paul. Most often He picks common people just like you and me. Why? So that He gets the glory instead of some individual. Don't you agree with me that if we do anything right, it is God doing it through us? That's why some pastors with very little training are burning down the woods, while the seminary-educated grind along with little to show for it. God knows best who to choose and who to use.

8. I Corinthians 2:9, 10 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. 10 But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

Only God's children can understand God's truth because we are part of His family. When we were growing up, Dad at times held a family council meeting. Things of special concern just to our family were discussed. We children were always instructed to never say anything about these meetings to anyone. And we never did. But there was a neighbor lady, a 'Mrs. Gossip', that tried to pump us kids. She wanted to know how much money Dad earned, for instance, or how Mother thought about

certain things. We knew how to hold our tongues. The Holy Spirit also teaches us about God's family matters. These things the unsaved are unable to understand, no matter how hard they try. They are spiritually discerned. Once they are saved, once they become a part of the family of God, these who were formerly spiritual outsiders will be able to learn God's secret truths easily enough.

9. Acts 7:9, 10 the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him, 10 And delivered him out of all his afflictions. Everyone, even his brothers, were against Joseph. For 13 years he suffered, mostly in bonds and behind bars. But God. There is no other explanation for why he never became bitter. There is no other explanation for the favor he found with Pharaoh of Egypt. God with him is the only explanation for his amazing successes.

10. Psalm 75:6, 7 For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. 7 But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another. There is no such thing as a self-made man. Many people enter our life and enable us to succeed. These enablers may be parents, teachers, friends, etc. Have we ever thought to thank them? Ultimately, it is God Who we serve, and it is God Who gives us the ability to do things. So we are not surprised that it is God Who gives out the promotions putting down one, and setting up another as He sees fit.

11. 1 Chronicles 28:3 But God said unto me, Thou shalt not build an house for my name, because thou hast been a man of war, and hast shed blood. God would not let King David build His temple. Sins have consequences: sins leave scars, affect family and friends, and often make our future difficult. Therefore we need to carefully watch how we live if we want to continue serving God. I've seen God put up warning signs and stop signs in my life when if I were to proceed would end my usefulness to Him. This prohibition that David received did not hinder him from doing what he could. King David provided supplies of costly building materials so his son, Solomon, could build a splendid temple. King David did not mind that Solomon received the credit for doing so. It was only important to King David that the temple be built to the glory of God.

12. 1 Samuel 23:14 Saul sought him every day, but God delivered him not into his hand. God protected David from Saul. God protects every one of His children today under the shelter of His wings. **Psalm 91.** A father's protection is fierce.

13. Jonah 4:7 But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered. God went to a bit of an extreme to teach Jonah a lesson. What was that lesson? God wanted Jonah to know that He will pity even cruel wicked people and that He desires their salvation. Jonah was told to witness to people for which he had no natural affinity. God loves all the people of the world, even if we don't. We are instructed to bring the Gospel to all the world and to do it now.

CONCLUSION There are many other instances in Scripture of God's intervention. Notice some of these.

***Jesus was dead in the tomb: **BUT GOD.**

***The 12 spies saw giants in the Promised Land: **BUT GOD.**

***Lazarus was buried in the grave: **BUT GOD.**

***The three Jewish lads were thrown into the fiery fiercely burning red hot furnace: **BUT GOD.**

***Balaam tried to curse Israel: **BUT GOD.**

In my own life there were three times I could have died. One of these times was in a West Virginia upstairs apartment when I woke up to the strong smell of gas. The flame in a not vented gas hot water heater had gone out during the night. It was located in the bath room joining my bedroom. BUT GOD had prompted me to shut that bathroom door before going to bed. I never did this before. My life was spared.

There were times I would have failed as a husband or as a pastor, BUT GOD. I'm so grateful for His intervention.

I'm sure you too have experienced God's loving hand in your life. I'm so glad He personally cares so much for each one of us. It makes our lives replete with gratitude.

YIELDED THINGS 9-20-14

INTRODUCTION: My first inclination was to title these reflections “Broken Things” but upon further thought, I’m giving it the title of: “Yielded Things”. May God give us marvelous insight as to how He works in and through our lives.

FIRST: Some Who Yielded

1. A small boy yielded his lunch to Christ. He was hungry, but willingly gave it for Christ to use as He wished. **Mark 6:38-42** It was exactly what Christ needed at that time to feed some five to seven thousand weary people. I suspect that boy did not loose out but was among the very first to eat of that miraculous meal. I have noticed that whatever we give to God without reservation, we do not lack for that thing throughout our lives. Some people think I have a lot of money. I don’t, but I have enough. Why? I think it is because on one occasion Loretta and I gave our life savings to the Lord to meet a special need where God’s reputation was at stake. Then the Lord took it upon Himself to look after our financial needs ever since.

2. A Samaritan woman yielded her water pot. John 4:28 That pot was expensive so why would she do such a thing as that? She was in a hurry to give out the good news about Jesus Christ and did not want to be hindered. As with this woman, to tell others about Jesus will cost us something., This newly saved woman didn’t mind the cost, and as a result, many of her townspeople were saved also. Think of her rewards in Heaven. How pleased the Lord must be with her and all like her who yield up things for the Gospel’s sake.

3. Mary yielded her most prized possession: an expensive box of ointment Mark 14:3 And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head. I believe it was the Holy Spirit that prompted her to do this loving act. When it comes to giving or yielding, it is most often the Holy Spirit that leads us.. And when we follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, we have a deep sense of joy. We may not fully realize why our Lord wants the deed done, but as in this case, it often is special in relation to the Lord. In this case it was a preparation for Christ’s death and burial. It filled the house with sweet odors and the heart with greater love.

4. Isaiah yielded for service Isaiah 6:8 Isaiah said: **Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.** **Acts 9:6** Paul said: **Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?** I was a senior in high school when the Lord called me to serve Him. I didn’t know what it would mean at the time, and was a bit surprised it turned out that I was to be pastor for some 40 years in five different churches. I was thinking the other day that I never was so sure of anything in my life as my call to His service.

SECOND: WHY WE WILLINGLY YIELD TO CHRIST

1. The Lord hath need Mark 11:3 And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him. One of the great joys we have in life is to serve the Lord where He has need. We are willing to forsake all that we have to be His disciple and to provide for that need. **Luke 14:33**

2. We love the Lord, and love loves to give. Matthew 22:37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. We merely follow God's example: **God so loved -- He gave.**

3. It is our duty to yield to Christ. Question: what is duty? A dictionary definition of duty says that duty is a debt that we owe. We owe everything to Christ who created us and who saves us from our sins and gives us eternal life.

CONCLUSION: Whatever we do in life, and most people are not pastors or missionaries, it is good to know we are in God's will while we are doing it. Why? Because there are times the going will be very very difficult. We keep on going only because we know we are in God's will. And in times like these it is good to have a wife as a prayer partner.

I am convinced that our future joys and rewards will be determined by how closely our lives approximate the purpose for which God created us. As we are instructed in **Hebrews 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.** Our future happiness will also be measured by how fully we yield to Him while here on earth.

Take a final warning from the life of Pharaoh. We all know that the Egyptian king resisted God, again -- and again -- and again. Each time he refused to yield, God punished him with greater severity. Loss of comfort, property, wealth and health, ended with loss of life. How much better for him and his people had he yielded to God from the start. The results of refusing God are long lasting. Egypt illustrates this because God said Egypt would never be a great nation again. **Ezekiel 29:14, 15 And I will bring again the captivity of Egypt, -- and they shall be there a base kingdom. 15 It shall be the basest of the kingdoms; neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations: for I will diminish them, that they shall no more rule over the nations.**

On the other hand, to yield to God is to enjoy His loving favor and blessings all our lives and on into eternity forever and forever. Let's live for Him.

THINK ABOUT THIS

Perhaps, my reader friend, you noticed I speak a lot about Heaven in these devotionals. And perhaps you are wondering what you have to do to go to Heaven. I'll tell you what I did. I simply believed God and took Him at His word. God said I was a sinner. I knew that. God said Jesus loves me and died on the cross for me taking the penalty for my sins. God further said that if I believe this, and ask Him for forgiveness, He will forgive me completely and forever. At that time He takes me under His wing as His child, and will take me home to Heaven when I die.

Think about it. What can be more wonderful than eternity in Heaven?