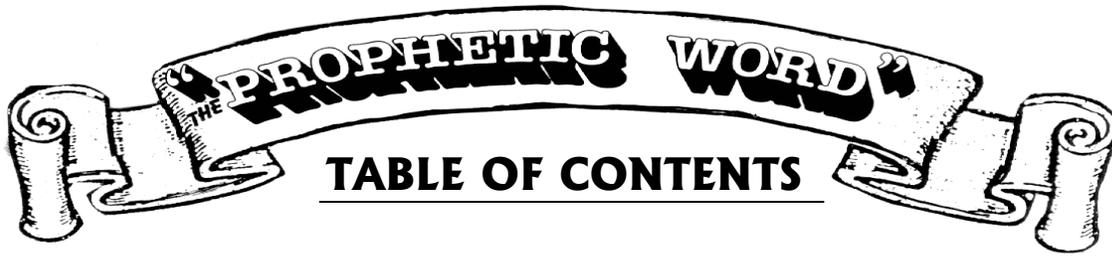


THE PROPHETIC WORD

**NEWSLETTER
ARCHIVE
2011**



Pastor Randy Shupe



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"THE PROPHETIC WORD"

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE "BE" ATTITUDES

It was Shakespeare that penned the moral challenge to man in stating, "To be, or not to be, that is the question."

However, long before this challenge to mankind was penned, God's Word set before His own people a set of moral values that have been dubbed with the popular title, "The Beatitudes."

The Latin word for "beatitude" simply means "blessed." Each beatitude begins with the words, "Blessed are..."

In the Beatitudes, God has set before the Christian believer eight areas of promised blessing, eight things that God fully intends for His people to "be" in this life. As a teacher, I have, with tongue-in-cheek, dubbed them with the more proper title of "The "Be" Attitudes."

The dire question really for each one of us, as followers of Christ, is the choice either "To be, or not to be."

"BLESSED ARE..."

1. THE POOR IN SPIRIT...
2. THOSE WHO MOURN...
3. THE MEEK...
4. THOSE WHO HUNGER AND THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS...
5. THE MERCIFUL...
6. THE PURE IN HEART...
7. THE PEACEMAKERS...
8. THE PERSECUTED...

Matt. 5:3-12

AH, TO BE!

OR NOT TO BE!

"ATTITUDE"

"A PERSISTENT DISPOSITION TO ACT EITHER POSITIVELY OR NEGATIVELY TOWARD A PERSON, GROUP, SITUATION OR VALUE... A MOOD THAT IMPACTS BEHAVIOR..." Webster

It is indeed a blessing to choose to be what God wants us to become, and conversely, we must realize that it can inevitably lead to a divine curse if we continually and willfully go through life choosing to not embrace what God intends for us to become in His sight.

THE KINGDOMS OF THIS WORLD



AND ITS ATTITUDES

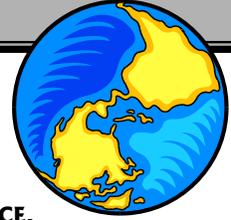
It is my understanding that the primary purpose God has for the Beatitudes in the life of a believer is to pinpoint those necessary things that will draw us ever-closer to the Kingdom of God in its present manifestation on earth, and thereby cause us to move further away from the demonic influence of the kingdoms of this world.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD



AND ITS BEATITUDES





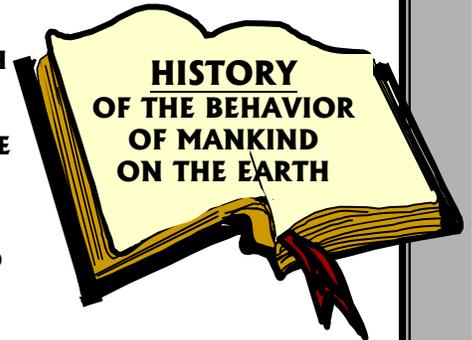
**"FOR THE LORD HAS SPOKEN THIS WORD:
THE EARTH MOURNS AND FADES AWAY,
THE WORLD LANGUISES AND FADES AWAY;
THE HAUGHTY PEOPLE OF THE EARTH LANGUISH.
THE EARTH IS ALSO DEFILED UNDER ITS INHABITANTS,
BECAUSE THEY HAVE TRANSGRESSED THE LAWS, CHANGED THE ORDINANCE,
BROKEN THE EVERLASTING COVENANT. THEREFORE THE CURSE HAS DEVOURER THE EARTH,
AND THOSE WHO DWELL IN IT ARE DESOLATE."** Isa 24:3-6

Simply put, "the world is a mess." Notice that Isaiah's prophecy places the responsibility of the earth's defilement squarely upon the shoulders of its inhabitants. We are dealing with a people problem. The ongoing sinful habits of the inhabitants are the source of the earth's present defilement and curse. It is most ironic that mankind believes the lie that man began in ignorance (as apes) and is ever moving to a place of supreme knowledge. (If true, how is it that the situation is getting worse rather than better?) However, the Bible states that man began as a created being with God-given supreme knowledge, but is presently moving to a prideful place based on willful ignorance:

"...ALTHOUGH THEY KNEW GOD, THEY DID NOT GLORIFY HIM AS GOD... BECAME FUTILE IN THEIR THOUGHTS, AND THEIR FOOLISH HEARTS WERE DARKENED. PROFESSING TO BE WISE, THEY BECAME FOOLS...THEREFORE GOD GAVE THEM UP TO UNCLEANNES, IN THE LUSTS OF THEIR HEARTS...EXCHANGED THE TRUTH OF GOD FOR THE LIE, AND WORSHIPPED AND SERVED THE CREATURE (Satan) RATHER THAN THE CREATOR (God) ... FOR THIS REASON GOD GAVE THEM UP TO VILE PASSIONS...AS THEY DID NOT LIKE TO RETAIN GOD IN THEIR KNOWLEDGE, GOD GAVE THEM OVER TO A DEBASED MIND...BEING FILLED WITH ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS, SEXUAL IMMORALITY, WICKEDNESS, COVETOUSNESS, MALICIOUSNESS, FULL OF ENVY, MURDER, STRIFE, DECEIT, EVIL-MINDEDNESS; THEY WERE WHISPERERS, BACKBITERS, HATERS OF GOD, VIOLENT, PROUD, BOASTERS, INVENTORS OF EVIL THINGS, DISOBEDIENT TO PARENTS, UNDISCERNING, UNTRUSTWORTHY, UNLOVING, UNFORGIVING, UNMERCIFUL..."

Excerpts Rom. 1:21-32

The above quotation is a vivid summary of what man has been, and continues to be, in his existence on earth. Now let us add a prophetic picture of what man will be like in what the Bible prophetically calls "the last days" prior to the return of Christ to the earth. Here is the Amplified version:



"BUT UNDERSTAND THIS, THAT IN THE LAST DAYS WILL COME (SET IN) PERILOUS TIMES OF GREAT STRESS AND TROUBLE [HARD TO DEAL WITH AND HARD TO BEAR]. FOR PEOPLE WILL BE LOVERS OF SELF AND [UTTERLY] SELF-CENTERED, LOVERS OF MONEY AND AROUSED BY AN INORDINATE [GREEDY] DESIRE FOR WEALTH, PROUD AND ARROGANT AND CONTEMPTUOUS BOASTERS. THEY WILL BE ABUSIVE (BLASPHEMOUS, SCOFFING), DISOBEDIENT TO PARENTS, UNGRATEFUL, UNHOLY AND PROFANE. [THEY WILL BE] WITHOUT NATURAL [HUMAN] AFFECTION (CALLOUS AND INHUMAN), RELENTLESS (ADMITTING OF NO TRUCE OR APPEASEMENT); [THEY WILL BE] SLANDERERS (FALSE ACCUSERS, TROUBLEMAKERS), INTEMPERATE AND LOOSE IN MORALS AND CONDUCT, UNCONTROLLED AND FIERCE, HATERS OF GOOD.

**[THEY WILL BE] TREACHEROUS [BETRAYERS], RASH, [AND] INFLATED WITH SELF-CONCEIT. [THEY WILL BE] LOVERS OF SENSUAL PLEASURES AND VAIN AMUSEMENTS MORE THAN AND RATHER THAN LOVERS OF GOD. FOR [ALTHOUGH] THEY HOLD A FORM OF PIETY (TRUE RELIGION), THEY DENY AND REJECT AND ARE STRANGERS TO THE POWER OF IT [THEIR CONDUCT BELIES THE GENUINENESS OF THEIR PROFESSION].
AVOID [ALL] SUCH PEOPLE [TURN AWAY FROM THEM]."**

2 Tim 3:1-5 Amplified Bible

**WHAT THE WORLD
HAS BEEN LIKE
FROM THE BEGINNING...**

"...ALTHOUGH THEY KNEW GOD, THEY DID NOT GLORIFY HIM AS GOD... BECAME FUTILE IN THEIR THOUGHTS, AND THEIR FOOLISH HEARTS WERE DARKENED. PROFESSING TO BE WISE, THEY BECAME FOOLS...THEREFORE GOD GAVE THEM UP TO UNCLEANNESS, IN THE LUSTS OF THEIR HEARTS... EXCHANGED THE TRUTH OF GOD FOR THE LIE, AND WORSHIPPED AND SERVED THE CREATURE (Satan) RATHER THAN THE CREATOR (God) ... FOR THIS REASON GOD GAVE THEM UP TO VILE PASSIONS...AS THEY DID NOT LIKE TO RETAIN GOD IN THEIR KNOWLEDGE, GOD GAVE THEM OVER TO A DEBASED MIND...BEING FILLED WITH ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS, SEXUAL IMMORALITY, WICKEDNESS, COVETOUSNESS, MALICIOUSNESS, FULL OF ENVY, MURDER, STRIFE, DECEIT, EVIL-MINDEDNESS; THEY WERE WHISPERERS, BACKBITERS, HATERS OF GOD, VIOLENT, PROUD, BOASTERS, INVENTORS OF EVIL THINGS, DISOBEDIENT TO PARENTS, UNDISCERNING, UNTRUSTWORTHY, UNLOVING, UNFORGIVING, UNMERCIFUL..."

Excerpts Rom. 1:21-32

**"...SHOW YOURSELVES TO BE
BLAMELESS AND GUILTESS,
INNOCENT AND
UNCONTAMINATED,
CHILDREN OF GOD
WITHOUT BLEMISH
(FAULTLESS, UNREBUKABLE)**



**IN THE MIDST OF
A CROOKED AND WICKED
GENERATION [SPIRITUALLY
PERVERTED AND PERVERSE]
AMONG WHOM YOU ARE SEEN
AS BRIGHT LIGHTS IN THE
WORLD, HOLDING OUT [TO IT]
AND OFFERING [TO ALL MEN]
THE WORD OF LIFE..."**

Phil. 2:15-16 Amplified

**WHAT THE WORLD
WILL BE LIKE
UNTIL THE END...**

**"BUT UNDERSTAND THIS, THAT IN THE LAST DAYS
WILL COME (SET IN) PERILOUS TIMES OF GREAT
STRESS AND TROUBLE [HARD TO DEAL WITH AND
HARD TO BEAR]. FOR PEOPLE WILL BE LOVERS OF
SELF AND [UTTERLY] SELF-CENTERED, LOVERS OF
MONEY AND AROUSED BY AN INORDINATE
[GREEDY] DESIRE FOR WEALTH, PROUD AND
ARROGANT AND CONTEMPTUOUS BOASTERS. THEY
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PLEASURES AND VAIN AMUSEMENTS MORE THAN
AND RATHER THAN LOVERS OF GOD. FOR
[ALTHOUGH] THEY HOLD A FORM OF PIETY (TRUE
RELIGION), THEY DENY AND REJECT AND ARE
STRANGERS TO THE POWER OF IT [THEIR CONDUCT
BELIES THE GENUINENESS OF THEIR PROFESSION].**

**AVOID [ALL] SUCH PEOPLE
[TURN AWAY FROM THEM]."**

2 Tim 3:1-5 Amplified Bible

The above passage from Philippians depicts what God expects from His people who live "in the midst of a crooked and wicked generation." Notice there is no mandate given to **FIX** what is wrong with the world, but rather to live in the midst of it as children of God who will remain "blameless, guileless, innocent, uncontaminated, without blemish and faultless." The apostle James defined "pure and undefiled religion before the Father" as consisting of "...keeping oneself unspotted from the world" (1 Pet. 1:27b). For the most part, American Christianity has missed the point: it has not been called to **REMOVE THE SPOTS FROM THE WORLD**, but rather to remain **UNSPOTTED FROM THE WORLD**. It is folly and futility to pursue the ideology of changing what the prophetic word tells us will mark the last days prior to the coming of Jesus Christ:

**"BUT WICKED MEN AND IMPOSTORS WILL GO ON FROM BAD TO WORSE, DECEIVING AND LEADING
ASTRAY OTHERS AND BEING DECEIVED AND LED ASTRAY THEMSELVES."** 2 Tim. 3:13 Amplified

Electing a Christian President is not going to change that prophesied outcome. Neither is legislating the moral laws of God on the immoral populace by means of controlling the vote of the Supreme Court Justices. The Christian Body must stop focusing upon how depraved mankind is, and start focusing upon what we are supposed to be like as we live in the midst of a crooked and perverse society. Jesus Himself reminded His disciples that the last days would be like the days of Noah and the days of Lot (Matt. 24:37, Luke 17:28-29). Noah and Lot's days were summed up as:

**"THEN THE LORD SAW THAT THE WICKEDNESS OF MAN WAS GREAT ON THE EARTH,
AND THAT EVERY INTENT OF THE THOUGHTS OF HIS HEART WAS ONLY EVIL CONTINUALLY."** Gen.6:5

**"AS SODOM AND GOMORRAH...HAVING GIVEN THEMSELVES OVER TO SEXUAL IMMORALITY
AND GONE AFTER STRANGE FLESH, ARE SET FORTH AS AN EXAMPLE..."** Jude 7

**"...THE MEN OF THE CITY, THE MEN OF SODOM, BOTH OLD AND YOUNG, ALL THE PEOPLE FROM EVERY
QUARTER, SURROUNDED THE HOUSE. AND THEY CALLED TO LOT AND SAID TO HIM, "WHERE ARE THE
MEN WHO CAME TO YOU TONIGHT? BRING THEM OUT TO US THAT WE MAY KNOW THEM CARNALLY."**

Gen 19:4-5

Yet, in the midst of a clearly prophesied repeat performance, much of American Christianity is bent on legislating a ban against gay marriage. Will such an endeavor be any more successful than the 30-plus year campaign (Roe vs. Wade) to legislate laws against abortion? Have we forgotten how miserable the legislated Prohibition era was in the 20's? Why is it that we go down the same pathways and yet expect different results? The answer is a painful reality- the ignoring of the prophetic word which was given as a light to Christians that is to shine into a dark place! (2 Pet. 1:19)



Dr. Francis Schaeffer 1912-1984

"Dr. Schaeffer promoted a more fundamentalist Protestant faith and a presuppositional approach to Christian apologetics, which he believed would answer the questions of the age. A number of scholars credit Schaeffer's ideas with helping spark the rise of the Christian Right in the United States." Wikipedia Encyclopedia

Dr. Francis Schaeffer became famous for posing the needful question to Christians, "**How Should We Then Live?**"

Although I respect Dr. Schaeffer as a dedicated believer with great zeal, he did not give the proper answer to Christians in his day, but rather became the father figure of the present politically-active thrust to Christian behavior that zeroes in on openly confronting the wicked behavior of men. There is a better answer to the posed question, a biblically-based one. We should live our lives as Christians in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation according to the pattern Jesus set forth in the Beatitudes rather than attempting to alter the moral behavior of the unregenerate through some form of domination. We were not put here as followers of Christ to **DOMINATE** the world, but rather to **INFLUENCE** those who live in it. Which of these two words best describes biblical Christianity?

DOMINATE

"TO HOLD SUPREMACY OR MASTERY OVER BY MEANS OF SUPERIOR POWER, STRENGTH AND AUTHORITY"

Webster

INFLUENCE

"TO AFFECT CONDUCT BY MEANS OF PERSUASION, REASONING... TO DISPLAY A BETTER SOLUTION..."

Webster

The Antichrist will come to **DOMINATE** mankind (Rev. 13).
Jesus Christ came to **INFLUENCE** man to choose a new way of life:

"FOR GOD DID NOT SEND HIS SON INTO THE WORLD TO CONDEMN THE WORLD, BUT THAT THE WORLD THROUGH HIM MIGHT BE SAVED. HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM IS NOT CONDEMNED; BUT HE WHO DOES NOT BELIEVE IS CONDEMNED ALREADY, BECAUSE HE HAS NOT BELIEVED IN THE NAME OF THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD.. LIGHT HAS COME INTO THE WORLD, AND MEN LOVED DARKNESS RATHER THAN LIGHT, BECAUSE THEIR DEEDS WERE EVIL. FOR EVERYONE PRACTICING EVIL HATES THE LIGHT AND DOES NOT COME TO THE LIGHT, LEST HIS DEEDS SHOULD BE EXPOSED..." John 3:17-21

Unlike the thrust of modern-day Christianity, Jesus does not launch into condemning the world for its practice of abortion, pornography, homosexuality and such like, but rather reveals what will ultimately send wicked men to their doom in utter darkness for all eternity: which is making the choice not to believe on the name of Jesus Christ. Note, Jesus is well aware that much of mankind "loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Prophecy, as we have seen, clearly reveals that much of mankind will continue to love darkness and practice evil. In fact, it is such ongoing conduct that will make the last days to be very perilous and very stressful as the prophecy we examined in 2 Tim 3:1-5 states. Note what Jesus states above, "Light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light." When Jesus was in the world, He said of Himself:

"I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

HE WHO FOLLOWS ME SHALL NOT WALK IN DARKNESS, BUT HAVE THE LIGHT OF LIFE." John 8:12

When He came as the Light of the World, He set before mankind a choice between light and darkness. He sought to **INFLUENCE** men to choose light over darkness. You will not find Jesus teaching His disciples to go out and **DOMINATE** mankind who practices evil. When Jesus commissioned His disciples He passed the torch to them with these words:

"YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD... LET YOUR LIGHT SO SHINE BEFORE MEN, THAT THEY MAY SEE YOUR GOOD WORKS AND GLORIFY YOUR FATHER IN HEAVEN." Matt.5:14-16

The "good works" the Father wants men to see is not the myriad of religious causes aimed at stopping those who love darkness and practice a lifestyle of abortion, pornography, gay marriage, homosexuality, etc. What "good works" Jesus is referring to is revealed in the **CONTEXT** of the commission to believers that they are now "the Light of the world." It is the giving of the eight principles that are to govern Christian behavior in the Kingdom of God in its present manifestation on earth:

THE BEATITUDES

Matt.5:1-12

As "the Light of the world" we are to "let our light **SO** shine before men." How so? By manifesting a God-given character and lifestyle that represents children who once were darkness themselves, but now have become "the Light of the world":

"...CHILDREN OF GOD WITHOUT FAULT IN THE MIDST OF A CROOKED AND PERVERSE GENERATION, AMONG WHOM YOU SHINE AS LIGHTS IN THE WORLD, HOLDING FAST THE WORD OF LIFE..." Phil. 2:15-16

"...YOU WERE ONCE DARKNESS, BUT NOW YOU ARE LIGHT IN THE LORD. WALK AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT." Eph. 5:8

"...THAT YOU SHOULD NO LONGER WALK AS THE REST OF THE GENTILES WALK, IN THE FUTILITY OF THEIR MIND, HAVING THEIR UNDERSTANDING DARKENED, BEING ALIENATED FROM THE LIFE OF GOD, BECAUSE OF THE IGNORANCE THAT IS IN THEM..." Eph. 4:17-18

AH, TO BE!



1. THE POOR IN SPIRIT...
2. THOSE WHO MOURN...
3. THE MEEK...
4. THOSE WHO HUNGER AND THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS...
5. THE MERCIFUL...
6. THE PURE IN HEART...
7. THE PEACEMAKERS...
8. THE PERSECUTED...

OR NOT TO BE!



Matt. 5:3-12

THE BEATITUDES

"YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD... LET YOUR LIGHT SO SHINE BEFORE MEN, THAT THEY MAY SEE YOUR GOOD WORKS, AND GLORIFY YOUR FATHER IN HEAVEN." Matt. 5:14-16

Since it remains a choice for the unregenerated to continue to remain in darkness and reject the light, it is equally true for believers in Christ to choose to reject letting their light so shine before men. It is a possible choice that every believer, that has become the Light of the world, to choose to keep their light hidden under a basket (Matt. 5:15), and to be salt that has lost its flavor and become "good for nothing" (Matt. 5:13). Do you want to be good for nothing in God's sight, or demonstrate such a changed life that some of those in darkness (like we once were) may "see your good works and glorify your Father in Heaven"? It won't be done by participation in anti-abortion or anti-gay protest rallies held by incensed Christians who are angry with the works of the children of darkness. Those who want to remain darkness will do so-prophecy says so! Again, at the risk of being redundant, we Christians are not here to **DOMINATE** over the works of darkness, but rather to **INFLUENCE** as many as will listen. Such was the life of Jesus as the Light of the world, and so must it be for each and every believer who has become in God's sight, the Light of the world. Let us show light (our good works) to darkness, not just demand that they stop their evil works of darkness! As long as they remain darkness, that is all they can do! Jesus said:

"YOU ARE OF YOUR FATHER THE DEVIL, AND THE DESIRES OF YOUR FATHER YOU WANT TO DO." John 8:44

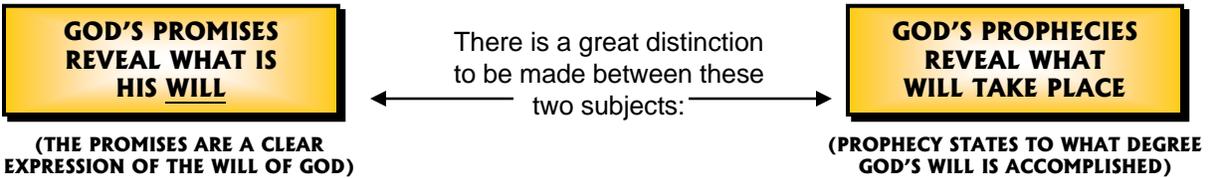
Keep in mind that at one time our father was also the devil! In order to forsake the works of darkness we had to exchange "father Devil" for "Father God." Dear saints of God, how can we, in utter hypocrisy, expect unregenerated darkness to obey our commands to stop killing their children? They are getting their desires from their father. What kind of "father" is the devil?

"...HE WAS A MURDERER FROM THE BEGINNING, AND DOES NOT STAND IN THE TRUTH, BECAUSE THERE IS NO TRUTH IN HIM..." John 8:44-45

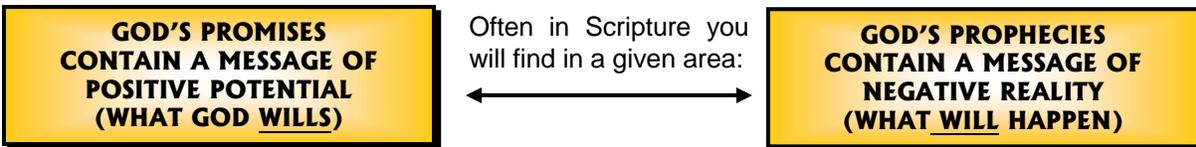
Legislated acts of prohibition didn't work in the 20's and won't work in the year 2011! That is a philosophy based on **DOMINANCE**. We cannot suppress evil by the forceful use of power and authority. It will go underground as the bootleg-liquor industry of the 20's readily demonstrated. Outlaw abortion, it will go underground. Outlaw pornography, it will go underground. Outlaw gay marriage or homosexuality and it too will go underground because we are not dealing with the real issue which is darkness in the hearts of men. We must change the heart, not the law! The **INFLUENCE** to do so lies at the feet of the children of Light to "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in Heaven." We can **INFLUENCE** some, but prophecy states most will continue to "...love darkness rather than light", and therefore darkness will prevail as prophecy states:

"BUT WICKED MEN AND IMPOSTORS WILL GO ON FROM BAD TO WORSE, DECEIVING AND LEADING ASTRAY OTHERS AND BEING DECEIVED AND LED ASTRAY THEMSELVES." 2 Tim. 3:13 Amp.

Please don't surmise that I am being very pessimistic about mankind, but rather that I am just paying strict attention to things God's Word says are prophetic statements of destiny. There is a big difference between the expressed WILL of God, and what God prophetically says WILL take place.



If you sit under strict Calvinistic teaching, you would have a problem with the above contrast, for the hard-core Calvinist believes whatever happens on earth to mankind (good or evil) is the result of the irresistible sovereign will of God rather than the free-will choice of man. However, this is not supported when a comparison is made between what is stated in the promises of God's Word which are expressions of His will in a given area, and what prophecy projects as the outcome that is going to actually take place.



For instance, God states as a clear expression of His will:

**"...GOD OUR SAVIOR, WHO DESIRES ALL MEN TO BE SAVED
AND TO COME TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH." 1 Tim. 2:3-4**

**"THE LORD...IS NOT WILLING THAT ANY SHOULD PERISH...
BUT THAT ALL SHOULD COME TO REPENTANCE." 2 Pet. 3:9**

**"THEREFORE I WILL JUDGE YOU...EVERYONE ACCORDING TO HIS WAYS...REPENT, AND TURN
FROM ALL THE TRANSGRESSIONS, SO THAT INIQUITY WILL NOT BE YOUR RUIN. CAST AWAY FROM
YOU ALL TRANSGRESSIONS WHICH YOU HAVE COMMITTED, AND GET YOURSELVES A NEW HEART
AND A NEW SPIRIT, FOR WHY SHOULD YOU DIE...? FOR I HAVE NO PLEASURE IN THE DEATH OF
ONE WHO DIES,' SAYS THE LORD GOD. 'THEREFORE TURN AND LIVE!' " Ezk. 18:30-32**

In spite of God's expressed WILL, (His desire) for mankind, His prophetic Word tells us what actually WILL happen in the last days of mankind on the earth:

**"BY THESE THREE PLAGUES A THIRD OF MANKIND WAS KILLED...BUT THE REST OF MANKIND,
WHO WERE NOT KILLED BY THESE PLAGUES, DID NOT REPENT OF THE WORKS OF THEIR HANDS, THAT
THEY SHOULD NOT WORSHIP DEMONS, AND IDOLS OF GOLD, SILVER, BRASS, STONE, AND WOOD,
WHICH CAN NEITHER SEE NOR HEAR NOR WALK; AND THEY DID NOT REPENT OF THEIR MURDERS OR
THEIR SORCERIES OR THEIR SEXUAL IMMORALITY OR THEIR THEFTS." Rev. 9:18-21**

For the most part, mankind's love for the works of darkness will be the cause of their eternal demise. It is important to see that God places that choice sovereignly upon their shoulders, not His! The perverse Calvinistic doctrine of the "absolute sovereignty of God" is not in harmony with what is portrayed in God's Word. It is the sovereign WILL of man that is being expressed above-they will not choose to repent!

The apostle Jude, as well as Paul, give us what is to be the believer's delicate position toward interacting with those in darkness:

**"KEEP YOURSELVES IN THE LOVE OF GOD,
LOOKING FOR THE MERCY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST UNTO ETERNAL LIFE.
AND ON SOME HAVE COMPASSION, MAKING A DISTINCTION; BUT OTHERS SAVE WITH FEAR,
PULLING THEM OUT OF THE FIRE, HATING EVEN THE GARMENT DEFILED BY THE FLESH." Jude 21-23**

**"WALK IN WISDOM TOWARD THOSE WHO ARE OUTSIDE, REDEEMING THE TIME.
LET YOUR SPEECH ALWAYS BE WITH GRACE, SEASONED WITH SALT,
THAT YOU MAY KNOW HOW YOU OUGHT TO ANSWER EACH ONE." Col. 4:5-6**

As a pastor/teacher, I am most grieved to see and hear how it is that much of Christianity interacts with those in darkness. The Religious Right hammers them with all kinds of self-righteous, judgmental statements of hypocrisy. Recently I saw an anti-Religious Right bumper sticker that stated:

**"I WISH THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT WOULD
FOCUS UPON THEIR OWN FAMILY!"**

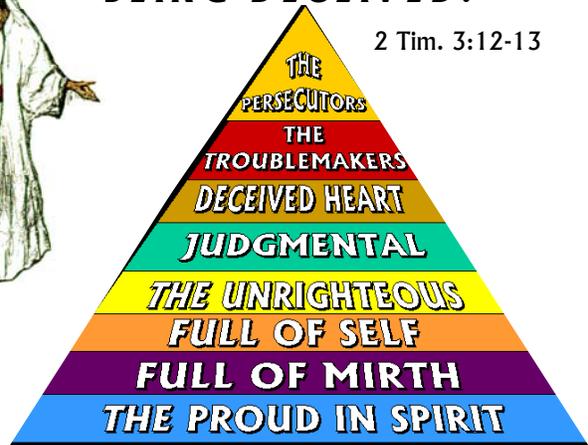
Not a bad idea at all! If all born-again Christians were truly demonstrating the lifestyle depicted in the Beatitudes, perhaps we would not have this kind of cynical response from so many of the children of darkness toward Christianity. God didn't instruct us in His Word to tell them what to do, but rather to show them a better way.

Having established that the prophetic word reveals what WILL happen in the future, let us look at a prophetic overview that speaks of what lies ahead for both the children of Light as well as the children of darkness:

**"YES, AND ALL WHO
DESIRE TO LIVE GODLY
IN CHRIST JESUS
WILL SUFFER
PERSECUTION.**

**BUT EVIL MEN AND
IMPOSTERS WILL GROW
WORSE AND WORSE,
DECEIVING AND
BEING DECEIVED."**

2 Tim. 3:12-13



THE KINGDOM OF GOD

KINGDOMS OF THIS WORLD

**THE BEATITUDES
OF THE CHILDREN OF LIGHT**

**THE ATTITUDES
OF THE CHILDREN OF DARKNESS**

The goal of the bulk of our newsletters for this coming year will be to bring a thorough understanding to what is depicted above. We will seek to examine in-depth each of the Beatitudes found in Matthew Chapter Five, as well as establishing the opposite "attitude" that governs this present world that is under the sway of the Wicked One (1 Jn. 5:19). Unfortunately, as we shall see, there are many passages of Scripture that reveal that there are professing children of Light that still operate in the same manner as do the children of darkness. This is true because they have chosen to remain in a state of conformity to this world rather than becoming transformed by the renewing of their mind with the Beatitude principles that were given to govern the Kingdom of God.

(to be continued, Lord willing...)

"THE PROPHETIC WORD"

PART TWO OF THE BEATITUDES:

**"THUS SAYS
THE LORD:
'HEAVEN IS MY THRONE,
AND EARTH IS
MY FOOTSTOOL...
ALL THESE THINGS
MY HAND HAS MADE...'
SAYS THE LORD.
'BUT ON
THIS ONE
I WILL LOOK:
ON HIM
WHO IS POOR
AND OF A
CONTRITE SPIRIT,
AND WHO TREMBLES
AT MY WORD.' "**
Isa. 66:2



**"FOR THUS SAYS
THE HIGH AND
LOFTY ONE WHO
INHABITS ETERNITY,
WHOSE NAME IS HOLY:
'I DWELL IN
THE HIGH AND HOLY
PLACE,
WITH HIM WHO HAS A
CONTRITE AND HUMBLE
SPIRIT,
TO REVIVE THE SPIRIT OF
THE HUMBLE,
AND TO REVIVE
THE HEART OF
THE CONTRITE ONES. ' "**
Isa. 57:15

What is stated as the first of the Beatitudes by Jesus in the New Testament has been previously recorded in an amplified manner by the mouth of Isaiah the prophet. This is an important truth to bring forth, for the contents of the Beatitudes are not restricted, as new revelation given, only to New Testament believers as many teach. All the principles of the Beatitudes of Matthew Chapter Five can be found in the Old Testament as well. Not only are they in the Old Testament, but these often contain amplification and clarification not found in the more simple statements of the Beatitudes in Matthew!

These are unchanging principles that God has always required of His people. These are the "attitudes" that God desires to see permeating the lives of His people on earth! These are the life-changing principles that are to govern the Kingdom of God in its present manifestation on earth. These are the God-given principles that make the believer a true witness, a stark distinction from that which marks the people of the world! It is the Beatitudes that enable our light to shine into darkness (Matt. 5:16)

A comparison between the brief statement of the first New Testament Beatitude above and the amplified statements of the Old Testament leave no doubt as to why Jesus says the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to the poor in spirit. The "High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity", and who states "Heaven is My throne", singles out the poor in spirit on earth as those with whom He chooses to dwell! If God's people cultivate a godly attitude of being poor in spirit on earth, they can be assured "theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven" for it is with such that the King of Heaven chooses to dwell!

Today we hear much being said about revival. However, the pre-requisite to revival is the Beatitude of becoming "poor in spirit":

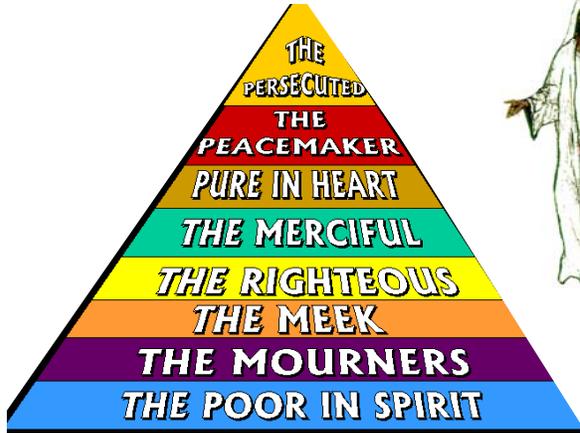
**"I DWELL IN THE HIGH AND HOLY PLACE,
WITH HIM WHO HAS A CONTRITE AND HUMBLE SPIRIT,
TO REVIVE THE SPIRIT OF THE HUMBLE, AND TO REVIVE THE HEART OF THE CONTRITE ONES "**

Isa. 57:15

“NOW YOU SHALL SAY TO THIS PEOPLE, ‘THUS SAYS THE LORD: BEHOLD, I SET BEFORE YOU

THE WAY OF LIFE AND THE WAY OF DEATH”

Jer. 21:8



THE KINGDOM OF GOD



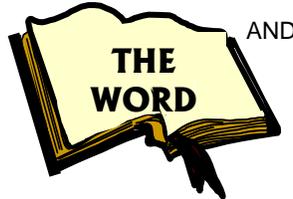
KINGDOMS OF THIS WORLD

THE BEATITUDES
MARKING THE CHILDREN OF LIGHT

THE ATTITUDES
MARKING THE CHILDREN OF DARKNESS

To properly understand the importance of the contents of the Beatitudes, we must establish that for every Beatitude stated in Matthew Chapter Five, there is a contrasting and opposing “attitude” that marks the people of the world. For instance, if one does not cultivate God’s call to be “poor in spirit”, then the alternative pathway is to remain among the “proud in spirit” of this world. We are to be “transformed” not “conformed” to this present world (Rom. 12:2) . There are two sources at work that produce such contrasting viewpoints:

The Word teaches its followers to be “POOR IN SPIRIT”...



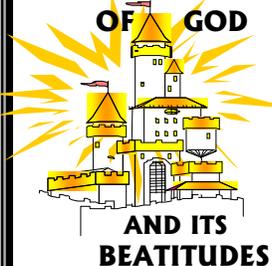
AND



The World teaches its followers to be “PROUD IN SPIRIT”...

It is easy to see why this is so: The origin of the Word comes from God (Jn.1:1-2) , and this present world is under the power and influence of the Wicked One (1 Jn. 5:19)

THE KINGDOM OF GOD



I believe the primary purpose God has for the Beatitudes is to pinpoint those necessary things that will draw us ever-closer to the Kingdom of God in its present manifestation on earth, and thereby cause us to move further away from the demonic influence of the kingdoms of this world. There is no greater form of witness we can bear than rejecting conformity to this present world.

THE KINGDOMS OF THIS WORLD



AND ITS ATTITUDES



“THE STEPS OF A GOOD MAN ARE ORDERED BY THE LORD, AND HE DELIGHTS IN HIS WAY.” Ps 37:23

BLESSED ARE
"THE POOR IN SPIRIT"

Let us begin to examine the first Beatitude of the godly call to be "poor in spirit" by making a comparison of definition to its worldly counterpart, "proud in spirit."

POOR IN SPIRIT:

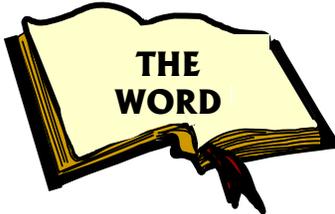
"A NEEDY, DEPENDENT, SUBSERVIENT, ATTITUDE"

Webster

PROUD IN SPIRIT:

"A SELF-SUFFICIENT, SELF RELIANT, INDEPENDENT, ATTITUDE"

Webster



**THE
WORD**

In the world, if you need something done, look for people who are "self-sufficient, self-reliant and independent.."

However, the Word reveals God is looking for people who are "needy, dependent, and subservient" to something higher than themselves.

Why?

Because of the danger of pride.



**THE
WORLD**

"IT'S ALL ABOUT GOD IN ME!"

"I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST WHO STRENGTHENS ME" Phil. 4:13

"IT'S ALL ABOUT ME!"

"TRUST ME, I KNOW IT ALL, AND I CAN DO IT ALL!"

Both of the above philosophies can produce successful people. However, one will be humble about it while the other one is quite proud, taking full credit for his own achievements. Pride is the original sin introduced by Lucifer:

"YOU WERE THE SEAL OF PERFECTION, FULL OF WISDOM AND PERFECT IN BEAUTY... YOUR HEART WAS LIFTED UP ("PROUD") BECAUSE OF YOUR BEAUTY; YOU CORRUPTED YOUR WISDOM FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR SPLENDOR...THEREFORE I BROUGHT FIRE FROM YOUR MIDST; IT DEVoured YOU...YOU HAVE BECOME A HORROR..." Ezk. 28:12-19 excerpts

The moral to this story is that the archangel Lucifer, a beautiful created being, fell from the high and exalted position of being at God's right hand in authority, to becoming a horror and the arch-enemy of God. What was his downfall? It was that he became "proud in spirit." As a result, the whole world over which he has spread his influence also bears the same mark of being "proud in spirit." The antidote to this ruinous, poisonous sin of being "proud in spirit" is to rather choose to be "poor in spirit."

Christian, do not think you can go down this same pathway of being "proud in spirit" and end up with different results. There is a principle of warning that comes into play when God's people embrace the worldly temptation to be "proud in spirit":

**"GOD RESISTS THE PROUD,
BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."**

Jas. 4:6

Read the context in which this warning from God appears. It is not a warning written to unbelievers, but to Christians who choose to be "friends with the world" (Jas. 4:4). This kind of world-loving believer "makes himself an enemy of God" (Jas. 4:4). It is a serious enough matter when Satan resists the believer, but it becomes an impossible situation if God becomes the source of that resistance!

How serious is God about resisting “the proud in spirit” among His people? Consider a sampling of passages in which God warns His people about the danger of pride. Note also the severity of the consequences God promises to bring upon those who refuse to heed His warning about being prideful:

**“I WILL BREAK THE PRIDE OF YOUR POWER;
I WILL MAKE YOUR HEAVENS LIKE IRON AND
YOUR EARTH LIKE BRONZE. AND YOUR
STRENGTH SHALL BE SPENT IN VAIN;
FOR YOUR LAND SHALL NOT YIELD ITS
PRODUCE, NOR SHALL THE TREES OF THE
LAND YIELD THEIR FRUIT.”**

Lev 26:19-20

**“WOE TO THE CROWN OF PRIDE,
TO THE DRUNKARDS OF EPHRAIM, (ISRAEL)
WHOSE GLORIOUS BEAUTY IS A FADING FLOWER...
BEHOLD, THE LORD HAS A MIGHTY AND STRONG
ONE, LIKE A TEMPEST OF HAIL AND A
DESTROYING STORM, LIKE A FLOOD OF MIGHTY
WATERS OVERFLOWING, WHO WILL BRING THEM
DOWN TO THE EARTH WITH HIS HAND.**

**THE CROWN OF PRIDE,
THE DRUNKARDS OF EPHRAIM, (ISRAEL)
WILL BE TRAMPLED UNDERFOOT...”**

Isa 28:1-3

“THUS SAYS THE LORD:

‘IN THIS MANNER

**I WILL RUIN THE PRIDE OF JUDAH
AND THE GREAT PRIDE OF JERUSALEM.
THIS EVIL PEOPLE, WHO REFUSE TO HEAR MY
WORDS, WHO FOLLOW THE DICTATES OF
THEIR HEARTS...HEAR AND GIVE EAR:**

DO NOT BE PROUD,

**FOR THE LORD HAS SPOKEN. GIVE GLORY TO
THE LORD YOUR GOD BEFORE HE CAUSES
DARKNESS, AND BEFORE YOUR FEET STUMBLE
ON THE DARK MOUNTAINS, AND WHILE YOU
ARE LOOKING FOR LIGHT, HE TURNS IT INTO
THE SHADOW OF DEATH AND MAKES IT DENSE
DARKNESS. BUT IF YOU WILL NOT HEAR IT,**

**MY SOUL WILL WEEP IN SECRET
FOR YOUR PRIDE; MY EYES WILL WEEP
BITTERLY AND RUN DOWN WITH TEARS,
BECAUSE THE LORD’S FLOCK
HAS BEEN TAKEN CAPTIVE.”**

Jer 13:8-17

**“PRIDE GOES BEFORE DESTRUCTION, AND A HAUGHTY SPIRIT BEFORE A FALL.
BETTER TO BE OF A HUMBLE SPIRIT WITH THE LOWLY...”**

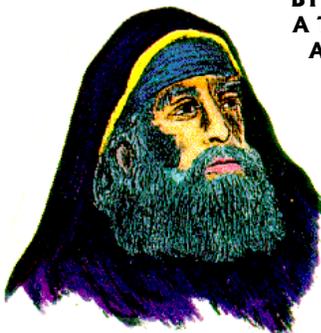
Prov. 16:18-19

God is determined not to allow pride to dominate His people. It brought destruction and a fall to Lucifer, and it will bring the same result to God’s people. The stated consequences of such pride in passages like those listed above, give understanding as to why destruction always follows pride in God’s people, and why a fall will be the end result of His people who cultivate a haughty spirit of pride. It is God Himself who is at work against the “proud in spirit.” Hear it clearly:

**“GOD RESISTS THE PROUD,
BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.”**

Jas. 4:6

Who is immune to pride? No one. Consider the amazing fact as to why God gave even the apostle Paul a “thorn in his flesh”:



**“AND LEST I SHOULD BE EXALTED ABOVE MEASURE
BY THE ABUNDANCE OF THE REVELATIONS,
A THORN IN THE FLESH WAS GIVEN TO ME,
A MESSENGER OF SATAN TO BUFFET ME,
LEST I BE EXALTED ABOVE MEASURE.”**

**CONCERNING THIS THING
I PLEADED WITH THE LORD THREE TIMES
THAT IT MIGHT DEPART FROM ME.
AND HE SAID TO ME,
“MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR YOU,
FOR MY STRENGTH IS MADE PERFECT IN WEAKNESS.”
THEREFORE MOST GLADLY I WILL RATHER BOAST IN MY INFIRMITIES,
THAT THE POWER OF CHRIST MAY REST UPON ME.
THEREFORE I TAKE PLEASURE IN INFIRMITIES, IN REPROACHES, IN NEEDS,
IN PERSECUTIONS, IN DISTRESSES, FOR CHRIST’S SAKE.
FOR WHEN I AM WEAK, THEN I AM STRONG.”**

2 Cor 12:7-10

**"GOD RESISTS THE PROUD,
BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."**

Jas. 4:6

**"BURDENED BEYOND MEASURE,
ABOVE STRENGTH..."**

**THAT WE SHOULD NOT TRUST
IN OURSELVES BUT IN GOD..."**

2 Cor. 1:8-9

**"...MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT
FOR YOU..."**

From

the opening thoughts in 2 Corinthians Chapter One, to his closing thoughts in Chapter Twelve, the theme of Paul is God's enabling grace working through a humble spirit that empowered him to endure all of his hardships and trials.

Humility ("poor in spirit") is the key to receiving God's enabling grace. God will always resist the proud, but give His grace only to the humble. For that reason, it is

**FOR MY STRENGTH IS MADE PERFECT
IN WEAKNESS...**

**THAT THE POWER OF CHRIST
MAY REST UPON ME...**

2 Cor. 12:9-10

**FOR WHEN I AM WEAK,
THEN I AM STRONG."**

"...BETTER TO BE OF A HUMBLE SPIRIT WITH THE LOWLY..."

Prov. 16:18-19

**"... DO NOT SET YOUR MIND ON HIGH THINGS, BUT ASSOCIATE WITH THE HUMBLE.
DO NOT BE WISE IN YOUR OWN OPINION."**

Rom 12:16

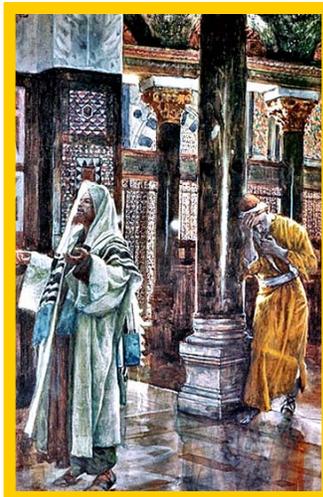
**"FOR I SAY, THROUGH THE GRACE GIVEN TO ME, TO EVERYONE WHO IS AMONG YOU,
NOT TO THINK OF HIMSELF MORE HIGHLY THAN HE OUGHT TO THINK..."**

Rom 12:3

There is no greater comparison between the "poor in spirit" and the "proud in spirit" than in a parable Jesus taught in Luke 18 in which He gave a stern warning to the prideful high-mindedness and self-righteousness the Pharisees bestowed upon themselves at the expense of others. The "proud in spirit" think HIGHLY of themselves and LOWLY of others! Beware: pride breeds the sin of being highly judgmental.

**"ALSO HE SPOKE THIS PARABLE TO SOME
WHO TRUSTED IN THEMSELVES ...
AND DESPISED OTHERS:**

**"TWO MEN WENT UP TO
THE TEMPLE TO PRAY,
ONE A PHARISEE AND THE
OTHER A TAX COLLECTOR.
THE PHARISEE STOOD AND
PRAYED THUS WITH HIMSELF,
'GOD,
I THANK YOU
THAT I AM
NOT LIKE OTHER MEN --
EXTORTIONERS, UNJUST,
ADULTERERS,
OR EVEN AS THIS
TAX COLLECTOR.
I FAST TWICE A WEEK;
I GIVE TITHES OF ALL
THAT I POSSESS.'**



**AND THE TAX COLLECTOR,
STANDING AFAR OFF,
WOULD NOT SO MUCH AS
RAISE HIS EYES TO HEAVEN,
BUT BEAT HIS BREST,
SAYING,
'GOD,
BE MERCIFUL TO ME
A SINNER!'
I TELL YOU,
THIS MAN WENT DOWN TO
HIS HOUSE JUSTIFIED
RATHER THAN THE OTHER;
FOR EVERYONE WHO EXALTS
HIMSELF WILL BE HUMBLD,
AND HE WHO HUMBLD
HIMSELF WILL BE EXALTD."**

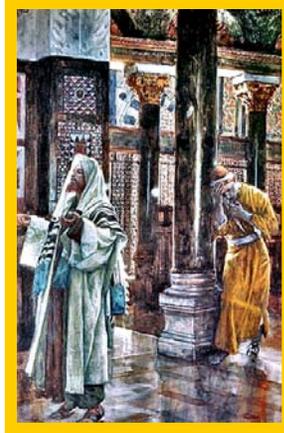
Luke 18:9-14

"PRIDE GOES BEFORE DESTRUCTION, AND A HAUGHTY SPIRIT BEFORE A FALL. BETTER TO BE OF A HUMBLE SPIRIT WITH THE LOWLY..."

Prov. 16:18-19

The moral to the story of this parable in Luke 18 is this contrasting principle:

**"EVERYONE
WHO
EXALTS
HIMSELF
WILL BE
ABASED,**



**AND HE
WHO
HUMBLES
HIMSELF
WILL BE
EXALTED"**

Luke 18:14

We are not given the outcome of this parable as to how God "abased" one and "exalted" the other. It is sufficient that God states it "will" be the outcome. One thing noteworthy of the proud Pharisee's exaltation of himself is the comment:

**"THE PHARISEE STOOD AND PRAYED THUS WITH HIMSELF,
'GOD, I THANK YOU THAT I AM NOT LIKE OTHER MEN...
EVEN AS THIS TAX COLLECTOR. "** Luke 18:11-12

He is praying "with himself", or perhaps we could surmise "to himself." Because of his high-minded opinion of himself in God's eyes, combined with his critical judgment of the despised tax collector, his prayer goes no further than himself. God does not listen to such self-exalting prayers offered with a haughty, self-righteous spirit that is judgmental of others deemed lesser than himself. Consider a few passages in which God clearly states what He thinks about those who have a haughty attitude:

**"THESE SIX THINGS
THE LORD HATES,
YES, SEVEN ARE
AN ABOMINATION TO HIM:
A PROUD LOOK,
A LYING TONGUE,HANDS THAT**

**SHED INNOCENT BLOOD,
A HEART THAT DEVISES
WICKED PLANS,
FEET THAT ARE SWIFT IN RUNNING
TO EVIL, A FALSE WITNESS
WHO SPEAKS LIES,
AND ONE WHO SOWS DISCORD
AMONG BRETHREN."**
Prov 6:16-19

**"THE LORD
WILL
DESTROY
THE HOUSE OF
THE PROUD..."**
Prov 15:25

**"A PROUD AND
HAUGHTY MAN
-- "SCOFFER" IS
HIS NAME;
HE ACTS WITH
ARROGANT
PRIDE."**
Prov 21:24

**"THE ONE WHO HAS
A HAUGHTY LOOK
AND A PROUD
HEART,
HIM I WILL
NOT ENDURE."**
Ps 101:5

**"YOU REBUKE
THE PROUD --
THE CURSED,
WHO STRAY FROM
YOUR
COMMANDMENTS."**
Ps 119:21

**"EVERYONE
PROUD IN HEART
IS AN ABOMINATION
TO THE LORD;
THOUGH THEY JOIN
FORCES, NONE WILL
GO UNPUNISHED."**
Prov 16:5

**"FOR YOU WILL SAVE
THE HUMBLE
PEOPLE,
BUT WILL
BRING DOWN
HAUGHTY LOOKS."**
Ps 18:27

It is important to realize that God is addressing the proud among **HIS** people, not the unregenerate who, perhaps more understandably, also reek with pride. Unless we consider the multitude of the Scriptures in which God condemns the proud in spirit among His people, we will not see the depth of this terrible sin, or fully realize the God-ordained curses that are the consequences of yielding to it. For instance, note in Proverbs 16 above: "a proud look" is sandwiched in with a host of wicked deeds that God says He not only "hates" but also are an "abomination" to Him. Ponder this well, for the word translated as abomination is usually reserved for detestable idols (as in "the Abomination of Desolation" Matt. 24:15)

"TOWBAH" (ABOMINATION)

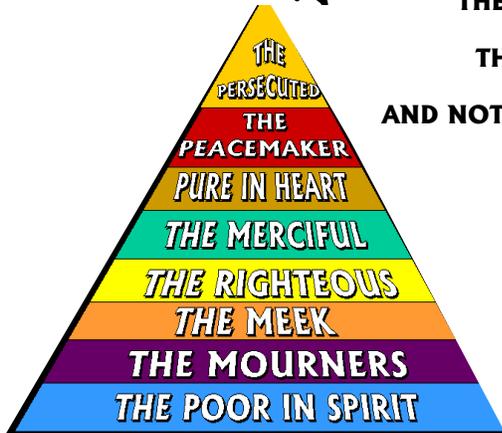
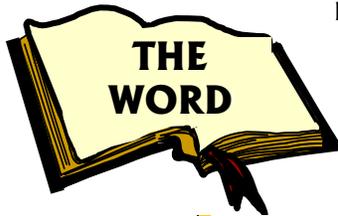
"TO LOATHE, UTTER ABHORRENCE, DISGUSTING, IDOLS-IDOLATRY"



**THE
POOR
IN
SPIRIT**

**A NEEDY,
DEPENDENT,
SUBSERVIENT,
ATTITUDE**

**“ O LORD,
I KNOW THE WAY
OF MAN
IS NOT IN HIMSELF;
IT IS NOT IN MAN WHO WALKS
TO DIRECT HIS OWN STEPS.
O LORD, CORRECT ME,
BUT WITH JUSTICE;
NOT IN YOUR ANGER,
LEST YOU BRING ME
TO NOTHING.”**
Jer 10:23-24



GODLY BEATITUDES...



**THE
PROUD
IN
SPIRIT**

**A SELF-SUFFICIENT,
SELF-RELIANT,
INDEPENDENT,
ATTITUDE**

**“ EVERY WAY
OF A MAN IS RIGHT
IN HIS OWN EYES,
BUT THE LORD
WEIGHS THE HEARTS...
A HAUGHTY LOOK,
A PROUD HEART,
AND THE PLOWING OF
THE WICKED
ARE SIN.”**
Prov 21:2,4



**“AS YOU HAVE THEREFORE
RECEIVED CHRIST JESUS THE LORD,
SO WALK IN HIM...
BEWARE
LEST ANYONE CHEAT YOU
THROUGH PHILOSOPHY
AND EMPTY DECEIT,
ACCORDING TO
THE TRADITION OF MEN,
ACCORDING TO
THE BASIC PRINCIPLES
OF THE WORLD,
AND NOT ACCORDING TO CHRIST...”**
Col. 2:6-8



WORLDLY ATTITUDES...

We have laid the foundation stone with the first Beatitude. Lord willing, in our next newsletter we will add the second building block that God has ordained to mark His people in such a way that they may:

**“LET YOU LIGHT SO SHINE BEFORE MEN,
THAT THEY MAY SEE YOUR GOOD WORKS AND GLORIFY YOUR FATHER IN HEAVEN.”**
Matt.5:16

"THE PROPHETIC WORD"

PART THREE OF THE BEATITUDES:



"...A MAN OF SORROWS AND ACQUAINTED WITH GRIEF..."

Isaiah 53:3



"...I HAVE GREAT SORROW AND CONTINUAL GRIEF IN MY HEART..."

Romans 9:2

Our focus is on the Beatitudes of Matthew Chapter Five. In our last newsletter we examined what it means to be "poor in spirit" as followers of Jesus Christ. This month's newsletter seeks to shed light on God's unique mark upon His people as "those who mourn." Being "poor in spirit" is not the result of suffering **PHYSICAL** poverty, and neither is the attribute of "those who mourn" describing the result of **PHYSICAL** mourning that takes place at the departure of those whom we love.

All of mankind experience this kind of "mourning." However, when considering mourning as a Beatitude, we are not speaking of the grief or sorrow at the departure of those whom we love, for this kind of mourning is experienced by both believer and unbeliever alike.



Rather, we want to examine a form of mourning ("grief and sorrow") of heart that is to uniquely govern the lives of God's people as they cultivate agony of heart for the wasted lifestyle of the living, both believer and unbeliever alike.

Look carefully at the two examples above of the mourning ("sorrow and grief") that marked the lives of Jesus and the apostle Paul. This is the ongoing attitude of "mourning" God is looking for among His people that will make the believer very different than the unregenerated people of the world.



A.W. Tozer

“FAR TOO MANY OF GOD’S PEOPLE ARE MORE COMFORTABLE WITH CHANGING THE IMAGE OF GOD RATHER THAN BEING CHANGED INTO THE IMAGE OF GOD.”

Today’s popular worldly buzz word is “total makeover.” Tozer is right: it is easier to change the image of God into something we are presently comfortable with than to be changed into the uncomfortable image God presents of Himself in the Word.

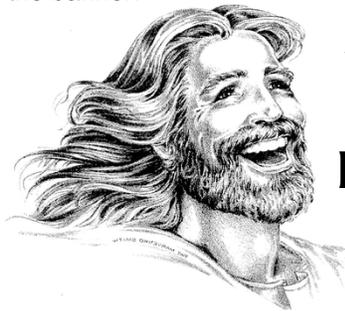
The testimony recorded of Jesus’ life on earth is that He was

“...A MAN OF SORROWS AND ACQUAINTED WITH GRIEF...”

Isaiah 53:3



If you want to see a popular “total makeover” of Jesus, then search the internet under the banner:



“THE LAUGHING JESUS”

You can buy Bibles, gift cards, banners, wall plaques and even dinner plates that change Jesus into this preferred image as He “laughs His way through life” right up to the agony of the cross.

Let us not forget the immense popularity of “THE LAUGHING REVIVAL” movement that emerged in 1994 and that swept through Christendom like a consuming fire. So widely was this unbiblical concept endorsed, I felt compelled to write a concerned newsletter in 1995 entitled,

Neither the present “LAUGHING JESUS” or the previous “LAUGHING REVIVAL” has any merit at all in Scripture. Both are counterfeits presented under the banner of “revelational truth”, but are in essence, subtle substitutes designed by Satan to keep God’s people away from what is really life-changing truth capable of sanctifying them (Jn. 17:17) and setting them free (Jn. 8:32).

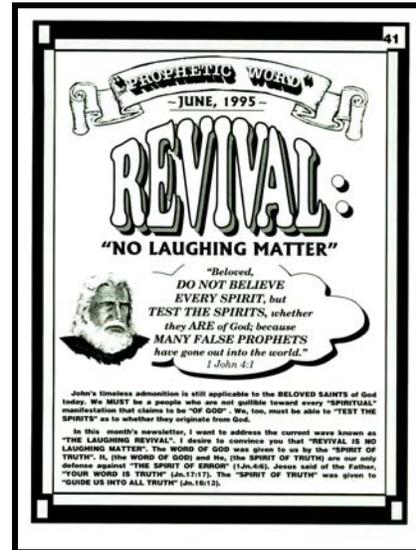
It is not that God is against laughter, for King Solomon states clearly:



“TO EVERYTHING THERE IS A SEASON, A TIME FOR EVERY PURPOSE UNDER HEAVEN... A TIME TO WEEP AND A TIME TO LAUGH; A TIME TO MOURN, AND A TIME TO DANCE...”

Ecc. 3:1-4 excerpts

So, it is ok at times to laugh. However, laughter is not singled out as a distinguishing mark of the character or life of Jesus. Neither is it a mark of revival. In fact, Solomon gives us a proper perspective of laughter when compared to the more weighty subject of mourning:



Here is the whole counsel of Solomon pertaining to the relative value of laughter compared to mourning:



**"I SAID OF LAUGHTER,
'IT IS MADNESS' ; AND OF MIRTH, 'WHAT DOES IT ACCOMPLISH?'"**

Ecc. 2:2

**"SORROW IS BETTER THAN LAUGHING.
FOR BY A SAD COUNTENANCE THE HEART IS MADE BETTER."**

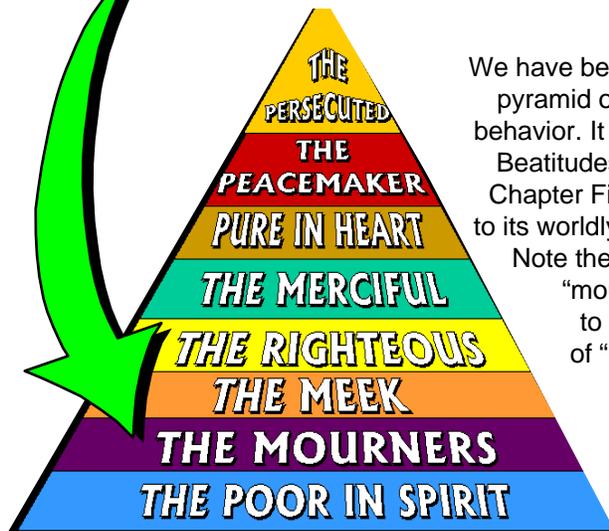
Ecc. 7:3

"IT IS BETTER TO GO TO THE HOUSE OF MOURNING...

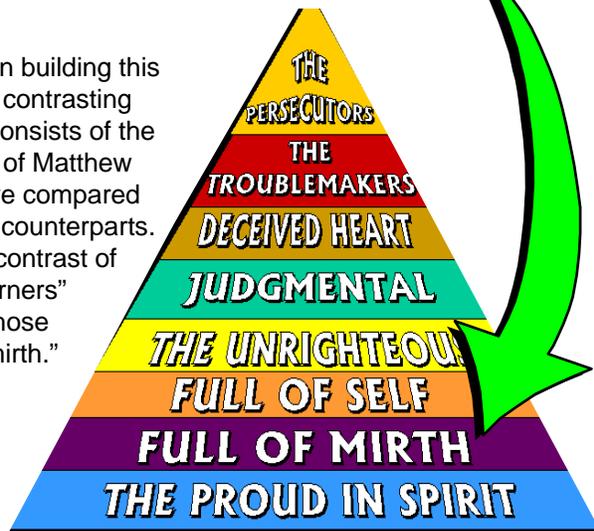
**THE HEART OF THE WISE
IS IN THE HOUSE OF
MOURNING,**

**BUT THE HEART OF FOOLS
IS IN THE HOUSE OF
MIRTH."**

Ecc. 7:2,4



We have been building this pyramid of contrasting behavior. It consists of the Beatitudes of Matthew Chapter Five compared to its worldly counterparts. Note the contrast of "mourners" to those of "mirth."



We expect such contrasting behavior from those in the world, for they are the by-product of the influence of the Wicked One (1 Jn.5:19), Satan the "god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4). However, God expects something quite different of His people in serious times. Consider this **PAST** account of the behavior of God's people as a day of dire judgment and disaster looms over them:

**"AND IN THAT DAY THE LORD GOD OF HOSTS CALLED FOR
WEeping AND FOR MOURNING,
FOR BALDNESS AND FOR GIRDING WITH SACKCLOTH.
BUT INSTEAD (HE FOUND), JOY AND GLADNESS,
SLAYING OXEN AND KILLING SHEEP, EATING MEAT AND DRINKING WINE:
"LET US EAT AND DRINK, FOR TOMORROW WE DIE!"**

Isa 22:12-13

In light of the **PAST** disapproving behavior of God's people stated above, we might more properly understand this seemingly innocent array of behavior in this **FUTURE** scenario in which, once again, much of mankind will be placing undo emphasis upon the wrong priorities just prior to another onslaught of God's judgment:

**"AND AS IT WAS IN THE DAYS OF NOAH, SO IT WILL BE ALSO IN THE DAYS OF THE SON OF MAN: THEY ATE, THEY DRANK, THEY MARRIED WIVES, THEY WERE GIVEN IN MARRIAGE, UNTIL THE DAY THAT NOAH ENTERED THE ARK, AND THE FLOOD CAME AND DESTROYED THEM ALL. LIKEWISE AS IT WAS ALSO IN THE DAYS OF LOT: THEY ATE, THEY DRANK, THEY BOUGHT, THEY SOLD, THEY PLANTED, THEY BUILT; BUT ON THE DAY THAT LOT WENT OUT OF SODOM IT RAINED FIRE AND BRIMSTONE FROM HEAVEN AND DESTROYED THEM ALL.
EVEN SO WILL IT BE IN THE DAY WHEN THE SON OF MAN IS REVEALED."** Luke 17:26-30

THE MOURNERS ②
THE POOR IN SPIRIT ①



...THE HEART OF THE WISE
IS IN THE HOUSE OF
MOURNING,

② **FULL OF MIRTH**
① **THE PROUD IN SPIRIT**



**BUT THE HEART OF FOOLS
IS IN THE HOUSE OF
MIRTH.”**

I have always had a propensity for being humorous. However, I will never forget sitting in the funeral of an old pastor and hearing story after story being told of what a prankster he was. We all laughed, for the stories were funny. However, the more I listened, the more quickened I became that I would not want to be remembered as a pastor for having been so very funny. That day I was greatly convicted that mirth, although enjoyable, has no eternal value, only a temporal one.

Far better, I determined that day, for this teacher of God’s Word to be remembered for something of eternal value such as this beautiful testimony found in the Scriptures:

“MY COVENANT WAS WITH HIM, ONE OF LIFE AND PEACE, AND I GAVE THEM TO HIM THAT HE MIGHT FEAR ME; SO HE FEARED ME AND WAS REVERENT BEFORE MY NAME. THE LAW OF TRUTH WAS IN HIS MOUTH, AND INJUSTICE WAS NOT FOUND ON HIS LIPS. HE WALKED WITH ME IN PEACE AND EQUITY, AND TURNED MANY AWAY FROM INIQUITY. FOR THE LIPS OF A PRIEST SHOULD KEEP KNOWLEDGE, AND PEOPLE SHOULD SEEK THE LAW FROM HIS MOUTH; FOR HE IS THE MESSENGER OF THE LORD OF HOSTS.”

Mal.2:5-7

We may not all be teachers, and rightly so, as we have greater accountability before God (Jm. 3:1). However, we all have accountability according to what God has given us as realms of responsibility (2 Cor. 5:9-10, Matt. 25:14-15). There is a passage in the Old Testament that I have always viewed as quite prophetic for the sober times in which we live. It speaks of the spiritual awareness possessed by the sons of Issachar:

“...THE SONS OF ISSACHAR WHO HAD UNDERSTANDING OF THE TIMES, TO KNOW WHAT ISRAEL OUGHT TO DO...” 1 Chron 12:32

The apostle Paul gives the church similar counsel as to how we should walk in the midst of evil days:

“SEE THEN THAT YOU WALK CIRCUMSPECTLY, NOT AS FOOLS BUT AS WISE, REDEEMING THE TIME, BECAUSE THE DAYS ARE EVIL. THEREFORE DO NOT BE UNWISE, BUT UNDERSTAND WHAT THE WILL OF THE LORD IS.”

Eph 5:15-18



It is the Beatitudes that express clearly what is God’s will for His people who live in the midst of very difficult and stressful times (2 Tim.3:1-5)



BLESSED ARE
"THEY WHO MOURN"

Let us now examine the three distinct areas that govern the Beatitude of **MOURNING**. They all have to do with the issue of sin:

MOURN OVER PERSONAL

① **SIN**

"...MY SORROW IS CONTINUALLY BEFORE ME, FOR I WILL DECLARE MY INIQUITY; I WILL BE IN ANGUISH OVER MY SIN..."
 Psm. 38:17-18



② **MOURN OVER LOST**

SINNERS

"...I HAVE GREAT SORROW AND CONTINUED GRIEF IN MY HEART.... MY HEART'S DESIRE AND PRAYER TO GOD FOR ISRAEL IS THAT THEY MAY BE SAVED."
 Rom. 9:2,10:1

MOURN OVER SINNING ③

SAINTS

"...AND I SHALL MOURN FOR MANY WHO HAVE SINNED BEFORE AND HAVE NOT REPENTED OF THE UNCLEANNES, FORNICATION, AND LICENTIOUSNESS WHICH THEY HAVE PRACTICED."
 2 Cor. 12:21

① **WE ARE TO MOURN OVER PERSONAL SIN**

"...MY SORROW IS CONTINUALLY BEFORE ME, FOR I WILL DECLARE MY INIQUITY; I WILL BE IN ANGUISH OVER MY SIN..."
 Psm. 38:17-18

It all begins with our own sin. If we don't mourn over committing personal sin as a Christian, we will not, and cannot, properly mourn over lost sinners or sinning saints. We can in hypocrisy be a judge, but not one who mourns. Jesus would tell us, "Physician, heal yourself" (Luke 4:23). However, there is an entrenched doctrinal error in wide circulation that prevents Christians from looking at existing sin in their own lives:

"WHEN GOD FORGIVES, HE DRAWS THE MARK THROUGH EVERY SIN WHICH THE BELIEVER EVER HAS COMMITTED, OR EVER WILL COMMIT. . . THEY ARE ALL GONE AT ONCE! NOT A SINGLE SIN SHALL EVER STAND AGAINST YOU, NOR SHALL YOU EVER BE PUNISHED FOR A SINGLE SIN..."

Charles Spurgeon-spiritual father of modern-day Calvinistic grace teachers



Charles Spurgeon

Put your trust in such flowing dissertations if you want to, but you won't be in harmony with the teachings of the apostle Paul about dealing with sin in the life of a believer. Listen to the advice of A.W. Tozer:



A.W.Tozer

"DEAR CHRISTIAN, EITHER YOU DEAL THOROUGHLY WITH THE ISSUE OF SIN IN YOUR LIFE, OR SIN WILL DEAL THOROUGHLY WITH YOU." A.W. Tozer

You will never mourn over sin if you think you don't have any in God's sight. Measure Spurgeon's doctrine against Paul's statements pertaining to sin in the life of a believer:

"WHAT SHALL I SAY THEN? SHALL WE CONTINUE IN SIN THAT GRACE MAY ABOUND? CERTAINLY NOT! HOW SHALL WE WHO DIED TO SIN LIVE ANY LONGER IN IT...LIKewise YOU ALSO, RECKON YOURSELVES TO BE DEAD INDEED UNTO SIN, BUT ALIVE TO GOD IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD. THEREFORE DO NOT LET SIN REIGN IN YOUR MORTAL BODY THAT YOU SHOULD OBEY IT IN ITS LUSTS. AND DO NOT PRESENT YOUR MEMBERS AS INSTRUMENTS OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS TO SIN...FOR SIN SHALL NOT HAVE DOMINION OVER YOU, FOR YOU ARE NOT UNDER LAW BUT UNDER GRACE. WHAT THEN? SHALL WE SIN BECAUSE WE ARE NOT UNDER LAW BUT UNDER GRACE? CERTAINLY NOT!"
 Rom. 6:1-15 excerpts

**"AWAKE TO RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND DO NOT SIN;
FOR SOME DO NOT HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. I SPEAK THIS TO YOUR SHAME."** 1 Cor. 15:34

**"...THE SOLID FOUNDATION OF GOD STANDS, HAVING THIS SEAL: 'THE LORD KNOWS THOSE WHO ARE HIS,'
AND, 'LET EVERYONE WHO NAMES THE NAME OF CHRIST DEPART FROM INIQUITY.'" 2 Tim.2:14-19**

Notice that Paul does not present the solid foundation of God as based upon the likes of Spurgeon's logic of "pre-forgiveness of sins" or his modern-day disciples who teach not only pre-forgiveness of sins, but also the added concepts of "Once Saved Always Saved," and "Unconditional Eternal Security." The message to believers is clear: "...I write to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation (mercy seat) for our sins..." (1 Jn. 2:1-2). It is imperative that every believer read the chapter that leads up to John's exhortation to believers about not sinning. You won't find any "pre-forgiveness of sins" in that Chapter, but rather a conditional promise, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness..." (1 Jn. 1:9).

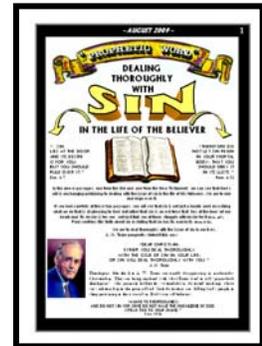
I highly recommend this previous newsletter (August 2009) in which I dealt in depth with this doctrinal error of "pre-forgiveness of sins." It is posted on my website (PastorRandyShupe.com) under newsletters 2009.

The message about dealing with sin is a continuation of the one found in Genesis:

**"SIN LIES AT THE DOOR
AND ITS DESIRE IS FOR YOU,
BUT YOU SHOULD RULE OVER IT."**
Gen.4:7

**"THEREFORE DO NOT LET SIN REIGN
IN YOUR MORTAL BODY,
THAT YOU SHOULD OBEY IT
IN ITS LUSTS."**
Rom.6:12

God's grace does not eliminate the danger of sin at work in our lives.



2

WE ARE TO MOURN OVER LOST

SINNERS

**"...I HAVE GREAT SORROW AND CONTINUED GRIEF IN MY HEART....
MY HEART'S DESIRE AND PRAYER TO GOD FOR ISRAEL IS THAT THEY MAY BE SAVED."**
Rom. 9:2,10:1

The second area in which the Beatitude of "mourning" is defined is this expression of grief and sorrow of heart of the apostle Paul over lost sinners among the Jewish people. So intense is his grief for his lost brethren in the flesh (the Jews) that he utters a sincere statement that few would be willing to make:

**"FOR I COULD WISH THAT I MYSELF WERE ACCURSED FROM CHRIST FOR MY BRETHREN,
MY KINSMEN ACCORDING TO THE FLESH, WHO ARE ISRAELITES..."** Rom. 9:3-4



Paul's plea of desperation reminds me of another great saint of God willing to sacrifice himself in exchange for the salvation of others:

**"THEN MOSES RETURNED TO THE LORD AND SAID, 'OH, THESE PEOPLE HAVE
COMMITTED A GREAT SIN, AND HAVE MADE FOR THEMSELVES A GOD OF GOLD!
YET NOW, IF YOU WILL FORGIVE THEIR SIN -- BUT IF NOT, I PRAY,
BLOT ME OUT OF YOUR BOOK WHICH YOU HAVE WRITTEN.'" Ex. 32:31**

On the other extreme end of the scale is the example of the care-less attitude of the prophet Jonah who was angry at God for not smiting all the sinners in Nineveh. God challenged His reluctant prophet with, "Is it right for you to be angry...? and he said, 'It is right for me to be angry even to death!'" (Jonah 4:9-11). Sadly, I believe much of Christianity here in America is also choosing to focus upon being angry at lost sinners. We lack the kind of compassion and mercy of the Lord who replied to Jonah these final closing words:

**"AND SHOULD I NOT PITY NINEVEH, THAT GREAT CITY,
IN WHICH ARE MORE THAN ONE-HUNDRED AND TWENTY THOUSAND PERSONS
WHO CANNOT DISCERN BETWEEN THEIR RIGHT HAND AND THEIR LEFT...?"** Jonah 4:11



The Puritan preacher, Jonathan Edwards became famous for his sermon entitled:

“SINNERS IN THE HANDS OF AN ANGRY GOD”

Today’s cause-driven brand of the gospel is producing Jonah-type Christians portraying an image of:

“SINNERS IN THE HANDS OF ANGRY CHRISTIANS”

Such misdirected, earth-bound zealots are more obsessed with fighting for capturing the SOIL of men than the SOULS of men.

Jesus saw this angry spirit toward the lost even in His own disciples:

"LORD, DO YOU WANT US TO COMMAND FIRE TO COME DOWN FROM HEAVEN AND CONSUME THEM, JUST AS ELIJAH DID?" BUT HE TURNED AND REBUKED THEM, AND SAID, "YOU DO NOT KNOW WHAT MANNER OF SPIRIT YOU ARE OF. FOR THE SON OF MAN DID NOT COME TO DESTROY MEN'S LIVES BUT TO SAVE THEM."

Luke 9:54-56

We are not here to “save America.” We are here to “save Americans.” Big difference!



3

WE ARE TO MOURN OVER SINNING SAINTS

“...AND I SHALL MOURN FOR MANY WHO HAVE SINNED BEFORE AND HAVE NOT REPENTED OF THE UNCLEANNESS, FORNICATION, AND LICENTIOUSNESS WHICH THEY HAVE PRACTICED.”

2 Cor. 12:21

Last, but not least, the apostle Paul shows yet another form of the Beatitude of mourning, this time he singles out the need to mourn over “sinning saints.” However, if we don’t believe we have any personal sin accountable before God, then we won’t believe our brethren have anything to account for either. If God has “pre-forgiven our sins”, then there is nothing to mourn over. However, such is not the case if we believe the teachings of the apostles. Listen to the arguments the apostle John and the apostle James present pertaining to brethren who are practicing sin:

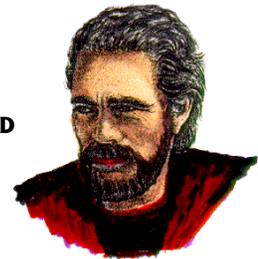


“IF ANYONE SEES HIS BROTHER SINNING A SIN WHICH DOES NOT LEAD TO DEATH, HE WILL ASK, AND HE WILL GIVE HIM LIFE FOR THOSE WHO COMMIT SIN NOT LEADING TO DEATH. THERE IS SIN LEADING TO DEATH. I DO NOT SAY THAT HE SHOULD PRAY ABOUT THAT. ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS IS SIN, AND THERE IS SIN NOT LEADING TO DEATH.”

1 John 5:16-17

“BRETHREN, IF ANYONE AMONG YOU WANDERS FROM THE TRUTH, AND SOMEONE TURNS HIM BACK, LET HIM KNOW THAT HE WHO TURNS A SINNER FROM THE ERROR OF HIS WAY WILL SAVE A SOUL FROM DEATH AND COVER A MULTITUDE OF SINS.”

James 5:19-20



It is quite evident from the above that the apostles held an opposing view of sin in the life of a believer than did Charles Spurgeon. According to James, sin can cost the believer. God wants fellow-believers to watch over one another to “turn a sinner from the error of his way” in order to “save a soul from death” and to “cover a multitude of sins.” They are not “pre-covered” as Spurgeon suggests. Paul is mourning over brethren in Corinth that have not repented of their sinful ways (2 Cor. 12:21). Read the context in which these verses are found. These are brethren, not unbelievers.

Lord willing, we will look at the third Beatitude of Matthew Chapter Five in our next newsletter.

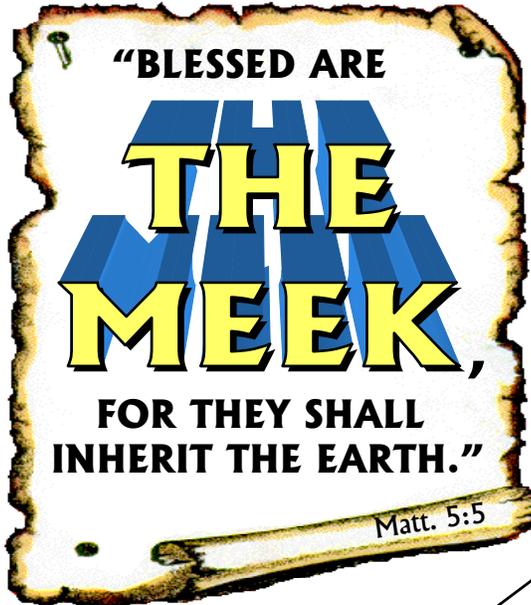
"THE PROPHETIC WORD"

PART FOUR OF THE BEATITUDES:



"NOW MOSES WAS VERY MEEK, MORE THAN ALL MEN WHO WERE ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH."

Num. 12:3



"TAKE MY YOKE UPON YOU AND LEARN FROM ME, FOR I AM MEEK AND LOWLY AT HEART..."

Matt. 11:29

"MEEK"

is the word God uses to describe His very best...

"MEEK"

is a word that the world describes as its worst...

The world has no clue as to the true meaning of meekness. It is convinced that meekness is a mark of weakness. The fact that Moses and Jesus are singled out as being marked with the character trait of meekness confirms that the world does not understand its meaning. If you read the accounts of the lives of Moses and Jesus, no one will be able to accuse them of having led "tame, timid, bland, weak, mild, docile, lacking ambition, spiritless and wimpish" lives on earth.

THE WORLD'S VIEW

"MEEKNESS IS WEAKNESS"

READERS DIGEST COMPLETE WORD FINDER:

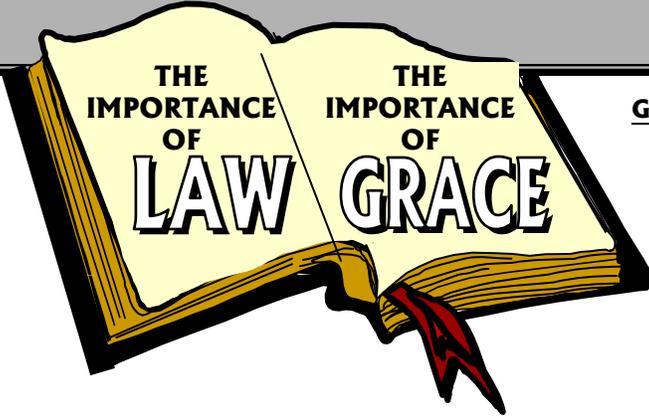
MEEK:

"TAME, TIMID, BLAND, WEAK, MILD, DOCILE, LACKING AMBITION, SPIRITLESS, WIMPISH"

The notable Greek scholar, William Barclay makes in his book, *"Flesh and Spirit"*, this comment about the word translated as "meekness":

"THIS IS THE MOST UNTRANSLATABLE OF WORDS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.... NO SINGLE WORD IS SUFFICIENT TO CONVEY ITS MEANING... WE MUST LOOK TO THE USE OF THE WORD IN SCRIPTURE TO SHED LIGHT ON ITS MEANING."

Holding to such an erroneous definition of meekness, the world scoffs at the proclamation of this Beatitude that it will be the meek that will inherit the earth. Meekness isn't weakness-it is God's hidden key to great strength.



“FOR THE LAW WAS GIVEN THROUGH MOSES,



“NOW MOSES WAS VERY MEEK, MORE THAN ALL MEN WHO WERE ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH.”

Num. 12:3

GRACE AND TRUTH CAME THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.” Jn. 1:17



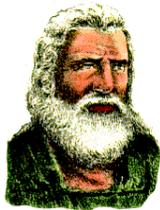
“TAKE MY YOKE UPON YOU AND LEARN FROM ME, FOR I AM MEEK AND LOWLY AT HEART...”

Matt. 11:29

The two most important concepts of Scripture were given unto the care of God’s two most faithful servants. Moses, who established the Old Covenant at the giving of the Law, and Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who cut and mediated the New Covenant that brought into play the importance of the Grace of God.

It is important to realize that these immense responsibilities were commissioned to the only two servants the Holy Spirit singled out in the Word of God as possessing the character trait of exceptional meekness.

We can put to rest the world’s erroneous interpretation of meekness by considering just two events in the lives of these two servants of God. Does this describe men under fire who behaved as “tame, timid, bland, weak, mild, docile, lacking ambition, spiritless and wimpish”?



“SO MOSES’ ANGER BECAME HOT... HE TOOK THE CALF WHICH THEY HAD MADE, BURNED IT WITH FIRE, ...GROUND IT TO POWDER... AND MADE THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL DRINK IT.”

Ex. 32:19-20

THE WORLD'S VIEW

“MEEKNESS IS WEAKNESS”

READERS DIGEST COMPLETE WORD FINDER:

MEEK:

“TAME, TIMID, BLAND, WEAK, MILD, DOCILE, LACKING AMBITION, SPIRITLESS, WIMPISH”



“WHEN HE HAD MADE A WHIP OF CORDS, HE DROVE THEM OUT OF THE TEMPLE... Poured out the changers’ money and overturned the tables... ‘TAKE THESE THINGS AWAY! DO NOT MAKE MY FATHER’S HOUSE A HOUSE OF MERCHANDISE!’ ”

John 2:15-16

“MEEKNESS IS NOT WEAKNESS”

“MEEKNESS IS CONTROLLED STRENGTH”

One aspect of the meaning of this word defined as “meekness” is that it means “controlled strength” as demonstrated by both Moses and Jesus. Were they angry? Yes! Was their righteous anger under God’s control? Yes! The Scripture says:

**“BE ANGRY, AND DO NOT SIN”
DO NOT LET THE SUN GO DOWN ON YOUR WRATH, NOR GIVE PLACE TO THE DEVIL.”** Eph. 4:26-27

"BE ANGRY, AND DO NOT SIN"

DO NOT LET THE SUN GO DOWN ON YOUR WRATH, NOR GIVE PLACE TO THE DEVIL." Eph. 4:26



There was a time near the end of the life of Moses that he was angry and did sin, giving great place to the devil. It cost Moses the mission of God in his life as well as life itself:

"THEN THE LORD SPOKE TO MOSES, SAYING ... 'SPEAK TO THE ROCK BEFORE THEIR EYES, AND IT WILL YIELD ITS WATER; THUS YOU SHALL BRING WATER FOR THEM OUT OF THE ROCK, AND GIVE DRINK TO THE CONGREGATION AND THEIR ANIMALS. SO MOSES TOOK THE ROD FROM BEFORE THE LORD AS HE COMMANDED HIM. AND MOSES AND AARON GATHERED THE ASSEMBLY TOGETHER BEFORE THE ROCK; AND HE SAID TO THEM, 'HEAR NOW, YOU REBELS! MUST WE BRING WATER FOR YOU OUT OF THIS ROCK?' THEN MOSES LIFTED HIS HAND AND STRUCK THE ROCK TWICE WITH HIS ROD... THEN THE LORD SPOKE TO MOSES AND AARON, 'BECAUSE YOU DID NOT BELIEVE ME, TO HALLOW ME IN THE EYES OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, THEREFORE YOU SHALL NOT BRING THIS ASSEMBLY INTO THE LAND WHICH I HAVE GIVEN THEM.'" Num 20:7-12

"...SO THAT IT WENT ILL WITH MOSES ON ACCOUNT OF THEM; BECAUSE THEY REBELLED AGAINST HIS SPIRIT, SO THAT HE SPOKE RASHLY WITH HIS LIPS." Ps 106:32-33

"YOU SHALL DIE...BECAUSE YOU TRESPASSED AGAINST ME AMONG THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL AT THE WATERS OF MERIBAH KADESH, IN THE WILDERNESS OF ZIN, BECAUSE YOU DID NOT HALLOW ME IN THE MIDST OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL." Deut 32:51-52

The lesson to be learned from Moses' single failure is that yielding to meekness is always a choice. This great man of God had a sinful flesh nature just as we also do. After forty years on what should have been an eleven day journey (Deut. 1:2-3), the people's constant rebellion finally pushed Moses over the brink and he gave in to an act of willful rebellion against God. He knew perfectly well that he was to speak to the rock, but he struck it twice in unbridled anger. Later, Paul would reveal that the Rock that followed them was Christ (1 Cor. 10:4). The needful point to make is that our sinful flesh nature is always capable of rising up in a moment if we give place to it. Meekness was Moses' strength for 40 years. When he chose to set it aside, he instantly sinned.



The key to maintaining a spirit of meekness lies in being yoked together with the meekness of Jesus:



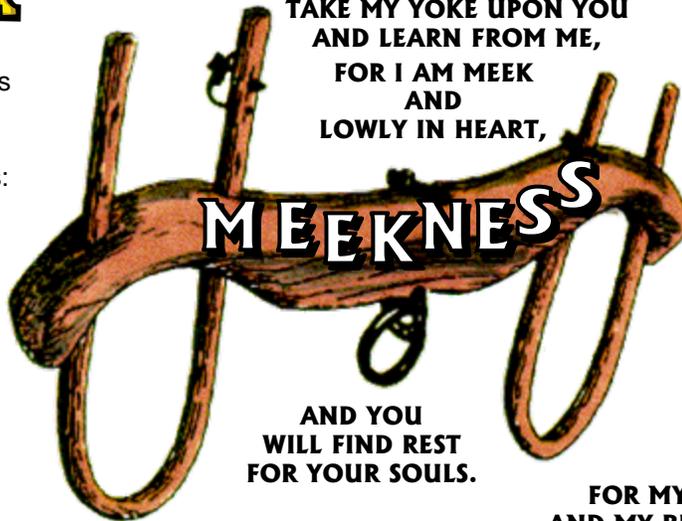
**"COME UNTO ME,
ALL YOU WHO LABOR AND ARE HEAVY LADEN,
AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST.**

**TAKE MY YOKE UPON YOU
AND LEARN FROM ME,
FOR I AM MEEK
AND
LOWLY IN HEART,**

**AND YOU
WILL FIND REST
FOR YOUR SOULS.**

**FOR MY YOKE IS EASY
AND MY BURDEN IS LIGHT."**

Matt. 11:28-30





The illustration of being yoked together with Jesus can better be understood by looking at the dual purpose of a yoke. It is true that oxen are kept together by a yoke upon their necks for the simple purpose of sharing the load equally. However, a yoke is also used for the purpose of training.



When a new ox is to be trained to plough, it is yoked together with an older seasoned ox in order that the inexperienced ox can learn how to walk in the same direction and speed as the older more experienced ox. This is why Jesus promise said:

“Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me...For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

Have you ever tried a dual paddle boat like this one?  The first time I took my wife out on a lake in one of these she said to me, “My, this is quite easy to paddle.” That is when I stopped paddling for a moment and she quickly found out that her old seasoned “ox” was doing most of the hard work! When we are yoked together with Jesus we discover that not only is His yoke easy, but the burden for us becomes lighter.

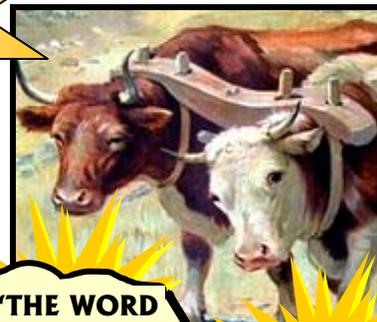


CHRIST AND THE CHRISTIAN

YOKED TOGETHER

“...WE ARE GOD’S FELLOW-WORKERS...”
1 Cor. 3:9

The practical way to see ourselves “yoked with Jesus” is to remember that Jesus is “The Word of God” (Rev. 19:13). Coming under the yoke of God’s Word is the very same as being yoked together with Jesus! This is why James tells us to:



“THE WORD OF GOD”

AND THE CHRISTIAN

YOKED TOGETHER

“RECEIVE WITH MEEKNESS

THE IMPLANTED WORD WHICH IS ABLE TO SAVE YOUR SOULS...” Jas. 1:21

God’s Word (which is Jesus), is God’s source of strength for His people. In a sense, if properly understood, it is true that “meekness is weakness.” By that I simply mean that meekness recognizes our own weaknesses. That is why Paul taught believers what he himself learned from God:

“AND HE SAID TO ME, ‘MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR YOU, FOR MY STRENGTH IS MADE PERFECT IN WEAKNESS...’ THAT THE POWER OF CHRIST MAY REST UPON ME... FOR WHEN I AM WEAK, THEN I AM STRONG.” 2 Cor. 12:9-10



“...I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST WHO STRENGTHENS ME.”
Phil. 4:13

People who are meek are weak only in trusting themselves. They are strong like Moses, and like Paul, because in **MEEKNESS** they seek strength from a higher source than themselves. They draw strength from being yoked to something stronger than themselves.

"EVERY SCRIBE INSTRUCTED CONCERNING THE KINGDOM OF GOD..."

BRINGS OUT OF HIS TREASURE THINGS NEW AND OLD."

Matt. 13:52

"BUT THE MEEK SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH, AND SHALL DELIGHT THEMSELVES IN THE ABUNDANCE OF PEACE."

Psm. 37:11



"BLESSED ARE THE MEEK, FOR THEY SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH."

Matt. 5:5

I have stressed to you earlier that the contents of the Beatitudes of Matthew Five are not "new treasures" in God's Word, but rather originated as "old treasure." The Beatitudes are stated quite simply and without amplification. That amplification is often found in the Old Testament where that truth originated. If we don't compare the old to the new then we will be deficient in understanding.

Remember, we opened by quoting this comment made by the Greek scholar, William Barclay, about the difficulty of translating the meaning of the word "meekness." It requires consideration of its use in Scripture to shed light on its full meaning.

"THIS IS THE MOST UNTRANSLATABLE OF WORDS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.... NO SINGLE WORD IS SUFFICIENT TO CONVEY ITS MEANING... WE MUST LOOK TO THE USE OF THE WORD IN SCRIPTURE TO SHED LIGHT ON ITS MEANING." William Barclay

Psalm 37:11 states, **"BUT** the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." The "But" connects this concluding thought to all the verses above it in which those things that bring an "abundance of peace" are described.

Verse 9 of Psalm 37 says, "For evildoers shall be cut off, **BUT** those who wait on the Lord, they shall inherit the earth." Verse 9 as well as verse 11 are the summarization of the promise to those who will inherit the earth. It is "THE MEEK" that will inherit the earth. Psalm 37 therefore constitutes what it means to be meek. It consists of these factors that help us to understand what it means to live a life of meekness before the Lord which will lead to being among those who "inherit the earth." Here are eight things listed in the first 11 verses that "spell" for us the meaning of such meekness:

These are the things that lead up to the verse stating that the meek will inherit the earth. These eight things constitute a meek attitude toward God. Notice the number of action verbs,
" TRUST...FEED... DELIGHT... COMMIT...REST.... WAIT... CEASE... (DO NOT) FRET..."

This is a recipe for developing and manifesting those things in our lives that produce meekness before God. Do these things in God's strength, and you will inherit the earth!

A RECIPE FOR MEEKNESS BEFORE GOD (Psm. 37)



**M
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- 1. "TRUST IN THE LORD"**
- 2. "FEED ON HIS FAITHFULNESS"**
- 3. "DELIGHT YOURSELF IN THE LORD"**
- 4. "COMMIT YOUR WAY TO THE LORD"**
- 5. "REST IN THE LORD"**
- 6. "WAIT PATIENTLY FOR HIM"**
- 7. "CEASE FROM ANGER-FORSAKE WRATH"**
- 8. "DO NOT FRET-IT ONLY CAUSES HARM"**

A RECIPE FOR MEEKNESS BEFORE GOD (Psm. 37)



**M
E
E
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S**

1. → **"TRUST IN THE LORD"**
2. → **"FEED ON HIS FAITHFULNESS"**
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4. → **"COMMIT YOUR WAY TO THE LORD"**
5. → **"REST IN THE LORD"**
6. → **"WAIT PATIENTLY FOR HIM"**
7. → **"CEASE FROM ANGER-FORSAKE WRATH"**
8. → **"DO NOT FRET-IT ONLY CAUSES HARM"**

To me, as a teacher of God's Word, the contents of Psalm 37:1-11 can be summed up with these brief conclusions about having meekness before God:

THE MEEK CEASE TO CARE ABOUT WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO SELF. HIS PRIDEFUL FLESH AND SELF-EXALTING WILL ARE BEING CRUCIFIED DAILY.

THE MEEK SEEK TO CULTIVATE SEEING EVERYTHING IN LIFE FROM GOD'S PERFECT PERSPECTIVE.

THE MEEK SEEK ONLY TO SERVE GOD'S REVEALED PURPOSE IN EVERY SITUATION THAT LIFE PRESENTS.

THE MEEK TRUST IN GOD TOTALLY AND DO NOT SEEK TO DO GOD'S WORK FOR HIM. THE MEEK HAVE ASSURANCE THAT GOD ALONE IS ABLE TO DO THAT WHICH MERE MAN CANNOT POSSIBLY DO.

So far we have only looked at one kind of meekness that describes our VERTICAL relationship with God.

There is another form of meekness pertaining to our HORIZONTAL relationship with men.

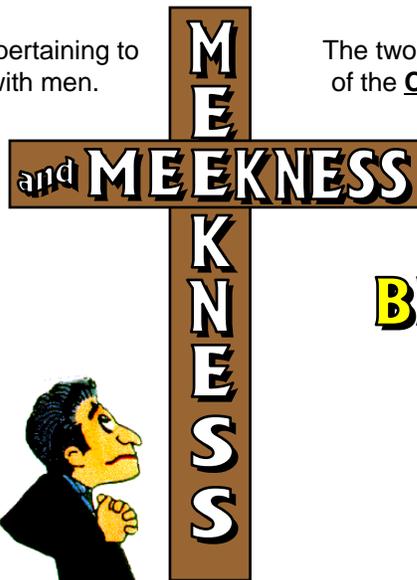
The two together form a depiction of the CROSS life for a believer.

TO LIVE AS MEEK BEFORE GOD

(MAINTAINING A PROPER ATTITUDE TOWARD GOD)

I am sure you would agree that it is far easier to show meekness before God than it is to manifest meekness before men. However, God expects a dual manifestation of meekness: (1) before God and (2) before men.

Consider Strong's definition of grace. It too has a dual manifestation.



TO LIVE AS MEEK BEFORE MEN

(MAINTAINING A PROPER ATTITUDE TOWARD MEN)

5485. χάρις *charis*, *khar'-ee*; from 5483; *graciousness* (as *gratifying*), of manner or act (abstr. or concr.; lit., fig. or spiritual; espec. the divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life; including gratitude):—acceptable, benefit, favour, gift, grace (-ious), joy liberality, pleasure, thank (-s, -worthy).

TO LIVE AS MEEK BEFORE GOD

TO HAVE "DIVINE INFLUENCE ON THE HEART..."

As with His grace, God expects the Beatitude of meekness to have a dual impact on the believer

TO LIVE AS MEEK BEFORE MEN

TO HAVE "ITS REFLECTION IN THE LIFE..."

How important was the subject of meekness before men to the apostle Paul? He addresses the subject to nearly every church:



"NOW I, PAUL, MYSELF
AM PLEADING WITH YOU BY THE
MEEKNESS
AND GENTLENESS OF CHRIST..."

2 Cor. 10:1

"LET YOUR
MEEKNESS
BE KNOWN TO ALL MEN.
THE LORD IS AT HAND."
Phil. 4:5

"...NOR DID WE SEEK GLORY FROM MEN,
EITHER FROM YOU OR FROM OTHERS..."

BUT WE WERE **MEEK** AMONG YOU
JUST AS A NURSING MOTHER CHERISHES HER OWN CHILDREN..."
1 Thess. 2:6-8

"REMINDE THEM TO

...BE PEACEABLE, **MEEK**, SHOWING ALL HUMILITY TO ALL MEN.

FOR WE OURSELVES WERE ALSO ONCE FOOLISH, DISOBEDIENT, DECEIVED,
SERVING VARIOUS LUSTS AND PLEASURES, LIVING IN MALICE AND ENVY,
HATEFUL AND HATING ONE ANOTHER."

Titus 3:1-3

"AS THE ELECT OF GOD...
PUT ON TENDER MERCIES,
KINDNESS, HUMILITY,
MEEKNESS
LONGSUFFERING,
BEARING WITH ONE ANOTHER,
AND FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER..."

Col. 3:12-13

"WALK WORTHY OF THE CALLING
WITH WHICH YOU WERE CALLED,
WITH ALL LOWLINESS AND
MEEKNESS
WITH LONGSUFFERING, BEARING WITH
ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE..."

Eph. 4:1-2

"AND A SERVANT OF THE LORD MUST NOT QUARREL,

BUT BE **MEEK** TO ALL,

ABLE TO TEACH, PATIENT, IN HUMILITY CORRECTING THOSE WHO ARE IN
OPPOSITION, IF GOD PERHAPS WILL GRANT THEM REPENTANCE, SO THAT THEY MAY
KNOW THE TRUTH, AND THAT THEY MAY COME TO THEIR SENSES AND ESCAPE THE
SNARE OF THE DEVIL, HAVING BEEN TAKEN CAPTIVE BY HIM, TO DO HIS WILL."

2 Tim. 2:24-26

BRETHREN, IF A MAN IS OVERTAKEN IN ANY TRESPASS, YOU WHO ARE
SPIRITUAL RESTORE SUCH A ONE IN A SPIRIT OF

MEEKNESS

CONSIDERING YOURSELF LEST YOU ALSO BE TEMPTED."

Gal. 6:1

Likewise, we find that the apostles James and Peter speak of the importance of meekness:



**“RECEIVE WITH
MEEKNESS**

**THE IMPLANTED WORD
WHICH IS ABLE TO
SAVE YOUR SOULS”** Jas. 1:21

**“...LET HIM SHOW BY GOOD
CONDUCT THAT HIS WORKS
ARE DONE IN THE**

MEEKNESS

OF WISDOM.” Jas. 3:13

**“THE WISDOM THAT IS FROM ABOVE IS FIRST PURE,
THEN PEACEABLE,**

MEEK

**WILLING TO YIELD, FULL OF MERCY
AND GOOD FRUITS...”** Jas. 3:17

**“...DON'T LET YOUR
ADORNMENT BE MERELY
OUTWARD...RATHER LET IT
BE... WITH THE
INCORRUPTIBLE BEAUTY OF**

**A MEEK AND QUIET SPIRIT,
WHICH IS PRECIOUS IN THE SIGHT OF GOD.”**

1 Pet. 3:3



**“...ALWAYS BE READY TO GIVE
A DEFENSE TO EVERYONE
WHO ASKS YOU A REASON
FOR THE HOPE**

**THAT IS IN YOU, WITH
MEEKNESS
AND FEAR.”**

1 Pet. 3:15

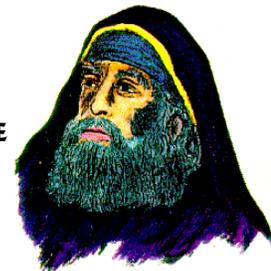
Take away the subject of **MEEKNESS** from the definition of those things that comprise practical Christianity, and you take away a major theme of emphasis from the teachings of Jesus and His apostles. Every phase and facet of life as a Christian is to be immersed with the Beatitude of meekness. As we have seen, meekness constitutes the cross life of a believer as he or she interacts with God and men. Meekness recognizes a higher authority and source of power than self. Paul lived and taught self-abasement as the norm rather than exaltation of self:

**“FOR I AM THE LEAST
OF THE APOSTLES,
WHO AM NOT WORTHY TO BE
CALLED AN APOSTLE,
BECAUSE I PERSECUTED THE
CHURCH OF GOD. BUT BY THE
GRACE OF GOD I AM WHAT I AM...”**

1 Cor 15:9-10

**“THIS IS A FAITHFUL SAYING AND
WORTHY OF ALL ACCEPTANCE,
THAT CHRIST JESUS CAME INTO THE
WORLD TO SAVE SINNERS,
OF WHOM I AM CHIEF.”**

1 Tim 1:15-16



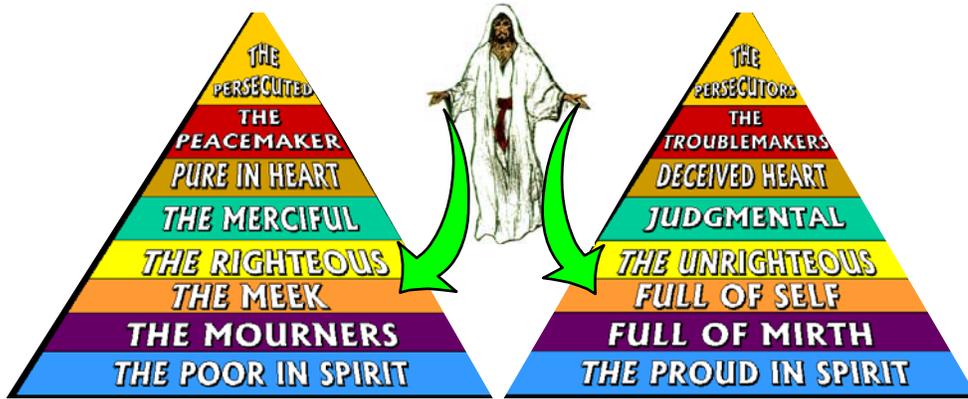
If you consider the opening of the epistles of Paul, James, Peter and Jude, you will find them placing their calling as servants of God in front of being apostles.

Such humility is lacking among leaders today. Business cards proudly proclaim, “Apostle so and so” or “Prophet so and so.” Titles such as “Dr.” or “Reverend” are given preeminence. Personally, I refuse to be called “Reverend” because only God is worthy of reverence, and I don't even feel very comfortable in using the phrase, “Pastor/Teacher” in describing what I do. Such titles should bother us for Jesus warned of the subtle pride lurking behind the use of titles conveying preeminence (Matt. 23:8-9)

**“... I BECAME A MINISTER ACCORDING TO THE GIFT OF THE
GRACE OF GOD GIVEN TO ME BY THE
EFFECTIVE WORKING OF HIS POWER.
TO ME, WHO AM LESS THAN THE LEAST OF ALL THE SAINTS,
THIS GRACE WAS GIVEN, THAT I SHOULD PREACH AMONG THE
GENTILES THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST...”**

Eph 3:7-9

The alternative to being meek is to be full of oneself:



"YOU KNOW THAT THOSE WHO ARE CONSIDERED RULERS OVER THE GENTILES LORD IT OVER THEM, AND THEIR GREAT ONES EXERCISE AUTHORITY OVER THEM. YET IT SHALL NOT BE SO AMONG YOU; BUT WHOEVER DESIRES TO BECOME GREAT AMONG YOU SHALL BE YOUR SERVANT. AND WHOEVER OF YOU DESIRES TO BE FIRST SHALL BE SLAVE OF ALL. FOR EVEN THE SON OF MAN DID NOT COME TO BE SERVED, BUT TO SERVE ..."

Mark 10:42-45

"THE ELDERS WHO ARE AMONG YOU I EXHORT, I WHO AM A FELLOW ELDER AND A WITNESS OF THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST, AND ALSO A PARTAKER OF THE GLORY THAT WILL BE REVEALED: SHEPHERD THE FLOCK OF GOD WHICH IS AMONG YOU, SERVING AS OVERSEERS, NOT BY COMPULSION BUT WILLINGLY, NOT FOR DISHONEST GAIN BUT EAGERLY; NOR AS BEING LORDS OVER THOSE ENTRUSTED TO YOU, BUT BEING EXAMPLES TO THE FLOCK; AND WHEN THE CHIEF SHEPHERD APPEARS, YOU WILL RECEIVE THE CROWN OF GLORY THAT DOES NOT FADE AWAY."

1 Peter 5:1-4

"LET THIS MIND BE IN YOU WHICH WAS ALSO IN CHRIST JESUS, WHO, BEING IN THE FORM OF GOD, DID NOT CONSIDER IT ROBBERY TO BE EQUAL WITH GOD, BUT MADE HIMSELF OF NO REPUTATION, TAKING THE FORM OF A BONDSERVANT, AND COMING IN THE LIKENESS OF MEN. AND BEING FOUND IN APPEARANCE AS A MAN, HE HUMBLIED HIMSELF AND BECAME OBEDIENT TO THE POINT OF DEATH, EVEN THE DEATH OF THE CROSS. THEREFORE GOD ALSO HAS HIGHLY EXALTED HIM..."

Phil 2:5-9

"...EVERYONE WHO IS AMONG YOU, NOT TO THINK OF HIMSELF MORE HIGHLY THAN HE OUGHT TO THINK. BE OF THE SAME MIND TOWARD ONE ANOTHER. DO NOT SET YOUR MIND ON HIGH THINGS, BUT ASSOCIATE WITH THE HUMBLE. DO NOT BE WISE IN YOUR OWN OPINION."

Rom.12:3,16

"FULL OF SELF"

I have a very large volume of Webster's dictionary on my desk. It has 2,661 pages. I amusingly tell people, "pick it up-it weighs a ton." When you look up the word "self", there are over a hundred variations listed. Among them are:

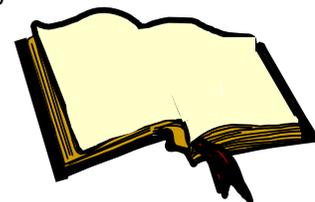
**SELF-CONCERNED
SELF-CONFIDENT
SELF-EXALTING
SELF-PROMOTING
SELF-DETERMINED
SELF-WILLED
SELF-ABSORBED
SELF-ASSERTIVE
SELF-APPOINTED
SELF-ASSURED
SELF-AGGRANDIZING
SELF-DEPENDENT
SELF-RELIANT**

**SELF-DEVOTED
SELF-DIRECTED
SELF-RIGHTEOUS
SELF-SUFFICIENT
SELF-PROFICIENT
SELF-GRATIFICATION
SELF-GRATULATION
SELF-LOVING
SELF-MADE
SELF-REGARDING
SELF-CENTERED
SELF-AWARENESS
SELF-SERVING**

These are among the things **THE WORLD** loves...



These are among the things **THE WORD** condemns...



MEEKNESS
and **MEEKNESS**

Those in the world who are enamored with many aspects of being "full of self" will not end up inheriting the earth, it will be the meek!



Two aspects of meekness are required by God to be found in the life of the believer. It is the daily cross life of denying "self" (Luke 9:23).



MEEK BEFORE GOD

A RECIPE FOR MEEKNESS

BEFORE GOD (Psm. 37)



MEEKNESS

1. **"TRUST IN THE LORD"**
2. **"FEED ON HIS FAITHFULNESS"**
3. **"DELIGHT YOURSELF IN THE LORD"**
4. **"COMMIT YOUR WAY TO THE LORD"**
5. **"REST IN THE LORD"**
6. **"WAIT PATIENTLY FOR HIM"**
7. **"CEASE FROM ANGER-FORSAKE WRATH"**
8. **"DO NOT FRET-IT ONLY CAUSES HARM"**

"DO NOT FRET BECAUSE OF EVILDOERS, NOR BE ENVIOUS OF THE WORKERS OF INIQUITY... TRUST IN THE LORD, AND DO GOOD; DWELL IN THE LAND, AND FEED ON HIS FAITHFULNESS. DELIGHT YOURSELF ALSO IN THE LORD, AND HE SHALL GIVE YOU THE DESIRES OF YOUR HEART. COMMIT YOUR WAY TO THE LORD, TRUST ALSO IN HIM, AND HE SHALL BRING IT TO PASS... REST IN THE LORD, AND WAIT PATIENTLY FOR HIM; DO NOT FRET BECAUSE OF HIM WHO PROSPERS IN HIS WAY, BECAUSE OF THE MAN WHO BRINGS WICKED SCHEMES TO PASS. CEASE FROM ANGER, AND FORSAKE WRATH; DO NOT FRET -- IT ONLY CAUSES HARM... BUT THOSE WHO WAIT ON THE LORD, THEY SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH... THE MEEK SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH, AND SHALL DELIGHT THEMSELVES IN THE ABUNDANCE OF PEACE." Ps 37:1-11

MEEK

BEFORE MEN

A RECIPE FOR MEEKNESS

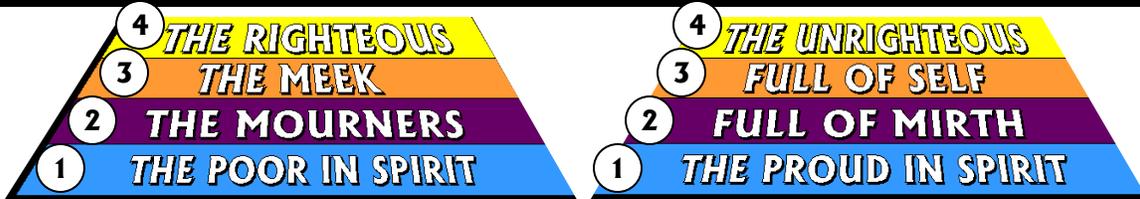
BEFORE MEN (Rom. 12)



MEEKNESS

1. **DO NOT THINK OF YOURSELF MORE HIGHLY THAT YOU OUGHT TO THINK**
2. **BE KINDLY AFFECTIONATE TO ONE ANOTHER WITH BROTHERLY LOVE**
3. **IN HONOR GIVING PREFERENCE TO ONE ANOTHER**
4. **BE OF THE SAME MIND TOWARD ONE ANOTHER**
5. **DO NOT SET YOUR MIND ON HIGH THINGS**
6. **ASSOCIATE WITH THE HUMBLE**
7. **DO NOT BE WISE IN YOUR OWN OPINION**
8. **IF IT IS POSSIBLE, AS MUCH AS DEPENDS ON YOU, LIVE PEACEABLY WITH ALL MEN**

"...EVERYONE WHO IS AMONG YOU, NOT TO THINK OF HIMSELF MORE HIGHLY THAN HE OUGHT TO THINK... LET LOVE BE WITHOUT HYPOCRISY... BE KINDLY AFFECTIONATE TO ONE ANOTHER WITH BROTHERLY LOVE, IN HONOR GIVING PREFERENCE TO ONE ANOTHER; NOT LAGGING IN DILIGENCE, FERVENT IN SPIRIT, SERVING THE LORD... DISTRIBUTING TO THE NEEDS OF THE SAINTS, GIVEN TO HOSPITALITY. BE OF THE SAME MIND TOWARD ONE ANOTHER. DO NOT SET YOUR MIND ON HIGH THINGS, BUT ASSOCIATE WITH THE HUMBLE. DO NOT BE WISE IN YOUR OWN OPINION.. HAVE REGARD FOR GOOD THINGS IN THE SIGHT OF ALL MEN. IF IT IS POSSIBLE, AS MUCH AS DEPENDS ON YOU, LIVE PEACEABLY WITH ALL MEN..." Rom 12:3-20



Lord willing, in our next newsletter we will add the fourth set of attributes that are to mark the people of God and the opposing attributes that single out the people of the world. As you can see so far, we are building quite a picture of distinction between the two groups and rightly so, for they stem from the influence of two different kingdoms in opposition to one another. These are the contrasting markings of light vs. darkness and good vs. evil.

Sadly however, the distinction becomes like muddy water when some of God's verbally professing people look and behave more like darkness and evil than light and good. Solomon records:

**“DEAD FLIES PUTREFY THE PERFUMER'S OINTMENT,
AND CAUSE IT TO GIVE OFF A FOUL ODOR;
SO DOES A LITTLE FOLLY TO ONE RESPECTED FOR WISDOM AND HONOR.”**

Ecc. 10:1

**WISDOM IS BETTER THAN WEAPONS OF WAR;
BUT ONE SINNER DESTROYS MUCH GOOD.”**

Ecc 9:18

Pastor Randy Shape

THE “BE” ATTITUDES

(PASTOR RANDY'S
LATEST DVD SERIES)

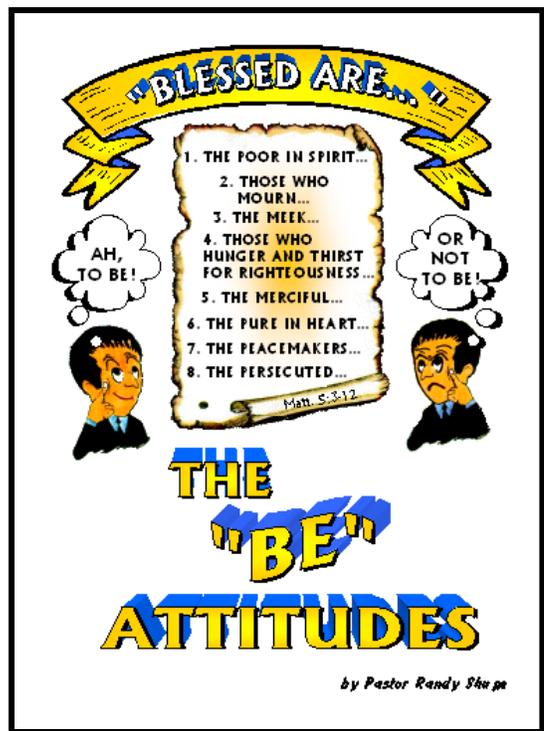
It was Shakespeare that penned the moral challenge to man in stating,

“To be, or not to be, that is the question.”

However, long before this challenge to mankind was penned, God's Word set before His own people a set of moral values that have been dubbed with the title, “The Beatitudes.” The word “beatitude” simply means “blessed.” Each beatitude begins with the words, “Blessed are...”

In the Beatitudes, God has set before the Christian believer eight areas of promised blessing, eight things that God fully intends for His people to “be” as a follower of Christ. As a teacher, I have, with tongue-in-cheek, dubbed them with the more proper title of “The “Be” Attitudes.”

The dire question really for each one of us as followers of Christ is the choice either “To be, or not to be.”

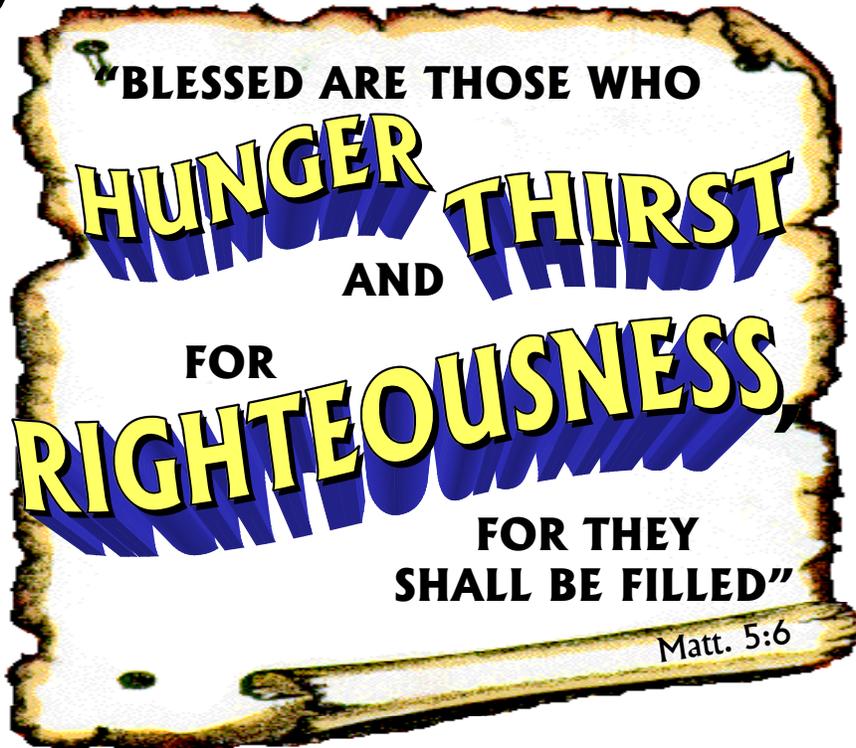


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"THE PROPHETIC WORD"

PART FIVE OF THE BEATITUDES:



"THE
PERSON
WHO
LABORS,
LABORS
FOR
HIMSELF,

FOR
HIS
HUNGRY
MOUTH
DRIVES
HIM
ON."
Prov 16:26

"**HUNGER** and **THIRST**" are two powerful driving forces in man that must be continually and repeatedly satisfied. It has been estimated that a healthy man can survive about four days without any water intake and perhaps thirty to forty days without absorbing any solid food. Jesus' illustration here in the Beatitudes of a people hungering and thirsting after something other than the necessity of food and water is quite purposeful. It is an admonition for us as followers of Christ to apply such basic, ongoing driving forces as "hunger and thirst" to things beyond the physical needs. After Jesus fasted forty days and forty nights, the Scripture records, "...afterward He was hungry" (Matt. 4:2). It was at this pinnacle of near-death hunger that Satan sought to tempt Jesus, as the Son of God, with the command to turn stones into bread (Matt. 4:3). In other words, make the demands of the physical realm to be more important priorities than that of the spiritual. Jesus responded:

**"IT IS WRITTEN, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE,
BUT BY EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS FROM THE MOUTH OF GOD.'"**

Matt. 4:4

This fourth Beatitude identifies what spiritual goal God would have us to pursue with the same intensity that "hunger and thirst" produces in the physical realm. We are to hunger and thirst for **RIGHTEOUSNESS**. As hunger and thirst is not a one-time necessity in life, neither is the kind of righteousness spoken of as a Beatitude a one time event. Righteousness is not only an initial **GIFT** of Christ, but it is also presented as an ongoing **FRUIT** in the life of the believer. It is this continual development of the fruit of righteousness for which we are to "hunger and thirst" with great intensity.

**"IT IS WRITTEN,
'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE,
BUT BY EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS FROM THE MOUTH OF GOD.'"**

Matt. 4:4

**"BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO
HUNGER AND THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS,
FOR THEY SHALL BE FILLED."**

Matt. 5:6

**"THEREFORE DO NOT WORRY, SAYING,
'WHAT SHALL WE EAT?' OR 'WHAT SHALL WE DRINK?...
FOR AFTER ALL THESE THINGS THE GENTILES SEEK.
FOR YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER KNOWS
THAT YOU NEED ALL THESE THINGS.
BUT SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS,
AND ALL THESE THINGS SHALL BE ADDED TO YOU."**

Mat. 6:31-33



From the above passages from Chapters 4-6 of Matthew's gospel, we can see a building theme on Jesus' mind as He makes a comparison between hunger and thirst in the physical and in the spiritual realm. We all know that when we begin to experience "hunger and thirst" physically, our immediate priority becomes one of satisfying the growing awareness of that perceived need. We all have used hyperbole saying such things as "I'm starving", or "I'm hungry". However, I doubt that any of us have uttered such sayings after having just completed a forty day fast. Jesus' forty day fast produced real hunger. We only think we are hungry. In this prosperous country of great abundance, few of us have ever really experienced true hunger pangs as does the rest of the world. You have seen the ads, "Millions go to bed hungry every night." Many of them don't even have beds.

We do not lack for an abundance of churches in America. However, compared to the number of restaurants and food shops available, churches must be viewed as few and far between. The point is that "hunger and thirst" in the physical realm is a "big supply and demand" business. However, I suspect "hunger and thirst" in the spiritual realm is not so big in demand. I wonder if there is a spiritual correlation to be made in that most food places that are in business cater to serving up people's desire for "fast food", "junk food" and "carry out." What should God's churches be promoting? God forbid that we, as God's leaders, are delivering up spiritual "fast food", "junk food", and "carry out." I would suggest that the proper emphasis should be the likes of the Beatitude we are considering, a call to create in God's people "hunger and thirst for righteousness."

Lest we think that this comparison between physical and spiritual hunger and thirst was limited to Jesus' teachings, consider how the apostle Paul picks up the same theme:

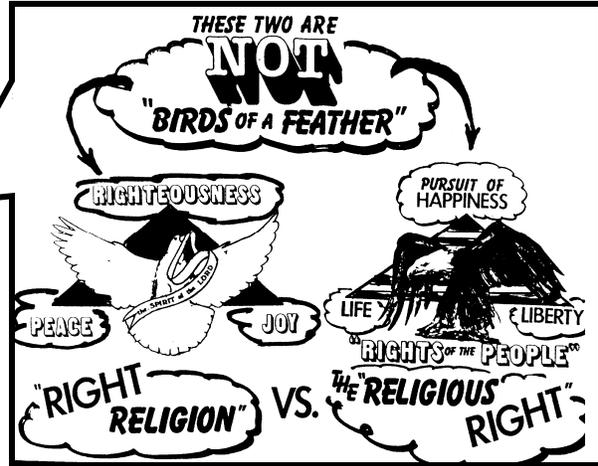
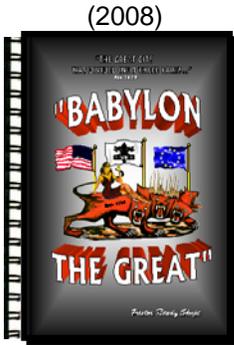
**"FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS NOT FOOD AND DRINK,
BUT RIGHTEOUSNESS AND PEACE AND JOY IN THE HOLY SPIRIT.
FOR HE WHO SERVES CHRIST IN THESE THINGS
IS ACCEPTABLE TO GOD..."**

Rom 14:17-18



Just add this passage of Paul to those of Jesus above, and you can see a continuous theme being passed from Jesus to His faithful apostle. Why is not this same theme being passed on to God's people here in America? It is because we have allowed Satan to make a deceptive doctrinal substitution of the Kingdom of God's stated foundations of "**RIGHTEOUSNESS**, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" with a bird of another feather promoting a "God-given kingdom" that majors in the physical realm of "Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" as being the will of God for His (new special) people, a physical "One Nation Under God" that needs to be re-captured by American Christians. Should we not be asking ourselves, "is this the gospel presented by Jesus and Paul?"

If you are being swallowed up in all of the tradition-based rhetoric of the Religious Right pertaining to America's destiny, I suggest you order these two books that I wrote to refute that error:



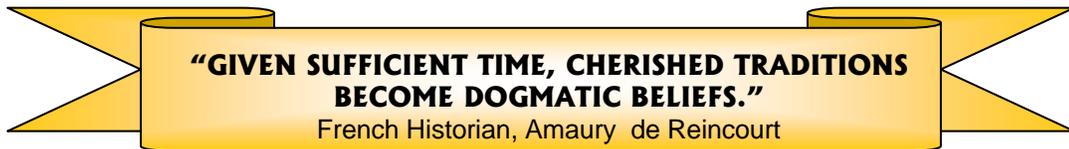
What does all this have to do with the Beatitude of hungering and thirsting after **RIGHTEOUSNESS**? Unless God's people make up their mind as to which of these two sets of goals God wants them to pursue after, they remain in danger of being deceived with a counterfeit brand of the gospel. You cannot harmonize two different kingdoms with two different sets of stated goals to establish a reason for being. Jesus warned that you cannot serve two masters (Matt. 6:24). Are we to set as our priorities:

**RIGHTEOUSNESS,
AND PEACE,
AND JOY
IN THE HOLY SPIRIT**
(as stated in the Scriptures)



**LIFE,
LIBERTY,
AND THE PURSUIT
OF HAPPINESS**
(as stated in the Constitution)

We are clearly told that, if we serve Christ in focusing upon "Righteousness, peace and joy", such service is "acceptable to God" (Rom. 14:17). It is also clearly stated that God's Kingdom does not consist of priorities such as "food and drink", which I think, includes the pursuit of similar physical things that constitute "Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Heed this warning dear Christian:



At Jesus' first coming, He found the Jewish religious leaders swallowed up by their cherished traditions to the point that the Word of God no longer had any effect. I fear that as we approach the Second Coming of Christ, this same charge Jesus laid on the Jews may be spoken against America's all too politically minded Christian leaders who are motivated by their own brand of cherished traditions:



"ONE NATION UNDER GOD"



"IN GOD WE TRUST"

"...THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR FROM ME. AND IN VAIN THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE COMMANDMENTS OF MEN. '...FOR LAYING ASIDE THE COMMANDMENT OF GOD, YOU HOLD THE TRADITION OF MEN... AND MANY OTHER SUCH THINGS YOU DO... ALL TOO WELL YOU REJECT THE COMMANDMENT OF GOD, THAT YOU MAY KEEP YOUR TRADITION... MAKING THE WORD OF GOD OF NO EFFECT THROUGH YOUR TRADITION WHICH YOU HAVE HANDED DOWN. AND MANY SUCH THINGS YOU DO."

Mark 7:6-13

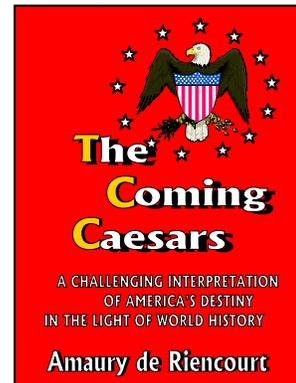
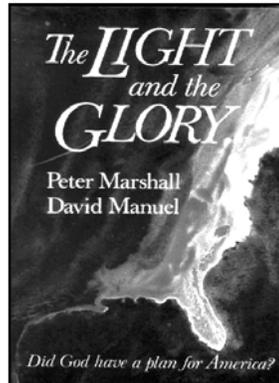
The Religious Right segment of the Republican Party, as well as the Christian home school movement, are in a deceptive swoon over the romantic presentation of Peter Marshall's "*Light and the Glory*" which cast the Puritans as being divinely called to establish God's "New Israel" on the shores of America as a geographical manifestation of the Kingdom of God on earth. The problem is that there is no such support in prophecy for a "New Israel" at all, but rather a prophesied return by God to His old Israel. However, there is much prophecy to be found about the raising up of a "New Rome" as Mystery Babylon the Great.

As Amaury de Reincourt proves in his secular historical book, "*The Coming Caesars*", (can order from us) which prophesied "New Rome" is in reality what the Puritans erroneously called their "New Israel", America. Why is it that Christians swallow the idea of the Puritans being God's "New Israel", but reject the Mormons doctrine which is built on the same premise? (God's New Zion being in Utah). The Puritans' doctrinal position about America is broken! I very much urge you to read an extensive 16-page newsletter on my website warning about the increase of modern-day Puritanism in America <http://www.pastorrandyshupe.com/classics-newsletters.php>

Historically, governmentally, as well as culturally, America reeks with the foundations of the ancient Roman Empire. If this is God's "New Israel", then He has made it a carbon-copy of the Roman Empire. Can you see God using the hated Roman Empire, who slaughtered Jews and Christians (as well as Christ), as an approved layout for a "New Israel"? If God has a "New Israel" as a replacement for the original one, why is Christ returning to set His feet down on Mt. Olivet in Israel? Why is He going to reign out of Jerusalem for a 1,000 years instead of Washington D.C.?

I realize we have gotten far away from the subject of the Beatitude of "hungering and thirsting for righteousness." However, it is a needful diversion to show that Satan is taking Christians in America down the easy "primrose path" to get them side-tracked from pursuing the difficult path of the **PURSUIT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS**. Far more popular is Christian's cherished tradition of a God-given inalienable right called "**THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS**."

IS IT **NEW** OR IS IT **NEW**
ISRAEL AS CONVEYED BY Peter Marshall's
ROME AS CONVEYED BY Amaury de Reincourt's



?

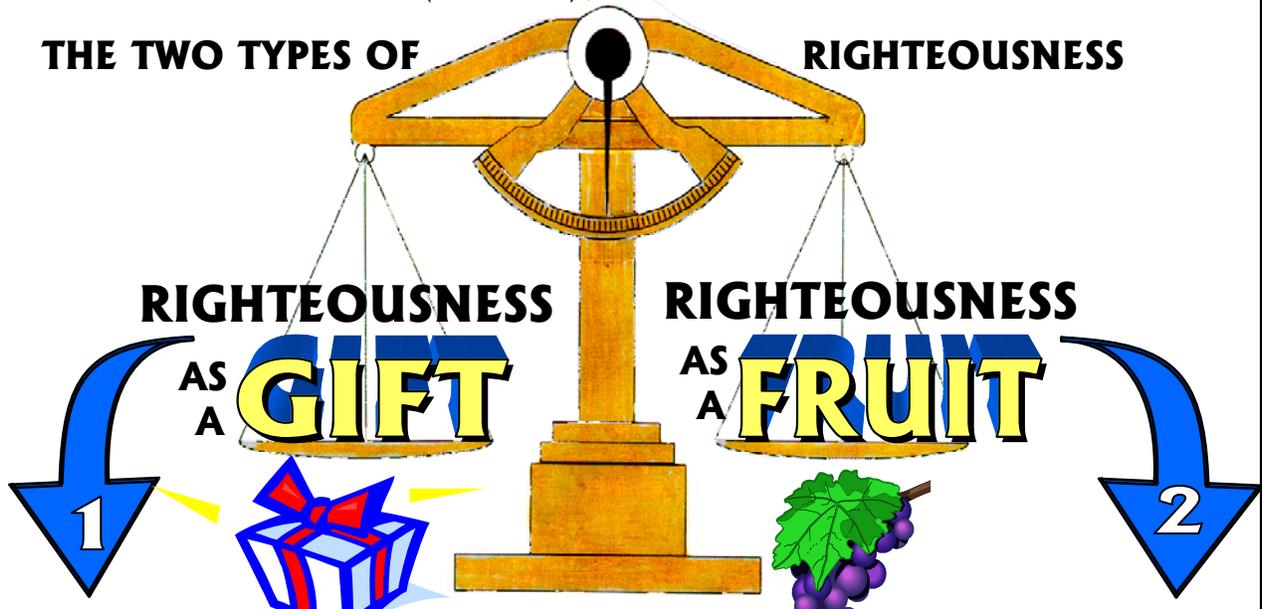
"THEY SAW THEMSELVES AS CALLED TO A NEW PROMISE LAND IN ORDER TO FOUND A NEW ISRAEL..." (20)
 "GOD WAS MAKING HIS MOST SIGNIFICANT ATTEMPT SINCE ANCIENT ISRAEL TO CREATE A NEW ISRAEL OF PEOPLE LIVING IN OBEDIENCE TO THE LAWS OF GOD, THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST" (22-23)... "GOD'S NEW ISRAEL WAS SAVED-FOR A SEASON. IF GOD WAS TRYING TO BUILD A NEW ISRAEL IN AMERICA, SATAN WAS DOING EVERYTHING TO THWART IT" (234) "THE PROMISES GOD MADE TO...HIS NEW ISRAEL REMAIN INTACT AND UNMODIFIED..." (355)

"SO IT WAS, TRANSLATING LONG-MEDITATED THOUGHTS INTO ACTION, THAT THE STERN PURITANS FOUNDED ON THE COAST OF NEW ENGLAND WHAT THEY THOUGHT WOULD BE THE LAND OF CANAAN, THE NEW JERUSALEM OF THEIR DREAMS, AND WHAT WE CAN NOW LABEL FAR MORE ACCURATELY THE NEW ROME... THE PURITANS WERE THE HUMAN SEED FROM WHICH THE NEW ROME OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION WAS TO SPRING ACROSS THE ATLANTIC OCEAN." (PAGE 30, 35)

(see September 2002 Newsletter under "Classic newsletters"
 PastorRandyShupe.com)

If we are going to properly understand the Christian's call to "hunger and thirst after righteousness" as a desirable Christian virtue (a beatitude) , then we must make a clear distinction between:

THE TWO TYPES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS



"...THOSE WHO RECEIVE ABUNDANCE OF GRACE AND OF THE GIFT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS WILL REIGN IN LIFE THROUGH THE ONE, JESUS CHRIST...THROUGH ONE MAN'S RIGHTEOUS ACT THE FREE GIFT CAME TO ALL MEN, RESULTING IN JUSTIFICATION OF LIFE... SO GRACE MIGHT REIGN THROUGH RIGHTEOUSNESS TO ETERNAL LIFE THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD."
Rom. 5:17-21

There are many places in God's Word that speak of these two types of righteousness. However, there is none greater than this comparison in Paul's epistle to the Romans. Romans Chapter Five speaks of righteousness as an initial **GIFT** and the very next Chapter (Six) describes righteousness in the life of the Christian as an ongoing **FRUIT**.

"...DO NOT PRESENT YOUR MEMBERS AS INSTRUMENTS OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS TO SIN, BUT...AS INSTRUMENTS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS TO GOD... HAVING BEEN SET FREE FROM SIN, YOU BECAME SLAVES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS... SO NOW PRESENT YOUR MEMBERS AS SLAVES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR HOLINESS. FOR WHEN YOU WERE SLAVES OF SIN, YOU WERE FREE IN REGARD TO RIGHTEOUSNESS. WHAT FRUIT DID YOU HAVE THEN...? BUT NOW...YOU HAVE YOUR FRUIT TO HOLINESS..."
Rom. 6:13-22 excerpts

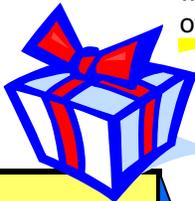
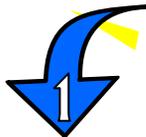
"FOR HE MADE HIM WHO KNEW NO SIN TO BE SIN FOR US, THAT WE MIGHT BECOME THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM."
2 Cor. 5:21

As an initial saving **GIFT** of God's grace, via the new birth, Jesus makes the exchange of His righteousness for our sinfulness. However, afterwards, Jesus becomes the fruit-producing vine in our lives, and we are to be the ongoing fruit-bearing branches:

"...THAT YOU MAY APPROVE THE THINGS THAT ARE EXCELLENT... BEING FILLED WITH THE FRUITS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH ARE BY JESUS CHRIST, TO THE PRAISE AND GLORY OF GOD."
Phil. 1:10-11

"BY THIS IS MY FATHER GLORIFIED THAT YOU BEAR MUCH FRUIT; AND SO YOU WILL BE MY DISCIPLES...YOU SHOULD GO AND BEAR FRUIT, AND THAT YOUR FRUIT SHOULD REMAIN..."
Jn. 15:5-16 excerpts

RIGHTEOUSNESS AS A GIFT...



“I WILL GREATLY REJOICE IN THE LORD, MY SOUL SHALL BE JOYFUL IN MY GOD; FOR HE HAS CLOTHED ME WITH THE GARMENTS OF SALVATION, HE HAS COVERED ME WITH THE ROBE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS..”

Isa. 61:10

“...AND WE NEED TO BE SAVED. BUT WE ARE ALL LIKE AN UNCLEAN THING, AND ALL OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS ARE LIKE FILTHY RAGS...”

Isa. 64:5-6

Even the Old Testament bears witness to this stark comparison of righteousness in two different manifestations:

I have heard endless misapplication of the isolation of Isaiah 64:6 as a “proof text” that

“All our righteousness are like filthy rags.” However, you only need to add the verse above this famous quote to identify to whom it is to be applied:

“WE NEED TO BE SAVED.”

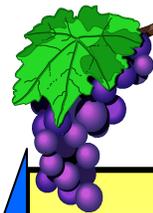
It is true that we cannot be saved by our own righteousness, but it is also true that we are saved unto a life of righteousness! Paul taught the same balanced truth in the New Testament:

“FOR BY GRACE YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED THROUGH FAITH, AND THAT NOT OF YOURSELVES; IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD, NOT OF WORKS LEST ANYONE SHOULD BOAST. FOR WE ARE HIS WORKMANSHIP, CREATED IN CHRIST JESUS, FOR GOOD WORKS,

WHICH GOD PREPARED BEFOREHAND THAT WE SHOULD WALK IN THEM.”

Eph. 2:8-9

RIGHTEOUSNESS AS A FRUIT...



“THE LORD REWARDED ME ACCORDING TO MY RIGHTEOUSNESS; ACCORDING TO THE CLEANNESS OF MY HANDS HE HAS RECOMPENSED ME. FOR I HAVE KEPT THE WAYS OF THE LORD, AND HAVE NOT WICKEDLY DEPARTED FROM MY GOD. FOR ALL HIS JUDGMENTS WERE BEFORE ME, AND I DID NOT PUT AWAY HIS STATUTES FROM ME. I WAS ALSO BLAMELESS BEFORE HIM, AND I KEPT MYSELF FROM MY INIQUITY. THEREFORE THE LORD HAS RECOMPENSED ME ACCORDING TO MY RIGHTEOUSNESS, ACCORDING TO THE CLEANNESS OF MY HANDS IN HIS SIGHT.”

Ps 18:20-24

However, Paul's verse in Ephesians 2 emphasizing “NOT OF WORKS” is also frequently isolated from the rest of the truth conveyed in the very next verse that God's people were created “FOR GOOD WORKS”.

“...ADORN THE DOCTRINE OF OUR GOD AND SAVIOR IN ALL THINGS. FOR THE GRACE OF GOD THAT BRINGS SALVATION HAS APPEARED TO ALL MEN, ———>

...WHO GAVE HIMSELF FOR US, THAT HE MIGHT REDEEM US FROM EVERY LAWLESS DEED, ———>

Actually, it is impossible to read God's Word and not see that the Scriptures carefully present **BOTH** halves of the truth. For example, take this one, flowing, continuous sentence from the apostle Paul (Titus 2:11-14). Can this sentence be read in context and not be confronted with a fuller revelation of truth than what is presently being taught as the contents of “the grace of God.”? Paul states specifically what “the Grace of God that brought salvation” (Jesus) came to teach. He taught the need for God's redeemed people under grace to **LIVE RIGHTEOUSLY** and to be **ZEALOUS FOR GOOD WORKS**.

→ TEACHING US THAT DENYING UNGODLINESS AND WORLDLY LUSTS, WE SHOULD LIVE SOBERLY, RIGHTEOUSLY, AND GODLY IN THIS PRESENT AGE...”

→ AND PURIFY FOR HIMSELF HIS OWN SPECIAL PEOPLE, ZEALOUS FOR GOOD WORKS.”

"...I TESTIFY TO YOU THIS DAY THAT I AM INNOCENT OF THE BLOOD OF ALL MEN. FOR I HAVE NOT SHUNNED TO DECLARE TO YOU THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD...FOR I KNOW THIS, THAT AFTER MY DEPARTURE SAVAGE WOLVES WILL COME IN AMONG YOU, NOT SPARING THE FLOCK. ALSO FROM AMONG YOURSELVES MEN WILL RISE UP, SPEAKING PERVERSE THINGS, TO DRAW AWAY THE DISCIPLES AFTER THEMSELVES." Acts 20:26-30

We live in the times in which "perverse things" are indeed being spoken to God's people under the banner of truth. Foremost, the diverse perversity of the doctrines of Calvinism come to mind. "The absolute sovereignty of God", "unconditional election by God" (meaning, if you are chosen-once saved, always saved), "limited Atonement" (meaning not everyone can be saved-just the elect by God's sovereign will) , "irresistible grace" (meaning you will be saved regardless of your choices-you can't resist God's will if He chooses you), "the total depravity of man" (meaning, a sinner can't repent until saved-has no free-will to choose).

How serious is the problem of Calvinistic theology in Christianity? Nearly every denomination that considers themselves as "Fundamentalist" have their roots deep in various forms of Calvinistic doctrines. Charles Spurgeon, the most widely read theologian, stated that "Calvinism is the gospel!" Because of Calvinistic beliefs that not everyone is eligible to be saved, Spurgeon championed the erroneous interpretation of Scriptures that "Christ died for all" means "all sins" and not "all people." Therefore we have the widespread doctrinal acceptance that "every sin I commit, past, present and future is already forgiven." If "all people" can't be saved, then it must be "all sins" that are pre-forgiven. There is not one ounce of Scriptural proof for such a theory (see my August 2009 newsletter, "Dealing Thoroughly With Sin", and Sept. 2009, "Calvinism-Assassination of God's Character") .

The subtle problem with Calvinism is that it is a theological position that places all responsibility upon God and nothing upon the Christian. The call to things like we find in the Beatitudes are made null and void by the ineptness of the believer to make such choices as to "hunger and thirst after righteousness." Calvinism contains a brutal assassination of the character of God. Under the banner of "Absolute Sovereignty", God who depicts Himself as "The Righteous Judge", is totally lost. The Calvinist presents as the ultimate revelation of God His "absolute sovereignty." There are no uses in Scripture of the word "sovereignty" by God in describing Himself, but the Scriptures abound with His own description of being righteous. I am limited in space, but here are a few of what you will find:

" FOR I PROCLAIM THE NAME OF THE LORD: ASCRIBE GREATNESS TO OUR GOD. HE IS THE ROCK, HIS WORK IS PERFECT; FOR ALL HIS WAYS ARE JUSTICE, A GOD OF TRUTH AND WITHOUT INJUSTICE; RIGHTEOUS AND UPRIGHT IS HE." Deut 32:3-4

"FOR THE LORD IS RIGHTEOUS, HE LOVES RIGHTEOUSNESS..." Psm. 11:7

"THE JUDGMENTS OF THE LORD ARE TRUE AND RIGHTEOUS ALTOGETHER." Psm. 19:9

"RIGHTEOUSNESS AND JUSTICE ARE THE FOUNDATION OF YOUR THRONE..." Psm. 89:14

"MY TONGUE ALSO SHALL TALK OF YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS ALL THE DAY LONG..." Psm. 71:24

"FOR HE IS COMING, FOR HE IS COMING TO JUDGE THE EARTH. HE SHALL JUDGE THE WORLD WITH RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND THE PEOPLES WITH HIS TRUTH." Ps 96:13

"THE WORKS OF THE LORD ARE GREAT, STUDIED BY ALL WHO HAVE PLEASURE IN THEM. HIS WORK IS HONORABLE AND GLORIOUS, AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ENDURES FOREVER." Psm. 111:2-3

"YOUR THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER AND EVER; A SCEPTER OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IS THE SCEPTER OF YOUR KINGDOM. YOU HAVE LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATED LAWLESSNESS..." Heb 1:8-9

Change the Scriptural emphasis of "righteousness" in describing who God is to a preferred man-made emphasis of "sovereignty", and you change the image of God in the minds of His people. Thus we lose the thrust that a Righteous God is looking for a people who focus upon the need of righteousness as a fruit, as a blessed Beatitude to hunger and thirst after. Paul's motivation in life was not based on a depiction of God's sovereignty, but rather on the fact that He is "the Righteous Judge" :

"...THE TIME OF MY DEPARTURE IS AT HAND, I HAVE FOUGHT THE GOOD FIGHT, I HAVE FINISHED THE RACE, I HAVE KEPT THE FAITH. FINALLY, THERE IS LAID UP FOR ME THE CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, WHICH THE LORD, THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE, WILL GIVE TO ME ON THAT DAY..."

2 Tim 4:6-8

"BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HUNGER AND THIRST AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS, FOR THEY SHALL BE FILLED." Matt. 5:6

"THE PROPHETIC WORD"

PART SIX OF THE BEATITUDES:

"BLESSED ARE
**THE
MERCIFUL**



FOR THEY SHALL
**OBTAIN
MERCY"**

Matt. 5:7

AH,
TO BE!



"THE MERCIFUL
MAN
DOES GOOD
FOR
HIS
OWN SOUL,

OR
NOT
TO BE!



BUT
HE WHO
IS CRUEL
TROUBLES
HIS
OWN FLESH."
Prov. 11:17

Mercy is not an emotional act of spontaneous combustion, it is a willful choice to be made in spite of how stirred up one's emotions become in life's difficult moments. Look carefully at the two contrasting scriptures above and you can see the calming effect that a merciful attitude produces compared to the disturbing results of choosing the pathway of responding with cruelty. We can either choose to do good for our soul or we can trouble our own flesh with a flesh-based response. One is a path of decisive action while the other is an emotionally-based reaction. Most of unregenerate mankind feeds on the "rightness" to be retaliatory, vengeful, and spiteful when they determine that they have been wronged. Here is what God is looking for in His people:

"BUT I SAY UNTO YOU WHO HEAR: LOVE YOUR ENEMIES, DO GOOD TO THOSE WHO HATE YOU, BLESS THOSE WHO CURSE YOU, AND PRAY FOR THOSE WHO SPITEFULLY USE YOU...

**THEREFORE, BE MERCIFUL,
JUST AS YOUR FATHER ALSO IS MERCIFUL."**

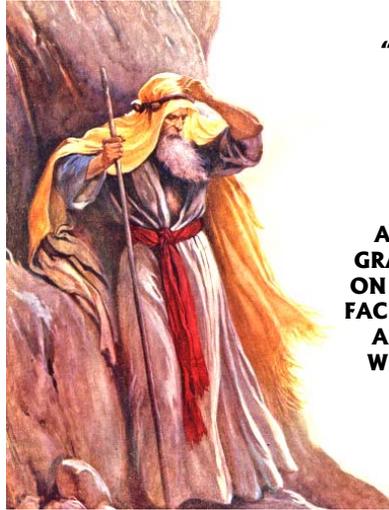
Luke 6:27-28,36

"BUT I SAY UNTO YOU WHO HEAR: LOVE YOUR ENEMIES, DO GOOD TO THOSE WHO HATE YOU, BLESS THOSE WHO CURSE YOU, AND PRAY FOR THOSE WHO SPITEFULLY USE YOU...

**THEREFORE, BE MERCIFUL,
JUST AS YOUR FATHER ALSO IS MERCIFUL."**

Luke 6:27-28,36

If we are going to respond properly to this mandate from God to be merciful, we must first understand how it is that God Himself is merciful. Where is this trait of a merciful God to be placed in the overall character of God as expressed in His Word? The answer is, "Right at the top." For example, let us consider Moses' request to be able to see God's glory:



"SO THE LORD SAID TO MOSES, 'I WILL ALSO DO THIS THING THAT YOU HAVE SPOKEN; FOR YOU HAVE FOUND GRACE IN MY SIGHT, AND I KNOW YOU BY NAME.'

**AND MOSES SAID,
'PLEASE, SHOW ME YOUR GLORY.'**

THEN HE SAID, 'I WILL MAKE ALL MY GOODNESS PASS BEFORE YOU, AND I WILL PROCLAIM THE NAME OF THE LORD BEFORE YOU. I WILL BE GRACIOUS TO WHOM I WILL BE GRACIOUS, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I WILL HAVE COMPASSION.' BUT HE SAID, 'YOU CANNOT SEE MY FACE; FOR NO MAN SHALL SEE ME, AND LIVE.' AND THE LORD SAID, 'HERE IS A PLACE BY ME, AND YOU SHALL STAND ON THE ROCK. SO IT SHALL BE, WHILE MY GLORY PASSES BY, THAT I WILL PUT YOU IN THE CLEFT OF THE ROCK, AND WILL COVER YOU WITH MY HAND WHILE I PASS BY. THEN I WILL TAKE AWAY MY HAND, AND YOU SHALL SEE MY BACK; BUT MY FACE SHALL NOT BE SEEN.'" Ex. 33:17-23

Two important things are to be noted from the magnitude of the revelation God gives to Moses about Himself: (1) God is going to make all His goodness pass before Moses, and (2) He will proclaim the name of the Lord as He passes by. Let us look at what God shows Moses as His glory, His goodness and His name:

"NOW THE LORD DESCENDED IN THE CLOUD AND STOOD WITH HIM THERE, AND PROCLAIMED THE NAME OF THE LORD. AND THE LORD PASSED BEFORE HIM AND PROCLAIMED,

'THE LORD, THE LORD GOD,

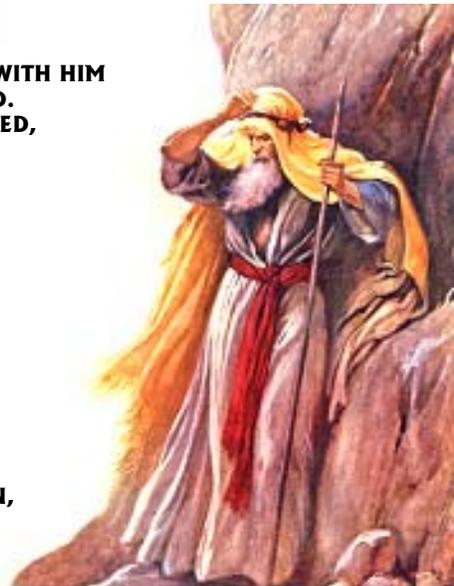
MERCIFUL

**AND GRACIOUS, LONGSUFFERING,
AND ABUNDING IN GOODNESS AND TRUTH,
KEEPING**

MERCY

**FOR THOUSANDS,
FORGIVING INIQUITY AND TRANSGRESSION AND SIN,
BY NO MEANS CLEARING THE GUILTY..."**

Ex 34:5-7



The first thing out of God's mouth in proclaiming His goodness as well as His name is the attribute of being merciful. Notice He did not proclaim "His Sovereignty" in describing what constitutes His glory, His goodness or His name. Today's erroneous Calvinistic doctrines exalt God's Sovereignty as supreme, but God exalts His Mercy above all His attributes.

If you think this is an isolated event in Scripture than consider these other examples as well: —————>



**"THE LORD IS
MERCIFUL**

**AND GRACIOUS, SLOW TO ANGER,
AND ABOUNDING IN
MERCY**

**AS THE HEAVENS ARE
HIGH ABOVE THE EARTH,
SO GREAT IS HIS
MERCY ..."**

Psalm 103:8-11

**"PRAISE THE LORD, ALL YOU GENTILES!
FOR HIS
MERCIFUL
KINDNESS**

**IS
GREAT
TOWARD US..."**

Psalm 117:1-2



**"OH, GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD,
FOR HE IS GOOD!**

**FOR HIS
MERCY
ENDURES FOREVER!"**

1 Chron. 16:34

The well-used phrase, "His mercy endures forever," appears 41 times in the Old Testament! This is the chief character trait that God lists in describing Himself.

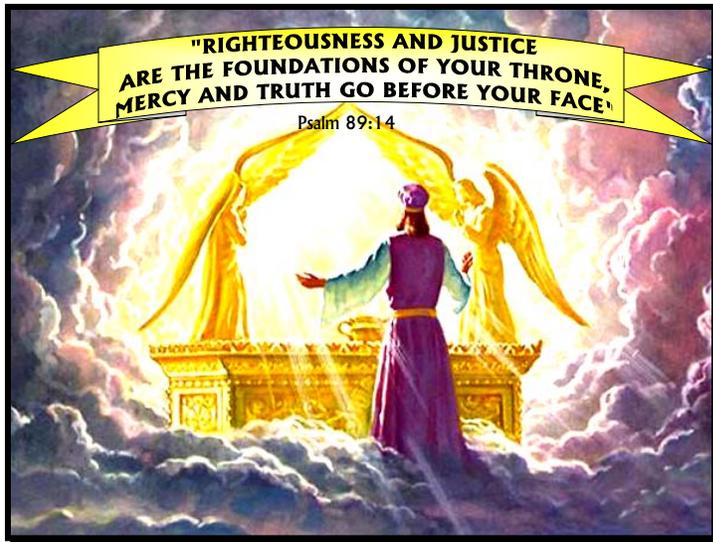
"His mercy endures forever" is the phrase the people used in praising God that resulted in fire falling from heaven in a manifestation of the glory of God filling the temple to the point that the people could not even remain standing (2 Chron. 7:1-6). Place importance on what God emphasizes in His Word, and you will get a proper response from God.

There is a very applicable principle in the story of Job about his three well-meaning friends who came down to straighten out his misconceptions of who God is. However, in the end, after several lengthy chapters of their misguided counsel, God charged Job's zealous friends with these stinging words of rebuke:

**"...MY WRATH IS AROUSED AGAINST YOU AND YOUR TWO FRIENDS,
FOR YOU HAVE NOT SPOKEN OF ME WHAT IS RIGHT,
AS MY SERVANT JOB HAS."**

Job 42:7

Careless doctrines of false emphasis such as the Calvinist-based denominations present about the supreme character and nature of God being "absolutely sovereign" may bring down the same threat of wrath upon them as God spoke against Job's three friends who "...have not spoken of Me what is right." Not even once does God speak of Himself as being "a sovereign God" as do the Calvinists. In fact, the word appears only once in Scripture, and that not of God at all, but "His mercy" is rampant throughout. God's "sovereignty" is a false emphasis, a character assassination of who God really is. God is exactly what He says He is in His Word, namely, He is merciful and wants His people to "be merciful just as your Father is also merciful." Let's get the right message!



Here is what the Scriptures state to be the foundations of God's throne. Rather than "sovereignty," we find it to be "Righteousness and Justice."

Follow the word "righteous/righteousness" in scripture and you will be overwhelmed with the fact that God is repeatedly pictured as "The Righteous Judge." He does not judge out of His sovereignty, but from His position of righteousness. Simply put, He does only what is right.

Look now at what follows these foundations of His throne,

"MERCY and TRUTH
go before Your face"

In describing the Ark of the Covenant pictured above, Paul said these words:

**"FOR A TABERNACLE WAS PREPARED...AND BEHIND THE SECOND VEIL,
THE PART OF THE TABERNACLE WHICH IS CALLED THE HOLIEST OF ALL,
WHICH HAD...THE ARK OF THE COVENANT...
AND ABOVE IT WERE THE CHERUBIM OF GLORY OVERSHADOWING**

THE MERCY SEAT..."
Heb. 9:1-5

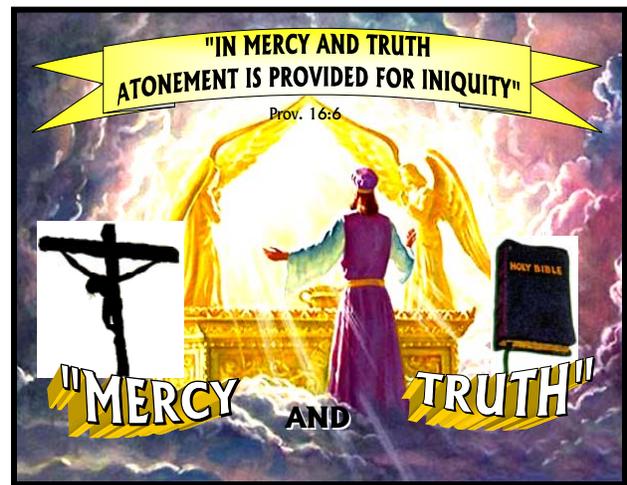
The Ark of the Covenant is a type and shadow of God's throne (Heb. 9:24). What is placed over the foundations of "Righteousness and Justice"? It is "The Mercy Seat." Again, we can see the importance of mercy in God's structure. It always gets a preeminent place because God Himself is chiefly merciful.

However, let us be sure that we embrace the whole counsel of God in this matter. Both in the passage above (Ps. 89:14) and in this one from Prov. 16:6,

We find mercy is connected to a sister truth. It is:

"MERCY and TRUTH"

This combination of "mercy and truth" appears 44 times in Scripture. We will look at some of them on the next page. However, for the moment, let us remember the principle, "What God has joined together, let not man separate" (Mk. 10:9). God has "married" together "mercy and truth." If we are going to be "merciful as our Father is merciful", then we are going to have to keep mercy tied to truth.



It is because God's throne is based on righteousness and truth, rather than an act of sovereignty, that the righteous demands of the law must be satisfied in order for God to grant His mercy. Look at the above. The cross of Christ depicts God's mercy, and the Word of God depicts His truth (see Ps.119:142, Jn.17:17). Because the Word of God says, "The wages of sin is death" (Rom.6:23), that truth must be satisfied in order for God to give us His mercy! The reverse is also true:

~ YOU CANNOT GIVE MERCY AT THE EXPENSE OF TRUTH ~

"MERCY AND TRUTH"



**"RIGHTOUSNESS AND JUSTICE ARE THE FOUNDATION OF YOUR THRONE;
MERCY AND TRUTH GO BEFORE YOUR FACE."**

Ps. 89:14

"IN MERCY THE THRONE WILL BE ESTABLISHED; AND ONE WILL SIT ON IT IN TRUTH..."

Isa. 16:5

"IN MERCY AND TRUTH ATONEMENT IS PROVIDED FOR INIQUITY..."

Prov 16:6

ALL THE PATHS OF THE LORD ARE MERCY AND TRUTH..."

Ps. 25:10

"...GOD SHALL SEND FORTH HIS MERCY AND HIS TRUTH."

Ps. 57:3

**BUT YOU, O LORD, ARE A GOD FULL OF COMPASSION, AND GRACIOUS,
LONGSUFFERING AND ABUNDANT IN MERCY AND TRUTH."**

Ps. 86:15

"O GOD, IN THE MULTITUDE OF YOUR MERCY, HEAR ME IN THE TRUTH OF YOUR SALVATION."

Ps. 69:13

"MERCY AND TRUTH HAVE MET TOGETHER; RIGHTEOUSNESS AND PEACE HAVE KISSED."

Ps 85:10

"FOR THE LORD IS GOOD; HIS MERCY IS EVERLASTING, AND HIS TRUTH ENDURES TO ALL GENERATIONS."

Ps 100:5

The above should be sufficient evidence to establish that God's mercy is vitally tied to His truth. As the Righteous Judge (2 Tim.4:8), He will not violate what He has recorded as truth in order to grant mercy. For instance, consider these specified conditions to God granting mercy:

**"... I WILL JUDGE YOU...
EVERY ONE ACCORDING TO HIS WAYS,'
SAYS THE LORD GOD.
'REPENT, AND TURN FROM ALL YOUR
TRANSGRESSIONS, SO THAT INIQUITY
WILL NOT BE YOUR RUIN. CAST AWAY
FROM YOU ALL THE TRANSGRESSIONS
WHICH YOU HAVE COMMITTED,
AND GET YOURSELVES
A NEW HEART AND A NEW SPIRIT.
FOR WHY SHOULD YOU DIE..?
FOR I HAVE NO PLEASURE
IN THE DEATH OF ONE WHO DIES,'
SAYS THE LORD GOD.
'THEREFORE TURN AND LIVE! '"**

Ezek 18:30-32



THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE

**"SINCE YOU HAVE PURIFIED YOUR SOULS
IN OBEYING THE TRUTH THROUGH THE
SPIRIT IN SINCERE LOVE OF THE
BRETHREN, LOVE ONE ANOTHER
FERVENTLY WITH A PURE HEART, HAVING
BEEN BORN AGAIN, NOT OF
CORRUPTIBLE SEED BUT INCORRUPTIBLE,
THROUGH THE WORD OF GOD WHICH
LIVES AND ABIDES FOREVER..."**

1 Pet. 1:22-24

**"THE LORD IS NOT SLACK CONCERNING
HIS PROMISE...BUT IS LONGSUFFERING
TOWARD US, NOT WILLING THAT ANY
SHOULD PERISH BUT THAT ALL SHOULD
COME TO REPENTANCE."**

2 Pet. 3:9

**"... A SERVANT OF THE LORD MUST NOT QUARREL BUT BE GENTLE TO ALL,
ABLE TO TEACH, PATIENT, IN HUMILITY CORRECTING THOSE WHO ARE IN OPPOSITION,
IF GOD PERHAPS WILL GRANT THEM REPENTANCE, SO THAT THEY MAY KNOW THE TRUTH,
AND THAT THEY MAY COME TO THEIR SENSES AND ESCAPE THE SNARE OF THE DEVIL,
HAVING BEEN TAKEN CAPTIVE BY HIM TO DO HIS WILL."**

2 Tim 2:24-26

God will not grant mercy at the expense of truth. Rather, God grants mercy to those who respond to truth. Man must come to the knowledge of the truth through repentance. Then, and then alone, does God grant mercy. He does not grant mercy because He is "sovereign" as the Calvinists proclaim. He grants mercy as the Righteous Judge to all who come to the knowledge of the truth. The Calvinist believes God grants mercy only "to whosoever God (sovereignly) chooses." Not true! The Bible says God grants mercy "to whosoever wills" to embrace the truth. The truth of the matter is, that it is man's will which is "sovereign" in choice, not God's! Reject truth, and you reject God's mercy!

"IN MERCY AND TRUTH ATONEMENT IS PROVIDED FOR INIQUITY" Prov. 16:6

**"DO NOT JUDGE ACCORDING TO APPEARANCE,
BUT JUDGE WITH RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT"**
John 7:24

Take careful notice that it is Jesus, the Righteous Judge who judges all men righteously, instructs us as His followers, to also judge with righteous judgment.

I am amazed how the majority of Christians are well-versed with Jesus' admonition, "Judge not, that you not be judged" (Matt. 7:1) , but seem to be oblivious to the call to "judge with righteous judgment" (Jn. 7:24).

Are these two verses in conflict with one another? They are not, if you consider the context in which Jesus warns, "Judge not, that you be not judged". This is an admonition not to judge from a position of hypocrisy rather than an exhortation not to judge at all:



**"JUDGE NOT, THAT YOU BE NOT JUDGED.
FOR WITH WHAT JUDGMENT YOU JUDGE, YOU WILL BE JUDGED;
AND WITH THE MEASURE YOU USE, IT WILL BE MEASURED BACK TO YOU.
AND WHY DO YOU LOOK AT THE SPECK IN YOUR BROTHER'S EYE,
BUT DO NOT CONSIDER THE PLANK IN YOUR OWN EYE? OR HOW CAN
YOU SAY TO YOUR BROTHER, 'LET ME REMOVE THE SPECK FROM
YOUR EYE'; AND LOOK, A PLANK IS IN YOUR OWN EYE?
HYPOCRITE!**



**FIRST REMOVE THE PLANK FROM YOUR OWN EYE, AND THEN YOU WILL
SEE CLEARLY TO REMOVE THE SPECK FROM YOUR BROTHER'S EYE."**

Matt 7:1-5

Let's get the message:

Judge righteously, and you will be judged by the same measure you use.

Judge from the position of hypocrisy, and you will be judged by God using the same measure.

This exact same principle is in play when it comes to the beatitude of being merciful:



The principles that govern judgment are the same that govern mercy. The Righteous Judge wants His people to "Judge with righteous judgment." God who is merciful calls His people to "be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful." How is God merciful? When man responds properly to truth. When man repents of disobeying truth, God extends His mercy. Be merciful in like manner! However, keep in mind that we are to "be merciful as your Father is merciful":

~ YOU CANNOT GIVE MERCY AT THE EXPENSE OF TRUTH ~

HOW TO BE MERCIFUL, AS YOUR FATHER IS MERCIFUL

55

**"BUT I SAY TO YOU WHO HEAR:
LOVE YOUR ENEMIES,
DO GOOD TO THOSE WHO HATE YOU,
BLESS THOSE WHO CURSE YOU,
AND PRAY FOR THOSE WHO SPITEFULLY USE YOU.
TO HIM WHO STRIKES YOU ON THE ONE CHEEK,
OFFER THE OTHER ALSO.**

**AND FROM HIM WHO TAKES AWAY YOUR CLOAK,
DO NOT WITHHOLD YOUR TUNIC EITHER. GIVE TO EVERYONE WHO ASKS OF YOU.
AND FROM HIM WHO TAKES AWAY YOUR GOODS DO NOT ASK THEM BACK.**

AND JUST AS YOU WANT MEN TO DO TO YOU, YOU ALSO DO TO THEM LIKEWISE.

"BUT IF YOU LOVE THOSE WHO LOVE YOU, WHAT CREDIT IS THAT TO YOU? FOR EVEN SINNERS LOVE THOSE WHO LOVE THEM. AND IF YOU DO GOOD TO THOSE WHO DO GOOD TO YOU, WHAT CREDIT IS THAT TO YOU? FOR EVEN SINNERS DO THE SAME. AND IF YOU LEND TO THOSE FROM WHOM YOU HOPE TO RECEIVE BACK, WHAT CREDIT IS THAT TO YOU?

FOR EVEN SINNERS LEND TO SINNERS TO RECEIVE AS MUCH BACK.

**BUT LOVE YOUR ENEMIES, DO GOOD, AND LEND, HOPING FOR NOTHING IN RETURN;
AND YOUR REWARD WILL BE GREAT,**

**AND YOU WILL BE SONS OF THE MOST HIGH. FOR HE IS KIND TO THE UNTHANKFUL AND EVIL.
THEREFORE BE MERCIFUL, JUST AS YOUR FATHER ALSO IS MERCIFUL."**

Luke 6:27-36

The above Scripture contains all the principles one needs to be deemed by God as possessing the beatitude of being merciful. The heartbeat principle is stated right in the middle of these passages. It is "the Golden Rule" principle of doing to others what you would have them do to you. It is built on "going the extra mile" and "giving till it hurts." It is a principle of choosing to continue to bless people who strike you publicly with their judgmental and condemning words, who choose to be hateful towards you, who prefer to use you spitefully for their own advantage, who curse you with their words of pronounced judgments, and all the while remain totally unthankful for all the multitude of your deeds of kindness toward them.

To whom do these words apply? We tend to think of a brutal occupational army that has invaded one's country, but this is not the concept Jesus has in mind. It applies to far more personal relationships. He is talking about confrontation with your loved ones, those dear to you, family members, children, or even brethren who have become your enemies because of the truth. It is these to whom Jesus calls us to be merciful beyond measure.

Listen to the source of David's personal agony as well as Jesus' warning to all:

**"FOR IT IS NOT AN ENEMY WHO REPROACHES ME; THEN I COULD BEAR IT...
BUT IT WAS YOU, A MAN MY EQUAL, MY COMPANION AND MY ACQUAINTANCE. WE TOOK SWEET
COUNSEL TOGETHER, AND WALKED TO THE HOUSE OF GOD IN THE THRONG." Psm. 55:12-13**

**"DO NOT THINK THAT I CAME TO BRING PEACE ON EARTH. I DID NOT COME TO BRING
PEACE BUT A SWORD. FOR I HAVE COME TO 'SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, A DAUGHTER
AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW';
AND 'A MAN'S ENEMIES WILL BE THOSE OF HIS OWN HOUSEHOLD.'" Matt 10:34-37**

The "sword" Jesus speaks of is "truth." Households will be divided by confrontation of the truth. The last days are vividly described by the apostle Paul as being centered upon what people will become:

**"BUT UNDERSTAND THIS, THAT IN THE LAST DAYS WILL COME (SET IN) PERILOUS TIMES OF GREAT
STRESS AND TROUBLE HARD TO DEAL WITH AND HARD TO BEAR. FOR PEOPLE WILL BE...UTTERLY
SELF-CENTERED, PROUD AND ARROGANT... CONTEMPTUOUS...ABUSIVE SCOFFERS, DISOBEDIENT TO
PARENTS, UNGRATEFUL, RELENTLESS (ADMITTING OF NO TRUCE OR APPEASEMENT) SLANDERERS,
FALSE ACCUSERS... CALLOUS AND INHUMAN, TROUBLEMAKERS... LOOSE IN MORALS AND CONDUCT,
UNCONTROLLED AND FIERCE, RASH..." excerpts of 2 Tim. 3:1-4 Amplified**

It is into this quagmire of volatile relationships that Jesus calls out to His people of truth for the needful balance to:

"THEREFORE BE MERCIFUL, JUST AS YOUR FATHER ALSO IS MERCIFUL."

Luke 6:27-36

Pastor Randy Shupe

"THE PROPHETIC WORD"

PART SEVEN OF THE BEATITUDES:

**"BLESSED ARE
THE
PURE
IN HEART,
FOR THEY
SHALL
SEE GOD"**



Matt. 5:8

"THEREFORE, AS THE HOLY SPIRIT SAYS: 'TODAY, IF YOU WILL HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS AS IN THE REBELLION IN THE WILDERNESS, WHERE YOUR FATHERS TESTED ME FORTY YEARS. ... I WAS ANGRY WITH THAT GENERATION, AND SAID, 'THEY ALWAYS GO ASTRAY IN THEIR HEART... BEWARE, BRETHREN, LEST THERE BE IN ANY OF YOU AN EVIL HEART OF UNBELIEF IN DEPARTING FROM THE LIVING GOD; BUT EXHORT ONE ANOTHER DAILY... LEST ANY OF YOU BE HARDENED THROUGH THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN.'"

Heb.3:7-13

"THE HEART IS DECEITFUL ABOVE ALL THINGS, AND IT IS EXCEEDINGLY PERVERSE AND CORRUPT AND SEVERELY, MORTALLY SICK! WHO CAN KNOW IT, PERCEIVE, UNDERSTAND, BE ACQUAINTED WITH HIS OWN HEART?"

Jer. 17:9 Amp.

"FOR THE WORD OF GOD IS LIVING AND POWERFUL, AND SHARPER THAN ANY TWO-EDGED SWORD, PIERCING EVEN TO THE DIVISION OF SOUL AND SPIRIT... AND IS A DISCERNER OF THE THOUGHTS AND INTENTS OF THE HEART"

Heb. 4:12-13

"HEART DISEASE REMAINS BY FAR THE NATION'S BIGGEST KILLER, TAKING A LIFE EVERY 32 SECONDS..."

(THE AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION)



Often I find that what is happening in the physical realm foreshadows spiritual happenings as well. Physical heart disease is deadly. So is spiritual heart disease. It would not be difficult to document from the Word of God that the condition of the heart of the believer is also in great jeopardy if not carefully maintained and looked after.

This is the seventh newsletter dedicated to the topic of the Beatitudes.

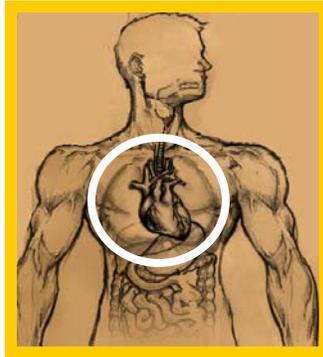
This is the sixth Beatitude spoken of by Jesus, "Blessed are the pure in Heart, for they shall see God."

There is a great parallel to be seen here: the ability to see God as He really is, requires that we, as followers of God, be able to see ourselves as we really are. A deceitful heart can prevent us from doing so. This newsletter is dedicated to those principles necessary for maintaining a healthy heart.

An easy parallel can be seen between the physical organ called the heart ("Kardia") and what the Bible indicates is the spiritual heart ("Leb-center") of man:

**"KARDIA"
THE HEART,

IS THE
CHIEF ORGAN
OF PHYSICAL LIFE
AND OCCUPIES
THE CENTRAL PLACE
IN THE HUMAN BODY**



**"LEB" (Hebrew)
HEART- "CENTER"**

**"KEEP YOUR HEART WITH ALL
DILIGENCE, FOR OUT OF IT
SPRING THE ISSUES OF LIFE"**

Prov. 4:23

**"FOR OUT OF THE ABUNDANCE
OF THE HEART
HIS MOUTH SPEAKS"**

Luke 6:45

**"KEEP YOUR HEART WITH ALL DILIGENCE,
FOR OUT OF IT SPRING THE ISSUES OF LIFE"**

Prov. 4:23

MEDITATION...

BELIEF...

FAITH...

REASONING...

INTENTION...

WILLINGNESS...

UNDERSTANDING...

CONSCIENCE...



WORSHIP...

LOVE...

DEVOTION...

LOYALTY...

COMPASSION...

CONVICTION...

THANKFULNESS...

Likewise a parallel can be made between a physically diseased heart vs. a healthy one, and by what the Bible depicts as a "good heart" vs. an "evil heart."



**"FOR FROM WITHIN,
OUT OF THE HEART OF MEN PROCEED..."**

Mark 7:21-23

EVIL
THOUGHTS...

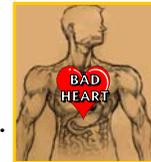
MURDERS...

PRIDE...

WICKEDNESS...

COVETOUSNESS...

FOOLISHNESS...



ADULTERIES...

FORNICATIONS...

THEFTS...

DECEIT...

LEWDNESS...

AN EVIL EYE...

BLASPHEMY...

**ALL THESE THINGS COME FROM WITHIN
AND DEFILE A MAN."**

**"A GOOD MAN OUT OF THE GOOD TREASURE OF HIS HEART BRINGS FORTH GOOD;
AND AN EVIL MAN OUT OF THE EVIL TREASURE OF HIS HEART BRINGS FORTH EVIL.
FOR OUT OF THE ABUNDANCE OF THE HEART HIS MOUTH SPEAKS."** Luke 6:45

How is it that the heart can be both evil and good? The answer can be summed up in one word, **"INFLUENCE."** If the source of influence on the heart comes from "the Wicked One" then the heart of man will produce wickedness. However, if the influence on the heart comes from the Word of God, a man's deeds will be good. Knowing the importance of the heart, Satan seeks to keep man from submitting to the influence of the Word of God. No place in Scripture is this taught more clearly than in the Parable of the Sower. The stark truth presented in this parable is that three out of four hearts who hear the Word of God suffer "cardiac arrest" as Satan moves in to steal the Word sown in their heart.

It is beyond the scope and purpose of this newsletter to deal with how it is that Satan is effective in bringing about these three forms of spiritual heart disease. What I strongly recommend is this teaching that I did both in book form as well as in DVD format. In this newsletter we are going to focus upon the fourth heart:

**"BUT AS FOR
THE SEED IN THE GOOD SOIL,
THESE ARE THE PEOPLE WHO, HEARING
THE WORD, HOLD IT FAST IN A JUST,
NOBLE, VIRTUOUS AND WORTHY HEART,
AND STEADILY BRING FORTH FRUIT
WITH PATIENCE"**

Luke 8:15 Amplified

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

**THE SEED IS
THE WORD
OF GOD..."** Luke 8:11

**THE GROUND IS
THE HEART
OF MAN**

**SATAN SEEKS
TO NULLIFY
THE EFFECTIVENESS
OF THE SEED SOWN
IN THE HEART**

**THE PARABLE
OF
THE SOWER**

**THE PARABLE
OF
THE SOWER**

**THE SEED IS THE WORD OF GOD...
THE GROUND IS THE HEART OF MAN
SATAN SEEKS TO NULLIFY THE EFFECTIVENESS
OF THE SEED SOWN IN THE HEART**

© Pastor Randy Steg

As we have seen with the other Beatitudes Jesus taught in Matthew Chapter Five, this one too is not a new truth presented by Jesus, but rather finds its originality in the Old Testament as well:

It is equally important to consider the benefits of pursuing purity of heart before God:

HOW IMPORTANT IS THIS BEATITUDE?

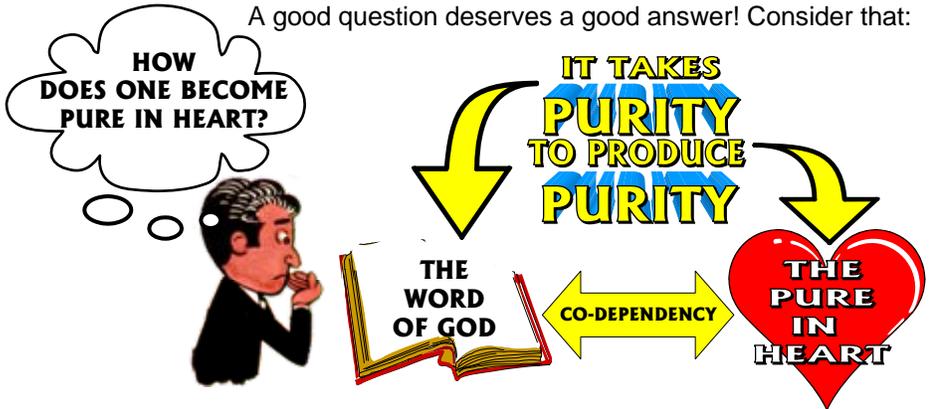
"HE WHO LOVES PURITY OF HEART WILL BE HIS FRIEND"
THE KING
 Prov. 22:11

THE HEART BEATITUDE

OLD TESTAMENT
 "WHO MAY ASCEND INTO THE HILL OF THE LORD? HE WHO HAS A PURE HEART"
 Psm . 24: 3-4

NEW TESTAMENT
 "BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART FOR THEY SHALL SEE GOD"
 Matt. 5:8

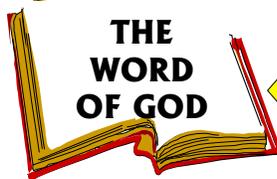
It is logical to assume that an impure source can only produce more impurity. Conversely, if we begin with a pure source, then what is produced by it will also be pure.



"HOW SHALL A YOUNG MAN CLEANSE HIS WAY? BY TAKING HEED ACCORDING TO YOUR WORD."

YOUR WORD I HAVE HIDDEN IN MY HEART, THAT I MIGHT NOT SIN AGAINST YOU"

Psm. 119:9,11



THE WORD OF GOD

"FOR THE WORD OF GOD IS LIVING AND POWERFUL, AND SHARPER THAN ANY TWO-EDGED SWORD, PIERCING EVEN TO THE DIVISION OF SOUL AND SPIRIT..."

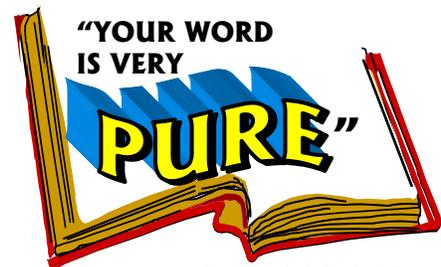


THE PURE IN HEART

AND IS A DISCERNER OF THE THOUGHTS AND INTENTS OF THE HEART"

Heb.4:12-13

Both the Old Testament as well as the New Testament bear out that there is a co-dependency that exists between the Word of God and purity of heart. Embracing the one produces the other. There is no other way. If you are going to obtain purity of heart, you must begin with that which is most pure:



Psm. 119:140

"YOUR WORD
IS VERY

PURE"

Psm. 119:140

"EVERY WORD
OF GOD IS

PURE"

Prov. 30:5

"THE WORDS OF
OF THE LORD ARE

PURE WORDS,

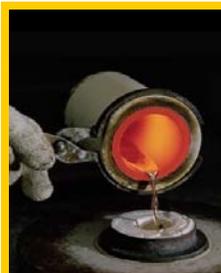
Psm. 12:6a

LIKE SILVER,
PURIFIED

SEVEN TIMES..."

Psm. 12:6b

How pure is God's Word? As pure as silver that has been purged of impurities seven times! Once again, the physical realm becomes a parallel for the spiritual. Consider how silver is purified:



THE REFINING OF SILVER DATES BACK TO 550 BC AT SARDIS, WHERE THE FIRST COINS WERE MINTED. THE REFINER WOULD HEAT THE FIRE TO SOME 1700 DEGREES, THEREBY MELTING SILVER AND POURING INTO CLAY JARS. THE IMPURITIES WOULD FLOAT TO THE TOP AND STICK TO THE EDGES OF THE POTS.

HOW DID THE ANCIENT REFINER KNOW WHEN HIS SILVER WAS PURE?



WHEN HE COULD SEE A PERFECT REFLECTION OF HIMSELF IN THE SILVER.

"...HE IS LIKE A REFINER'S FIRE... HE WILL SIT AS A REFINER AND A PURIFIER OF SILVER... HE WILL PURIFY ...AND PURGE THEM AS SILVER, THAT THEY MAY OFFER TO THE LORD AN OFFERING IN RIGHTEOUSNESS"

Mal. 3:2-3



WHEN HE COULD SEE A PERFECT REFLECTION OF HIMSELF IN THE SILVER.

"BUT WE ALL... BEHOLDING AS IN A MIRROR THE GLORY OF THE LORD, ARE BEING TRANSFORMED INTO THE SAME IMAGE FROM GLORY TO GLORY ... BY THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD..."

2 Cor. 3:18

"BUT BE DOERS OF THE WORD, AND NOT HEARERS ONLY, DECEIVING YOURSELVES. FOR IF ANYONE IS A HEARER OF THE WORD AND NOT A DOER, HE IS LIKE A MAN OBSERVING HIS NATURAL FACE IN A MIRROR; FOR HE OBSERVES HIMSELF, GOES AWAY, AND IMMEDIATELY FORGETS WHAT KIND OF MAN HE WAS..." James 1:22-24

Please note, once again, the natural illustration the Word of God uses to convey a spiritual truth. Two different images can be seen using the Word of God. One is that of the glory of Jesus (2 Cor. 3:18) and the other is a deficient reflection of ourselves (Jas. 1:22-23). Jesus, who is the Word of God (Rev. 19:13, Jn.1:1-2), sits as a "refiner of silver" revealing the perfect image of Himself as well as the imperfect image of ourselves. We are to be transformed into the image of Jesus. However, we must beware of ignoring the deficient image of ourselves that we are shown in the Word of God and thereby deceive ourselves. Remember we are dealing with a deceptive heart when left to itself. It is only by means of the purity of the Word of God that the believer can be transformed into that same pure image. It takes purity to produce purity. The Word of God has already been purified seven times like silver. Impurities lie in the deceitful heart of man. Exposing it to purity is the only way to end up being pure in heart.

**"...HE IS LIKE A REFINER'S FIRE...HE WILL SIT AS A REFINER AND A PURIFIER OF SILVER...
HE WILL PURIFY ...AND PURGE THEM AS SILVER,
THAT THEY MAY OFFER TO THE LORD AN OFFERING IN RIGHTEOUSNESS"**

Mal. 3:2-3



**"FOR YOU, O GOD, HAVE TESTED US; YOU HAVE REFINED US AS SILVER IS REFINED.
YOU BROUGHT US INTO THE NET; YOU LAID AFFLICTION ON OUR BACKS.
YOU HAVE CAUSED MEN TO RIDE OVER OUR HEADS;
WE WENT THROUGH FIRE AND THROUGH WATER;
BUT YOU BROUGHT US OUT TO RICH FULFILLMENT."** Ps 66:10-12

As mentioned earlier, silver is refined by means of the furnace. Some impurities are quite stubborn. Therefore, if need be, the furnace temperature must be increased drastically to cause hidden impurities to rise to the surface. Such was the case with Job. Initially he presented an eloquent defense and remained quite self-justifying right up to the end, but finally stated:

**"I HAVE HEARD OF YOU BY THE HEARING OF THE EAR, BUT NOW MY EYE SEES YOU.
THEREFORE I ABHOR MYSELF, AND REPENT IN DUST AND ASHES."** Job 42:5-6

In speaking of the purpose of trials the apostle Peter reminds us:

**"...THOUGH NOW FOR A LITTLE WHILE, IF NEED BE, YOU HAVE BEEN GRIEVED BY VARIOUS
TRIALS, THAT THE GENUINENESS OF YOUR FAITH, BEING MUCH MORE PRECIOUS THAN
GOLD THAT PERISHES, THOUGH IT IS TESTED BY FIRE,
MAY BE FOUND TO PRAISE, HONOR, AND GLORY AT THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST..."**

1 Pet. 1:6-7

Paul the apostle also understood God's purpose for such "fiery trials" in the life of the believer. Rather than being punitive action, he saw them as acts of loving correction from God to prevent destruction:

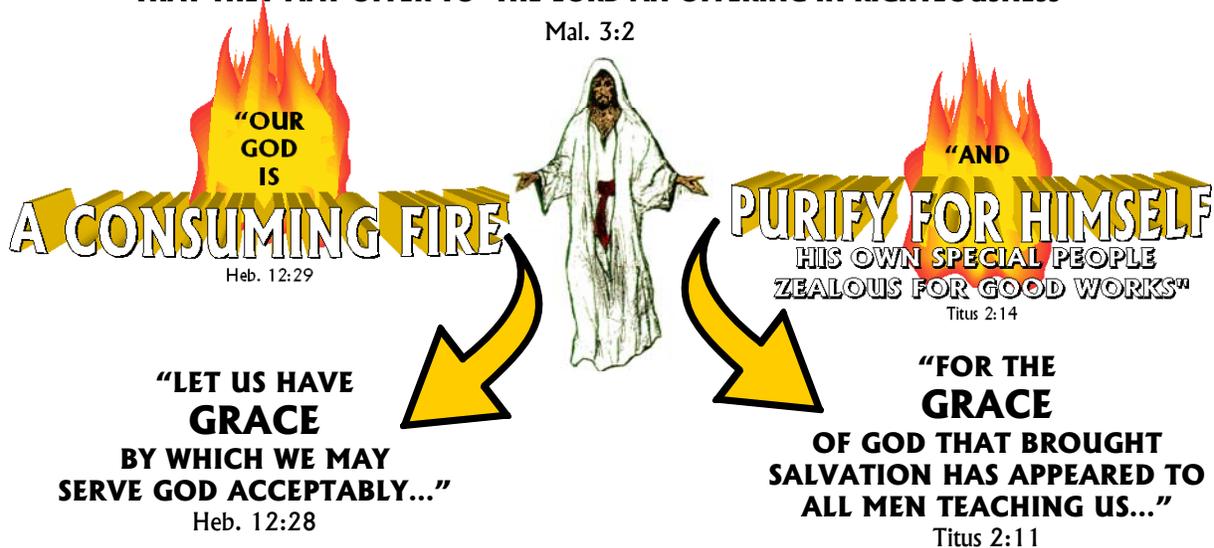
**"FOR IF WE WOULD JUDGE OURSELVES, WE WOULD NOT BE JUDGED.
BUT WHEN WE ARE JUDGED, WE ARE CHASTENED BY THE LORD,
THAT WE MAY NOT BE CONDEMNED WITH THE WORLD."** 1 Cor 11:31-32

Notice the first option is for believers to judge themselves. This is done through examining ourselves through the mirror of God's Word and making self-correcting changes as needed. However, should we become like the "forgetful hearer of God's Word" that James describes, then God Himself will eventually take the initiative to administer chastening with the purpose in mind, "...that we may not be condemned with the world." Self-correction is the easier pathway. Look at God's Word and then look at yourself. If the images are drastically opposed, it is time for drastic action. If you don't take action, know that God will. Paul reminds us:

**"IF YOU ENDURE CHASTENING, GOD DEALS WITH YOU AS WITH SONS; FOR WHAT SON IS
THERE WHOM A FATHER DOES NOT CHASTEN...BUT IF YOU ARE WITHOUT CHASTENING, OF
WHICH ALL HAVE BECOME PARTAKERS, THEN YOU ARE ILLEGITIMATE AND NOT SONS...
NOW NO CHASTENING SEEMS TO BE JOYFUL FOR THE PRESENT, BUT GRIEVOUS;
NEVERTHELESS, AFTERWARD IT YIELDS THE PEACEABLE FRUIT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS
TO THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN TRAINED BY IT."** Heb.12:7-11 excerpts

"...HE IS LIKE A REFINER'S FIRE...HE WILL SIT AS A REFINER AND A PURIFIER OF SILVER... HE WILL PURIFY ...AND PURGE THEM AS SILVER, THAT THEY MAY OFFER TO THE LORD AN OFFERING IN RIGHTEOUSNESS"

Mal. 3:2



It is extremely important to consider the sober fact that both of the presentations of God as "a consuming fire" and as God seeking to "purify for Himself" His own people zealous for good works, in context, are teachings about **THE GRACE OF GOD**. What might I ask, has happened to the presentation of this purifying aspect placed on the recipients of God's grace in modern-day teaching today? Where is the emphasis on the message of Grace that produces believers who serve God acceptably? Where is the kind of grace teaching that makes God's people to be zealous for good works? The answer lies in the lack of concern for preaching the whole counsel of God as did Paul:

"...I TESTIFY TO YOU THIS DAY THAT I AM INNOCENT OF THE BLOOD OF ALL MEN. FOR I HAVE NOT SHUNNED TO DECLARE TO YOU THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD. THEREFORE TAKE HEED TO YOURSELVES AND TO ALL THE FLOCK, AMONG WHICH THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS MADE YOU OVERSEERS, TO SHEPHERD THE CHURCH OF GOD WHICH HE PURCHASED WITH HIS OWN BLOOD. FOR I KNOW THIS, THAT AFTER MY DEPARTURE SAVAGE WOLVES WILL COME IN AMONG YOU, NOT SPARING THE FLOCK. ALSO FROM AMONG YOURSELVES MEN WILL RISE UP, SPEAKING PERVERSE THINGS, TO DRAW AWAY THE DISCIPLES AFTER THEMSELVES. THEREFORE WATCH, AND REMEMBER THAT FOR THREE YEARS I DID NOT CEASE TO WARN EVERYONE NIGHT AND DAY WITH TEARS."



Acts 20:26-31

Such apostolic oversight is greatly lacking in modern-day Christianity. Paul's prophetic warning of men rising up and speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after themselves is more the norm today. Jude also warned the early church about the perversion that would take place concerning the presentation of the grace of God:



Jude 3-4

"BELOVED, WHILE I WAS VERY DILIGENT TO WRITE TO YOU CONCERNING OUR COMMON SALVATION, I FOUND IT NECESSARY TO WRITE TO YOU EXHORTING YOU TO CONTEND EARNESTLY FOR THE FAITH WHICH WAS ONCE FOR ALL DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS. FOR CERTAIN MEN HAVE CREPT IN UNNOTICED, WHO LONG AGO WERE MARKED OUT FOR THIS CONDEMNATION, UNGODLY MEN, WHO TURN THE GRACE OF OUR GOD INTO LEWDNESS AND DENY THE ONLY LORD GOD AND OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST."

Unless we embrace the whole "pure Word of God" we will be found lacking in "purity of heart." The quality of one produces the quality of the other. Diminish the contents of the message of the grace of God, and the lack of purity of heart in the believer will be the result.

A deceitful handling of the Word of God by those in the pulpit will produce a deceitful heart in those in the pew. Paul gave sufficient warning of this coming phenomena:



“PREACH THE WORD! BE READY IN SEASON AND OUT OF SEASON. CONVINCe, REBUKE, EXHORT, WITH ALL LONGSUFFERING AND TEACHING. FOR THE TIME WILL COME WHEN THEY WILL NOT ENDURE SOUND DOCTRINE, BUT ACCORDING TO THEIR OWN DESIRES, BECAUSE THEY HAVE ITCHING EARS, THEY WILL HEAR UP FOR THEMSELVES TEACHERS; AND THEY WILL TURN THEIR EARS AWAY FROM THE TRUTH, AND BE TURNED ASIDE TO FABLES.”

2 Tim 4:2-5

“I HAVE SET THE LORD ALWAYS BEFORE ME; BECAUSE HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND I SHALL NOT BE MOVED. THEREFORE MY HEART IS GLAD...”

Ps 16:8-9

“A DECEIVED HEART HAS TURNED HIM ASIDE; AND HE CANNOT DELIVER HIS SOUL, NOR SAY, ‘IS THERE NOT A LIE IN MY RIGHT HAND?’ ”

Isa. 44:20

Study carefully the above contrast. What is in your right hand? Is it the truth or a lie? The pure in heart will be those who set their heart on the pure Word of God. A deceived heart will put his trust in the wisdom of this world. Only God’s Word is pure enough to produce a pure heart. Remember the principle: It takes purity to produce purity. Left to itself the heart can only produce deceit. It must be placed under the influence of something of absolute purity.

God indeed is serious about the subject of purity in His people:

“TO THE PURE ALL THINGS ARE PURE, BUT TO THOSE WHO ARE DEFILED AND UNBELIEVING NOTHING IS PURE; BUT EVEN THEIR MIND AND CONSCIENCE ARE DEFILED. THEY PROFESS TO KNOW GOD, BUT IN WORKS THEY DENY HIM, BEING ABOMINABLE, DISOBEDIENT, AND DISQUALIFIED FOR EVERY GOOD WORK.”

Titus 1:15-16



“SINCE YOU HAVE PURIFIED YOUR SOULS IN OBEYING THE TRUTH...”

LOVE ONE ANOTHER FERVENTLY WITH A **PURE HEART**

HAVING BEEN BORN AGAIN... THROUGH **THE WORD OF GOD**

AS NEWBORN BABES, DESIRE THE MILK OF **PURE** **THE WORD** THAT YOU MAY GROW THEREBY...”

1 Pet. 1:22-23

"THE PROPHETIC WORD"

PART EIGHT OF THE BEATITUDES:

**"BLESSED ARE
THE
PEACE-
MAKERS,
FOR THEY
SHALL BE CALLED
SONS OF GOD."**

Matt. 5:9

"DO NOT THINK THAT I CAME TO BRING PEACE ON EARTH.

I DID NOT COME TO BRING PEACE BUT A SWORD.

FOR I HAVE COME TO 'SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW'; AND 'A MAN'S ENEMIES WILL BE THOSE OF HIS OWN HOUSEHOLD.'

Matt 10:34-37

"DO YOU SUPPOSE THAT I CAME TO GIVE PEACE ON EARTH? I TELL YOU, NOT AT ALL, BUT RATHER DIVISION. FOR FROM NOW ON FIVE IN ONE HOUSE WILL BE DIVIDED: THREE AGAINST TWO, AND TWO AGAINST THREE. FATHER WILL BE DIVIDED AGAINST SON AND SON AGAINST FATHER, MOTHER AGAINST DAUGHTER AND DAUGHTER AGAINST MOTHER, MOTHER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AND DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW."

Luke 12:51-53

Take a long, hard look at what is contrasted above from among the sayings of Jesus. The same Jesus who pronounces a divine blessing upon the peacemakers, elsewhere clearly warns that to become a true follower of His will potentially makes peaceful family relationships very difficult and very costly to achieve. Peace has always been costly. Peace usually follows as the aftermath of war. Jesus is describing a state of warfare even among family blood-relationships that is a potential result of making a stand for truth as defined by Jesus who is called "The Truth" (Jn. 14:6).

To understand the call to be a peacemaker, we must first understand what is, and what is not true peace. Consider these thoughts from an editorial published in 1986 by Dr. Harold S. Martin:

"FOR SOME, BEING AT PEACE IS THE SAME AS HAVING A TRUCE. HOWEVER A TRUCE IS MERELY A SUSPENSION OF FIGHTING ESPECIALLY FOR A CONSIDERABLE DURATION... FOR OTHERS, PURSUING PEACE MEANS EVADING THE ISSUES. SOME SEE PEACE AS SIMPLY IGNORING THAT WHICH CAUSES THE HOSTILITIES AMONG US — A SORT OF SWEEP-THEM-UNDER-THE-RUG-AND-HOPE-THEY-GO-AWAY APPROACH TO PROBLEM SOLVING.. FOR STILL OTHERS, PEACE IS SOUGHT AT THE EXPENSE OF TRUTH. TO SUCH, PEACE IS PARAMOUNT AND BECOMES "PEACE AT ANY PRICE." ...MOST PERSONS WANT TO AVOID NEEDLESS STRIFE, BUT THERE ARE TIMES WHEN STANDING FOR THE TRUTH WILL ACTUALLY STIR UP STRIFE..."

In this newsletter, we want to look at the difficult task of the pursuit of being a peacemaker without compromising one's need to stand for truth:

"...THAT YOUR WORDS MAY BE TESTED TO SEE WHETHER THERE IS ANY TRUTH IN YOU..."

Gen. 42:16

**"...THAT YOUR WORDS MAY BE TESTED
TO SEE WHETHER THERE IS ANY TRUTH IN YOU..."**

Gen. 42:16

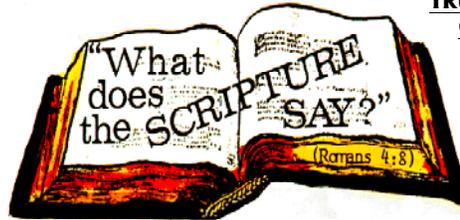
In stating that "God tests the righteous" (Ps. 11:5), it is TRUTH that has been, and always will be, the litmus test by which God tests His people. The Old Testament bears witness that for the most part God's people have demonstrated a horrendous record for being willing to compromise God's truth:

**"NO ONE CALLS FOR JUSTICE,
NOR DOES ANY PLEAD FOR TRUTH.
THEY TRUST IN EMPTY WORDS
AND SPEAK LIES..."**

Isa 59:4

**"...CONCEIVING AND
UTTERING
FROM THE HEART
WORDS OF FALSEHOOD,
JUSTICE IS TURNED BACK,
AND RIGHTEOUSNESS
STANDS AFAR OFF;
FOR TRUTH IS FALLEN IN THE STREET,
AND EQUITY CANNOT ENTER.
SO TRUTH FAILS,
AND HE WHO DEPARTS FROM EVIL
MAKES HIMSELF A PREY."**

Isa 59:13-15



**"THIS IS A NATION THAT DOES NOT OBEY
THE VOICE OF THE LORD THEIR GOD NOR
RECEIVE CORRECTION.**

**TRUTH HAS PERISHED AND HAS BEEN
CUT OFF FROM THEIR MOUTH."**

Jer 7:28-29

**"THEY ARE NOT VALIANT FOR
THE TRUTH ON THE EARTH.
FOR THEY PROCEED FROM EVIL TO
EVIL, AND THEY DO NOT KNOW
ME, SAYS THE LORD. EVERYONE
TAKE HEED TO HIS NEIGHBOR,
AND DO NOT TRUST ANY
BROTHER; FOR EVERY BROTHER WILL UTTERLY
SUPPLANT, AND EVERY NEIGHBOR WILL WALK
WITH SLANDERERS. EVERYONE WILL DECEIVE HIS
NEIGHBOR, AND WILL NOT SPEAK THE TRUTH..."**

Jer 9:3-5

It is quite weighty to consider that God stated that His present people (the Church), are a people saved by Jesus who is THE TRUTH (Jn.14:6), a people guided and empowered by THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH (Jn. 14:17), a people to be set free and set apart by THE TRUTH (Jn.8:32, Jn.17:17), and are to be known as "THE CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD, THE PILLAR AND THE GROUND OF THE TRUTH" (1 Tim. 3:15). Forgive all my underlining emphasis above, but it is imperative that we begin to see ourselves as God sees us! If we fail to do so, then we may very well repeat the failed testimony of God's first covenant people toward truth.

As important as the subject of "peace" is, we must realize that truth cannot be compromised for the sake of obtaining peace. God wants us to love and strive to accomplish both together:



**"THESE ARE THE THINGS YOU SHALL DO:
SPEAK EACH MAN THE TRUTH TO HIS NEIGHBOR;
GIVE JUDGMENT IN YOUR GATES FOR TRUTH, JUSTICE, AND PEACE;
LET NONE OF YOU THINK EVIL IN YOUR HEART
AGAINST YOUR NEIGHBOR;
AND DO NOT LOVE A FALSE OATH.
FOR ALL THESE ARE THINGS THAT I HATE, SAYS THE LORD.
...THEREFORE LOVE TRUTH AND PEACE."**

Zach. 8:16-18

Much relational conflict in our lives stems out of confrontation over God's truth. One side loves it- the other side hates it. Therefore one chooses heartily to embrace it, and the other totally rejects it. Therefore we have such relational conflict as Jesus states in Matthew 10:34-37 and in Luke 12:51-53 (front page-opening Scriptures). There may be indeed disputes based on debating the proper answer to the preverbal question, "What is truth?" (Jn. 18:38). However, most conflict is not based on interpretation of truth, but rather stems out of the outright rejection of God's truth in favor of the world's erroneous philosophies. The apostle John makes this terse contrast for us:

**"YOU ARE OF GOD...THEY ARE OF THE WORLD.
THEREFORE THEY SPEAK AS OF THE WORLD, AND THE WORLD HEARS THEM.
WE ARE OF GOD. HE WHO KNOWS GOD HEARS US;
HE WHO IS NOT OF GOD DOES NOT HEAR US.
BY THIS WE KNOW THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH AND THE SPIRIT OF ERROR."**

1 Jn. 4:4-6

**"WOE IS ME!
...MY SOUL HAS DWELT TOO LONG WITH ONE WHO HATES PEACE.
I AM FOR PEACE; BUT WHEN I SPEAK, THEY ARE FOR WAR."
Ps. 120:5-121:1**

THE
SPIRIT OF TRUTH

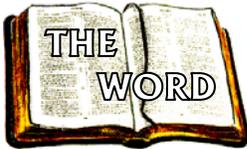
MAIN SOURCE OF RELATIONAL CONFLICT

THE
SPIRIT OF ERROR



PEACE

**PEACEMAKERS
SOURCE OF WISDOM:**



"WHO IS WISE AND UNDERSTANDING AMONG YOU? LET HIM SHOW BY GOOD CONDUCT THAT HIS WORKS ARE DONE IN THE MEEKNESS OF WISDOM. BUT THE WISDOM THAT IS FROM ABOVE IS FIRST PURE, THEN PEACEABLE, GENTLE, WILLING TO YIELD, FULL OF MERCY AND GOOD FRUITS, WITHOUT PARTIALITY AND WITHOUT HYPOCRISY. NOW THE FRUIT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IS SOWN IN PEACE BY THOSE WHO MAKE PEACE."

"DO NOT THINK THAT I CAME TO BRING PEACE ON EARTH. I DID NOT COME TO BRING PEACE BUT A SWORD. FOR I HAVE COME TO 'SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW'; AND 'A MAN'S ENEMIES WILL BE THOSE OF HIS OWN HOUSEHOLD.'"

Matt 10:34-37

"DO YOU SUPPOSE THAT I CAME TO GIVE PEACE ON EARTH? I TELL YOU, NOT AT ALL, BUT RATHER DIVISION. FOR FROM NOW ON FIVE IN ONE HOUSE WILL BE DIVIDED: THREE AGAINST TWO, AND TWO AGAINST THREE. FATHER WILL BE DIVIDED AGAINST SON AND SON AGAINST FATHER, MOTHER AGAINST DAUGHTER AND DAUGHTER AGAINST MOTHER, MOTHER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AND DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW."

Luke 12:51-53



WAR

**TROUBLEMAKERS
SOURCE OF WISDOM:**



These contrasting passages from the apostle James depict for us two different sources of conflicting wisdom that set the stage for the relational dramas in which, from time to time, we all find ourselves unavoidably immersed:

Note carefully the diversely stated outcome from embracing each source of wisdom. It is a stark contrast of day and night, light and darkness, good and evil at work. There is only one cure to this conflict. It is the replacement of demonic wisdom from below with God's wisdom from above. As long as the two sources of wisdom are at work, the outcome remains relational disorder between the two camps as Jesus described.

"BUT IF YOU HAVE BITTER ENVY AND SELF-SEEKING IN YOUR HEARTS, DO NOT BOAST AND LIE AGAINST THE TRUTH. THIS WISDOM DOES NOT DESCEND FROM ABOVE, BUT IS EARTHLY, SENSUAL, DEMONIC. FOR WHERE ENVY AND SELF-SEEKING EXIST, CONFUSION AND EVERY EVIL THING ARE THERE."

James 3:13-4:1

"...PURSUE RIGHTEOUSNESS, FAITH, LOVE, PEACE WITH THOSE WHO CALL ON THE LORD OUT OF A PURE HEART. BUT AVOID FOOLISH AND IGNORANT DISPUTES, KNOWING THAT THEY GENERATE STRIFE. AND A SERVANT OF THE LORD MUST NOT QUARREL BUT BE GENTLE TO ALL, ABLE TO TEACH, PATIENT, IN HUMILITY CORRECTING THOSE WHO ARE IN OPPOSITION, IF GOD PERHAPS WILL GRANT THEM REPENTANCE, SO THAT THEY MAY KNOW THE TRUTH, AND THAT THEY MAY COME TO THEIR SENSES AND ESCAPE THE SNARE OF THE DEVIL, HAVING BEEN TAKEN CAPTIVE BY HIM TO DO HIS WILL." 2 Tim 2:22-26

However, let us understand that the initiative for continuing to seek a peaceful solution lies more upon the people who draw their wisdom from the Word:

However, we must also note that it is not without great significance that the very next string of verses in Timothy that follow this exhortation to God's people reveal the great magnitude of what all servants of the Lord will be up against as distinguishing marks of the last days.

Notice these "perilous times" stem out of what character **"MEN WILL BE"** in these difficult last days.

"BUT KNOW THIS, THAT IN THE LAST DAYS PERILOUS TIMES WILL COME: FOR MEN WILL BE LOVERS OF THEMSELVES, LOVERS OF MONEY, BOASTERS, PROUD, BLASPHEMERS, DISOBEDIENT TO PARENTS, UNTHANKFUL, UNHOLY, UNLOVING, UNFORGIVING, SLANDERERS, WITHOUT SELF-CONTROL, BRUTAL, DESPISERS OF GOOD, TRAITORS, HEADSTRONG, HAUGHTY, LOVERS OF PLEASURE RATHER THAN LOVERS OF GOD, HAVING A FORM OF GODLINESS BUT DENYING ITS POWER. AND FROM SUCH PEOPLE TURN AWAY!" 2 Tim 3:1-6

Perhaps a consideration of these verses as stated in the Amplified Bible will help to bring to front the severe gravity of what we are facing as followers of Christ in these last days:

**“BUT UNDERSTAND THIS, THAT IN THE LAST DAYS
WILL COME (SET IN) PERILOUS TIMES OF GREAT STRESS AND TROUBLE,
HARD TO DEAL WITH AND HARD TO BEAR.
FOR PEOPLE WILL BE...
LOVERS OF SELF AND UTTERLY SELF-CENTERED...
THEY WILL BE ABUSIVE...
RELENTLESS, ADMITTING OF NO TRUCE OR APPEASEMENT;
THEY WILL BE SLANDERERS (FALSE ACCUSERS, TROUBLEMAKERS)...
THEY WILL BE TREACHEROUS BETRAYERS, RASH,
AND INFLATED WITH SELF-CONCEIT.
THEY WILL BE WITHOUT NATURAL HUMAN AFFECTION
(CALLOUS AND INHUMAN),...
DISOBEDIENT TO PARENTS...UNGRATEFUL...
FOR THEY HOLD A FORM OF PIETY (TRUE RELIGION),
BUT THEY DENY AND REJECT AND ARE STRANGERS TO THE POWER OF IT
(THEIR CONDUCT BELIES THE GENUINENESS OF THEIR PROFESSION.)
...AVOID ALL SUCH PEOPLE(TURN AWAY FROM THEM.)”**

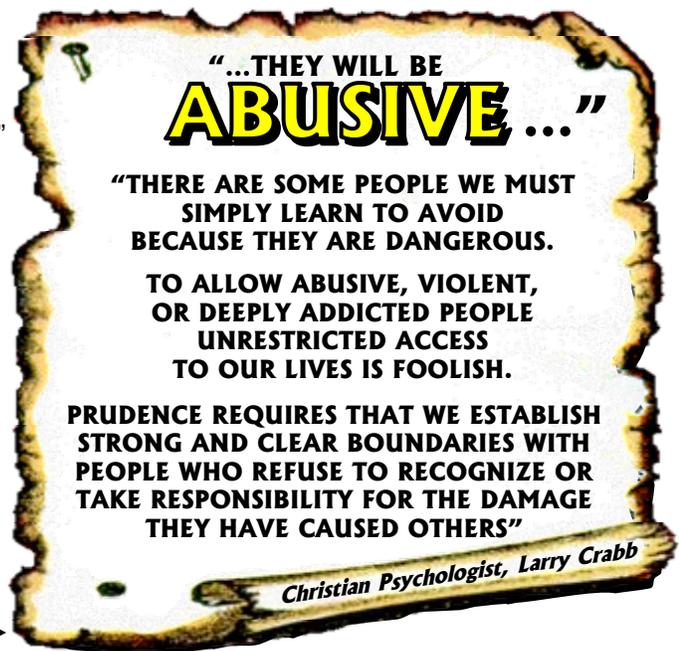
2 Tim 3:1-5 Amplified Bible

As Christians, we tend to shrink back from what we perceive as harsh and unloving commands such as stated above, “avoid all such people (turn away from them.)” Was Paul “harsh and unloving” in saying,

**“BUT NOW I HAVE WRITTEN TO YOU
NOT TO KEEP COMPANY
WITH ANYONE NAMED A BROTHER,
WHO IS SEXUALLY IMMORAL,
OR COVETOUS, OR AN IDOLATER,
OR A REVILER, OR A DRUNKARD,
OR AN EXTORTIONER --
NOT EVEN TO EAT WITH SUCH A PERSON.”**

1 Cor 5:11

Such things were written for our protection. Among the list above from 2 Tim. 3:1-5 is the statement, “...they will be abusive.” Consider carefully this warning from Larry Crabb about the danger of continuing to associate with abusive people: →



Christian Psychologist, Larry Crabb

Note also in the above passages from 2 Tim. 3:1-5 that Paul includes some “believers” along with the obvious class of unbelievers. They hold to a profession of belief in Christ, but are strangers to the power of Christ at work in their lives. Paul states their conduct undermines any genuineness to their profession of belief in Christ. We are commanded to avoid such people, to turn away from them. In Titus 1:16, Paul proclaimed about such professors of God:

**“THEY PROFESS TO KNOW GOD, BUT IN WORKS THEY DENY HIM,
BEING ABOMINABLE, DISOBEDIENT, AND DISQUALIFIED FOR EVERY GOOD WORK”**

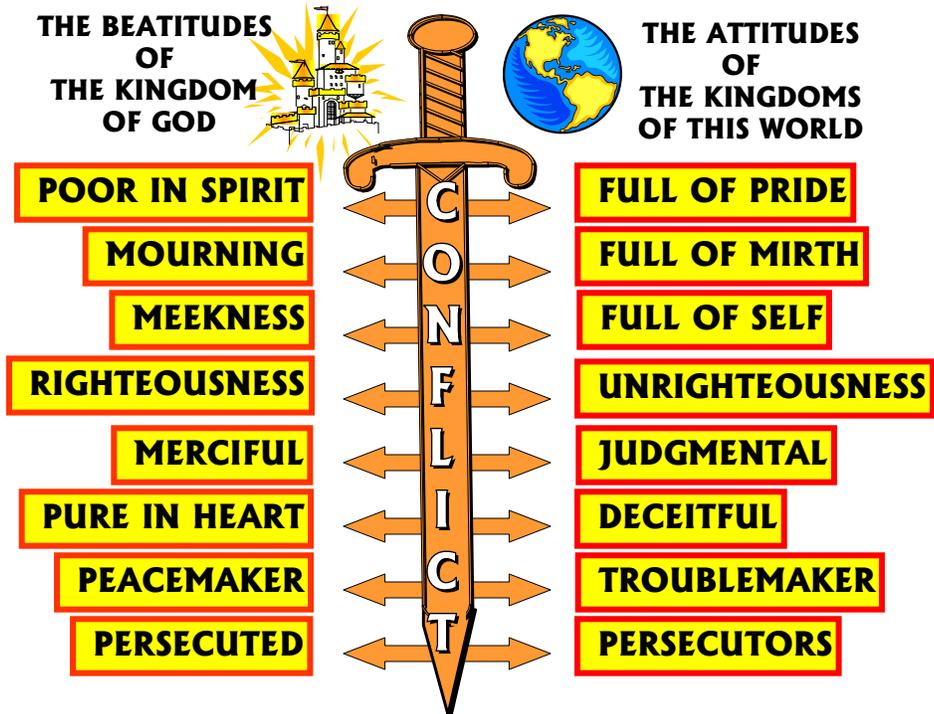
The Amplified brings the point home even more:

“THEY PROFESS TO KNOW GOD [TO RECOGNIZE, PERCEIVE, AND BE ACQUAINTED WITH HIM], BUT DENY AND DISOWN AND RENOUNCE HIM BY WHAT THEY DO; THEY ARE DETESTABLE AND LOATHSOME, UNBELIEVING AND DISOBEDIENT AND DISLOYAL AND REBELLIOUS, AND [THEY ARE] UNFIT AND WORTHLESS FOR GOOD WORK (DEED OR ENTERPRISE) OF ANY KIND.” Titus 1:16-2:1 Amp.

“BUT UNDERSTAND THIS, THAT IN THE LAST DAYS WILL COME (SET IN) PERILOUS TIMES OF GREAT STRESS AND TROUBLE, HARD TO DEAL WITH AND HARD TO BEAR. FOR PEOPLE WILL BE... LOVERS OF SELF AND UTTERLY SELF-CENTERED... THEY WILL BE ABUSIVE... RELENTLESS, ADMITTING OF NO TRUCE OR APPEASEMENT; THEY WILL BE SLANDERERS (FALSE ACCUSERS, TROUBLEMAKERS)...THEY WILL BE TREACHEROUS BETRAYERS, RASH,AND INFLATED WITH SELF-CONCEIT. THEY WILL BE WITHOUT NATURAL HUMAN AFFECTION(CALLOUS AND INHUMAN),... DISOBEDIENT TO PARENTS...UNGRATEFUL... FOR THEY HOLD A FORM OF PIETY (TRUE RELIGION), BUT THEY DENY AND REJECT AND ARE STRANGERS TO THE POWER OF IT(THEIR CONDUCT BELIES THE GENUINENESS OF THEIR PROFESSION.) ...AVOID ALL SUCH PEOPLE(TURN AWAY FROM THEM.)”

2 Tim 3:1-5 Amplified Bible

For the point of impacting our understanding of the severity of the times in which we live, compare the above list of what “men will be” with the chart below. What you will find is a contrast of what God seeks from His people via the Beatitudes of the Word of God, to the opposite attitudes found in people (believers and unbelievers) who prefer to have their character formed by the world in which we live:



Perhaps we can now begin to see why Jesus stated so vividly that truth is a sword of conflict capable of even separating blood relatives from one another!

"DO NOT THINK THAT I CAME TO BRING PEACE ON EARTH. I DID NOT COME TO BRING PEACE BUT A SWORD. FOR I HAVE COME TO 'SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW'; AND 'A MAN'S ENEMIES WILL BE THOSE OF HIS OWN HOUSEHOLD.'"

Matt 10:34-37



"DO YOU SUPPOSE THAT I CAME TO GIVE PEACE ON EARTH? I TELL YOU, NOT AT ALL, BUT RATHER DIVISION. FOR FROM NOW ON FIVE IN ONE HOUSE WILL BE DIVIDED: THREE AGAINST TWO, AND TWO AGAINST THREE. FATHER WILL BE DIVIDED AGAINST SON AND SON AGAINST FATHER, MOTHER AGAINST DAUGHTER AND DAUGHTER AGAINST MOTHER, MOTHER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AND DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW."

Luke 12:51-53

In our last newsletter, we saw the importance of the heart (Leb-center) becoming the pivotal point in directing man properly if the Word of truth is the chosen source of daily guidance.

"I HAVE SET THE LORD ALWAYS BEFORE ME; BECAUSE HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND I SHALL NOT BE MOVED. THEREFORE MY HEART IS GLAD..."
Ps 16:8-9

PURE IN HEART
PEACEMAKER
PERSECUTED

"A DECEIVED HEART HAS TURNED HIM ASIDE; AND HE CANNOT DELIVER HIS SOUL, NOR SAY, 'IS THERE NOT A LIE IN MY RIGHT HAND?'"
Isa. 44:20

DECEITFUL
TROUBLEMAKER
PERSECUTORS

However, we also saw that when worldly wisdom replaced God's truth as the source of guidance, the heart of man quickly became deceived to the point that he cannot even recognize a lie when he sees it

From the chosen pathway of the heart flows both the remaining two godly beatitudes of a pure heart contrasted to the two worldly attitudes of the deceived heart:

"FOR OUT OF THE ABUNDANCE OF THE HEART HIS MOUTH SPEAKS"
Luke 6:45

"ONE THAT SEEKS TO BE AT PEACE, THE PURSUIT OF PEACE... A DESIRE TO SEE PARTIES RECONCILED THAT ARE AT VARIANCE..."
Webster

PEACEMAKER
PERSECUTED

TROUBLEMAKER
PERSECUTOR

"ONE THAT IS A SOURCE OF TROUBLE; A PERSON WHO FOMENTS STRIFE AND DISAGREEMENT OFTEN FROM ULTERIOR MOTIVES..."
Webster

We all must ask ourselves in the midst of trouble, am I seeking to be the peacemaker or am I the root troublemaker? The answer depends on what is in your heart, purity or deception? The answer depends on which source of wisdom you are using. Is it wisdom from above or wisdom from below?

**A
B
O
V
E**

"WHO IS WISE AND UNDERSTANDING AMONG YOU? LET HIM SHOW BY GOOD CONDUCT THAT HIS WORKS ARE DONE IN THE MEEKNESS OF WISDOM. BUT THE WISDOM THAT IS FROM ABOVE IS FIRST PURE, THEN PEACEABLE, GENTLE, WILLING TO YIELD, FULL OF MERCY AND GOOD FRUITS, WITHOUT PARTIALITY AND WITHOUT HYPOCRISY. NOW THE FRUIT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IS SOWN IN PEACE BY THOSE WHO MAKE PEACE."

...BUT IF YOU HAVE BITTER ENVY AND SELF-SEEKING IN YOUR HEARTS, DO NOT BOAST AND LIE AGAINST THE TRUTH. THIS WISDOM DOES NOT DESCEND FROM ABOVE, BUT IS EARTHLY, SENSUAL, DEMONIC. FOR WHERE ENVY AND SELF-SEEKING EXIST, CONFUSION AND EVERY EVIL THING ARE THERE."
James 3:13-4:1

**B
E
L
O
W**

There is an old English proverb that states, "The proof (test) of the pudding is in the eating." If it tastes good, then obviously it was made by following the right mix of ingredients of a proven recipe. If it tastes bad, then it is now obvious that something was lacking in carefully following the recipe. There is nothing wrong with the recipe. God's plan (recipe) works in the lives of those who submit to it and will produce good fruit in themselves. Hear it: The peacemaker is guaranteed to bear good fruit in himself in the midst of trouble. However, we must accept that nothing good may develop in the life of the troublemaker. He's following the wrong recipe. The proof of the pudding is in the eating.

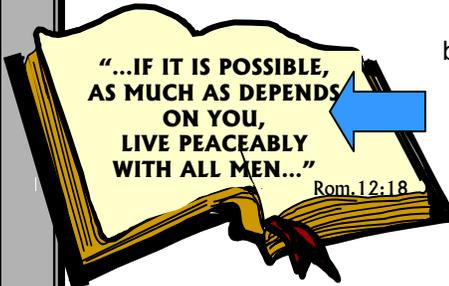


In closing out our thoughts on this beatitude of seeking to be a peacemaker, let us ponder briefly a series of Scriptures in which we can truly establish that this is primarily an INWARD fruit that God is seeking in His people in the midst of trying and difficult times such as Paul describes:



“BUT UNDERSTAND THIS, THAT IN THE LAST DAYS WILL COME (SET IN) PERILOUS TIMES OF GREAT STRESS AND TROUBLE, HARD TO DEAL WITH AND HARD TO BEAR...”

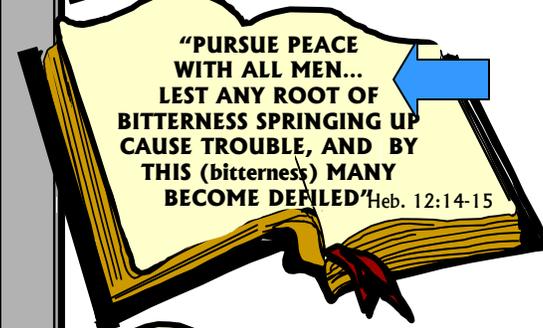
2 Tim 3:1 Amplified Bible



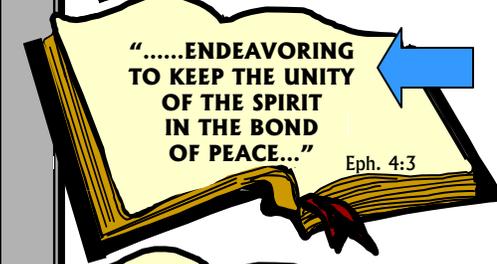
It is significant to note that this passage in Rom. 12:18 is sandwiched between these two comments, “Repay no one evil for evil” and, “Beloved, do not avenge yourselves”. In other words, this is counsel for people potentially in the midst of very disturbing trouble. This is counsel for the believer to do “as much as depends on you” to live peaceably with all men. Don’t fall for the trap of returning evil deeds with evil deeds of your own. Don’t seek revenge. If such is needful, God’s counsel is for His people to leave that responsibility totally in God’s hand. He alone is the Righteous Judge.



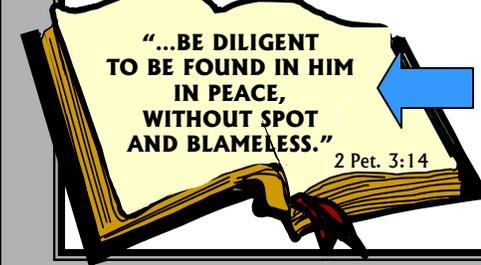
Likewise we find this verse from Col. 3:15 is prefaced contextually with the admonition to “bear with one another, and forgive one another, if anyone has a complaint with another, even as Christ forgave you, so also must you do” (Col. 3:13). It is imperative to note the responsibility lies upon the “peacemaker” to LET (allow) the peace of God to rule in your own heart regardless of what is taking place in the heart of the other party.



These passages from Heb. 12:14-15 place before us an ongoing mandate to “pursue peace with all men.” Do all that is within your power to be at peace. Note what follows is a warning to watch out for “roots of bitterness” springing up when it does not go well. If we fall short of walking in God’s grace, this verse warns us that many can become defiled through such things as bitterness, frustration and unforgiveness due to a lack of achieving desired peace. Let us cultivate the fact that God is not only at work in these situations, but also that the devil is at work as well.



Do not be surprised that nearly every Scripture which admonishes us to be at peace is surrounded with potential conflict. This passage from Eph. 4:3 is no exception. The verse above it calls us to “...longsuffering, bearing with one another in love.” Our text verse uses the word “endeavoring” which simply implies a need to work hard at it, which is not an easy task.



Our final passage is similar to the one above. We must be “diligent” in our effort to be found in a blameless state of peace. That does not mean we will solve every problem we may have. It speaks of an inward peace. This is what marks a peacemaker in God’s sight.

"THE PROPHETIC WORD"

PART NINE OF
THE BEATITUDES:

THE PERSECUTED BELIEVER

"BLESSED
ARE YOU WHEN
THEY REVILE
AND
PERSECUTE
YOU,
AND SAY
ALL KINDS
OF EVIL
AGAINST YOU
FALSELY
FOR MY SAKE.

Matt. 5:11



REJOICE AND
BE EXCEEDINGLY
GLAD,
FOR GREAT IS
YOUR REWARD
IN HEAVEN,
FOR SO
THEY PERSECUTED
THE PROPHETS
WHO WERE
BEFORE YOU."

Matt. 5:12

"REMEMBER THE WORD THAT I SAID TO YOU,
'A SERVANT IS NOT GREATER THAN HIS MASTER.'
IF THEY PERSECUTED ME,
THEY WILL ALSO PERSECUTE YOU."

John 15:20

"FOR THIS IS COMMENDABLE,
IF BECAUSE OF CONSCIENCE TOWARD GOD ONE ENDURES GRIEF,
SUFFERING WRONGFULLY...WHEN YOU DO GOOD AND SUFFER FOR IT,
IF YOU TAKE IT PATIENTLY, THIS IS COMMENDABLE BEFORE GOD.
FOR TO THIS WERE YOU CALLED, BECAUSE CHRIST ALSO SUFFERED FOR US,
LEAVING US AN EXAMPLE, THAT YOU SHOULD FOLLOW IN HIS STEPS:
'WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOT WAS GUILE FOUND IN HIS MOUTH';
WHO, WHEN HE WAS REVILED, DID NOT REVILE IN RETURN;
WHEN HE SUFFERED, HE DID NOT THREATEN,
BUT COMMITTED HIMSELF TO HIM WHO JUDGES RIGHTEOUSLY..."

1 Pet. 2:19-23

Ask most Christians in America what they know about persecution and the answer might be “PERCY who?” Although we live under the reputation of being the “land of the free and the home of the brave,” and readily boast of every citizen’s constitutional guarantee of “inalienable rights” to a safe and secure life, these secular concepts do not make us immune from experiencing true biblical persecution. Yes, it is true that the American Christian is not subject to the kind of persecution experienced by brothers and sisters living under cruel dictatorships throughout the world. The Bible warns clearly:

**“HAVE RESPECT TO THE COVENANT;
FOR THE DARK PLACES OF THE EARTH
ARE FULL OF THE HABITATIONS OF CRUELTY”**
Psm. 74:20



This map of the Middle East will quickly confirms what is stated in the above passage. Our daily news reports bring home the fact of what it is like to live in “the dark places of the earth.” Try practicing Christianity openly under such oppressive governments and you will know something about the kind of widespread persecution that exists in much of the world.

However, I want to show you a brand of persecution that comes to the believer which is not based upon WHERE one lives geographically, but rather for HOW one lives out his or her life. Let us consider what the apostle Paul presents as the root cause for persecution that every believer SHOULD BE experiencing, even here in the safe haven of America that operates under the religious banners of:



The apostle Paul presents this “guarantee” to all devout believers regardless of where they live:

**“...WHAT PERSECUTIONS I ENDURED.
AND OUT OF THEM ALL
THE LORD DELIVERED ME.**

**YES, AND ALL WHO DESIRE TO LIVE GODLY
IN CHRIST JESUS WILL SUFFER PERSECUTION.**

**BUT EVIL MEN AND IMPOSTERS
WILL GROW WORSE AND WORSE,
DECEIVING AND BEING DECEIVED.”**
2 Tim. 3:11-12

Constitutional freedom to practice religion is not a preventive guarantee against such persecution. Paul describes above a cause for persecution that is not dependent upon WHERE one lives, but rather for HOW one lives. Paul states a guarantee of persecution for every believer who “desires to live Godly in Christ Jesus.” Not only is that an all-inclusive fact brought out by the apostle Paul, but it is also clearly stated by Jesus Himself:

**“REMEMBER THE WORD THAT I SAID TO YOU, ‘A SERVANT IS NOT GREATER THAN HIS MASTER.’
IF THEY PERSECUTED ME, THEY WILL ALSO PERSECUTE YOU.”**

**THE QUESTION
MUST BE
ASKED THAT
IF WE, AS
“AMERICAN
CHRISTIANS”,
ARE NOT
EXPERIENCING
SUCH
PERSECUTION
AS PAUL AND
JESUS
DESCRIBE,**

**“BLESSED
ARE YOU
WHEN
THEY REVILE
AND
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**THEN THERE
MUST BE
SOMETHING
AMISS
IN HOW WE ARE
LIVING AS
FOLLOWERS OF
CHRIST!
WE CANNOT
DISMISS IT UNDER
THE BANNER OF
WHERE WE LIVE.
THE ISSUE IS HOW
WE ARE LIVING!**

This diagram can be life-changing if allowed to penetrate into our inner-most heart. We do not have to physically live in “the dark places of the earth” to be “blessed” by persecution as a Christian. You can live in America, a nation under much religious light and freedoms and still be persecuted in the manner Jesus and Paul describe. Remember, it is not WHERE you live that counts, but rather HOW you live.

BELIEVERS LIVING UNDER RELIGIOUS OPPRESSION:



“DO NOT FEAR ANY OF THOSE THINGS WHICH YOU ARE ABOUT TO SUFFER. INDEED, THE DEVIL IS ABOUT TO THROW SOME OF YOU INTO PRISON, THAT YOU MAY BE TESTED, AND YOU WILL HAVE TRIBULATION TEN DAYS. BE FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH, AND I WILL GIVE YOU THE CROWN OF LIFE.”

Rev. 2:10



BELIEVERS LIVING UNDER RELIGIOUS FREEDOM:



“BLESSED IS THE MAN WHO ENDURES TEMPTATION; FOR WHEN HE HAS BEEN PROVED, HE WILL RECEIVE THE CROWN OF LIFE WHICH THE LORD HAS PROMISED TO THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.”

Jas. 1:12



Note carefully the contrast presented above. This same “Crown of Life” can be earned by the believer for either DYING FOR CHRIST in the oppressive dark places of the earth or for LIVING FOR CHRIST in a free place like America. Note that both believers are being tested by God, and both, if found faithful, receive the same crown in eternity, the Crown of Life! Although it is not the specific subject of this newsletter, I want to stress the point that all crowns mentioned in Scripture are pictures of eternal rewards earned by believers for how they lived (or died) in Christ. For the point of illustration, here is a brief synopsis of the five crowns listed in Scripture:

<p>THE CROWN OF LIFE Rev. 2:10 Jas. 1:12 FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH STANDING UP UNDER TEMPTATION</p>	<p>THE CROWN OF REJOICING 1 Thess. 2:18-19 Phil. 4:1 WINNING OF SOULS AND MAKING OF DISCIPLES</p>	<p>THE IMPERISHABLE CROWN 1 Cor. 9:24-27 LIVING THE DISCIPLINED LIFE IN THE BODY</p>
<p>THE CROWN OF GLORY 1 Pet. 5:2-4 SHEPHERDING THE FLOCK OF GOD or SUPPORTING GOD'S SHEPHERDS</p>	<p>THE CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS 2 Tim. 4:7-8 FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT, FINISHING THE RACE, KEEPING THE FAITH, LOVING GOD'S APPEARANCE ON EARTH</p>	

“...AND ON HIS HEAD WERE MANY CROWNS.” Rev. 19:11-12

As stated above, when Jesus returns He will have on His head “many crowns.” Where did He get them? Which of the above crowns offered to believers could we say that Jesus did not obtain Himself by means of suffering in His life on earth? Was He a martyr unto God? Did He stand up under temptation? Did He not claim to be the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep? Was Jesus a soul winner? Was He a maker of disciples? Did Jesus live a disciplined life in His earthly body? Did our Master fight the good fight? Did He finish His race? Did He keep the faith? Did He love to focus upon the coming of the kingdom of God to earth? Live as did our Master, and you too will suffer persecution associated with laying hold of “many crowns”!

“...IF THEY PERSECUTED ME, THEY WILL ALSO PERSECUTE YOU.” John 15:20

Perhaps in true humility you are thinking, "I don't want any crowns in heaven, I just want to be with Jesus". Consider what is depicted in this heavenly scene into eternity when we are all gathered around His throne to express our thankfulness:

**"AND THEY DO NOT REST DAY OR NIGHT, SAYING:
"HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, LORD GOD ALMIGHTY,
WHO WAS AND IS AND IS TO COME!"**

**WHENEVER THE LIVING CREATURES GIVE GLORY AND HONOR AND
THANKS TO HIM WHO SITS ON THE THRONE, WHO LIVES FOREVER
AND EVER, THE TWENTY-FOUR ELDERS FALL DOWN BEFORE HIM WHO
SITS ON THE THRONE AND WORSHIP HIM WHO LIVES FOREVER AND
EVER, AND**

CAST THEIR CROWNS BEFORE THE THRONE,

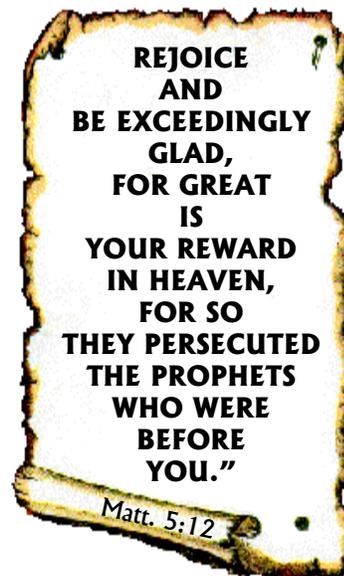
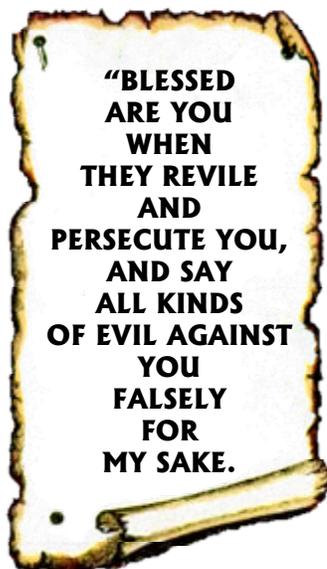
**SAYING:
"YOU ARE WORTHY, O LORD,
TO RECEIVE GLORY AND HONOR AND POWER..."**

Rev 4:8-11



Please give some meditative thought to this concept: Don't you think that on that great day in eternity you might greatly desire to have in your possession a crown, or perhaps even "many crowns"? And why so? That in eternity and for all eternity, as the heavenly hosts praise and worship the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, you could be among those casting such costly trophy crowns at His feet in a tangible expression of adoration and worship?

In this last Beatitude, Jesus promises the persecuted, "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for Great is your reward in Heaven..." Let us look into the depth of this blessed culminating Beatitude that Jesus presents to His faithful followers:



Matt. 5:12

It is important to understand that this last Beatitude is not meant to be viewed as a stand-alone, undefined message left to the interpretation of the believer. Such persecution Jesus refers to is the direct result of living a life as depicted on the previous page by the qualifying marks that lead to crowns in heaven. Even more so, it is the culminating result of living life under the difficult and painful tutorship of all the Beatitudes that Jesus describes. This final Beatitude must be viewed as the supreme capstone result for choosing to live differently in the midst of even believers who are extremely hostile toward those who choose such distinctive living.

**"...REJOICE AND BE EXCEEDINGLY GLAD,
FOR GREAT IS YOUR REWARD IN HEAVEN,
FOR SO THEY PERSECUTED THE PROPHETS WHO WERE BEFORE YOU."**

Matt. 5:12

The prophets
were not persecuted for WHERE they lived,
but rather for HOW they lived.

For the most part, the prophets were not persecuted by the godless heathen, but rather by their own carnally-minded brethren who resented any message that placed responsibility or correction for their actions.

Isaiah was such a prophet sent from God.

Consider how his peers treated him:

"...THIS IS A REBELLIOUS PEOPLE, LYING CHILDREN, CHILDREN WHO WILL NOT HEAR THE LAW OF THE LORD; WHO SAY TO THE SEERS, "DO NOT SEE," AND TO THE PROPHETS, "DO NOT PROPHECY TO US RIGHT THINGS; SPEAK TO US SMOOTH THINGS, PROPHECY DECEITS. GET OUT OF THE WAY, TURN ASIDE FROM THE PATH, CAUSE THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL TO CEASE FROM BEFORE US!"

Isa 30:9-11

Yes, God's people were brutal with the prophets. In this last Beatitude, Jesus lumps the persecuted believer together with the prophets. That is pretty good company! In saying, "GREAT IS YOUR REWARD IN HEAVEN" we must look to how greatly the prophets are rewarded in heaven. We have such an illustration set before us. The apostle John is being shown the unfolding of the contents of Revelation, not by God Himself, but rather by a glorified prophet that John mistakes for God Himself:

"THEN HE SAID TO ME, "WRITE: 'BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE CALLED TO THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB!' " AND HE SAID TO ME, "THESE ARE THE TRUE SAYINGS OF GOD."

AND I FELL AT HIS FEET TO WORSHIP HIM. BUT HE SAID TO ME, "SEE THAT YOU DO NOT DO THAT! I AM YOUR FELLOW SERVANT, AND OF YOUR BRETHREN WHO HAVE THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS. WORSHIP GOD!"

Rev 19:9-10

"NOW I, JOHN, SAW AND HEARD THESE THINGS. AND WHEN I HEARD AND SAW, I FELL DOWN TO WORSHIP BEFORE THE FEET OF THE ANGEL ("messenger") WHO SHOWED ME THESE THINGS.

THEN HE SAID TO ME, "SEE THAT YOU DO NOT DO THAT. FOR I AM YOUR FELLOW SERVANT, AND OF YOUR BRETHREN THE PROPHETS, AND OF THOSE WHO KEEP THE WORDS OF THIS BOOK. WORSHIP GOD."

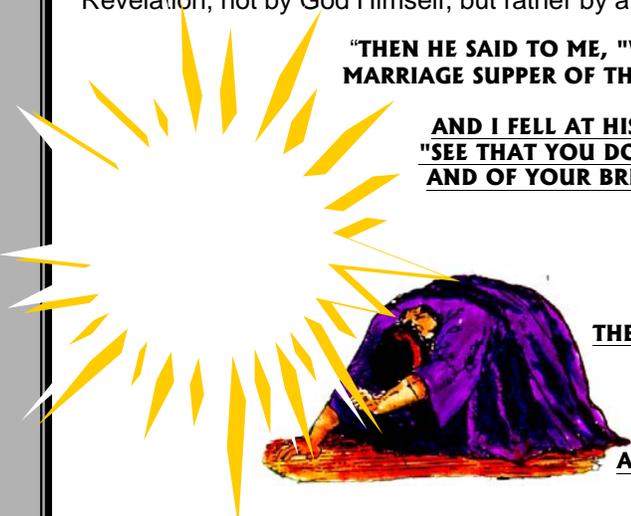
Rev 22:8-9

John is no idolater. He mistakes this glorified prophet for God Himself! Neither does John fall at the feet of every being he sees in Heaven for not all are glorified as was this prophet! Such great "glorification" is part of the "great reward" that awaits the persecuted when they get to Heaven! In this life it is the promise of persecution. Consider Jesus' words of "great reward" that is to come to this persecuted church because of how they lived:

"I KNOW YOUR WORKS. SEE, I HAVE SET BEFORE YOU AN OPEN DOOR, AND NO ONE CAN SHUT IT; FOR YOU HAVE A LITTLE STRENGTH, HAVE KEPT MY WORD, AND HAVE NOT DENIED MY NAME. INDEED I WILL MAKE THOSE OF THE SYNAGOGUE OF SATAN, WHO SAY THEY ARE JEWS AND ARE NOT, BUT LIE -- INDEED I WILL MAKE THEM COME AND WORSHIP BEFORE YOUR FEET, AND TO KNOW THAT I HAVE LOVED YOU. BECAUSE YOU HAVE KEPT MY COMMAND TO PERSEVERE, I ALSO WILL KEEP YOU FROM THE HOUR OF TRIAL WHICH SHALL COME UPON THE WHOLE WORLD, TO TEST THOSE WHO DWELL ON THE EARTH. BEHOLD, I AM COMING QUICKLY! HOLD FAST WHAT YOU HAVE, THAT NO ONE MAY TAKE YOUR CROWN. HE WHO OVERCOMES, I WILL MAKE HIM A PILLAR IN THE TEMPLE OF MY GOD, AND HE SHALL GO OUT NO MORE. I WILL WRITE ON HIM THE NAME OF MY GOD AND THE NAME OF THE CITY OF MY GOD, THE NEW JERUSALEM, WHICH COMES DOWN OUT OF HEAVEN FROM MY GOD. AND I WILL WRITE ON HIM MY NEW NAME.

"HE WHO HAS AN EAR, LET HIM HEAR WHAT THE SPIRIT SAYS TO THE CHURCHES."

Rev 3:8-13



Persecution such as Jesus describes is the result of pursuing what is taught under the banner of the Beatitudes of the Kingdom of God and therefore rejecting the carnal (but cherished) attitudes that the kingdoms of this world seek. The attitudes are the opposites of the Beatitudes. Follow the Beatitudes, and you will encounter people with opposing attitudes. It spells “conflict” and it leads to “persecution.” As we saw in our last lesson, most of this conflict comes from those within the camp-members of our own family (both physical and spiritual family members).

"DO NOT THINK THAT I CAME TO BRING PEACE ON EARTH. I DID NOT COME TO BRING PEACE BUT A SWORD. FOR I HAVE COME TO 'SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW'; AND 'A MAN'S ENEMIES WILL BE THOSE OF HIS OWN HOUSEHOLD.' "

Matt 10:34-37

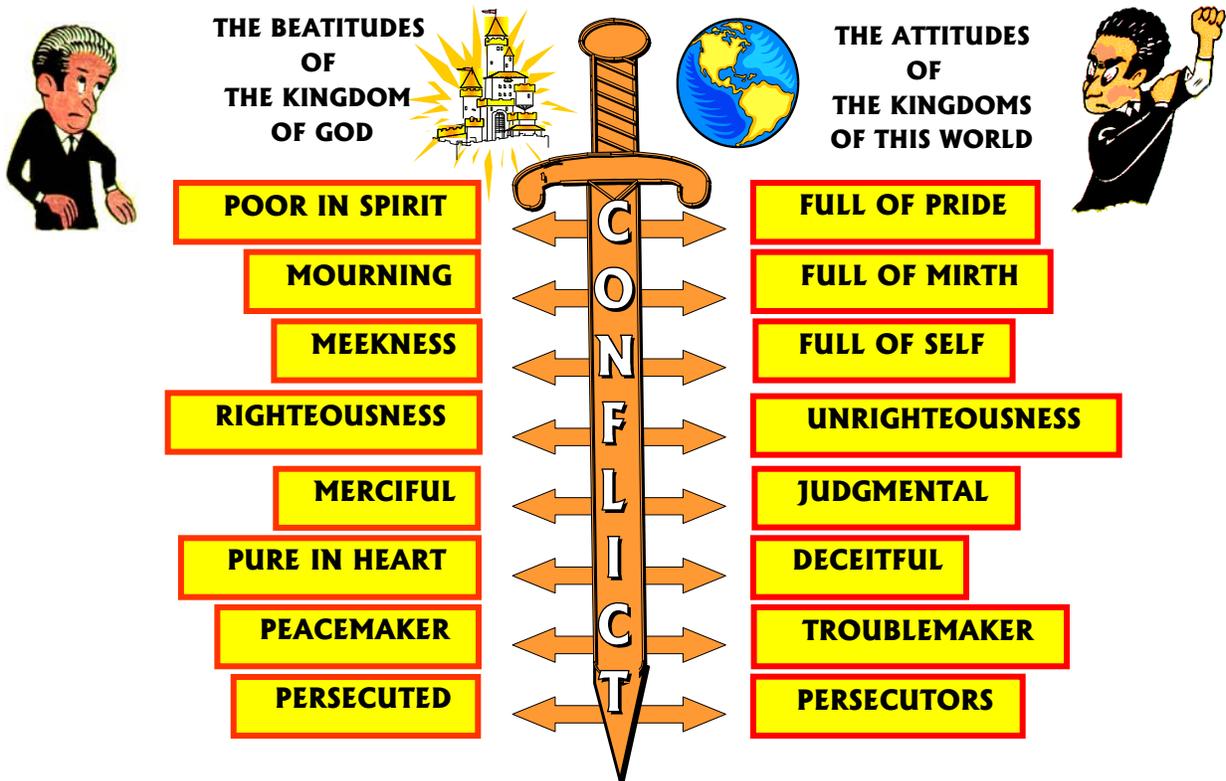


"DO YOU SUPPOSE THAT I CAME TO GIVE PEACE ON EARTH? I TELL YOU, NOT AT ALL, BUT RATHER DIVISION. FOR FROM NOW ON FIVE IN ONE HOUSE WILL BE DIVIDED: THREE AGAINST TWO, AND TWO AGAINST THREE. FATHER WILL BE DIVIDED AGAINST SON AND SON AGAINST FATHER, MOTHER AGAINST DAUGHTER AND DAUGHTER AGAINST MOTHER, MOTHER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AND DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW."

Luke 12:51-53

In our last newsletter, I showed you the chart below which now must be viewed as “the big picture” that leads up to the culminating Beatitude of persecution. The Christian life does not normally begin with acts of persecution unless you live in the dreaded “dark places of the earth.” There they will kill you for just naming the name of Christ.

Note well that the list of the Beatitudes does not begin with persecution, but rather ends up there due to methodically progressing down the list as we live our life as a follower of Christ:



The proper way to view the Beatitudes is in the form of an ascending pyramid. It all begins with being poor in spirit (humble). It culminates with being persecuted in the same manner as were the prophets.



The same can be said for those who follow the attitudes that permeate the world. It all begins with being proud in spirit. It will culminate with being labeled among the persecutors of the humble.

We lack the space to elaborate, but pursue the theme of this chart and it will enhance your understanding of what brings persecution upon the dedicated believer:

PERSECUTED FOR THE SAKE OF THE NAME OF CHRIST

Matt. 5:11 Jn. 15:21

“ALL WHO DESIRE TO LIVE GODLY IN CHRIST JESUS WILL SUFFER PERSECUTION.”

PERSECUTED FOR THE SAKE OF THE WORD

Mark 4:17

PERSECUTED FOR THE SAKE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Matt. 5:10

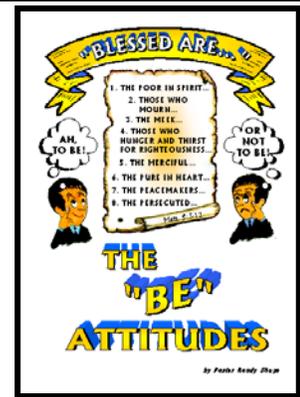
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"THE PROPHETIC WORD"



~ CREMATION ~ IS IT FOR CHRISTIANS?



**"HEAR THE WORD
WHICH THE LORD SPEAKS TO YOU...
THUS SAYS THE LORD:
DO NOT LEARN
THE WAY OF THE GENTILES...
FOR THE CUSTOMS OF THE PEOPLE ARE FUTILE..."**
Jer. 10:1-3

**"...ALL TOO WELL YOU REJECT
THE COMMANDMENT OF GOD,
THAT YOU MAY KEEP YOUR TRADITION
...MAKING THE WORD OF GOD
OF NO EFFECT THROUGH YOUR TRADITION
WHICH YOU HAVE HANDED DOWN."**
Mrk. 7:8-13

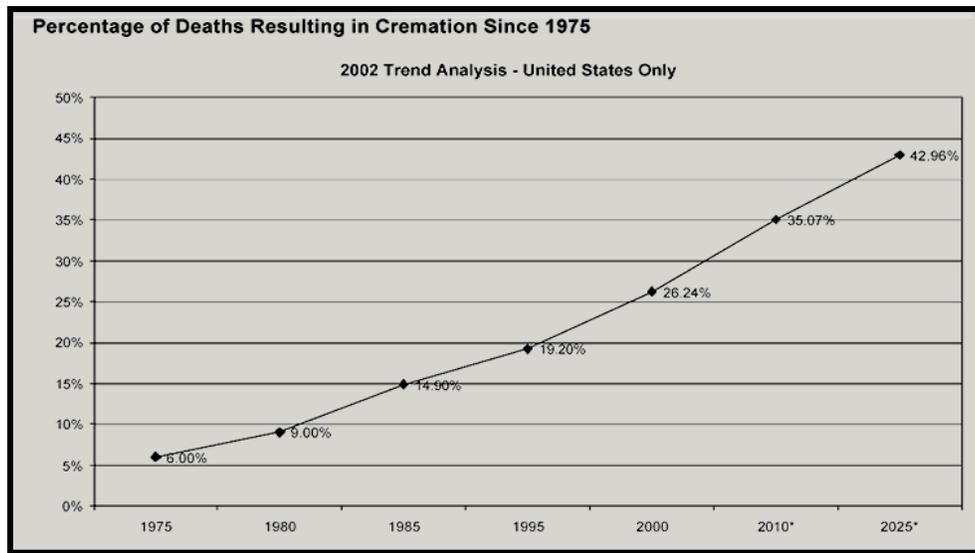
The influence of "the customs of the people" and the cherished "keeping of tradition" creates great pressure on the dedicated believer living in this present world. There is intense pressure to follow what everybody else is doing that is considered to be "the norm." Considering the ever-increasing levels of cremations vs. burials that are taking place we, as Christians, are more and more exposed to the dilemma of being personally involved in cremation funerals of loved ones, friends and acquaintances. It is not my purpose in this newsletter to judgmentally criticize what the world accepts as normal behavior, because Scripture plainly states that the people of the world are those "...whose minds the god of this world (age) has blinded..." (2 Cor. 4:4). The world's unregenerated inhabitants are continually "having their understanding darkened" (Eph. 4:18), but the believer is called to seek to have "the eyes of [their] understanding enlightened" (Eph. 1:18). What the children of darkness choose to do should have no influential bearing upon the children of light to follow suit. This newsletter is written to God's people who are instructed to be "not of this world" (Jn.15:19), and "not to be conformed to this world" (Rom. 12:2). Hopefully, we, as being divinely enlightened, take our guidance solely from the revelation of the Scriptures. However, this narrow path of illumination will place you in direct conflict with the widely accepted status quo of customs and traditions cherished by the world.

~ THE TREND TOWARD CREMATION ~

Consider these statistics:

- **Projected vs. Actual Death and Cremation Numbers**

The table below shows a comparison of the number of deaths and cremations for the years 2002, 2010 and 2025. The 2002 death rate is extracted from the National Vital Statistics System. The 2010 and 2025 death rates were extracted from the US Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census' *Projections of the Population of the United States by Age, Sex and Race: 1988 to 2080, Series P-25, No. 1018.*

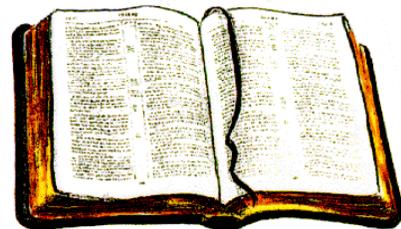


Another survey in the Dec. 5, 1995 issue of USA Today revealed that on the average, 30% of North American funerals were cremations. This same article reports that in 1960 the average was less than 5%. That is a significant increase over a thirty-five year period. By 2004 that average had increased to 47%. Obviously we are witnessing an ever-increasing, trend-setting pace developing in the world in which we live.

As a teacher of God's Word,
I am ever scrutinizing various trends that I see
in the world and comparing them to what is
recorded in God's Word because:



**WHAT
THE WORLD
EMBRACES IS
180 DEGREES OPPOSITE
OF WHAT IS STATED IN
GOD'S WORD**



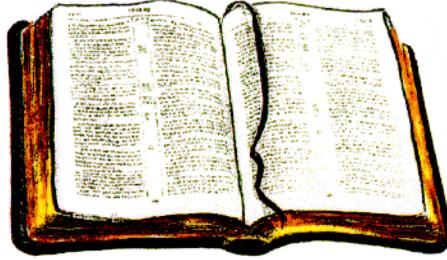
This principle is true because Satan is clearly identified as "the god of this world (age)" (2 Cor. 4:4), and that the direction or course of this world (age) is being guided by Satan himself (Eph.2:2). In fact, Scripture states "the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one (1 Jn.5:19). Therefore, it is most likely that the ever-increasing trends such as we see in the preference of cremation of the body rather than the Scriptural practice of burial, must be deemed as having Satanic influence. It is imperative for the believer who desires to please God to see that what the world tends to widely endorse is the result of Satan's underlying corrupt and detrimental guidance. Very little, if anything should be viewed as neutral, because Satan has a hidden purpose behind these subtle trends embraced by the world.

Consider how Paul states both positive and negative examples of Scripture from which we are to take direction for our lives:

THE POSITIVE EXAMPLE:

“FOR WHATEVER THINGS WERE WRITTEN BEFORE WERE WRITTEN FOR OUR LEARNING, THAT WE THROUGH THE PATIENCE AND HOPE OF THE SCRIPTURES MIGHT HAVE HOPE.”

Rom. 15:4



THE NEGATIVE EXAMPLE:

“NOW ALL THESE THINGS HAPPENED TO THEM AS EXAMPLES, AND THEY WERE WRITTEN FOR OUR ADMONITION, UPON WHOM THE END OF THE AGES HAVE COME.”

1 Cor. 10:11

Notice that what has been previously written is to be God’s counsel for those of us who live in “the end of the ages.” God’s will in the area of the proper disposal of the body of believers is revealed in His Word. We are going to take a look at what has been recorded in the Scriptures pertaining to the practice of cremation as well as what God’s Word has to say about burial.

From the first page you can easily see that I am strongly in favor of the practice of Christian burial rather than the ever increasingly popular preference for cremation. However, I want to stress to all my readers that the act of cremation has no bearing on eternal destiny. Whether one has been cremated or not is not the issue that determines whether one enters heaven or hell. It is only the existence or the absence of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ that makes that determination. Cremation is not a deadly sin unto damnation. However, I do want to convince you that it is a sin against the believer’s body. I want to stress, however, that it is a forgivable sin. Not all sin is the same. Even the Old Testament law made a distinction between sins of ignorance and willful disobedience:

“YOU SHALL HAVE ONE LAW FOR HIM WHO SINS UNINTENTIONALLY... BUT THE PERSON WHO DOES ANYTHING PRESUMPTUOUSLY (DEFIANTLY)... HE SHALL BE CUT OFF FROM AMONG HIS PEOPLE... BECAUSE HE HAS DESPISED THE WORD OF THE LORD, AND HAS BROKEN HIS COMMANDMENT...”

Numbers 15:29-31

The apostle James obviously has this law in mind as he warns New Testament believers:

“...TO HIM WHO KNOWS TO DO GOOD AND DOES NOT DO IT, TO HIM IT IS SIN.”

James 4:17

We cannot change what has been done in ignorance, but we can, having been illuminated to God’s will, do what is right in the future. We can properly choose for ourselves what God desires for us to do with our body at death. This is a personal choice for every believer. The purpose of this newsletter is to seek to convince you to choose burial over cremation. If you are so persuaded by the contents of this newsletter, then I also highly counsel you to share it with all those whom you love so that you, having been illuminated, do not end up in an awkward and most unpleasant situation at their funeral.

As a young minister I remember well the first funeral over which I presided. It was for a man that I did not know personally. However, I was assured by those who asked me to perform the ceremony that he was a “godly man.” I quickly realized that I was in deep trouble when I saw a string of men in black across the front row of the church, all wearing white aprons. I had unknowingly committed to take part in a “Christian” burial of a man of high standing in cultic Freemasonry. The gravesite ritual was horrible for me to endure. I watched as a series of mystical ceremonial rituals were performed on the casket just prior to interment. I vowed to God that I would never again be involved in the mixing of pagan rituals with a Christian burial.

I take the time to share all of this with you to say that as a minister who is seriously dedicated to proclaim the full contents of God's Word, I made a personal commitment to God that **I WILL NOT PERFORM A FUNERAL IN WHICH THERE IS THE WILLFUL CREMATION OF A CHRISTIAN'S BODY.**

Why do I make such a difficult choice? Because just like "Christian" Freemasonry is contaminated with pagan ritual and "church" orthodoxy, so likewise is the practice of "Christian" cremation steeped in ancient pagan beliefs. Much of today's church readily accepts a mixing of pagan beliefs and Christian orthodoxy. It is true of Christmas and Easter, and it is true with the subject we are considering, cremation of a follower of Jesus Christ. This is the "Christian" world in which we live, one of quick acceptance of mixture and compromise with pagan beliefs. As a minister of God's Word, I do not stand alone in taking such a difficult stand. Consider this testimony of Rev. James W. Frazer, author of *"Cremation, is it Christian?"*:

"By the grace of God I have served as a minister of the gospel since 1921. I had never been requested to officiate at the funeral service of a body to be cremated until I came to Montreal. To date, I have taken but one cremation service; what was very disturbing to me in that instance was the fact that the individual had been a baptist. I had not been notified that it was to be a cremation until I arrived at the chapel at the hour of service. That service was for me a conscience-stirring experience. This event caused me deep concern as to my personal responsibility as a minister of the gospel and as a leader among Christian people of this generation. For I sincerely believe that the minister's responsibility to God and to his fellows is much greater than that of the average Christian. We know all Christians are stewards of God and will be called to account for their stewardship in a coming day, but preachers are especially honoured and privileged servants; therefore, their responsibility is greater."

<http://www.thescripturealone.com/Cremate.html>

Both the apostle James as well as the apostle Paul give a sober testimony pertaining to the responsibility that rests upon ministers of the gospel that has been entrusted to them:

**"MY BRETHREN,
LET NOT MANY OF YOU BECOME TEACHERS,
KNOWING THAT WE SHALL RECEIVE
A STRICTER JUDGMENT"** James 3:1

**"FOR WE ARE NOT, AS SO MANY,
PEDDLING THE WORD OF GOD;
BUT OF SINCERITY, BUT AS FROM GOD,
WE SPEAK IN THE SIGHT OF GOD."** 2 Cor. 2:17

Often I have attended funerals of unbelievers in which, to my inner agony, I was forced to endure the selective reading of Scriptures of comfort that are solely the property of believers who have obtained the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was painful to hear passages about the wonderful resurrection and heaven, and the promises of "no more tears, no more crying, no more pain" (Rev. 21:4) being applied to those who were more than likely writhing in pain and agony at that very moment in Hell, just like the man Jesus vividly described in Luke 16:



**"...AND BEING IN TORMENT IN HADES...HE CRIED...
HAVE MERCY ON ME...COOL MY TONGUE;
FOR I AM TORMENTED IN THIS FLAME...
I HAVE FIVE BROTHERS...TESTIFY TO THEM,
LEST THEY ALSO COME TO THIS PLACE OF TORMENT..."**
Luke 16:22-28 excerpts

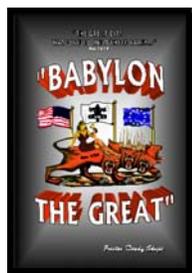
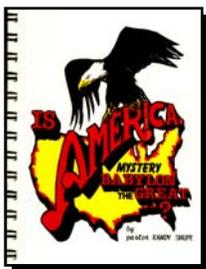
What a fearful accountability before God such ministers have who haphazardly and carelessly misapply God's words of comfort to those whose destiny is clearly stated as "... anyone not found written in Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire...the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Rev. 20:15, 21:8). Rather, they universally apply to any and all the words of Rev. 21:4, "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain...". If it were possible, the rich man of Luke 16 would tell you that it is untrue for him that there is "no more pain, crying or death"! He is still in Hades awaiting the fearful judgment of the second death of Revelation 20-21 to take place!

If you do an internet search, you will find that the practice of cremation has its origins firmly entrenched in many pagan religions. However, cremation was never accepted by either Judaism or its infant offspring, Christianity. Mandatory cremation is practiced today by Buddhist and Hindu religions. Cremation was the religious practice of some early North American Indians. It was practiced by the Hawaiian people prior to it becoming "Christianized" by American missionaries. The practice of cremation was strongly taught against by the Christian missionaries sent to this pagan people. Europe, prior to Christianity, widely practiced cremation. It was also widespread among the Grecian people in 800 BCE. Now hear this: Cremation was the preferred practiced by the Roman empire as early as 600 BCE with the reign of Julius Caesar:

"Cremation was the most common funeral practice in the Roman Empire, although burial was also used. The custom of burning the dead was steeped in tradition at the Roman funerals. A funeral pile was constructed in the shape of an altar, upon which the corpse was laid. The nearest relative then set fire to it. Perfumes and spices were afterwards thrown into the blaze, and when it was extinguished, the embers were quenched with wine. The ashes were then collected and deposited in an urn, to be kept in the mausoleum of the family. At the conclusion of the procession and the ceremony the sepulchre was strewed with flowers, and the mourners took a last farewell of the remains of the deceased...The Ancient Romans paid great attention to funeral rites, because they believed that the souls of the unburied were not admitted into the abodes of the dead and would wander a hundred years along the river Styx before they were allowed to cross it...Cremation is becoming a tradition of men readily accepted and practiced in the church of Jesus Christ. The Roman historian Tacitus noted that both the Jews and the Christians "...bury rather than burn their dead" (Hist.5:5). It is somewhat ironic that the Jewish people, steeped in so much tradition, have remained very faithful to this day to the practice of burying their dead, but the church has not. It is the church who has replaced the commandment of God with the tradition of men. In this area of cremation there is no distinction between today's modernized "Roman Empire" and the church of Jesus Christ. We do what they do with their dead."

<http://www.roman-colosseum.info/roman-life/roman-funerals.htm>

What is the significance of cremation dominating the ancient Roman Empire? It is because America is the prophesied "New Rome" that will dominate the world as its only superpower just prior to the return of Jesus Christ. The parallels between ancient Rome and America are astounding! Both were built on slavery. The governmental structure of America is a carbon-copy of the Roman Empire. They both champion the highest Roman Law, "All men are created equal." They both bear the Eagle emblem. Washington DC is inundated with Roman imagery-not "Christian". In spite of all these common parallels, Christians in this country remain duped with the fairy tale of America being a Christian nation. I have written several documented books as well as newsletters on this subject. You can view them on my website at "PastorRandyShupe.com."



What does all this have to do with the subject of cremation? It is this: Do you believe that God Himself would so pattern His new "Christian" ("One Nation Under God") after the pagan Roman Empire that crucified Christ and slaughtered His followers, both Jew and Christian alike? Do you think that God would have you, as a follower of Christ, living in America (modern-day Rome), to emulate the pagan-based Roman practice of cremating the body at death? Yet, we find Christians doing just that! America is on this fast track of ever-increasing replacement of Christian burial with the custom and tradition of cremation! Dear Christian, are you among the citizens of modern-day Rome, or are you now a citizen of the Kingdom of God? Are you going to take your instruction from the practice of ancient pagan Rome or from the Word of God? Was Jesus buried or cremated? If you know the answer, then dear Christian, why choose to follow the Roman pattern for your body at death?

**“WE KNOW THAT WE ARE OF GOD,
AND THE WHOLE WORLD LIES UNDER THE SWAY OF THE WICKED ONE.”**

1 Jn. 5:19

“Cremation is a practice of ancient pagan origin. It was one of the ceremonies involved in ancient fire worship. In an article entitled, “Cremation,” the *Encyclopedia Americana* states:

“In primitive cultures [that] have survived into modern times cremation is widely practiced. Burning is not only supposed to destroy the dead body most effectively and thus prevent the possible return of the ghost, but since fire serves also as a purifying [agent], it is often considered a good means of warding off evil spirits... Besides discouraging the ghost from haunting the corpse and its former abode, and serving as a means of purification from evil spirits and the contamination associated with the dead body, cremation has also, in some instances...been associated with a belief in a heavenly abode for the spirit of the deceased. The flames of the funeral pyre, leaping upward, are thought to facilitate the ascent of the soul.” <http://www.thercg.org/questions/p035.a.html>

I can hear the cry of opposition saying, “But I don’t believe such mystical nonsense today! That is not why I choose to be cremated!” The absence of faith in the beliefs of such ancient mysticism behind cremation is not the point! I am merely stating what was the motivation behind the practice of burning the body at death. It is the **ORIGIN** of cremation we are establishing. The question for every Christian to consider is this: Why does a believer in Jesus Christ reject the clear-cut biblical practice of burial of the body in favor of an ancient custom and tradition invented by idolatrous pagan worshippers of the “Fire Gods”? Why choose a method of disposing of the body that is steeped in idolatrous pagan beliefs rather than obey the biblical pattern of Scripture for burial at death? If a Christian is rejecting God’s specified plan for the body at death and replacing it with one of pagan origin, then the reason may not be spiritually-based at all. Why the increase in cremation vs. burial? This is but one of many surveys posted on the internet that have been taken in an attempt to answer that question. The initial statement recorded in this survey as the primary reason given for preferring cremation over burial, is “it saves money.”

Cremation is all about money. As followers of Jesus Christ, as those who profess to believe the Word of God to be infallible truth that is applicable for directing the decisions of today’s believers, we must be able to list a completely different set of reasons for rejecting cremation and accepting what has been recorded about burial! This survey proves the unregenerate world does not have a clue about the importance of the body in the eyes of God.

	2004 %
Saves money	30
Saves land	13
Simpler	8
Body not in earth	6
Preference	6
No reason to save body	5
Remains/ashes can be strewn	3
Less emotional	3
Remains can be sent to a more meaningful/some other place	3
Don’t want bugs eating my body	3
Convenient	2
Claustrophobia	2
Unburdened soul	1
Religion	1
Don’t want people to come see me	1
Organ donor	1
Family tradition	1
Other	1
Can hold a memorial at a later date	*
Don’t know/Refused	7
Base: Definitely/somewhat likely to choose cremation for myself	(371)

Taken from the 2005 Wirthlin Report.

For the Christian, life's decisions must always be determined from the spiritual perspective, not from a worldly view such as opting for cremation simply because it "saves money." If a Christian is making a decision to cremate solely on the basis of saving money, then I must painfully suggest that these words of Scripture might be applicable for corrective meditation:



**"FOR THE LOVE OF MONEY IS A ROOT OF ALL KINDS OF EVIL,
FOR WHICH SOME HAVE STRAYED FROM THE FAITH IN THEIR GREEDINESS,
AND PIERCED THEMSELVES THROUGH WITH MANY SORROWS.
BUT YOU O MAN OF GOD, FLEE THESE THINGS..."**

1 Tim. 6:10-11



To **BURY THE BODY...**

Funerals rank among the most expensive purchases many consumers will ever make. A sudden on-demand traditional funeral, including a casket and vault, costs about \$6,000, although "extras" like flowers, obituary notices, acknowledgment cards or limousines can add thousands of dollars to the bottom line. Many funerals can run well over \$10,000 if your emotions are not under check. The need to purchase a cemetery plot (\$ 3,500) can add significantly to the overall cost to bury a loved one.

OR



To **BURN THE BODY...**

The body is cremated shortly after death, without embalming. The cremains are placed in an urn or other container. No viewing or visitation is involved, although a memorial service may be held, with or without the cremains present. The remains can be kept in the home, buried or placed in a crypt or niche in a cemetery, or buried or scattered in a favorite spot. Direct cremation usually costs significantly less (nearly two-thirds) than the "traditional," full-service funeral and burial.

It is quite easy to make the case for cremation being cheaper than burial. If the financial factor is the only consideration, there is no conflict in making a decision. However, for a Christian it must not be a decision based on how much money it will cost. God's Word has much to say about burning a body vs. burial. We will consider that comparison next. First however, I would like to share with you how my wife and I were taught by our parents to deal with the expense of burial.

My wife and I have been married for over 43 years. We have been Christians for 35 of those years. At the time of the death of my wife's mother, along with the death of my parents sometime afterward, we learned a valuable lesson that impacted our view about our own responsibility to prepare in advance for our date with death. Both Lucette's mother and my parents had prepared long before for their day of departure by pre-planning and pre-paying for the entirety of their burial, every phase and facet, every detail that could have required painful and emotional decisions to be made by surviving family were already decided. No purchase of coffin to choose, no cost of headstone or burial, all was preplanned and pre-paid by our parents.

We were relieved and thankful that we were not faced with such emotional-packed decisions in our time of grief. They did it all for us. What an act of love. We determined that we would do the same ourselves. Those plans have been carried out even down to the choosing of our headstone which already sits atop our two burial plots. We have spelled out our wish to be buried and not cremated, our desire not to be embalmed (a practice for viewing purposes). We selected a modest coffin and paid for it as well. Our plots are paid for, we can be buried without any outlay of cash by our survivors. We pray that they, too, will see our actions as an act of love.

Because we made those decisions in advance, on the basis of good stewardship rather than in the moment of emotional stress, we cut the cost of our burial in half, if not more. Funeral establishments are most willing to make you a deal you can't resist if you plan ahead. However, there are no sales if you wait to the last minute. It is not that we are rich, but rather that we realized the value of planning ahead. We could have used all that money for other self-gratifying needs like a new car, luxurious vacation, or a multitude of other desires for the present. However, God commends those who think about the future and make plans accordingly. Consider these principles:

“GO TO THE ANT, YOU SLUGGARD! CONSIDER HER WAYS AND BE WISE, WHICH, HAVING NO CAPTAIN, OVERSEER OR RULER, PROVIDES HER SUPPLIES IN THE SUMMER, AND GATHERS HER FOOD IN THE HARVEST.” Prov 6:6-8

“A GOOD MAN LEAVES AN INHERITANCE TO HIS CHILDREN'S CHILDREN... THERE IS MUCH FOOD IN THE FALLOW GROUND OF THE POOR, AND FOR LACK OF JUSTICE THERE IS WASTE” Prov 13:22-23

We need to dig up our fallow ground! Pre-plan your funeral. Pay for it in monthly installments if you must, just as you do for your house and your car. Plow up your fallow ground. There is food there even for the poor. Look again at the last statement above, "...and for lack of justice (doing what is right) there is waste." Everyone of us wastes much money on selfish things. There is food there if you will cultivate it. Stop living just for the temporal present and plan for the future. Think of others:

“LET NOTHING BE DONE THROUGH SELFISH AMBITION...LET EACH OF YOU LOOKOUT NOT ONLY FOR HIS OWN INTERESTS, BUT ALSO FOR THE INTERESTS OF OTHERS” Phil. 2:3-4

We live in a land that is obsessed with the need to plan for retirement. We invest carefully in our coveted IRA's and investment plans that will provide sufficient money to live on in our old age. Use the same mentality to prepare properly for the time in which you will leave this world. Think of, and prepare for those you will leave behind. Even a simple insurance policy purchased while it is affordable will provide funds for paying that pre-planned departure. The Bible says:

“TRAIN UP A CHILD IN THE WAY HE SHOULD GO, AND WHEN HE IS OLD HE WILL NOT DEPART FROM IT” Prov 22:6

Our parents taught us by example what is the right thing to do. Prepare for your departure by pre-planning and pre-paying for your own burial. If it is left to the survivors they may well just decide to cremate you due to a lack of funds to do otherwise. Let us now consider WHY it is important for a Christian to bury the body rather than to burn it:

“OR DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT YOUR BODY IS THE TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WHO IS IN YOU, WHOM YOU HAVE FROM GOD, AND YOU ARE NOT YOUR OWN? FOR YOU WERE BOUGHT AT A PRICE: THEREFORE GLORIFY GOD IN YOUR BODY AND IN YOUR SPIRIT, WHICH ARE GOD'S (PROPERTY).”
1 Cor. 6:19-20

The body of a Christian is God's property – not our own! Should we then not rely on God's Word to tell us what He wants done with our body after we have finished using it as the temple of the Holy Spirit? Is it now just to be considered some useless thing to be instantly consumed by a destroying fire such as is done with trash? Perhaps I'm being too harsh with my words, but we must think this thing through. Having been the temple of God in life, should the body not be likewise honored in death as long as it is within our power to do so? For a believer, should "saving money" be a deciding factor at all?

“I BESEECH YOU THEREFORE, BRETHREN, BY THE MERCIES OF GOD, THAT YOU PRESENT YOUR BODIES A LIVING SACRIFICE, HOLY, ACCEPTABLE TO GOD, WHICH IS YOUR REASONABLE SERVICE.”

Rom. 12:1

Our life on earth as a follower of Christ is to be one in which our bodies become a living, holy, acceptable sacrifice to God. At the coming of Christ, the believer is to be found sanctified completely, not just in our spirit or in our soul, but also in our body. Most of us will perhaps die before the coming of Christ. Then as an act of faith in the plan of God to resurrect our PHYSICAL body, should we not bury it with reverence in anticipation of that great event? Is this not the very crux of our faith in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ? Take the time to read the 15th Chapter of 1st Corinthians!

“NOW MAY THE GOD OF PEACE HIMSELF SANCTIFY YOU COMPLETELY; AND MAY YOUR WHOLE SPIRIT, SOUL AND BODY BE PRESERVED BLAMELESS AT THE COMING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.”

1 Thess. 5:23

THE BIBLICAL ARGUMENT FOR BURIAL OF THE BODY OF A BELIEVER

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"FOR WHATEVER THINGS WERE WRITTEN BEFORE WERE WRITTEN FOR OUR LEARNING, THAT WE THROUGH THE PATIENCE AND HOPE OF THE SCRIPTURES MIGHT HAVE HOPE."

Rom. 15:4

There are numerous examples in Scripture of the burial of the followers of God, but no record exists of any believer being PURPOSELY cremated, although the practice was in existence throughout a heathen world. Here is a list of some of the numerous burial references of the people of God:

EXAMPLES FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT:

1. **Abraham buried his wife, Sarah** (Gen 23:3-4, 17-20)
2. **Abraham was buried by his sons** (Gen. 25:8-9)
3. **Deborah was buried** (Gen. 35:8)
4. **Rachel was buried by her husband Jacob** (Gen. 35:19-20)
5. **Isaac was buried by his sons** (Gen. 35:29)
6. **Jacob buried his wife Leah in the family tomb** (Gen. 49:31)
7. **Jacob requested to be buried in the same place** (Gen. 47:29-31, 50:2,13)
8. **Moses buried his sister Miriam** (Num. 20:1)
9. **Moses was buried by God Himself!** (Deut. 34:5-6)
10. **Joshua was buried in the land of his inheritance** (Josh. 24:30)
11. **Samuel was honored with a national burial** (1 Sam. 25:1)
12. **David and his son Solomon were buried in the city of David** (1 Kin. 2:10, 11:43)
(There are also numerous references to the burial of the various kings of Judah and Israel)

EXAMPLES FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT:

1. **Jesus Christ was buried in another man's tomb** (Mat. 27:57-60, 1 Cor. 15:4)
2. **John the Baptist was buried after he was beheaded** (Mat. 14:12)
3. **Stephen was buried after his martyrdom** (Acts 8:2)
4. **Even Ananias and Sapphira were buried by believers after God slew them for lying**(Acts 5:10)

From the volume of recorded evidence above, we cannot say that we do not know what is God's will for the body of a believer. How this truth is borne out by the fact that God Himself buried the body of Moses:

"SO MOSES THE SERVANT OF THE LORD DIED THERE IN THE LAND OF MOAB, ACCORDING TO THE WORD OF THE LORD. AND HE BURIED HIM IN A VALLEY IN THE LAND OF MOAB, OPPOSITE BETH PEOR; BUT NO ONE KNOWS HIS GRAVE TO THIS DAY." Deut 34:5-7

God's people are not fully aware of the significance of the body in God's economy! Have you ever wondered why this scenario took place after the death of Moses?

"YET MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL, IN CONTENDING WITH THE DEVIL, WHEN HE DISPUTED ABOUT THE BODY OF MOSES...SAID, 'THE LORD REBUKE YOU!'" Jude 9

God has further need for the body of Moses. He is prophesied to return to earth in his resurrected body as one of God's two witnesses (see Rev.11). Read this story carefully and note how interesting it is that the world, in retaliation against these two witnesses, "...do not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves" (Rev. 11:9). Is not this an open defiance and mockery against what is known by man to be God's will for the body of His followers? Why do you think that so many martyrs were burned at the stake by the haters of God? It is an open challenge and desire to prevent God's desire for the honor of the burial of a believer in anticipation of the resurrection to come.

THE BIBLICAL ARGUMENT AGAINST CREMATION OF THE BODY OF A BELIEVER

“NOW ALL THESE THINGS HAPPENED TO THEM AS EXAMPLES, AND THEY WERE WRITTEN FOR OUR ADMONITION, ON WHOM THE END OF THE AGES HAVE COME.”

1 Cor. 10:11

We have seen the positive examples recorded in God’s Word supporting burial. What then do we find recorded as negative examples that should convince a believer to shun the practice of cremation? Consider the evidence that God is not only against those who practice cremation, but that He Himself uses fire as a severe judgment upon the disobedient:

“THUS SAYS THE LORD: ‘FOR THREE TRANSGRESSIONS OF MOAB, AND NOT FOR FOUR; I WILL NOT TURN AWAY ITS PUNISHMENT, BECAUSE HE BURNED THE BONES OF THE KING OF EDMO TO LIME. BUT I WILL SEND A FIRE UPON MOAB, AND IT SHALL DEVOUR...’” Amos 2:1-2

“IF A MAN MARRIES A WOMAN AND HER MOTHER, IT IS WICKEDNESS. THEY SHALL BE BURNED WITH FIRE, BOTH HE AND THEY, THAT THERE MAY BE NO WICKEDNESS AMONG YOU.” Lev. 20:14

“THE DAUGHTER OF ANY PRIEST, IF SHE PROFANES HERSELF BY PLAYING THE HARLOT, SHE PROFANES HER FATHER. SHE SHALL BE BURNED WITH FIRE.” Lev. 21:9

“AND IT CAME TO PASS, ABOUT THREE MONTHS AFTER, THAT JUDAH WAS TOLD, SAYING, ‘TAMAR YOUR DAUGHTER-IN-LAW HAS PLAYED THE HARLOT; FURTHERMORE SHE IS WITH CHILD BY HARLOTRY.’ SO JUDAH SAID, ‘BRING HER OUT AND LET HER BE BURNED!’” Gen.38:24

“ISRAEL HAS SINNED...FOR THEY HAVE EVEN TAKEN SOME OF THE ACCURSED THINGS, AND HAVE BOTH STOLEN AND DECEIVED; AND THEY HAVE ALSO PUT IT AMONG THEIR OWN STUFF...THEN IT SHALL BE THAT HE WHO IS TAKEN WITH THE ACCURSED THING SHALL BE BURNED WITH FIRE, HE AND ALL THAT HE HAS, BECAUSE HE HAS TRANSGRESSED THE COVENANT OF THE LORD, AND BECAUSE HE HAS DONE A DISGRACEFUL THING IN ISRAEL... SO ALL ISRAEL STONED HIM WITH STONES; AND THEY BURNED THEM WITH FIRE AFTER THEY HAD STONED THEM WITH STONES... SO THE LORD TURNED FROM THE FIERCENESS OF HIS ANGER...” Joshua 7:11,15, 25,26

“THEN NADAB AND ABIHU, THE SONS OF AARON, EACH TOOK HIS CENSER AND PUT FIRE IN IT, PUT INCENSE ON IT, AND OFFERED PROFANE FIRE BEFORE THE LORD, WHICH HE HAD NOT COMMANDED THEM. SO FIRE WENT OUT FROM THE LORD AND DEVoured THEM, AND THEY DIED BEFORE THE LORD.” Lev. 10:1-2

“AND A FIRE CAME OUT FROM THE LORD AND CONSUMED THE TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY MEN WHO WERE OFFERING INCENSE...” Numbers 16:35

“THEY WENT UP ON THE BREADTH OF THE EARTH AND SURROUNDED THE CAMP OF THE SAINTS AND THE BELOVED CITY. AND FIRE CAME DOWN FROM GOD OUT OF HEAVEN AND DEVoured THEM.” Rev. 20:9

“AND ANYONE NOT FOUND WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF LIFE WAS CAST INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE... THE COWARDLY, UNBELIEVING, ABOMINABLE, MURDERERS, SEXUALLY IMMORAL, SORCERERS, IDOLATERS, AND ALL LIARS SHALL HAVE THEIR PART IN THE LAKE OF FIRE WHICH BURNS WITH FIRE AND BRIMSTONE, WHICH IS THE SECOND DEATH.” Rev. 20:15, 21:8

It is inescapable that **FIRE** is God’s judgment upon the unbelieving as well as the disobedient. The destruction of the physical body by fire was the final act of His wrath upon those who commit abominations before His face. Such an eternal fire faces the unbeliever and the disobedient. Considering all the above evidence of how God has used the burning of the bodies of the disobedient and rebellious, why then should a believer in Jesus Christ choose to have his/her body cremated by fire? Do we want to identify with the punishment of the disobedient or with the faithful obedient who reverently bury their body in hope of the resurrection? Satan “deceives the whole world” (Rev.12:9). If we, as followers of God, are not careful to take our direction solely from the Word of God instead of from the misdirection of “the god of this world” (2 Cor.4:4), then we, too, can be deceived (Mat. 24:24).

As long as it is within the power of the believer to control the destiny of his/her physical body, burial should be that choice. Certainly, recorded history will attest that there have been countless numbers of believers who were burned at the stake for their faith (see Foxe’s Book of Martyrs). Others have perished by means of the destructive force of house fires, etc. In such instances, the all-powerful God will not be limited in restructuring the bodies of those believers destroyed in such manner. Even the recent discovery and use of DNA should illustrate that point. It takes very little evidence to establish the DNA of an individual. Do you think God who “numbers the hairs on our head” (Mat. 10:30) does not know the DNA of every person that He created? Martyrs who are burned at the stake will not prevent God from being able to resurrect their bodies.

However, in all honesty, I must say that I do not know for certainty what eternal effect that the act of willful cremation by Christians of their body will produce. I suspect such "dead works" performed in defiance of God's clearly revealed will, might result in a person being saved, but suffering loss of reward as spelled out in 1 Corinthians 3:14-15. Why so? Because, such failure to act in true faith and obedience toward God's revealed purpose for the body, God's warning is clear:

"THEREFORE, TO HIM WHO KNOWS TO DO GOOD AND DOES NOT DO IT, TO HIM IT IS SIN"

James 4:17

"DO NOT BE DECEIVED, GOD IS NOT MOCKED; FOR WHATEVER A MAN SOWS, THAT HE WILL ALSO REAP"

Gal. 6:7

There are many who would tell you that there are no ramifications for a Christian to choose to cremate the body rather than bury it as Scripture reveals. Somehow we think that "Grace" means we can reap what we do not sow and that we can end up with the same results even if we choose to disobey God's instructions, that we can know to do good, but not suffer any loss if we don't do it. From my perspective of Scripture, this is dangerous and risky thinking.

Let me reassure you it is not a matter of being saved or not saved that is the consequence of choosing cremation over burial, but I fear it may well result in a loss of eternal rewards if we are willfully disobedient, and especially if our motivation for doing so is to save money.

I lack the space to print out these Scriptures, but let me urge you to meditate prayerfully in "The Resurrection Chapter" of 1 Corinthians 15:35-57. Some of the important points Paul makes that are applicable to the subject we are studying are these:

1. THE BODY IS BURIED BY FAITH AS A SEED PLACED IN THE GROUND.
2. IT IS SOWN INTO THE GROUND AS A CORRUPTIBLE, MORTAL, PHYSICAL BODY.
3. IT IS EVENTUALLY TO BE RAISED AS AN INCORRUPTIBLE, IMMORTAL, SPIRITUAL BODY.
4. FLESH AND BLOOD (the physical body) CANNOT INHERIT THE HEAVENLY KINGDOM.
5. THE NATURAL BODY COMES FIRST, THEN THE SPIRITUAL BODY.
6. THE RAPTURE IS PRECEDED BY THE DEAD IN CHRIST BEING RAISED FROM THE DEAD.
7. THEN THOSE WHO ARE ALIVE AND REMAIN WILL BE INSTANTLY CHANGED FROM THE PHYSICAL BODY TO THE SPIRITUAL BODY WITHOUT DYING.

It is clear from the language of Paul above, as well as his illustrations pertaining to the resurrection, that he taught (and anticipated) that the body of the believer would be sown into the ground like a seed. It speaks of the natural corruption process that releases the life contained in the seed. If possible, the body of the believer is to be planted in the ground, not burned with fire! The remains are to experience a natural corruption process in the ground. I am grieved when I read the "creative" ways in which the world takes the ashes and disperses them from airplanes and the like. That is fine for the world, but it is not so fine for a believer!

God has a plan for the body of the believer. At the rapture, the first manifestation before the living will be removed is that the **GRAVES** are visibly opened in which the planted bodies of believers will be raised! This is God's witness to a Christ-rejecting world of the power of the resurrection from the dead. All **BURIED** bodies of believers who have died in obedience to Christ will be used by God to bear witness to the world of the value of being a Christian. What an honor! This is a hard saying, but if you burn your body and scatter its ashes, you will not be part of that manifested witness even though (perhaps) your body will be reconstructed from ash. Do it God's way, and "rest in peace!"

Selah,

Pastor Randy Shupe

"THE PROPHETIC WORD"

~NOVEMBER 2011~

**THE RESURRECTION
OF THE DEAD IN CHRIST:**

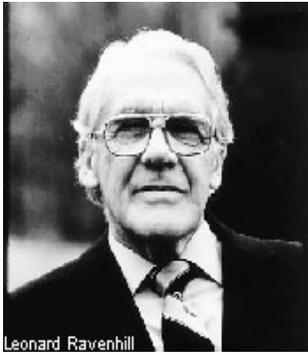
THE FINAL ACT OF SALVATION

"...HOW ARE THE DEAD RAISED UP? AND WITH WHAT BODY DO THEY COME? FOOLISH ONE, WHAT YOU SOW IS NOT MADE ALIVE UNLESS IT DIES...AND WHAT YOU SOW, YOU DO NOT SOW THAT BODY THAT SHALL BE...THE BODY IS SOWN IN CORRUPTION, IT IS RAISED IN INCORRUPTION. IT IS SOWN IN DISHONOR, IT IS RAISED IN GLORY. IT IS SOWN IN WEAKNESS, IT IS RAISED IN POWER. IT IS SOWN A NATURAL BODY, IT IS RAISED A SPIRITUAL BODY. THERE IS A NATURAL BODY, AND THERE IS A SPIRITUAL BODY... HOWEVER, THE SPIRITUAL IS NOT FIRST, BUT THE NATURAL, AND AFTERWARD THE SPIRITUAL. THE FIRST MAN WAS OF THE EARTH, MADE OF DUST; THE SECOND MAN IS THE LORD FROM HEAVEN...AND AS WE HAVE BORNE THE IMAGE OF THE MAN OF DUST, WE SHALL ALSO BEAR THE IMAGE OF THE HEAVENLY MAN.

NOW THIS I SAY, BRETHREN, THAT FLESH AND BLOOD CANNOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD; NOR DOES CORRUPTION INHERIT INCORRUPTION. BEHOLD, I TELL YOU A MYSTERY: WE SHALL NOT ALL SLEEP, BUT WE SHALL ALL BE CHANGED -- IN A MOMENT, IN THE TWINKLING OF AN EYE, AT THE LAST TRUMPET. FOR THE TRUMPET WILL SOUND, AND THE DEAD WILL BE RAISED INCORRUPTIBLE, AND WE SHALL BE CHANGED. FOR THIS CORRUPTIBLE MUST PUT ON INCORRUPTION, AND THIS MORTAL MUST PUT ON IMMORTALITY. SO WHEN THIS CORRUPTIBLE HAS PUT ON INCORRUPTION, AND THIS MORTAL HAS PUT ON IMMORTALITY, THEN SHALL BE BROUGHT TO PASS THE SAYING THAT IS WRITTEN: 'DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY.'
'O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING? O HADES, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY?'
...BUT THANKS BE TO GOD, WHO GIVES US THE VICTORY THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST."

1 Cor 15:35-57 excerpts





Leonard Ravenhill

“Much of what is taught as Christianity today is “paperback theology.” Leonard Ravenhill

If you have read any of the writings of the late, great revivalist, Leonard Ravenhill, you know that he often bemoaned the fact that modern-day theologians are a mere wisp of the spiritual giants of yesterday. Where are the protégés of old timers like William Gurnall, Charles Finney, Andrew Murray, E.W. Bullinger, Clarence Larkin, G. Cambell Morgan, and the likes? Even more recent, where are the likes of Derek Prince, Robert Horton, A.W. Tozer, Alan Redpath and Watchman Nee? Indeed, they have been replaced with a cheapened version of “paperback theology”, a composite of half-truths presented as the whole.

Where are the in-depth, systematic teachers of the totality of the Word of God such as we find in the apostle Paul? Today’s most popular teachers in America specialize in the limited realm of being either “faith teachers” or “grace teachers.” However, the Scriptures state its own reason for being:



“...THE HOLY SCRIPTURES, WHICH ARE ABLE TO MAKE YOU WISE FOR SALVATION THROUGH FAITH WHICH IS IN CHRIST JESUS. ALL SCRIPTURE IS GIVEN BY INSPIRATION OF GOD, AND IS PROFITABLE FOR DOCTRINE, FOR REPROOF, FOR CORRECTION, FOR INSTRUCTION IN RIGHTEOUSNESS, THAT THE MAN OF GOD MAY BE COMPLETE, THOROUGHLY EQUIPPED FOR EVERY GOOD WORK.”

2 Tim. 3:15-17



No doubt the message of “faith,” as well as the message of “grace” is important. We all know the quote: “For by grace are you saved through faith...and not of works lest anyone should boast.” (Eph. 2:8-9). However, the very next verse tells us, “...created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared before hand that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10). Read the verse above from 2 Timothy again. It is the same message as Ephesians 2. “Saved by faith...for every good work.”

Although we have much emphasis placed on the need for “faith” and “grace”, what is presented under these two banners often lacks the fullness of what the Scriptures teach. For instance, faith is reduced to nifty clichés like “only believe and receive.” How does that stack up against the apostle James warning:



“BUT DO YOU WANT TO KNOW, O FOOLISH MAN, THAT FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD?... DO YOU SEE THAT FAITH WAS WORKING TOGETHER WITH HIS WORKS, AND BY WORKS FAITH WAS MADE PERFECT?...YOU SEE THEN THAT A MAN IS JUSTIFIED BY WORKS, AND NOT BY FAITH ONLY...FOR AS THE BODY WITHOUT THE SPIRIT IS DEAD, SO FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD ALSO.” James Chapter two excerpts

It was the Protestant reformer Martin Luther who became so enraged over these words of the apostle James that he declared it to be “an epistle of straw” that would be burned up. Is that how we are to solve conflict in the Scriptures? Just rip out the parts that don’t fit our cherished half-theological positions? James was only stating that faith is EVIDENCED by our works. Where there are no works there is no real faith. Read it in context. There is no conflict.

Today’s theology has been reduced to expressions of “clever clichés.” Have you heard this one? “Faith plus nothing.” Do the apostles agree? Not the apostle Peter:

“TO THOSE WHO HAVE OBTAINED LIKE PRECIOUS FAITH WITH US BY THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF OUR GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST...GIVING ALL DILIGENCE ADD TO YOUR FAITH VIRTUE...KNOWLEDGE...SELF-CONTROL...PERSEVERANCE...GODLINESS...BROTHERLY KINDNESS...LOVE.FOR IF THESE THINGS ARE YOURS AND ABOUND, YOU WILL BE NEITHER BARREN NOR UNFRUITFUL IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. FOR HE WHO LACKS THESE THINGS IS SHORT-SIGHTED, EVEN TO BLINDNESS AND HAS FORGOTTEN THAT HE WAS PURGED FROM HIS OLD SINS.

THEREFORE BRETHREN, BE EVEN MORE DILIGENT TO MAKE YOUR CALLING AND ELECTION SURE, FOR IF YOU DO THESE THINGS YOU WILL NEVER STUMBLE; FOR SO AN ENTRANCE WILL BE SUPPLIED TO YOU ABUNDANTLY INTO THE EVERLASTING KINGDOM OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST.”

2 Peter Chapter 1 excerpts



In Christianity today, most of its doctrinal positions have been reduced to over-simplified, popular clichés. Just as we saw them rooted in expressions of faith, so likewise do we find them used to express the meaning of grace. The doctrine of grace is best known by the cliché, “The unmerited favor of God.” But, is this correct?

Let us consider Strong’s Concordance to see how this condensed saying about grace measures up. First of all, you will not find “unmerited favor” in the definition of the Greek word translated as “grace” at all: →

5485. χάρις *charis*, *khar'-ece*; from 5463; *graciousness* (as *gratifying*), of manner or act (abstr. or concr.; lit., fig., or spiritual; espec. the divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life; incl. *gratitude*):— acceptable, benefit, favour, gift, grace (-ious), joy, liberality, pleasure, thank (-s, worthy).



Just like James defined “faith” as a twofold expression (faith evidenced by works), “grace” also bears a twofold expression (inward receiving-outward reflection).

(1)
“THE DIVINE
INFLUENCE
UPON
THE HEART,



(2)
AND
ITS
REFLECTION
IN THE LIFE”

(“GRACE” FLOWING INWARD
INTO THE HEART...)

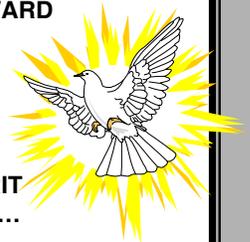
(“GRACE” REFLECTING OUTWARD
IN THE LIFE...)



PARDON

THROUGH JESUS CHRIST
AS THE GRACE OF GOD...

“FOR THE GRACE OF GOD THAT BRINGS
SALVATION HAS APPEARED TO ALL MEN...”
Titus 2:11

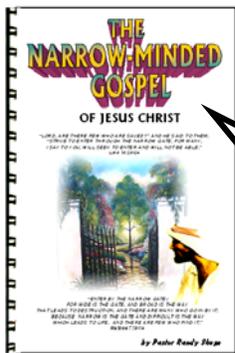


POWER

THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT
AS THE SPIRIT OF GRACE...

“...THE SPIRIT WHO DWELLS IN US YEARNs
JEALOUSLY...BUT HE GIVES MORE GRACE...”
James 4:5-6

We need to beware of cleverly stated doctrinal clichés. They are used to express faith (“believe and receive,” and “faith plus nothing”). They are used to express grace (“unmerited favor”). They are also used to express salvation (“once saved, always saved.”) Here is the question I want to pose in this newsletter: If there is more to the doctrine of faith, and there is more to the doctrine of grace, do you think it could be also true of the doctrine of salvation?



I wrote this book in 2009 to clearly present what the Bible teaches about salvation vs. what is widely presented today as the gospel of salvation. There is a serious problem in this area:

“THE WORD OF GOD IS BEING PERVERTED IN SUCH A MANNER THAT EVERYTHING IS AUTOMATICALLY AND IRREVERSIBLY PLACED IN THE BELIEVER’S SPIRITUAL “WIN” COLUMN RIGHT FROM THE NEW BIRTH. THEREFORE, SALVATION IS VIEWED TOTALLY FROM A PAST-TENSE PERSPECTIVE; FROM A POSSESSIVE POSITION IN WHICH NOTHING OF VALUE LIES IN FRONT OF US.”

Faith is considered to be “a done deal.” Grace is also viewed as “a done deal.” The same is true of the doctrine of salvation, it too is “a done deal.” Everything is a finished work of the past in modern-day, over-simplified, cliché-laden doctrinal expressions. However, they do not teach the fullness of what the Scriptures contain. It is true of faith, it is true of grace, and I want to show you it is also true of salvation. We need to move away from merely expressing the Christian experience as a completed **POSSESSION** of the past, and begin to see it as an ongoing **PROCESS**.

"SALVATION"

Greek: Strong's Concordance

4991. σωτηρία *sōtēria*, so-lay-ree'-ah
 fem. of a der. of 4990 as (prop. abstr.
 noun; *rescue* or *safety* (phys. or mor.);-
deliver, health, salvation, save, saving

We are now going to look at "salvation" in the New Testament teachings of the apostles to establish that they too taught there are areas of salvation that are past-tense, areas that are present-tense, and others that are future-tense. If indeed this is true, then the rendering of "being saved" is the proper way to approach this subject rather than cramming every aspect of salvation into a past-tense, totally completed, possessive statement of doctrine. If the premise I am stating is true, then it renders the popular cliché, "once saved, always saved" to be an unbiblical expression about salvation.

Perhaps it is noteworthy to bring out the fact that "eternal life" is not even specified as part of the definition of the Greek word translated as salvation, and yet many teach that as its sole meaning. If you say "salvation" the first word response people utter is "eternal life."

Look at this diagram.
 It is a comparison of the Strong's Concordance definition with what Jesus said He came to preach. It is easy to see the four words found in Strong's described in Jesus' objectives for preaching the gospel →



"THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME BECAUSE HE HAS ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR; HE HAS SENT ME TO HEAL THE BROKENHEARTED, TO PREACH DELIVERANCE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET AT LIBERTY THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, TO PREACH THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD."
 Luke 4:18-19

**"...WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING;
 FOR IT IS GOD WHO WORKS IN YOU BOTH TO WILL AND TO DO OF HIS GOOD PLEASURE"**
 Phil. 2:12-13

In light of this definition of salvation, we must conclude that when Paul uttered the command to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12), he wasn't issuing a mandate to "work out your own way to eternal life," was he? Rather he must have in mind for God's people to work out what is needful to be "saved" is being rescued, finding safety, health and deliverance in the midst of this present evil age that is under the sway of the wicked one. In this misunderstood verse, Paul is talking about an aspect of "salvation" being worked out by the believer in the soul (mind, will and emotions). "Salvation" does not always speak of "eternal life."

Consider another use of the word salvation that does not speak of eternal life.

"IS ANY AMONG YOU SICK? LET HIM CALL FOR THE ELDERS OF THE CHURCH, AND LET THEM PRAY OVER HIM, ANOINTING HIM WITH OIL IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, AND THE PRAYER OF FAITH WILL SAVE THE SICK, AND THE LORD WILL RAISE HIM UP..."
 James 5:14-15

James uses the same Greek word for salvation to state that "the prayer of faith will save the sick" (Jm.5:14-15). We would not use this verse to convey how to be saved unto eternal life, would we? James is merely speaking of the aspect of salvation that brings health in the physical realm. Not all verses about salvation speak of eternal life!

I am now going to reveal to you how the Scriptures present salvation as a work in progress rather than a past-tense possession. Stop thinking that salvation is always talking about eternal life. A note of caution is in order here as well. While I am presenting to you a picture of progressive salvation, I pray that you will not surmise that I am proclaiming to you salvation by your own works!

SALVATION

IS A PROGRESSIVE ACTION

When God created Adam, we find these words describing what God created:

**“AND THE LORD GOD FORMED MAN OF THE DUST OF THE GROUND,
AND BREATHED INTO HIS NOSTRILS THE BREATH OF LIFE;
AND MAN BECAME A LIVING SOUL”** Gen. 2:7

Man is a **SPIRIT**, he possess a **SOUL**, and he lives in a **PHYSICAL BODY**.

We find this confirmation spoken by the apostle Paul when he said,

**“ NOW MAY THE GOD OF PEACE HIMSELF, SANCTIFY YOU COMPLETELY;
AND MAY YOUR WHOLE SPIRIT, SOUL AND BODY BE PRESERVED BLAMELESS
AT THE COMING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.
HE WHO CALLS YOU IS FAITHFUL, WHO ALSO WILL DO IT.”**

1 Thess. 5:23-24

HOW Jesus is going to sanctify us completely (spirit, soul and body) is by means of who He is. Jesus has a threefold revelation of Himself presented in Scripture that is the means by which He will “save” the believer totally (spirit, soul and body). Here is that revelation:

**“LET NOT YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED; YOU BELIEVE IN GOD, BELIEVE ALSO IN ME. IN MY FATHER’S HOUSE ARE MANY MANSIONS; IF IT WERE NOT SO, I WOULD HAVE TOLD YOU. I GO TO PREPARE A PLACE FOR YOU. AND IF I GO AND PREPARE A PLACE FOR YOU, I WILL COME AGAIN AND RECEIVE YOU TO MYSELF; THAT WHERE I AM, THERE YOU MAY BE ALSO. AND WHERE I GO YOU KNOW, AND THE WAY YOU KNOW. THOMAS SAID TO HIM, “LORD, WE DO NOT KNOW WHERE YOU ARE GOING, AND HOW CAN WE KNOW THE WAY?” JESUS SAID TO HIM,
“I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE.
NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER EXCEPT THROUGH ME.”**

John 14:1-6

How is Jesus going to show the way? It is not restricted to Jesus being “the way” via the new birth. It is a progressive unfolding to the believer of Jesus Christ first as “the way”, then as “the truth”, and finally as “the life”. Salvation is an ongoing progressive process in the life of the believer, just as Jesus’ revelation of Himself is an ongoing progression of revelation to be applied in the redemption of the believer. Salvation first comes to the spirit, then it is worked out in the soul, and finally will be manifested in the resurrected (or raptured) body of those for whom Christ died. Altogether, this is “salvation”, and is best expressed by the concept of “being saved”. For instance, how can you say that “I have been saved” when your body is yet to be “saved” by means of resurrection or rapture? (Rom. 8:23-25) This stated “salvation” of the body is the final act of salvation. Everything pertaining to salvation was not completed in the initial act of the new birth. There is more to come.

I would like to show you how the salvation process begins in the spirit, is then worked out in the soul, and will only be finalized in the body, in the future, at the appointed day of the resurrection from the dead, when the believer’s body that lies in the grave is finally resurrected. Here is that premise:

**“WHERE
I GO YOU
KNOW,
AND
YOU KNOW
THE WAY.**



**I AM
THE WAY,
THE TRUTH,
AND
THE LIFE.**

**BEGINS IN
THE SPIRIT**

“I AM THE WAY”

**WORKED OUT IN
THE SOUL**

“I AM THE TRUTH”

**FINALIZED IN
THE BODY**

“I AM THE LIFE”

NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER EXCEPT THROUGH ME”

Jn. 14:46

PAST**SALVATION BEGINS
IN THE SPIRIT**

**"...THAT WHICH IS
BORN OF THE SPIRIT
IS SPIRIT...
"YOU MUST**

BE BORN AGAIN." God works in man from the inside to the outside. Life must begin with a transformation of his degenerate spirit by the Spirit of the living God (see Rom. 8:15-16). here man receives the first definition of grace that we studied earlier, "Divine influence upon the heart."

Jn. 3:5-7

However, as you also remember there is a second manifestation of God's grace that must follow, "and its reflection in the life" which, brings us to the second phase of God's plan of salvation, bringing restoration to the soul of the born again Christian. This is not a product of the new birth.

PRESENT**SALVATION IS WORKED
OUT IN THE SOUL**

**"...RECEIVING THE END
OF YOUR FAITH-THE SALVATION
OF YOUR SOULS..."**

1 Pet. 1:9

**"WE ARE NOT OF THOSE WHO
DRAW BACK TO PERDITION,
BUT OF THOSE WHO BELIEVE
TO THE SAVING OF THE SOUL"**

Heb. 10:39

**"...WORK OUT YOUR
OWN SALVATION WITH
FEAR AND TREMBLING,
FOR IT IS GOD
WHO WORKS IN YOU
BOTH TO WILL AND DO
OF HIS GOOD PLEASURE..."**

Phil. 2:12-13

We know that the event known as the "new birth" is when salvation comes to man. To what part of man does salvation come, the total man (spirit, soul and body) or to a portion of man as God created him? Jesus specifically tells us what happens at the new birth.

What is "born again" is the spirit of man. However, the spirit is not the complete expression of a man, is it? Man is spirit, possesses a soul, and lives in a body, all of which God intends to "sanctify completely" as we saw earlier in 1 Thess. 5:23-24.

Wow! Notice when the apostle Peter declares that salvation comes to "the soul"! It is at **THE END** of your faith, rather than a thing achieved at the beginning via the act of the new birth! Remember, earlier, I showed you that your "Faith without works is a dead faith", and that grace received in your heart is now to have a "reflection in the life." The new birth is to be followed with an outward manifestation of a new life! That is why Paul states, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold all things have become new" (2 Cor. 5:17).

Likewise, the apostle Paul places the saving of the soul as a goal set before the Christian, not as an event that took place at the new birth. Notice, too, that Paul believed that a Christian could go backwards all the way to perdition ("eternal misery").

Dear Christian, **IF** you accept that faith is to be **EVIDENCED** by works, and **IF** you believe God is looking for an outward reflection of His grace **EVIDENCED** in your life, then you can fully understand this difficult verse penned by the apostle Paul instructing the believer to "work out your own salvation" as God "works in you" to will and do of His good pleasure! God expects His "sheep" to submit to the "restoration of the soul" as stated in Psalm 23:3. God expects His people to "be renewed in the spirit of their mind" in order that they may **PROVE** (demonstrate) what is the "good... acceptable...perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:2).

God expects His people to "put off the man which grows corrupt according to its deceitful lusts" and to "put on the new man which is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:22-24). Do you really believe all these things happened at the new birth, or are they an ongoing, progressive action taken by the born-again believer as he/she submits to the working of the Spirit of Grace (the Holy Spirit) sent by God to finish the work Christ has begun. Paul states, "Be confident of this very thing, that He who has **BEGUN** a good work in you shall **COMPLETE** it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil.1:6). Are we not to look to Jesus as the **AUTHOR** and **FINISHER** of our faith"? (Heb.12:2). Can you not see the absolute folly of espousing clever clichés like "once saved, always saved" when God still has so much "salvation" to complete in us? Are we indeed "eternally secure" if we in essence only allow God to do the initial work of bringing salvation to our spirit by means of the new birth?

FUTURE**FINALIZED
IN THE BODY**

**"...EAGERLY WAITING FOR
THE ADOPTION,
THE REDEMPTION
OF OUR BODY...
FOR WE ARE SAVED
IN THIS HOPE"**

Rom. 8:23-24

**"...WHEN THIS MORTAL HAS
PUT ON IMMORTALITY..."**

1 Cor. 15:54

So much to say and so little space left to say it. This is the final act of our salvation. It is the resurrection (or rapture) of the body of the believer. This is not a finished work, but a future work. In last month's newsletter, I was a pleading with you to avoid cremating the body but rather to plant it as a seed in the ground as Paul plainly argues in 1 Cor. 15. Read carefully these two scriptures in their contextual setting as I lack the space to print them. At the appropriate moment, Jesus Christ Himself will raise the bodies of Christians from the grave. It is at this moment that **THE BODY** will put on **IMMORTALITY** ("eternal life"). The spirit and the soul are **ETERNAL**, but the body has not yet put on eternal life. That is why we are "being saved" because the process is not yet finished! In our next issue, I want to talk to you about the doctrine of eternal life. We will ponder the same premise: "Is eternal life a **PRESENT POSSESSION** or is it a **FUTURE PROMISE.**" You might be surprised by what the Scriptures say.

"THE PROPHETIC WORD"

ETERNAL LIFE

IS
ETERNAL LIFE
A
PRESENT
POSSESSION?

IS
ETERNAL LIFE
A
PROMISED
POSSESSION?

**"...LAY HOLD ON ETERNAL LIFE, TO WHICH YOU WERE ALSO CALLED...
...KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS, WHO ALONE HAS IMMORTALITY,
DWELLING IN UNAPPROACHABLE LIGHT, WHOM NO MAN HAS SEEN OR CAN SEE,
TO WHOM BE HONOR AND EVERLASTING POWER. AMEN."** 1 Tim. 6:12-16 excerpts

When it comes to the subject of eternal life, we live in times in which men say things other than what the apostle Paul spoke about this subject. Paul is writing to Timothy, his true son in the faith (1 Tim. 1:2). It is in this same epistle, that he exhorts Timothy, "Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity...do not neglect the gift that is in you...by the laying on of hands of the presbytery...take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you" (1 Tim.4:12-16). Such exhortation that Paul gives to his young protégé is foreign theology in Christianity today. Rather than following the likes of Paul's words, everything pertaining to salvation is stated to be a completed act, a done deal, a thing of the past, that is now considered to be a present possession of the believer.

Now look carefully at the opening text above from 1 Timothy 6:12-16. Paul makes two references to the subject of this newsletter, namely, "eternal life" and "immortality." Paul is not in harmony with today's popular salvation clichés, "once saved, always saved" or "unconditional eternal security", but rather reminds Timothy of the need to "...lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called." Timothy is a born-again believer like you and me, is he not? Why does Paul not view eternal life as a present possession of the believer as so many teach today?

Secondly, as Paul begins now to describe the majesty of Jesus Christ in these verses, he clarifies that it is Jesus "...who alone has immortality." However, this is not the modern-day perspective on this subject. There is today a tenacious defense of eternal life and immortality as being a present possession belonging the believer. Since Paul wrote two-thirds of the New Testament epistles, we should take note that he teaches Timothy just the opposite of what is being taught today.

I believe Paul's teachings such as he gave to Timothy have become foreign theology today because we are not viewing the subject of salvation in its completeness. Salvation is not a totally completed process based just on the initial act of conversion, as widely believed, but rather is an ongoing, progressive unfolding of salvation coming to the complete man that God created: man with a spirit, a soul, and a physical body. So important is a proper understanding of salvation that I am going to repeat two pages from last month's newsletter for you review:

SALVATION
IS A PROGRESSIVE ACTION

When God created Adam, we find these words describing what God created:

**“AND THE LORD GOD FORMED MAN OF THE DUST OF THE GROUND, ← (body)
AND BREATHED INTO HIS NOSTRILS THE BREATH OF LIFE; ← (spirit)
AND MAN BECAME A LIVING SOUL” ← (soul)**
Gen. 2:7

Man is a **SPIRIT**, he possess a **SOUL**, and he lives in a **PHYSICAL BODY**. We find this confirmation spoken by the apostle Paul when he said,

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HOW Jesus is going to sanctify us completely (spirit, soul and body) is by means of who He is. Jesus has a threefold revelation of Himself presented in Scripture that is the means by which He will “save” the believer totally (spirit, soul and body). Here is that revelation:

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John 14:1-6

“WHERE I GO YOU KNOW, AND YOU KNOW THE WAY.”



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BEGINS IN THE SPIRIT
“I AM THE WAY”

WORKED OUT IN THE SOUL
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The salvation process begins in the spirit, it is then worked out in the soul, and will only be finalized in the body, in the future, at the appointed day of the resurrection from the dead, when the believer's body that lies in the grave is finally resurrected.

How is Jesus going to show the way? It is not restricted to just Jesus being “the way” via the new birth. Rather it is a progressive unfolding to the believer of Jesus Christ first as “the way”, then as “the truth”, and finally as “the life”. Salvation is an ongoing progressive process in the life of the believer, just as Jesus’ revelation of Himself is an ongoing, progression of revelation to be applied in the redemption of the believer. Salvation first comes to the spirit, then it is worked out in the soul, and finally will be manifested in the resurrected (or raptured) body of those for whom Christ died. Altogether, this is “salvation”, and is best expressed by the concept of “being saved”. For instance, how can you say that “I have been saved” when your body is yet to be “saved” by means of resurrection or rapture? (Rom. 8:23-25) This stated “salvation” of the body is the final act of salvation. Everything pertaining to salvation was not completed in the initial act of the new birth. There is more to come.

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SALVATION BEGINS IN THE SPIRIT

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God works in man from the inside to the outside. Life must begin with a transformation of his degenerate spirit by the Spirit of the living God (see Rom. 8:15-16). here man receives the first definition of grace that we studied earlier, “Divine influence upon the heart.”

However, as you also remember there is a second manifestation of God’s grace that must follow, “and its reflection in the life”, which brings us to the second phase of God’s plan of salvation: bringing restoration to the soul of the born again Christian. This is not a finished product of the new birth.

PRESENT

SALVATION IS WORKED OUT IN THE SOUL

“...RECEIVING
THE END
OF YOUR FAITH-
THE SALVATION OF
YOUR SOULS...”

1 Pet. 1:9

“WE ARE NOT OF THOSE
WHO DRAW BACK TO
PERDITION, BUT OF THOSE
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SAVING OF THE SOUL”

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“...WORK OUT YOUR
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FUTURE

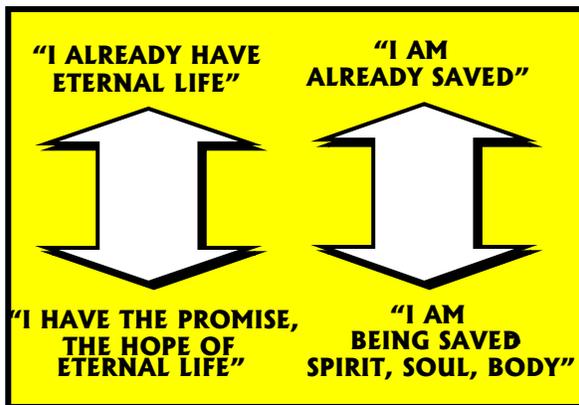
**FINALIZED
IN THE BODY**

**“...EAGERLY WAITING
FOR THE ADOPTION,
THE REDEMPTION
OF OUR BODY...
FOR WE ARE SAVED
IN THIS HOPE”**
Rom. 8:23-24

**“...WHEN THIS MORTAL
HAS PUT ON
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1 Cor. 15:54

**“YOU SHALL NOT ADD TO THE WORD WHICH
I HAVE COMMANDED YOU, NOR TAKE
ANYTHING FROM IT, THAT YOU MAY KEEP
THE COMMANDMENTS OF THE LORD YOUR
GOD WHICH I COMMAND YOU.”**

Deut. 4:2



This is the final act of our salvation. It is the resurrection (or rapture) of the body of the believer. This is not a finished work, but a future work. In October’s newsletter, I was a pleading with you to avoid intentionally cremating the body, but rather to plant it as a seed in the ground as Paul plainly argues in 1 Cor. 15.

Read carefully these two scriptures in their contextual setting as I lack the space to print them. At the appropriate moment, Jesus Christ Himself will raise the bodies of Christians from the grave. It is at this moment that **THE BODY** will put on **IMMORTALITY** (“eternal life”). The spirit and the soul are **ETERNAL**, but the body has not yet put on eternal life. That is why we are “being saved”, because the process is not yet finished! Saying all that as preliminary instruction, I now want to talk to you about the doctrine of eternal life.

If you endorse a gospel that adds to God’s Word then you are in danger of keeping the commandments of men – things added to the Word of God. Today’s version of the gospel teaches salvation as a past-tense, completed event. There are teachers who major in drilling home the point that the born-again believer has already received eternal life. Is that true? Is that really what the Scriptures teach? Does the believer possess eternal life or is it given to the believer in the form of a promise and a hope for the future?

This is an enormously important question to answer properly. Equally emphasized by the wide-gate and broad-way gospel is the emphatic declaration of salvation being a completed task. Is this what the Scriptures teach, or do they present salvation as an on-going, progressive action that begins in the spirit, progresses to the soul, and is yet-to-be finalized in the body through the resurrection of the dead? This, too, is a vitally important question to consider.

Both of these positions cannot be true. Only one is according to what is written in God’s Word. Either eternal life is a present possession in the life of the believer or it is a promised possession that will take place in eternity. Multitudes of believers are endorsing the “once saved-always saved” concept because of the belief that they already possess eternal life; and if it is eternal, then they can never lose it. It is a doctrine that sounds good, but it is not sound doctrine! These concepts are “sand theology” (Mat. 7:26). These are the teachings of man replacing the rock foundational teachings of Christ (Mat. 7:25).

Let us begin to examine what the Scriptures teach about when and how the believer receives eternal life.

With this text in mind, that every fact is established in the mouth of two or three witnesses, let us examine the recorded witness that the Scriptures bear pertaining to the subject of when one receives eternal life. There are 15 pertinent passages in the New Testament using the words eternal life and 10 verses using the phrase everlasting life. About half of both categories are repetitive passages which you can (and should) verify for yourself. Let us look at 10 of those passages which convey different aspects and qualifying content that shed light on the subject of when the believer will inherit eternal/everlasting life. You might be in for a shock, for the Scriptures do not convey the likes of what is being presented by the wide-gate and broad-way gospel.

Let us begin with Paul who wrote two-thirds of the New Testament. Let us consider what Paul spoke to Timothy, his "true son in the faith" (1 Tim.1:2). I stress this point about Timothy because Paul, by making such a statement, confirms that Timothy is a born-again believer. In the opening of this epistle Paul calls Timothy "my true son in the faith" (1:2). His closing words in this same epistle to this "man of God" is to "lay hold on eternal life to which you were called" (6:11-12).

1st Witness:

**" BUT YOU
O MAN OF GOD...
FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT
OF FAITH,
LAY HOLD ON
ETERNAL LIFE,
TO WHICH
YOU WERE ALSO CALLED..."**
1 Tim. 6:11-12

We must ask ourselves why it is that Paul would speak to Timothy, his "true son in the faith", telling him to "lay hold on eternal life" if he already possessed it, as the modern-day version of the gospel proclaims takes place at the new birth? Timothy is not only born-again, but he is an apostle and is pastoring the church at Ephesus.

As a born-again believer, Timothy is told by Paul to lay hold on eternal life by fighting the good fight of faith just as Paul did (2nd Tim. 4:7). That is also message for the born-again believer today. These passages of Paul to Timothy make perfect sense if we realize that the Scripture presents eternal life as a hope and a promise rather than a present possession! Otherwise, Paul's words to Timothy make no sense whatever if he already possessed eternal life as proclaimed today. There is more.

2nd Witness:

**" ...COMMAND THOSE WHO
ARE RICH...
LET THEM DO GOOD, THAT
THEY MAY BE RICH IN GOOD
WORKS, WILLING TO SHARE,
STORING UP FOR THEMSELVES
A GOOD FOUNDATION FOR
THE TIME TO COME,
THAT THEY MAY
LAY HOLD
ON ETERNAL LIFE."**
1 Tim. 6:17-19

In this very same epistle Paul begins to exhort the believers who are rich to also "lay hold on eternal life." Notice the reference to the future, "for the time to come" that they may lay hold on eternal life.

Why, we must again ask, is Paul placing eternal life in the future tense rather than in the past tense as does the wide-gate and broad-way gospel?

Paul gives many more witnesses in his other epistles that eternal life is a future expectation. Let us consider more of what he has to say.

3rd Witness:

**" ...ACCORDING TO THE
FAITH OF GOD'S ELECT...
IN HOPE OF
ETERNAL LIFE
WHICH GOD,
WHO CANNOT LIE, PROMISED
BEFORE TIME BEGAN."**
Titus 1:1-2

Here in Paul's epistle to Titus, he opens by referring to eternal life as (1) a future hope and (2) as a promise. We know a promise is different from a possession. We possess the promise, not what is in it.

Paul defines hope for us as:

"FOR WE ARE SAVED IN THIS HOPE, BUT HOPE THAT IS SEEN IS NOT HOPE; FOR WHY DOES ONE STILL HOPE FOR WHAT HE SEES? BUT IF WE HOPE FOR WHAT WE DO NOT SEE, THEN WE EAGERLY WAIT FOR IT WITH PERSEVERANCE."
Rom. 8:24-25

Paul's definition of hope is in perfect alignment with eternal life being stated as a hope. Paul would not call eternal life a "hope" if it were a present possession.

By the time you reach Paul's concluding thoughts in this same epistle, he emphatically stresses that we are not saved by works of righteousness which we have done, but rather that we are justified by God's grace and therefore have become heirs of the hope of eternal life. Notice the phrase here is identical to the one he made earlier in this same epistle.

5th Witness:

**"BUT NOW HAVING BEEN
SET FREE FROM SIN, AND
HAVING BECOME SLAVES
OF GOD, YOU HAVE
YOUR FRUIT TO
HOLINESS,**

**AND THE END,
EVERLASTING
LIFE.**

**FOR THE WAGES OF SIN
IS DEATH, BUT THE GIFT
OF GOD IS ETERNAL LIFE
IN CHRIST JESUS OUR
LORD."**

Rom. 6:22-23

Let us consider now what Paul spoke to the believers in his epistle to the Romans pertaining to eternal life.

This is a classic case in which the modern-day gospel misuses the Word of God in subtle ways. To make the point, read these two verses together. Now just read Verse 23 apart from Verse 22.

There is nothing wrong with what is stated in Verse 23, but the connecting word "for" tells you that it is a continuing thought of the Verse above it (22).

We have no justifiable basis for separating Verse 22 from Verse 23. However, when this is done, an isolated "proof text" is used for the present possession of the gift of eternal life. However, the contextual setting of Verse 22 tells us specifically **WHEN** "everlasting life" will be received as a gift from God: "and the end, everlasting life."

What does Paul place as the emphasis for "now"? It is in Verse 22 which leads into Verse 23. He exhorts the believer that, having been set free from sin (by the new birth), he is "now" to become a slave of God who brings forth the fruit of holiness in this present life. Then at "the end, everlasting life" will be his. This is a call to discipleship. What Paul presents above is the "full gospel." He states what should be the present emphasis of a believer. It is to be a willing bond slave of Jesus Christ who has set him free from the bondage of sin! The present emphasis is to be that of bringing forth fruits of holiness (Hagimos-sanctification). The modern-day gospel has severed this confronting present priority of holiness in favor of giving a present emphasis to the comforting "gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus." This is separating the conditions from the promise, is it not? Having been set free from sin, we are to live in this life as believers fulfilling God's present call of holiness unto the Lord with a visionary eye upon the end, everlasting life!

Watch carefully for any presentation and use of this verse of Scripture (Rom. 6:23) in tracts and preaching. I will dare say that you will rarely find it kept in context with the connecting verse which states that eternal life comes at the end, not in the beginning, as the modern-day gospel conveys. I cannot overstress to you the importance of considering Scripture in context!

6th Witness:

**"...HE WHO SOWS TO
THE SPIRIT
WILL OF THE
SPIRIT REAP
EVERLASTING
LIFE.**

**AND LET US NOT
GROW WEARY...**

**IN DUE
SEASON WE
SHALL REAP
IF WE DO NOT LOSE
HEART."**

Gal. 6:8-9

The Sixth Chapter of Paul's letter to the Galatians is written to the brethren (6:1). The exhortation of Paul is "let us (the believers) not grow weary." He includes himself in this picture of those who will "reap in due season if we do not lose heart." What will they reap in due season? The context tells us: those who sow to the Spirit will reap of the Spirit everlasting life. Paul does not convey to the Galatians that they have already reaped eternal life, does he?

Conversely, Paul warns believers not to be deceived, for if they sow to the flesh they will reap of their flesh corruption:

**"DO NOT BE DECEIVED, GOD IS NOT MOCKED;
FOR WHATEVER A MAN SOWS, THAT HE WILL ALSO REAP.
FOR HE WHO SOWS TO HIS FLESH WILL OF THE FLESH REAP
CORRUPTION, BUT HE WHO SOWS TO THE SPIRIT WILL OF THE
SPIRIT REAP EVERLASTING LIFE." Gal. 6:7-8**

No promise given here by the apostle Paul of "once saved-always saved", nor is a brand of "unconditional eternal security" guaranteed the believer who continues to live a carnal lifestyle; but rather, a sober warning that the believer will reap exactly what he sows.

So far we have considered seven Scriptures found in five different epistles of Paul that bear witness that eternal life comes at the end and not the beginning of our salvation. Paul is consistent in his preaching to all the churches. There is no room for misinterpretation when his teaching spans five different epistles written at different times. Paul taught that eternal life is a hope and a promise for the future.

7th Witness:

**" ...HE IS THE MEDIATOR
OF THE NEW COVENANT BY
MEANS OF DEATH...THAT
THOSE WHO ARE CALLED
MAY RECEIVE**

**THE PROMISE
OF THE
ETERNAL
INHERITANCE. "**

Hebrews 9:15

If Paul authored the Book of Hebrews (which I believe he did), then again we find him carefully referring to our eternal inheritance as being a promise rather than a present possession. If Paul did not author this epistle, then whoever did is preaching exactly what Paul taught pertaining to eternal life; namely, that it is a promise rather than a possession.



Among those who taught that eternal life is a future possession and not a present one was Jesus Himself. May I remind you that Acts 3:22-23 warns:

**"THE LORD YOUR GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A
PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN. HIM YOU
SHALL HEAR IN ALL THINGS, WHATEVER HE SAYS TO YOU.
AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS THAT EVERY SOUL WHO WILL
NOT HEAR THAT PROPHET SHALL BE UTTERLY DESTROYED
FROM AMONG THE PEOPLE."**

8th Witness:

**"ASSUREDLY, I SAY UNTO YOU,
THERE IS NO ONE WHO HAS LEFT
HOUSE OR BROTHERS OR SISTERS
OR FATHER OR MOTHER OR WIFE
OR CHILDREN OR LANDS, FOR MY
SAKE AND THE GOSPEL'S,
WHO SHALL NOT RECEIVE
A HUNDREDFOLD NOW**

**IN THIS TIME --
HOUSES AND BROTHERS AND
SISTERS AND MOTHERS AND
CHILDREN AND LANDS,
WITH PERSECUTIONS -
AND**

**IN THE AGE TO COME,
ETERNAL LIFE."**

Mark 10:29-30

Let us consider these very precise words that Jesus spoke pertaining to eternal life.

Just as Paul did in Romans 6:22-23, Jesus, in these passages, states the inheritance for the present and the future. What will the believer receive "in this time?" Jesus said it would be "houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions." That is how He described the Christian life "in this time." Then He tells us what will be received by the believer "in the age to come." It is eternal life! Again, we must see that what is being said by the wide-gate and broad-way gospel is not in agreement with what Jesus says.



Jesus, who is the Word of God, the one who commissioned Paul to write two-thirds of the New Testament epistles, says in essence, as does Paul, that eternal life is a promise and a hope for "the age to come." It is not conveyed as a present possession, but a future possession.

No where does either Jesus or Paul present eternal life as a present possession. Yes, it is a gift, a free gift, but it is given to the "heirs of the hope of eternal life." Clearly we need to deal with this issue of when a believer receives eternal life as a possession. Scripture emphatically tells us it is a hope and a promise for the future. Let us consider two more witnesses.

9th Witness:

"BUT YOU, BELOVED, BUILDING YOURSELVES UP ON YOUR MOST HOLY FAITH, PRAYING IN THE SPIRIT, KEEP YOURSELVES IN THE LOVE OF GOD, LOOKING FOR THE MERCY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

UNTO ETERNAL LIFE."

JUDE 20-21

Let us now consider two other apostles who bear the same confirming witness as Paul and Jesus that eternal life is a hope and a promise for the future rather than a present possession.

Even in this brief epistle by the apostle Jude, we find him exhorting believers that eternal life is something we are looking forward to receiving rather than it being a present possession.

10th Witness:

"AND THIS IS THE PROMISE THAT HE HAS PROMISED US -- ETERNAL LIFE.

THESE THINGS I HAVE WRITTEN TO YOU CONCERNING THOSE WHO TRY TO DECEIVE YOU."

1 Jn. 2:25-26

Our last witness is the apostle John.

Note that he also confirms that eternal life is a promise that God has given us rather than a present possession. Notice that, in context, he is warning against those who would "try to deceive you." I believe this is a prophetic forewarning by the apostle John of what was going to happen to the doctrine of eternal life.



Let us add to this verse from Chapter 2 of John's epistle in which he states eternal life to be a promise, these additional verses found in Chapter 5 of the same epistle:

"...AND GOD HAS GIVEN US ETERNAL LIFE, AND THIS LIFE IS IN HIS SON. HE WHO HAS THE SON HAS THE LIFE, HE WHO DOES NOT HAVE THE SON OF GOD DOES NOT HAVE LIFE. THESE THINGS I HAVE WRITTEN TO YOU...THAT YOU MAY KNOW THAT YOU HAVE ETERNAL LIFE, AND THAT YOU MAY CONTINUE TO BELIEVE IN THE NAME OF THE SON OF GOD."

1 Jn. 5:11-13

Here in 1 John 5:11-13 is a Scripture that certainly appears to convey quite plainly that eternal life is a present possession of the believer, does it not? However, it must be isolated by itself to do so. John has already told us in the Chapter 2 of this same epistle that he considers eternal life to be a promise rather than a possession. Has he now changed his mind in these verses from chapter 5? Hardly, for this is an epistle (a letter) meant to be properly interpreted by its total context. He does not make one point in Chapter 2 and then reverse his thinking in Chapter 5.

So far we have seen a consistent harmonious view of eternal life presented by the apostle Paul, by Jesus Himself, as well as Jude and the apostle John. In spite of this consistent flow of verses that call eternal life a future hope and a promise, it is these verses in 1 John 5:11-13 that are singled out and used by those who wish to "prove" that eternal life is a present possession. The other verses are merely ignored because they don't harmonize with the popular concept being taught. For many, this is the "proof text" that says it all very plainly, but does it really? Let us dissect what John is saying in these verses. Perhaps we can see a whole different meaning that is in perfect harmony with all that we have considered so far.



**IS THIS A
MESSAGE
ABOUT YOU?**

**"...GOD HAS GIVEN US ETERNAL LIFE,
AND THIS LIFE IS IN HIS SON.**

**HE WHO HAS THE SON
HAS THE LIFE,**

**HE WHO DOES NOT HAVE THE SON
OF GOD DOES NOT HAVE LIFE.**

**THESE THINGS I HAVE WRITTEN TO YOU...
THAT YOU MAY KNOW
THAT YOU HAVE ETERNAL LIFE,**

**AND THAT YOU MAY CONTINUE TO BELIEVE IN
THE NAME OF THE SON OF GOD."**

1 Jn. 5:11-13



**OR IS THIS A
MESSAGE
ABOUT JESUS
IN YOU?**

First of all, note that this verse does not say "God has given us eternal life" - period, but rather the sentence goes on to clarify what John means by this statement. He adds, "and this life is in His Son." What does that mean? Eternal life is still a promise in John's theology. He is not contradicting what he has said previously in Chapter 2. To have the Son means we have the promise of eternal life abiding in us in the in-dwelling presence of Jesus Christ. Where you find eternal life stated in a possessive way, you will also find following it a phrase stating in some form or another that Christ abides in us. Here is an example:

"...CHRIST IN YOU, THE HOPE OF GLORY." Col. 1:27

Jesus is the **HOPE** of glory that abides in us! In Titus 2:13 Paul exhorts the believer to be looking for the appearance of "the blessed **HOPE**." Why is eternal life presented as a hope and a promise? Because Jesus is "**THE HOPE OF GLORY--THE BLESSED HOPE**." and all the promises of God are in Christ Jesus (2nd Cor.1:20). God has not given us eternal life as a possessive gift apart from the inward presence of His Son. Jesus said of Himself "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live" (Jn.11:25). If we indeed already possess eternal life, then why must we still die? Eternal life cannot die, can it? We die because eternal life is a promise for the afterlife, not for this present life. What is behind the dogma of the broad-way proclamation of presently possessing eternal life is the false doctrine of "once saved-always saved." The argument goes "Eternal life is eternal, and I have that which is eternal." No, you have **A PROMISE AND A HOPE OF ETERNAL LIFE** according to the Scriptures! Advocates of "once saved-always saved" and "unconditional eternal security" like to use as their primary "proof text" Paul's words pertaining to "the sealing of the believer" by the Holy Spirit. Let us look carefully at that passage and see what it really says:

**"IN HIM YOU ALSO TRUSTED, AFTER YOU HEARD THE WORD OF TRUTH,
THE GOSPEL OF YOUR SALVATION; IN WHOM ALSO, HAVING BELIEVED,
YOU WERE SEALED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT OF PROMISE,
WHO IS
THE GUARANTEE OF OUR INHERITANCE UNTIL
THE REDEMPTION OF THE PURCHASED POSSESSION,
TO THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORY."**

Eph 1:13-14

Notice it is the Holy Spirit of **PROMISE** that is at work. When will it be fulfilled? When it is time for **THE REDEMPTION OF THE PURCHASED POSSESSION**". That is talking about the resurrection from the dead of the believer's body! It is a **PROMISE** for the future because it cannot be a present possession prior to the event that raises the dead. Paul, in another epistle states this very clearly:

**"...WE ALSO WHO HAVE THE FIRSTFRUITS OF THE SPIRIT, EVEN WE OURSELVES GROAN WITHIN
OURSELVES, EAGERLY WAITING FOR THE ADOPTION, THE REDEMPTION OF OUR BODY. FOR
WE WERE SAVED IN THIS HOPE, BUT HOPE THAT IS SEEN IS NOT HOPE; FOR WHY DOES ONE STILL
HOPE FOR WHAT HE SEES? BUT IF WE HOPE FOR WHAT WE DO NOT SEE, WE EAGERLY WAIT FOR IT
WITH PERSEVERANCE."** Rom 8:23-25

I would like to suggest to you that these verses from 1 John 5 are not “proof texts” about us possessing eternal life as a present possession, but rather speak of Jesus (“who alone has immortality”) possessing the believer. It is the one who is eternal life and who alone has immortality that dwells in us (“he who has the Son has the life”). Herein lies why eternal life can only be given as a promise for the future rather than a present possession. Jesus is eternal life (“this life is in His Son-he who has the Son has the life-he who does not have the Son of God does not have life”).

Let me remind you of our opening text from page one in which Paul exhorted his son in the faith Timothy to:

**“...LAY HOLD ON ETERNAL LIFE, TO WHICH YOU WERE ALSO CALLED...
...KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS, WHO ALONE HAS IMMORTALITY,
DWELLING IN UNAPPROACHABLE LIGHT, WHOM NO MAN HAS SEEN OR CAN SEE,
TO WHOM BE HONOR AND EVERLASTING POWER. AMEN.”** 1 Tim. 6:12-16 excerpts

It is Jesus “who alone has immortality”. As followers of Jesus, we do not yet possess immortality (“eternal life”). It is a future promise, not a present possession. If it were, we would not face death. When will the believer receive immortality? Paul is clear:

**“FOR THE TRUMPET WILL SOUND, AND THE DEAD WILL BE RAISED INCORRUPTIBLE, AND WE SHALL BE CHANGED. FOR THIS CORRUPTIBLE MUST PUT ON INCORRUPTION, AND THIS MORTAL MUST PUT ON IMMORTALITY. SO WHEN THIS CORRUPTIBLE HAS PUT ON INCORRUPTION, AND THIS MORTAL HAS PUT ON IMMORTALITY, THEN SHALL BE BROUGHT TO PASS THE SAYING THAT IS WRITTEN:
“DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY.”** 1 Cor 15:52-54

Do you remember the action God took against Adam and Eve when they sinned in the garden? First, He clothed them due to their sin, and then He moved to cut off their access to the tree of Life:

“...ALSO FOR ADAM AND HIS WIFE THE LORD GOD MADE TUNICS OF SKIN, AND CLOTHED THEM. THEN THE LORD GOD SAID, “BEHOLD, THE MAN HAS BECOME LIKE ONE OF US, TO KNOW GOOD AND EVIL. AND NOW, LEST HE PUT OUT HIS HAND AND TAKE ALSO OF THE TREE OF LIFE, AND EAT, AND LIVE FOREVER” -- THEREFORE THE LORD GOD SENT HIM OUT OF THE GARDEN OF EDEN...SO HE DROVE OUT THE MAN; AND HE PLACED CHERUBIM AT THE EAST OF THE GARDEN OF EDEN, AND A FLAMING SWORD WHICH TURNED EVERY WAY, TO GUARD THE WAY TO THE TREE OF LIFE.”

Gen 3:21-24

The pattern is clear. Even though God has “covered our sin” by means of the death of His Son Jesus, He too must keep us from access to eternal life-immortality in this present life because we are still sinful mortals living in sinful bodies capable of yielding to sin. Therefore we are given **THE PROMISE** of eternal life, not the **POSSESSION** lest we too, like Adam and Eve could “live forever” by means of direct access to eating of the Tree of Life while in a sinful state.

GOD’S FINAL ACT OF SALVATION IS TO BRING ETERNAL LIFE TO THE BODY OF THE BELIEVER.

This is a yet future event and therefore we find the volume of scriptures carefully stating God’s full plan.

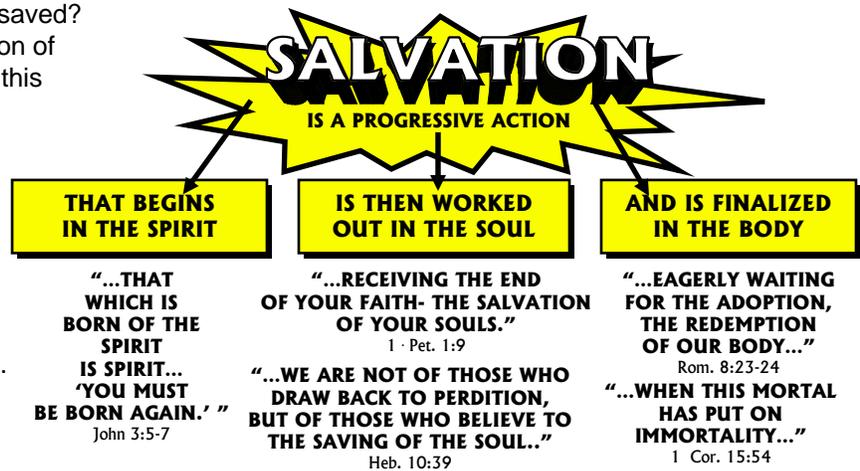
When will our mortal body be saved?

Paul tells us that the redemption of our body will take place when this “mortal puts on immortality.”

Think about that statement!

We know that “immortality” is eternal life! When will you put on eternal life (immortality)?

According to the apostle Paul, it will take place at the redemption of our body when this mortal puts on immortality. Then, and only then, can a believer say correctly I am totally saved, spirit, soul and body.





AN IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

FROM PASTOR RANDY:

THERE WILL BE NO NEWSLETTERS FOR THE YEAR 2012

It is with a heavy heart that I must let you know that I will not be writing any newsletters in the coming year. In September, I was diagnosed with Stage 2, Non-Hodgkin's, Lymphoma Cancer in my groin. No one is ever prepared for hearing the dreaded "C" word, and neither were we. After the initial shock sank in, we began what has become the biggest battle of our lives.

Upon researching this medically labeled systematic chronic and incurable disease, I entered into a 40 day fast in order to arrest the rapid spreading of this cancer to other parts of my body. Initially, due to what I studied about the power of physical fasting, I thought that the fast itself would be sufficient to starve the cancer at work in my body. However, 37 days into that fast, we felt that God, by a series of events of divine guidance, was directing us to seek additional medical help outside of the U.S.. Therefore, we went to a specific medical clinic in Mexico for a two-week treatment program which uses less aggressive forms of chemo and radiation treatments than the standard protocol administered in the U.S.. We are very thankful to the Lord for the wonderful clinic He sent us to and the huge care, concern and kindness we received while we were there. We have never experienced the kind of dedication, and personal attention than what we received from these doctors. As a matter of fact the head oncologist Dr. Vargas still calls me almost every other day to find out how I am doing.

During those two weeks in Mexico I received intravenous feeding of massive doses of vitamin C, B-17 (Laetrile) and B-12 shots. I also received 10% radiation and chemo (instead of the 90% of radiation and chemo used in the U.S.). In those 2 weeks my tumors completely disappeared. However, I had a rough road of recovery ahead as I had contracted bronchitis and also had various side effects that were most difficult to endure. Thankfully, God had impressed us to stay an extra week in San Diego in case of any complications. That was a grueling week for me filled with nausea and motion sickness. Later, I developed great abdominal and rectal pains that made life anything but pleasant.

I lost quite a bit of weight during the fast. I dropped from 142 to 114 pounds. At the writing of this letter, I have only regained a few pounds of that lost weight. Needless to say, I am quite weak. We are thankful to now be back home in Arvada. Truly, there is no place like home. Although home, I have not as yet returned to any of my pastoral duties.

I am presently 71 years old and still a full-time pastor of a congregation here in Arvada as well as overseeing another group in Ohio. I am also on the radio here in the Denver Metro area as well as in Ohio, and I am still making DVD teachings and writing books here and there. Lord willing, I plan to continue to do most of these activities. However, as the old song says, "Something has to give". Therefore I am making this announcement that I will be discontinuing the newsletters for the year 2012 in order to get some much needed rest. The newsletters are a big part of my ministry, which take much research and study. Not including meditation and study of the subject matter, it takes me an entire week just to produce one newsletter from start to finish.

In absence of any new newsletter material coming forth for 2012, I want to remind you that there is a wealth of previous newsletters posted on my website spanning back to 2005. This is a great backlog of material that will sustain your appetite until, Lord willing, I can get back on my feet. You could also request our catalogue which lists all of my books, DVD's and yearly booklet of newsletters which are available for you to order.

It is not only I who needs time to strengthen and recover, but also my caregiver, my dear wife. If you have never served in this capacity, you cannot comprehend how draining this is on someone, especially when it is your mate. It takes a great toll physically and emotionally. My wife is 78, and like me, is still working full-time in the ministry. Pray for us that we can develop a needful "semi-retired" mentality in 2012. We are so thankful that God has chosen to spare my life and has directed us in paths to achieve that goal. Our God never leaves us nor forsakes us, He is a very present help in time of trouble and He works all things together for good for those who love Him and those who are called according to His purpose. We desire to fulfill His purpose in our time of testing.

May the Lord richly bless you, guide you and strengthen you as you continue to run the race with endurance looking to the blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It will be worth it all when we see Him face to face.

Blessings upon you.

Pastor Randy Shupe

**"AND SO WE HAVE
THE PROPHETIC WORD
CONFIRMED,
WHICH YOU DO WELL TO
HEED AS A LIGHT THAT
SHINES IN A
DARK PLACE,
UNTIL THE DAY DAWNS
AND
THE MORNING STAR
RISES IN YOUR HEARTS..."**

2 Pet. 1:19



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