Victory in Christian Warfare

Second Edition

Indispensable Knowledge Series, Book 1



ANDREA P. SUTHERLAND

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Books By Andrea P. Sutherland

Indispensable Knowledge Series

Victory in Christian Warfare – 2nd Edition (Book 1)
Know Your Bible in 50 Days: A Guide to All 66 Books (Book 2)

"To the only wise God our Saviour,
be glory and majesty, dominion and power,
both now and ever. Amen." Jude 1:25.

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Preface

On the morning of Friday, December 26, 2014, during prayer, God impressed the following thought upon my mind: "Why don't you self-publish with Amazon?" Although I had been eagerly preparing Bible studies and sending them by email to those who wished to receive them, the thought of writing a book had never occurred to me.

I was delighted with the prospect of such a project and I immediately started to do research on the Internet to find out what exactly was self-publishing and how did one go about it. That was almost five years ago.

I originally thought of writing one book, suitable for everyone, with indispensable knowledge that would lead to their gaining paradise and everlasting life. This was and still is my passion in life—to cause people to come to know God and to delight in Him as I do.

I had no idea how to go about writing a book. I started with a brief outline and began to write in an attempt to imitate the structure of the Bible. The first year of writing, 2015, proved to me that it was impossible for me to copy God's manner of writing in the Bible for only infinite wisdom could have devised it.

So, I started over from scratch in 2016. Since, then my progress has been slow but steady, as I needed to do much Bible study in order to be able to write with confidence and accuracy on many of the book's topics.

Over the years, I was able to collect bit by bit a few points about writing a book from seemingly endless internet searches and studies, but all in all it was God who has taught me what I needed to know. It has been a precious, blessed journey of daily learning from God and writing down in this book what God has made clear to me.

It was only in July, 2019 that I realised that all that I wanted to say and that needed to be said, could not fit into one book. Therefore, what was initially going to be just one book will now be a number of book series and standalone books.

This first book presents a context for the Christian faith and also focusses on two key milestones—justification and sanctification—for anyone who wishes to gain everlasting life. It lays an important and necessary foundation for understanding God and the Bible, and this is why I have chosen these topics for my first book. These are topics that are only vaguely understood, if at all, by the world at large and even Christians.

This book shares the knowledge that I have gained in my over 17 years of practical experience as a Christian, and gained by reading the Bible from its beginning to the end eleven times, conducting daily Bible study, and most of all, gained by being taught by God. I believe that my perspective, insights, and unique voice, is urgently needed in the world today.

After reading this book, I hope that you will be inspired to take the appropriate steps to gaining paradise and everlasting life.

Andrea P. Sutherland
Jamaica
October, 2019

Preface to the Second Edition

The second edition of Victory in Christian Warfare is essentially the same as the first edition. The first thing you might notice is that in paperback format it is smaller in size. Also, the book is now available in hardcover format. As regarding the contents of the book, changes have been made to make the book clearer and more accurate with some additional material, particularly in Chapter 13.

Andrea P. Sutherland
Jamaica
June, 2022

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge God for teaching me, leading me, and guiding my thoughts and my research in the preparation of this book. God has given me time and opportunity to write. All thanks, praise, glory, and honour for this work, I give to God.

"The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name." Exodus 15:3.

Chapter One

A First Look at the Conflict

Some time in eternity past. Date unknown. War between God and a band of angels. An invisible war between good and evil. A good God and an evil rival. A battle for the rulership of the universe. Fast forward. The twenty-first century. Planet earth. The army of God's rival battles God's army for supremacy on earth as a gateway to the rulership of the universe.

A battle over the lives of every human being. God's battle plan for every human being—a plan, which if followed, cannot fail. Which army will each person on earth join? The army of God's rival or God's army? A paradise and everlasting life for those persons who join God's army and never defect to the army of God's rival. How will the war end? Will it ever end? Who will win?

The Conflict

God, who wants nothing more than a perfect universe, finds the love, joy, peace, and harmony of the universe shattered when evil arises in the universe through one of the angels in heaven. In response, God sets in motion his attempt to unmask the wickedness of His rival and to eradicate evil from the universe; this effort pits

God against the angel who is God's rival. This then is the ongoing conflict in the universe.

God at War on Two Fronts

On one front, God was battling His rival's army for supremacy in the heavenly realms. This was a battle for the allegiance of all the intelligences that live outside of the earth. However, some of the intelligences outside the earth have so far to date seen enough of the evil of God's rival that they have decided to be firmly on God's side in the war. Nevertheless, these intelligences still do not understand all the issues involved in the conflict. So, God's purpose remains unchanged—to completely unmask the full extent of the wickedness of God's rival and to eliminate evil from the universe.

Some of the intelligences who live outside the earth have already joined the army of God's rival and His rival seeks to win over the remaining intelligences in the heavenly realms who make up God's army. So, the intelligences who live outside of the earth are divided into two camps—one camp, as was said before, on God's side and the other camp on His rival's side.

On another front, with respect to humanity however, *all* are naturally inclined to be members of the army of God's rival. Hence, the efforts of God's rival are focussed on keeping *all of humanity* from defecting from his side and joining God's army.

Now the nature of the war is not the same on both fronts. In the case of the intelligences in the heavenly realms, God is not invisible, neither is His rival's army invisible. Furthermore, they are aware of the history of the conflict and its current manifestation. However, in the case of humanity, not only is God invisible but both armies, God's army in the heavenly realms and His rival's army, are also invisible. Moreover, humanity is unaware that there is a conflict and unaware of the history of the war.

Some time ago, the war shifted from the heavenly realms and the earth became the stage of the ongoing conflict, in that, the war became focussed on the inhabitants of the earth. Ever since that time, God's rival has sought to rule the earth by *retaining* the allegiance of all humanity. Therefore, God's focus in the war has shifted from the heavenly realms to the earth, in that, God has been seeking to *win* the allegiance of all humanity to Himself.

God's Difficulty

Surely, God has a difficulty. He is in love with humanity who love His rival. God has a universe to govern, yet this difficulty has His foremost attention. He is surrounded by an innumerable company who adore Him, and whom He loves, yet His heart yearns for humanity who do not love Him. For God, giving up on winning their love is not an option. His desire for these people is strong. Stronger than death. Yes, God has a real difficulty.

Those whom God loves, they love one who is evil and cunning. The one the people love is the master of deception. The people God loves follow the ways of his rival. Yet God still loves them. God's rival is his bitter enemy. Can God win them away from this foe? God is anxious to see if the people will love him. Will they turn away from his rival?

God's thought is, What shall I do to win the people's love? Ah! I know. I will demonstrate my exceeding love for them. Surely, they will love me then. I will send my Son to them. His love for the people is identical to mine. He will be my Representative to the people. Through my Son my love will be fully displayed.

God is love, but the people He loves are the opposite of Himself. God is loving, unselfish, truthful, doing good and only good at all times. The people God loves are noteworthy for their selfishness. They are hateful, hating each other. They are just like God's rival. But God loves the people even though He hates their evil

ways. God's thought is, Surely the people, when they see my love displayed by my Son, will desire to be like me. How else could the people delight in me and I delight in them?

The people God loves think love is what God's evil rival says it is. They are deceived and blinded by the cunning of God's rival. Thus, the love they show to other people is really selfishness. The love that resides in God's heart is the one and only true love. God's thought is, Will the eyes of the people be opened when they see the love displayed by my Son? Will they be attracted to my Son? Will they love my Son and, hence, love me?

God is as a stranger in the eyes of the people He loves. They know him not. God's thought is, What shall I do to introduce myself to the people? I know. I will send them a love letter. In it I will describe my love for them, what I am like and what my evil rival is like. In it I will describe what I love and what I hate. In my letter I will appeal to their hearts and invite them to reason with me, invite them to get to know me. Of necessity, my love letter must instruct. Will the people refuse my instruction? O, that the people would love me and become like me! How else can we enjoy each other's companionship?

God has a remedy for the people's selfishness. It is a simple remedy, but will the people accept it? Of necessity, the people must have a change of heart in order to implement God's instructions on how to be loving. God's thought is, I can change their heart from hatefulness and selfishness to true love. It is not an impossible task for me. But will the people agree to be changed? I will not force them to change. I want them to willingly accept my remedy.

God's thought is, I want the people to love me because I am good, and to love me of their own free will. Surely, they will accept my remedy. Surely, they will, therefore, turn away from my rival and love me instead. Yes, with a change of heart they will love me. Yes, God has a difficulty. But God rejoices because there is

a way out of his difficulty. If only the people would accept God's remedy!

The Role of the Individual in the War

God calls upon every human being to engage in warfare with His rival on their own behalf. They must change from a character of evil to a character of love in order to be accepted by God as a member of God's army. To aid them in this change of heart, God has provided humanity with an example of true love in the Person of His Son. In addition, God has provided humanity with a love letter from Him which is, in effect, a battle plan to be used by every human being to win the war on their own behalf.

For God's rival, knowing that humanity is evil, seeks to keep every human being from having a change of heart from evil to love. God's rival knows that, if the individual has a change of heart, they will reject him and choose God. This then is the war that should exist between every human being and God's rival. Each person, with God's help, must win this war. They must individually take hold of God's remedy for humanity if they wish to have paradise and everlasting life.

How God Plans to Win the War

All of the intelligences who live outside of the earth already have some understanding of the objectives of God's rival and how he operates, his methods used in conducting his warfare against God. Humanity, on the other hand, have no understanding of the invisible war in the universe. Neither does humanity understand how both God and His rival operate in conducting warfare.

Nevertheless, God's plan to win the war is the same for both groups—the intelligences who live outside of the earth and humanity. God plans is to fully unmask his rival as evil, for His

rival hides his real character behind a pretence of goodness. God knows that if His rival is unmasked then all the intelligences in the universe outside of the earth, as those who value goodness, will never give up their allegiance to God for an allegiance instead to His rival. Likewise, those among humanity who have come to value goodness will give their allegiance to God and never give it up.

The actions of God's rival on earth will help to completely unmask His rival in the eyes of those of the intelligences of the heavenly realms and those of humanity who have joined God's army. It will also reveal His rival's real objective in the conflict.

All intelligences, including humanity, who have chosen the side of God's rival, who chose evil over good, will when the time allotted by God for the war to be waged comes to an end, be annihilated by God in order to eliminate evil in the universe. That is, they will cease to exist.

This act of destruction by God will not then alienate God's army which is made up of those intelligences in the heavenly realms and the people on earth who have taken God's side in the war. These in God's army are those who have chosen good over evil and, thus, have given their allegiance to God. For they, at that time, seeing God's rival unmasked as evil and understanding *all* the issues of the war, will agree with God that their annihilation is necessary to eliminate evil in the universe.

This then is how the war will end, for God is not limited in power. God can easily destroy all His enemies, but God exercises restraint for the time being, in an effort to *keep* the allegiance of the intelligences in the heavenly realms and *win* the allegiance of as many among humanity as He can. For God does not wish to have to annihilate anyone, but those who cling to evil will leave God with no other choice than to destroy them.

In This Book and Beyond

The rest of this book will be the retelling of this story and more in detail, and it will largely be told in God's own words. In this book, you will learn about God's love letter, which is God's battle plan for humanity, the state of the universe before evil was introduced into it, and the rise of the conflict. Also, you will learn about the tactics of God's rival, the work of God's Son on earth, and the two battles that every human being must individually fight and win in order to gain paradise and everlasting life.

The aim of this book is to unmask God's rival as evil, and to give you a correct understanding of God and the ongoing conflict as it relates to the God's remedy for humanity. For God's rival has counterfeits of God's remedy in an attempt to deceive the unsuspecting and keep them from joining God's army.

This book then will prepare you to escape annihilation by God by giving you the truths of God. Also, this book will teach you how to effectively take hold of God's remedy. Therefore, you will win the war against God's rival by having the necessary change of heart, if you *correctly* apply what is taught in this book.

The story and instruction given in this book is not the end of all that you need to know so that you are adequately prepared for warfare against God's rival. Therefore, this book is only the first in a series of books. (The remaining books in the series will be released in the future.)

Each book in the series will unmask God's rival with respect to some of the various issues in the ongoing war, as the deceit and cunning of God's rival is great. Until you know the truths of God and, hence, can discern *all* the lies of God's rival, you are not adequately prepared to win the war. The knowledge contained in this series of books then is indispensable. (The remaining books in the series will be released in the future.) There is much to know,

to understand, and to implement, if you wish to win the war on your own behalf with God's help.

Chapter Two

God's Battle Plan

God has given a love letter to humanity which is a battle plan for *every* human being. God's love letter describes a plan of warfare for the individual to wage war against God's rival on their own behalf, with God's help. God's battle plan, if followed, cannot fail. It teaches the individual how to effectively take hold of God's remedy and so have a necessary change of heart from selfishness to love, just like God's heart of love.

Your Guide

Hello, I am Andrea P. Sutherland, the author of this book. I will be your guide to understanding the invisible war in the universe. I am a soldier in God's army of good by virtue of understanding and implementing God's battle plan for humanity. I expect that, if I remain loyal to God, to gain paradise and everlasting life, which is to be immortal.

You too can gain paradise and everlasting life! To this end I will be your guide to understanding and following God's battle plan which cannot fail. God's side is good and is light and his rival's

side is evil and is darkness. Let us choose the good and not the evil. Let us choose the light and not darkness.

Who is God?

God is a Family of three divine Persons, namely, the Father, the Son called Christ, and the Holy Spirit. God is self-existent, meaning that God is the One whose life which does not originate from any other. He is the Creator of the universe and the Source of all life in the universe apart from Himself.

God's Battle Plan for Humanity

The battle plan God has drawn up for humanity is written in what is known as the Bible. By God's ordering of events, the Bible is the world's best-selling book and it is also the most widely distributed. It is estimated that over 5 billion copies have been printed.

God gave the Bible to humanity in a unique way. The Bible is a collection of books which were written over a period of approximately 1600 years by about 40 human authors. You may well ask, "How then is the Bible God's battle plan since it was written by humans?" The answer is that the Bible itself gives us the rationale for saying it is God's battle plan. So, we must find our answer by delving into the Bible itself.

Availability of the Bible

In today's world in the twenty-first century, the Bible, God's blueprint for war, is available worldwide and can be read by anyone who so desires. The Bible is widely available not only in print, but in electronic form on the Internet as text and audio or as an app for your smartphone. You can also read the Bible for free online at www.blueletterbible.org or you can download a free Bible app

to your smartphone. Note that I do not necessarily recommend *all* the resources at the Blue Letter Bible website.

I recommend the free Blue Letter Bible app available for iPhone, iPad, and Android devices. The app allows you to choose several free Bible versions to add to the app. Also, with this app, you can read the Bible offline, so that there is no need for an internet connection or mobile data on your phone after you download it. This feature is very useful as you can read the Bible anywhere you can take your device at no cost to you. Note that some of the other features require an internet connection.

I have also used the free Olive Tree Bible app which is available as a download for these devices—iPhone, iPad, Android, Mac, and Windows. The app allows you to choose several free Bible versions to add to the app. Some resources in the app are available for sale, but the free resources are all you will ever need if all you want to do is to read the Bible. One great feature of the Olive Tree Bible app too is that it works offline.

The Format of the Bible

Before we can delve into the Bible, we must understand its format. The King James Version of the Bible (KJV), which is an English language version, consists of a collection of 66 books in all, with the first 39 books making up what is known as the "Old Testament", and the remaining 27 books making up what is known as the "New Testament." For example, the first book of the Bible is entitled "Genesis" and the last of the 66 books of the KJV is entitled "Revelation."

Each book of the Bible consists of one or more chapters, with each chapter being divided into numbered sections called "verses." For example, the book of "Genesis" has 50 chapters and the book of "Obadiah" has only one chapter.

Citing the Bible

Also, before we can delve into the Bible, we must understand how to cite it. There is a universal notation used to cite or make reference to the Bible. In this notation "Genesis 1:1″ means, "The book of Genesis, chapter 1, and verse 1, which is the first verse of chapter 1." Similarly, "Genesis 1:5″ means "The book of Genesis, chapter 1, and verse 5, which is the fifth verse of chapter 1."

Let us look at two more examples of this Bible notation. "Job 26:7″ means, "The book of Job, chapter 26, and verse 7 of chapter 26." As another example, "Acts 18:12″ means, "The book of Acts, chapter 18, and verse 12 of chapter 18." As an example, I will quote the verse, Genesis 1:1, which says, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

How God Gave His Battle Plan to Humanity

As was said before, the Bible was written over a period of approximately 1600 years by about 40 authors. Our questions then that we are seeking to answer is, "How then is the Bible God's battle plan since it was written by humans? Didn't God write the Bible Himself?" Note that the Bible refers to itself as "scripture." 2 Timothy 3:16.

There is a tiny section of the Bible, the Scripture, known as the "ten commandments" (Exodus 34:28), which God gave as "two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God." Exodus 31:18. This section therefore was written by God Himself. Everything else in the Bible apart from the ten commandments was written by human authors.

How did the Bible's human authors know what to write? They knew what to write because God communicated to these people through dreams, visions, and symbols, and He sometimes spoke

audibly. These people then wrote down the thoughts that God gave them in human language, under God's divine influence.

While there are portions of the Bible which are pen-inspired in that the human authors wrote down word for word what God said, the Bible is for the most part, thought-inspired as the authors wrote down, in their own words, under the inspiration of God, what was impressed upon their minds.

Therefore, when reading the Bible, we are reading either the exact words of God or the thoughts given by God to its human authors. We may say then that it is God who says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." 2 Timothy 3:16. God Himself, speaking of the Scripture, which is the Bible, says that it is "not...the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God." 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

(The three consecutive periods, "...", as appears in the Bible verse which was previously quoted is known as an ellipsis, and it means that there are omitted words or phrases. Why? The reason for the omission is that many Bible verses convey complex, multifaceted thoughts. Therefore, I will use ellipses in order to simplify the verse by omitting words and phrases. By this means, I will be better able to convey the thought of focus at a particular point in this book.)

The King James Version of the Bible

The Bible was originally written in the Hebrew and Greek languages, with a small portion written in the Aramaic language. Specifically, the Old Testament was written in the Hebrew and Aramaic languages and the New Testament was written in the Greek language. The Bible has been translated into many languages since it was first written, and today in the twenty-first century there are many English language versions of the Bible available.

In this book, I have chosen to use only the English language version known as the King James Version of the Bible (KJV) in quoting from the Bible. It is my preferred English language version as it is *the ONLY correct English translation of the Bible* from its original languages. I read no other version of the Bible and I recommend the KJV to you. So, a few words about the King James Version of the Bible (KJV) are in order.

The English translation known as the King James Version (KJV) has been the most popular among English language versions over the last 400 years and more since it was first published in the year 1611. Since the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible dates back to the year 1611, it was, therefore, written in an older form of the English language.

Subsequently, the KJV was updated in the year 1769 to take account of changes in spelling, punctuation, capitalisation, and grammar that had occurred in the English language in the more than 150 years since it was published in 1611. Today's English language in the twenty-first century now differs from the English of the 1769 updated version. Nevertheless, the King James Version is still highly readable and understandable.

Since the King James version is written in an older form of the English language, the pronouns *thou*, *thee*, *thy*, *thine*, *ye*, *you*, *your*, *yours*, all occur in the Bible text. We can easily understand the meaning of these pronouns whenever they occur in the KJV by using a simple rule. The rule is that all the pronouns beginning with the letter "t" are singular, while all the pronouns beginning with the letter "y" are plural.

The pronouns *thou*, *thee* and *ye* then would be translated into today's English as *you*, and the pronouns *thy* and *thine* would be translated into today's English as *your*. So, only three pronouns of the eight pronouns in the KJV occur in today's English, while the KJV's older form of English has an extra five pronouns for a total of eight pronouns.

This variety of eight pronouns in the KJV captures more accurately the meanings found in the original languages of the Bible, Hebrew and Greek, than the three pronouns *you*, *your*, and *yours* in modern English. Hence, in using a variety of pronouns the KJV gives a greater depth of meaning to the biblical text than a Bible translation without this differentiation of the pronouns.

Names of God in the Bible

The divine Family is collectively known as the "Godhead." Acts 17:29; Romans 1:20; Colossians 2:9. The Godhead is also commonly referred to as the "Trinity" although this word does not occur in the Bible.

God says of Himself, "God is the LORD" (Psalm 118:27), and He also says, "I am the LORD: that is my name." Isaiah 42:8. He is "the Lord God" (Genesis 2:4) and "God the Lord." Isaiah 42:5. Now when God refers to Himself as the "Lord," He means that He is the self-existent, eternal One, who is the supreme Ruler of the universe.

In the King James Version of the Bible, the name for God is written with an uppercase letter "L" such as "Lord" and "LORD." These words are distinct in meaning from the word "lord" written with a lowercase letter "l" which refers to a human being as "master" or "ruler." So, God says of Himself, "Thou, O LORD, shalt endure for ever." Psalm 102:12.

The Bible's Usage of the Word "God"

In God's word, the Bible, the word "God" is used interchangeably as a collective name for the Godhead or for any of the individual members of the Godhead. For example, the Bible says, "Hear...the LORD our God is one LORD." Deuteronomy 6:4. "God is one." Galatians 3:20. Here the word "God" is used for the collective

name "Godhead." We could restate these verses by saying, "Hear, the LORD our Godhead is one LORD." "The Godhead is one."

There are three implications of the two Bible verses just quoted. The first implication is that the Godhead is a unit, a divine Family made up of three divine Persons. These are the Father, the Son called Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

The second implication is that the three Persons are equal to each other, in that, none is superior or inferior to the others. Each of the three Persons in the Godhead is a deity in their own right. The Father is God, the Son called Christ, is God, and the Holy Spirit is God.

For each of the three divine Persons, the Father, the Son called Christ, and the Holy Spirit is "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life." Hebrews 7:3. Each Person of the Godhead is self-existent and eternal.

The third implication is that the character and purposes of each of the Persons making up the Godhead are one and the same. The Persons of the Godhead are in perfect agreement with each other, so that they are perfectly united, never contradicting each other. Whatever is said by one divine Person can be taken as the words of the other two divine Persons.

Let us next consider God's word which says, "God the Father." John 6:27. Here we see the word "God" being used for one Person of the Godhead, namely, the Father. This interchangeable use of the word "God" causes no difficulty in interpreting the word of God, the Bible, since the Holy Spirit, who inspired the authors of the Bible, will guide us into the correct understanding, if we choose to be guided.

The Preservation of the Bible

"The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou

shalt preserve them from this generation for ever." Psalm 12:6, 7. "Every word of God is pure." Proverbs 30:5. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever." Isaiah 40:8. "The word of God...liveth and abideth for ever." 1 Peter 1:23. It is God Himself then who has preserved the Bible for us from the time it was written up until today, and God will preserve it forever.

How to Understand God's Battle Plan

In order to be victorious in the invisible war in the universe, we must follow God's battle plan given in the Bible, for this plan cannot fail. However, we cannot follow a plan that we do not understand. So, it is vital that we correctly understand the Bible, which is to correctly interpret the Bible. In this book then, we will be exploring the Bible in an endeavour to understand God's plan of warfare.

Now "all scripture is given by inspiration of God." 2 Timothy 3:16. "No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake [spoke] as they were moved by the Holy Ghost [Holy Spirit]." 2 Peter 1:20, 21.

(The words above in square brackets, [], are inserted by me, the author of this book, as my own explanatory note or translation note to aid you, the reader, in your understanding of the Bible text which is being quoted. For example, in the Bible verses quoted above I have inserted the translation note, [spoke], for the old English word "spake" which occurs in the verses. I have also inserted the name "Holy Spirit" (Psalm 51:11) which is another name for the "Holy Ghost" in the Bible.)

God Has Only One Battle Plan

According to the Bible, in the writing of all the Scriptures, including the prophetic portions, the human authors were inspired by God. These "holy men of God spake [spoke] as they were moved by the Holy Ghost [Holy Spirit]." 2 Peter 1:21. As was said before, the "Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21) and the "Holy Spirit" (Psalm 51:11) are one and the same divine Person.

"There is...one Spirit...one faith" (Ephesians 4:4, 5) so that "we all come in the unity of the faith." Ephesians 4:13. Just as there is only one Holy Spirit, who is a member of the Godhead, there is only "one faith" (Ephesians 4:5), only one correct interpretation of the Scriptures, the Bible, all of which was inspired by the Holy Spirit.

God desires that all humanity have this "one faith" (Ephesians 4:5), this one interpretation of the Bible. Then all humanity will be perfectly aligned with the single battle plan for all of God's army. This is a most important point to grasp.

There are many different interpretations of the Bible in our world today, but as we have seen there is only one correct interpretation. All others must, therefore, be erroneous.

Even though, some interpretations of the Bible today, may be a mixture of truth and error, as a whole they are still erroneous, just as a glass of pure water with a small amount of poison in it is nevertheless poisonous. For God says that the Bible is "the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15) and, hence, the correct interpretation of the Bible is pure truth, not mingled with any error. Therefore, God says, "Do not err, my beloved." James 1:16.

The Holy Spirit Our Helper

How then can we find the correct, the true interpretation of the Bible? God's answer is, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye

shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." Matthew 7:7, 8. "Be not wise in your own conceits." Romans 12:16. "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord." James 4:10. "The Spirit of truth...he will guide you into all truth." John 16:13.

God means that we must ask Him to give us His Holy Spirit, who inspired the authors of the Bible, as a Helper and the Spirit will guide us into the correct interpretation of the Bible. This asking of ours is part of what is called "prayer." What then is prayer? It is a two-way communication with God in that we speak to God and then listen to hear God speaking to us. Now God rarely speaks in an audible voice, but He can and does impress His thoughts upon our mind and/or directs us to the Scripture that we may know what is His word to us.

Why do we have to ask? We are required by God to ask because God will not force upon us that which we do not desire. If we do not desire the Holy Spirit's aid, we will not receive it and we will, therefore, be left to our own "private interpretation" (2 Peter 1:20), our own human reasoning and intellect, in order to interpret the Bible.

If we do not have the help of the Holy Spirit, the Bible will be read, even from its beginning to the end, without the reader understanding its true meaning. This is because it is a spiritual book as it is a product of the mind of the infinite God. Like "hid treasures" (Proverbs 2:4), like veins of precious ore hidden beneath the surface of the earth, so are spiritual riches concealed in God's holy word. It requires mental effort and a prayerful approach to discover the hidden meaning of the word of God.

You may ask, "Why is the meaning of the Bible hidden?" This is a good question and one for which the answer will be given in this book. For now, I say to you just continue reading this book. All will be made clear, I promise.

The Bible is unlike human productions which can be understood by the sole application of human reasoning and intellect. Furthermore, if we come to the Bible, which is the word of God, to read it in a casual manner, or only with curiosity, or with preconceived notions, in effect we will not to be found among those that say, "I will hear what God the LORD will speak" (Psalm 85:8) to us individually through its pages.

Our ears then are not open to receive from the Holy Spirit the Bible's correct interpretation and, hence, we will come away from the Bible with an erroneous interpretation. In order to arrive at the truths of the Bible, we must approach it with an open mind, a humble, teachable spirit, and with prayer, if we are to correctly understand the Bible and its message from God to us. This is the necessary approach to understanding God's plan of warfare.

Validating Me, Your Guide

In view of what was said above, you might well ask, "How can I know that what the author of this book has written is a true interpretation of the Bible?" This is a fair question and one which you should indeed ask for God says, "The simple" (Proverbs 14:15), the naïve and gullible, "believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going" (Proverbs 14:15), in other words, the prudent man is discerning.

Therefore, as you read this book, ask the Holy Spirit to "guide you into all truth." John 16:13. In this way, you can validate what I, your guide, have written in this book.

This book is, by no means, an exhaustive study of the Bible, but it is intended to give a foundation of essential Bible truths. If you find that the contents of this book are confirmed by the Holy Spirit, then this book will be to you a safe guide for your life as you yourself prayerfully read and study the Bible.

Conditional Promises of God

God promises, "All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Matthew 21:22. There are two conditions upon which the fulfilment of this promise depends. If we meet the two conditions laid down by God, the promise to us will be fulfilled. Having met the conditions, we will receive the aid of the Holy Spirit.

One condition is, "And this is the confidence that we have in him [God], that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." 1 John 5:14, 15. The other condition is, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine [teaching], whether it be of God." John 7:17.

The plan of warfare laid out by God in the Bible is God's will for humanity and is a blessing to all. If the blessing we seek is according to God's will and will be used by us in doing the will of God, then we will surely receive the blessing from God. Of such individuals we can say, joyfully and in truth, "Thou [God] hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden [withheld] the request of his lips." Psalm 21:2.

God's Battle Plan is God's Will

You may ask, "Is God's will the right thing for us to do?" God answers this question, saying, "I lead in the way of righteousness" (Proverbs 8:20), "in all goodness and...truth." Ephesians 5:9. "I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths." Proverbs 4:11.

Now it is God's will that we should have the aid of "the Spirit of God." Genesis 1:2. Therefore, if, in all sincerity, you ask God for the assistance of the Holy Spirit, you will indeed receive the

Spirit's help and you will know for yourself "what is truth." John 18:38. This is the proper approach to understanding the Bible.

Then we will know for ourselves that "the entrance of thy [God's] words giveth light" (Psalm 119:130), the light of truth to "enlighten my darkness." Psalm 18:28. "It giveth understanding unto the simple" (Psalm 119:130), it gives understanding to the naïve and gullible. For "thy [God's] word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." Psalm 119:105. So, God's army of good is an army of light, while His rival's army of evil is an army of darkness.

Contrasting the two armies, God says, "Let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous." 1 John 3:7. "They that are of a froward [wicked] heart are abomination to the LORD" (Proverbs 11:20), who is God, "but such as are upright in their way are his delight." Proverbs 11:20.

"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" Isaiah 5:20. So, God pronounces negative consequences for those people who are wicked, who have joined His rival's army of evil.

Necessity of Firsthand Knowledge

We need to take into account God's caution to "beware of evil workers" (Philippians 3:2) who "by the sleight [trickery] of men, and cunning craftiness [deviousness]...lie in wait to deceive." Ephesians 4:14. It is critical that we do not receive an understanding of God's word secondhand, becoming mere reflectors of other people's thoughts.

Instead, by praying ourselves for the Holy Spirit to guide us, we will be connected to God, the Source of all truth. Thus, we will receive knowledge from God's word firsthand and we will become trained by God to be thinkers for ourselves.

For God desires that "every man be fully persuaded in his own mind" (Romans 14:5) with respect to the truthfulness of the word of God, the Bible. By taking this approach, that you will become "grounded and settled" (Colossians 1:23) in your mind in God's truths about God Himself and the universe in which we live.

Thanking God

"O give thanks unto the LORD" (Psalm 105:1), "blessed be the LORD, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications" (Psalm 28:6), the voice of my earnest prayers. Having asked God in sincerity for the aid of the Holy Spirit in understanding the Bible, we should believe that we have received the requested help and, hence, we should thank God for His blessing upon us.

The Godhead are real, divine Persons and we should treat them as such. Just as in everyday life, if we receive a gift, we thank the giver, so having received the gift of the Spirit's help, we should express our gratitude to God.

God is "well pleased" (Isaiah 42:21) when we "offer unto God thanksgiving." Psalm 50:14. Having thanked God, we may then say of God in truth, "Thou wast [You were] pleased with me." Genesis 33:10. We need not wait for the evidence of a blessing, for having met the conditions in asking, we are to have faith that the promise is sure to be fulfilled.

Good Understanding Received From God

Surely, thereafter, we will find that what before may have appeared obscure and impenetrable in the Bible, will now open to our understanding because we have received the promised help. Our constant prayer to God should be "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of" (Psalm 119:18) "thy word" (Psalm 119:105), "the word of truth." 2 Timothy 2:15.

Over a Million of God's Thoughts in the Bible

The Bible is a book like no other. God's plan of warfare is multi-faceted and is given in detail with more than a million of God's own thoughts in the Bible. We will now look at the rationale for saying that the Bible contains more than a million of God's thoughts.

It is not necessary to fully understand all aspects of this rationale at this point. It is included here so that you are not left with only the option of taking my word as truth without an opportunity to examine the facts yourself.

Analysis of a Verse

The King James Version (KJV) of the Bible has 31,102 verses making up a total of 1,189 chapters, where each chapter consists of two or more verses. Now there are often one, two, or more thoughts in a verse which make up the overall thought of the verse. How is this so? Let us consider an example to see this for ourselves.

For example, consider the following verse: "The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat [food] in due season." Psalm 145:15. This verse contains two thoughts which make up the overall thought. The first thought in the verse is, "The eyes of all wait upon thee" (Psalm 145:15), which means that all life on earth is dependent upon God for sustenance.

The second thought in the verse is, "Thou givest them their meat [food] in due season." (Psalm 145:15), which means that God provides food at the appropriate times. The overall thought of the verse is that God is the Giver of all necessary food on earth.

Calculations

Many of God's thoughts in the Bible are themselves precepts, which are moral principles. For example, consider the following verse in which God says, "Thou shalt not kill." Exodus 20:13. This is a precept, a moral principle, forbidding murder.

Many of the approximately 31,000 verses in the Bible are made up of two or more precepts, which means that they are made up of two or more of God's thoughts. We can therefore estimate that there are at least 50,000 of God's thoughts in the whole Bible. This is an arbitrary estimate and a conservative one as you will discern if you study the Bible.

For ease of computation, let us call these 50,000 thoughts our Estimate #1. Now each verse, each passage (where a passage consists of two or more consecutive verses in the Bible), each chapter, each book in the Bible has up to six or more applications.

Some of these six applications are (1) the literal meaning, (2) the application to me as an individual, (3) the application to God, (4) and to God's rival. Now each application results in the discovery of more of God's thoughts in the Bible. These additional thoughts are hidden beneath the surface from the superficial reader of the Bible.

Let us conservatively estimate that there are two applications of *some* of the passages of the Bible. Specifically, let us estimate that there are two applications of 15,000 verses, 20,000 passages, 500 chapters, and 50 books of the Bible. Once again this is an arbitrary estimate but nevertheless a conservative one, as you will agree when you become a mature student of the Bible, if you are not already mature in your knowledge of the word of God.

Calculating then, we find that there are (15,000 verses + 20,000 passages + 500 chapters + 50 books) x (2 applications) = (35,550 x 2) = 71,100 or approximately 70,000 additional thoughts in the Bible. Therefore, our Estimate #1 + 70,000 = 50,000 + 70,000 =

120, 000. Let us call these 120,000 of God's thoughts in the Bible our Estimate #2. But this is not all of God's thoughts in the Bible.

Let us consider the following rule given by God, "Precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little." Isaiah 28:10. If you will recall, a precept is a moral principle, or we may say, a moral instruction. This rule given by God means that we are to compare precept with precept, which is to compare Scripture with Scripture, comparing thought with thought. Such comparisons lead to the discovery of more of God's thoughts in the Bible.

Therefore, assuming that each of the 120,000 thoughts in our Estimate #2 can be compared with 10 other thoughts in the entire Bible, we get (120,000 x 10) = 1,200,000 more of God's thoughts found in the Bible. Again, this an arbitrary estimate but still a conservative one.

Now our Estimate #2 + 1,200,000 = 120,000 + 1,200,000 = 1,320,000 of God's thoughts found in the Bible. Let us call these 1,320,000 thoughts our Estimate #3. Still, this is not all of God's thoughts that are found in the Bible.

Let us assume that approximately 30% of our Estimate #3, which is 30% of the 1,320,000 thoughts calculated so far, can be compared with one aspect of history and life in today's world. We find 30% of 1,320,000 = 396,000 or approximately 390,00 more of God's thoughts enfolded in the Bible. Once more, this is an arbitrary estimate and a conservative one at that.

Our Estimate #3 + 390,000 = 1,320,000 + 390,000 = 1,710,000 of God's thoughts in the Bible. We may now conclude that there are over a million of God's thoughts to be found in the Bible. We will end our analysis of the Bible here, but you will find as you study the Bible yourself that there are, in fact, millions upon millions, and even billions, of God's thoughts in the Bible.

Assimilating the Bible

Since there are more than a million of God's thoughts in the Bible, we might well ask, "How can we read, understand, and assimilate it all?" You could, conceivably, read the entire Bible in a month or two, reading 40 or 20 chapters per day, but this is not practical for most people. Nor is it necessarily desirable. A more practical approach would be to read at least three chapters a day.

Consider then, if we were to read three chapters of the Bible every day in a year, we would read (365 days x 3 chapters) = 1,095 chapters in a year. This is 94 chapters less than the 1,189 chapters in the whole Bible. In another 32 days, we could complete reading the remaining 94 chapters by reading at the same rate of three chapters a day.

Therefore, it would take us a little more than a year to read through the entire Bible. A year is a long time for us to remember all that we have read. Furthermore, besides reading, God tells us to "study" (2 Timothy 2:15) the Bible, with study being an entirely different activity from reading. Now both reading and studying are necessary if we are to understand the Bible, God's blueprint of warfare.

Since there are so many of God's thoughts in the Bible to assimilate, it is profitable and even necessary to read the Bible daily, reading again and again from the beginning through to the end, in addition to a daily study of the Bible. For God says, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing" (2 Timothy 2:15), rightly interpreting, "the word of truth." 2 Timothy 2:15.

God desires that the student of the Bible should come to the realisation and, hence, wholeheartedly say, "Thy [God's] word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." Psalm 119:105. God has designed that the Bible should be a lifelong guide to one's daily

life. This means that we are to continually be armed by the Bible, God's battle plan, in order to be a soldier in God's army of good.

The Bible is Inexhaustible

As you study the Bible, you will find that there is revealed a depth of thought and such multifaceted applications to your own life as to convince you, the Bible student, that no mere finite mind of human beings could have devised such a book with its many hidden truths. Conviction will come to you that the Bible is indeed the "word of God." 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

As we contemplate the great truths revealed in the Bible, it is as if we look into a fountain that broadens and deepens beneath our gaze. This fountain's breadth and depth is beyond comprehension. As we continue to gaze, the vision widens as the truths of God's word expand and broaden beneath our view, and we see before us a vast, limitless, shoreless sea.

So, the diligent Bible student will come to realise that, in fact, the word of God, the Bible, is "unsearchable riches" (Ephesians 3:8), an inexhaustible treasure.

Choosing to Join God's Army

Now God says, "Walk in the light" (1 John 1:7) of truth. This means that we are to practice the truth that has come to our understanding. "Then shall we know" (Hosea 6:3) that only "in thy [God's] light shall we see light." Psalm 36:9. Only when we follow in the way that God leads can we fully understand the Bible and, hence, understand God's plan of warfare.

For "light is sown [disseminated] for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart" (Psalm 97:11) by God Himself, for they who "walk in the light" (1 John 1:7) of truth. Any neglect to "walk in the light" (1 John 1:7) of truth, is to "walk in darkness." Isaiah 59:9.

This means that any neglect to join God's army of light is to join His rival's army of darkness. It is to choose evil instead of good.

What is Paradise Like?

Those persons who join God's army and do not defect to his rival's army will be made "immortal" (1 Timothy 1:17) by God. They will live forever with God in "paradise." Revelation 2:7. The question you may be asking then is, "What is paradise like?" I have great news for you. God has given us a picture of paradise in the Bible so that we don't have to speculate about it.

Nevertheless, God says, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." 1 Corinthians 2:9.

Here is how God describes paradise for us through the eyes of a man named John to whom God gave a vision, where a vision is supernatural mental imagery. "And I saw" (Revelation 21:1), in a vision, "a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Revelation 21:1, 2.

"And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God" (Revelation 21:3), God's dwelling place, "is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." Revelation 21:3, 4. Paradise then will be found on a newly recreated earth.

"And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful." Revelation 21:5. Thus, the man named John who had the

vision from God of the "new earth" (Revelation 21:1) wrote down in the Bible, which is the word of God, what he saw in the vision, as instructed by God.

"And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Revelation 22:1), who is Christ. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." Revelation 22:1, 2.

"And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it [in the holy city, new Jerusalem]; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face." Revelation 22:3, 4.

"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling" (Isaiah 11:6), the fat cattle, "together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox." Isaiah 11:6, 7.

"And the sucking child" (Isaiah 11:8), the infant, "shall play on the hole of the asp [snake], and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' [viper's] den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea." Isaiah 11:8, 9.

"For the LORD shall comfort Zion" (Isaiah 51:3), where Zion is another name for "the holy city, new Jerusalem" (Revelation 21:2): "he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden" (Isaiah 51:3), a garden that God had planted on earth, "and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody." Isaiah 51:3.

"And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Isaiah

35:10. This then is the picture of paradise which God paints for us in the Bible. Those who gain paradise will also gain heaven, because heaven which is God's "dwelling place" (1 Kings 8:30) where God's throne is, has been moved to the earth. Ans they will be free to roam throughout the vast immensity of the universe.

Chapter Three

In Eternity Past

We will now turn our attention to a time in eternity past, before the invisible war in the universe started, in order to get the backstory to the current situation.

What is God Like?

First of all, though, we will look at what God is like as He is revealed in the Bible. After all, if the prize for those who join God's army is to live forever with God in paradise, you would definitely want to know what God is like. Of course, you need this knowledge so you can determine if living with God would be a pleasant experience that would make paradise and immortality, which is everlasting life, desirable.

In this chapter, we will take an introductory look at what God is like. Everything in this book in some way reveals the character of God.

God is Eternal

God declares Himself as the "I AM THAT I AM" (Exodus 3:14), the self-existent One whose life does not originate from any other. He is the "high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy." Isaiah 57:15. "From everlasting to everlasting, thou art God" (Psalm 90:2), "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life." Hebrews 7:3. "Thy years shall have no end." Psalm 102:27.

God is the Infinite One, "him which is, and which was, and which is to come." Revelation 1:4. "He is before all things." Colossians 1:17. As finite human beings, we think in terms of a beginning and an end, but this does not apply to God. He is eternal, which means that God exists at the present time, He has always existed in eternity past and He will always exist in eternity future.

God is Unique

As was said before, the Godhead is made up of three divine Persons. These three are "the everlasting Father" (Isaiah 9:6), "Christ...who is...God blessed for ever" (Romans 9:5), and "the eternal Spirit." Hebrews 9:14. Each member of the Godhead is eternal.

Now God says, "There is one God." Mark 12:32. Given that the word "God" in the Bible can mean the Godhead, we can say, "There is one Godhead." This helps us to understand what is meant when God says, "Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any." Isaiah 44:8. The meaning is that there is no other God besides the one Godhead.

"Thus saith the Lord...the Lord of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God." Isaiah 44:6. "Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me." Isaiah

43:10. "I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me." Isaiah 45:5. "I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me." Isaiah 46:9. All these statements mean that there is no other deity besides the one Godhead.

God's Character

God describes Himself by saying, "God is love." 1 John 4:8. It is God's character that defines what is love. Since God is love, He says, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory" (Philippians 2:3), through pride and self-exaltation; "but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." Philippians 2:3. "Be kindly affectioned one to another...in honour preferring one another." Romans 12:10. "Love thy neighbour as thyself." Leviticus 19:18.

Each Person of the Godhead is "meek and lowly in heart" (Matthew 11:29), and each Person loves the other divine Persons more than they love themselves, giving the others preference over themselves in all things.

God also describes His heart of love to be as follows. (The King James Version of the Bible uses the old English word "charity" which in modern English is the word "love.")

"Charity [love] suffereth long, and is kind; charity [love] envieth not; charity [love] vaunteth not itself [is not boastful], is not puffed up [is not haughty], Doth not behave itself unseemly [improperly], seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity [wickedness], but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity [love] never faileth." 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.

The Good News About God

In addition to God's declaration that "God is love" (1 John 4:8), God declares, "I am the Lord, I change not" (Malachi 3:6) and I am "God, that cannot lie." Titus 1:2.

In view of these three things that God says about Himself, we can deduce that God is truthful at all times. So, when God says, "God is love" (1 John 4:8), He is telling the truth. When God says, "I am the Lord, I change not" (Malachi 3:6), He is also speaking the truth. God declares that He is "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Hebrews 13:8), for "his ways are everlasting" (Habakkuk 3:6), His ways are unchanging.

There can be no better news than this, that it can be said that "God is love!" 1 John 4:8. Certainly then you would enjoy living with God forever in paradise.

Other Attributes of God

We will now look at other attributes of God. All of this will aid us in understanding God and His blueprint for warfare, the Bible.

God is Wise

Not only is God's character of love the very definition of love, He is "the only wise God" (1 Timothy 1:17), "him which is perfect in knowledge." Job 37:16. "Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite." Psalm 147:5. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" Romans 11:33. His ways [are] past finding out!" Romans 11:33. "God thundereth marvellously with his voice; great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend." Job 37:5.

God is All-Powerful

God asks, "Is any thing too hard for the LORD?" Genesis 18:14. The answer is, "With God nothing shall be impossible." Luke 1:37. "I am God Almighty." Genesis 35:11. God is "omnipotent" (Revelation 19:6) meaning that God is all-powerful. God says, "I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded." Isaiah 45:12.

"Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth." Isaiah 40:26.

"The worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." Hebrews 11:3. The visible things are made from invisible things, and based on our current understanding today, we would say that the universe consists of invisible things, such as atoms.

"By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth...For he spake [spoke], and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." Psalm 33:6-9. "He [God] is before all things, and by him all things consist." Colossians 1:17.

God is "the LORD God...that made heaven and earth" (2 Chronicles 2:12), "the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator" (Isaiah 40:28) of all that there is in the universe. God says that He spoke the word and they were created. He created all things from nothing. God was not reliant on pre-existing material in order to create the universe.

God is a Spirit

"God is a Spirit" (John 4:24), but the human race, "the children" (Hebrews 2:14), created by God, "are partakers of [made of] flesh and blood." Hebrews 2:14. What does it mean that God is a Spirit? We cannot say precisely because God has not revealed it to humanity for "the secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever." Deuteronomy 29:29.

God is Present Everywhere

We may say of God, "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" Psalm 139:7. The word of God says that anywhere I may go, "Behold, thou art there." Psalm 139:8. So, God is omnipresent, meaning that God is everywhere at the same time.

God is All-Knowing

With respect to God, "neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." Hebrews 4:13. "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." Proverbs 15:3. "Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee." Psalm 139:12.

"Thus saith the LORD...I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them." Ezekiel 11:5. Therefore, we say that God is omniscient, meaning that God knows all things. There is nothing that can be hidden from Him.

The Godhead Before Creation

The Son called Christ, a member of the Godhead, gives us a glimpse of the Godhead before they had ever created anything outside of themselves. Christ says, "The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old." Proverbs 8:22.

"I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world." Proverbs 8:23-26.

"When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass [a circle] upon the face of the depth: When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." Proverbs 8:27-30.

From the above Bible verses, we may conclude that there was a time when the Godhead was alone, when they had not yet created anything. At that time they delighted in each other and had a loving relationship among themselves since God is love.

God and His Creation

God "made the worlds." Hebrews 1:2. These words are an indication that, in addition to creating the human race, God has created the "angels" (Genesis 19:1) and other intelligences who populate "worlds" (Hebrews 1:2) somewhere in the universe.

We do not know the order in which all the intelligences were created, or other details about these them except what is revealed in the Bible about the "angels" (Genesis 19:1) in heaven and those called "the sons of God" (Job 1:6) from the other worlds. We do know that since "God is love" (1 John 4:8), it must have been the love in the Godhead's heart that led them to extend their Family by creating intelligent beings.

God and His Law

To all His intelligences, God has prescribed that, "Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." Deuteronomy 6:5. "This is the first and great commandment, and the second is like unto it" (Matthew 22:38, 39), namely, "thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Leviticus 19:18.

These two great commandments are a summary of God's law of love by which He governs the universe. This law God refers to variously as "the law of the LORD God" (2 Kings 10:31), "the law of the God of heaven" (Ezra 7:12), "the law of God" (Nehemiah 8:8) and "God's law." Nehemiah 10:29.

In prescribing that God's character of love should be the standard of character to be maintained by His intelligences, God requires of them only that they follow His perfect example. By prescribing His law of love for all His intelligences, God designs that love should reign in all His kingdom which spans the universe.

If the created beings followed God's example then they would constitute a holy, happy family just like the divine Family, the Godhead. God says, "He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law...Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." Romans 13:8 – 10. To live in love was not an

impossibility for these intelligences for God had made them all "holy and without blame before him in love." Ephesians 1:4.

The Godhead loved the created beings as they loved themselves. They desired that the created intelligences who were endowed with reason, conscience, and free will, would of their own free will love God, and would love their fellow beings according to God's law of love.

For God's created intelligences to know what is love is, they must come to know God's character. The relationships between the members of the divine Family, the "Godhead" (Acts 17:29; Romans 1:20; Colossians 2:9) are indeed a demonstration of love in action.

We can readily see and understand that love, joy, peace, and harmony can only reign in the universe if the created inhabitants do no wickedness, but only good. Therefore, "His [God's] commandments are not grievous." 1 John 5:3. God gives these commandments for the good, happiness, and best interests of the universe that He has created.

God's Rule in the Universe

"The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all" (Psalm 103:19) "in all places of his dominion." Psalm 103:22. God has a kingdom and a government which rules over all the intelligences He has created, including the angels and mankind.

God has absolute power in the universe for "with God nothing shall be impossible." Luke 1:37. Yet God is not a dictator, an authoritarian, an oppressive, unjust, and cruel ruler. No, no, it is not so! Instead "God is love" (1 John 4:8) and God is "meek and lowly in heart." Matthew 11:29.

Look at how much God respects the freedom of will of His created intelligences in that He never forces the will or the con-

science. God leaves it to each of His created beings to choose whether or not they will love Him in return. Although God has absolute power he governs *only* according to His character of love.

Heaven

"The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD'S throne is in heaven" (Psalm 11:4), "heaven thy dwelling place." 1 Kings 8:30. God says, "I dwell in the high and holy place." Isaiah 57:15. Where exactly is heaven? Again, we cannot say where it is because God has not revealed it to humans.

"Many angels [were] round about the throne [of God]...and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" (Revelation 5:11), "an innumerable company of angels." Hebrews 12:22. God "maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire." Psalm 104:4. We see that the Godhead is not alone in heaven, where they reside, but heaven is also the dwelling place of millions upon millions of angels.

What is the occupation of the angels? We as humans can say, according to the word of God, "Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening [being obedient] unto the voice of his word. Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure." Psalm 103:20, 21.

The angels in heaven are busy doing God's will. In so doing, each of the angels can say, "Happy am I" (Genesis 30:13), "happy are thy" angels, "happy are these thy servants...that hear thy wisdom." 1 Kings 10:8. The angels find their highest joy in service.

The Happy State of the Universe

The language of the hearts of all the created beings was "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." Psalm

40:8. These beings counted it a joy to do the will of God, which is to serve God. This was a time when all created intelligences loved God and loved each other with a love identical to the love in God's heart.

While the intelligences' love for God was supreme, above their love for all others, their love for fellow beings was trusting and unselfish. Hence, all was peace, harmony and love in the universe and joy reigned in heaven and in all the worlds.

So long as all created beings patterned themselves after the love demonstrated by God, the perfect harmony of the universe was preserved. There was no discord to mar the bliss of God and created beings. It was a delight to all intelligences to live with God.

Appreciation of God

God's is worthy of our praise because of His character of love. Let us, therefore, rejoice and say with our whole heart, "Praise God!" "Praise the Lord!" As the Creator of all that there is in the universe, God is worthy of all honour and all worship. It is right for all His created intelligences, including human beings, to "give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; [and] worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness." Psalm 29:2.

It is right for them all to say, "Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty." Psalm 104:1. Let us say, in accordance with the word of God, "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen." 1 Timothy 1:17.

"Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable." Psalm 145:3. It is God "which doeth great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number." Job 9:10. It is He "which doeth great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number." Job 5:9.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Rise of the Great Controversy

TODAY, GOD'S LAW OF love does not prevail on earth and one might reasonably ask, "Why is this so?" God says that "the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19), "this present evil world." Galatians 1:4. Is God responsible for all the anarchy, chaos, evil, and wickedness that exists in the world? Did God create faulty human beings?

In order to answer these questions, we will begin by looking at the origin of evil in the universe. God's response to the existence of evil is a revelation of God's love for all His created beings, for "God is love." 1 John 4:8.

Lucifer Exalts Himself

There came a time when the harmony in the universe was broken, not by God, but by one of His angels, named "Lucifer." Isaiah 14:12. Who was Lucifer? God said of Lucifer, "Thus saith the Lord God; Thou [Lucifer] sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty...Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have

set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God;...thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity [wickedness] was found in thee." Ezekiel 28:12-15.

A cherub is a kind of angel and as a "cherub that covereth" (Ezekiel 28:14), Lucifer could say of himself in truth, "I...stand in the presence of God." Luke 1:19. This angel, Lucifer, is commonly believed to have been first in rank of the two covering cherubs who stood in the presence of God. Thus, Lucifer would have been of the highest rank of all the angels, and next in rank to Christ, the Son of God who is also known as "Michael the archangel." Jude 1:9. As high in rank as Lucifer was in heaven, he was nevertheless subject to God's authority.

However, Lucifer desired to be first in rank in the universe. In effect, Lucifer fell in love with himself and he began to cherish a spirit of pride and self-exaltation. But God says, "Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD." Proverbs 16:5.

His character became one of selfishness which is the opposite of love."Love worketh no ill to his neighbour" (Romans 13:10) and, hence, love is the principle of doing good, and only good, to others at all times. Selfishness is "covetousness, which is idolatry." Colossians 3:5.

Now, while on the errands of God, Lucifer, a prince of the angels, sought to secure the service and loyalty of all created beings to himself. To this object Lucifer now bent the energies of that master mind, which, next to Christ's, was first among all the angels, the heavenly hosts of God.

Lucifer's idolatry of self, manifested as his self-love, self-worship, and self-exaltation, was such then that he coveted the homage, the worship, that is due to God alone as the Creator. Lucifer then became God's rival.

Lucifer's Enmity Against God's Law

God questions Lucifer, whom God now calls "the Devil, and Satan" (Revelation 12:9), upon Lucifer's rebellion against God. He asks Lucifer, "Shall even he that hateth right govern? and wilt thou condemn him that is most just?" Job 34:17. Lucifer, a created being, condemned God who is "most just" (Job 34:17) as wicked. A "controversy" (Deuteronomy 25:1) therefore arose between Lucifer and God.

God is "a God of truth and without iniquity [wickedness], just and right is he" (Deuteronomy 32:4) because of His character of love which is expressed in God's law of love. What we will call *the great controversy* concerned the law of God, for God said that Lucifer "hateth right." Job 34:17. Lucifer sought to overthrow God's law of love and replace it with something else.

The great controversy between God and Satan is, in effect, over whose law, whose words, will prevail among God's created intelligences. God's desire is that His law of love will prevail. So, God says, "let every...[one] be fully persuaded in his own mind" (Romans 14:5) and say, "For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven." Psalm 119:89.

God says, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Luke 4:8. In accordance with God's word, all created intelligences worshipped God, but Lucifer now desired to receive the worship that is due to God alone.

Lucifer Causes Disaffection Among the Angels

God describes the character of Lucifer, whom God now calls "the Devil, and Satan." Revelation 12:9. God says, "The devil...was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of

his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." John 8:44. Lucifer corrupted himself with evil.

Lucifer, now called Satan, in his disaffection, began to spread lies among the angels. Speaking lies, which is speaking falsehood, is contrary to the character of "God, that cannot lie." Titus 1:2. It is contrary to God's law of love, for it is God's character which defines love. Speaking lies is evil and God calls this "sin." Genesis 4:7.

God says, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth [breaks] also the law: for sin is the transgression [the breaking] of the law." 1 John 3:4. Every sin is the breaking of God's law of love and so God says that Lucifer broke God's law of love. (In the Bible, the words "iniquity" (Genesis 15:16), "transgression" (Exodus 34:7), and "sin" (Genesis 4:7) are used interchangeably.) God says of Lucifer, "Iniquity [wickedness] was found in thee." Ezekiel 28:15. In all of this, we can say that sin is wickedness, evil, and wrongdoing.

God says, "The devil...was a murderer from the beginning." John 8:44. Why did God say that Satan was a murderer? The answer is that Satan was "he that hideth hatred with lying lips, and he that uttereth a slander" (Proverbs 10:18) about God. "With flattering lips and with a double heart [did he]...speak" (Psalm 12:2) to God.

In the presence of God, to God's face Satan was reverent, loyal and obedient, but away from God's presence his hatred of God led him to utter slander, false and malicious statements, about God. "Whosoever hateth his brother"(1 John 3:15), his fellow being, "is a murderer: and...no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." 1 John 3:15. Satan's hatred of God made him a murderer in God's eyes.

We can say of God, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." Habakkuk 1:13. "For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee." Psalm 5:4. "The wages of sin is [eternal] death [which is to be annihilated by God]." Romans 6:23. Speaking of the wicked, God says, "God shall...destroy thee for ever, he shall take thee

away, and pluck thee out of thy dwelling place, and root thee out of the land of the living." Psalm 52:5. Those who persist in sin and who refuse to turn away from it, God will annihilate.

Satan's lies about God were not without effect. Many angels believed his lies and joined him in rebellion against God. God says of Satan and each of his angels that he is "him that without cause is mine enemy." Psalm 7:4. "They compassed me about also with words of hatred; and fought against me without a cause." Psalm 109:3. "They dealt perversely with me without a cause." Psalm 119:78. They had become the enemies of God.

War in Heaven

Speaking of Satan, God says, "Should not the multitude of words be answered? and should a man full of talk be justified? Should thy lies make men hold their peace? and when thou mockest, shall no man make thee ashamed? For thou hast said, My doctrine is pure, and I [Satan] am clean in thine [God's] eyes." Job 11:2-4.

"And there was war in heaven: Michael" (Revelation 12:7), who is also known as Christ, "and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan...he was cast out...and his angels were cast out with him." Revelation 12:7-9. God says of Lucifer, "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer...how art thou cut down to the ground!" Isaiah 14:12.

The disaffection of Satan and the angels who had taken Satan's side of the great controversy eventually ripened into open revolt against God. As a result, God cast Satan and his angels out of heaven. They had reached a point of no return in that their character had become fixed in doing evil.

Why was Satan and his angels not immediately destroyed? God has allowed them to continue to live for a time until His objective

is met in unmasking Satan as a wicked deceiver before the whole universe. Then Satan and his evil angels will be destroyed.

This then is the backstory of the rise of the great controversy in the universe. It is the story of the origin of evil in the universe and God's response to the evil which He hates.

God Creates the Human Race and the Earth

God says "I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded." Isaiah 45:12. I am "the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it." Isaiah 45:18.

"God the LORD, he...created the heavens, and stretched them out; he...spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he...giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit [mind] to them that walk therein." Isaiah 42:5.

Humanity Belongs to God

"The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." Psalm 24:1. "Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture." Psalm 100:3. "For in him we live, and move, and have our being...for we are also his offspring." Acts 17:28.

"If he gather unto himself his...breath; all flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust." Job 34:14, 15. God sustains all that He has created and mankind is dependent upon God for every breath, every heartbeat. We are not our own, we belong to God.

The Sinlessness of Adam and Eve

"God hath made man upright." Ecclesiastes 7:29. He made the first human pair, Adam and Eve, perfect in character and "holy and without blame before him in love." Ephesians 1:4. They were created perfect in holiness, sinless, with the God's law of love written in their minds. Their character which was in harmony with, and they were obedient to God's law of love. In the beginning, Adam and Eve loved God and delighted in Him, and they loved each other.

A Small Test

"And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil." Genesis 2:8, 9.

"And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Genesis 2:16, 17.

God gave Adam and Eve everything which they could ever need or desire in the garden of Eden. There were two special trees in the garden. To eat from the "tree of life" (Genesis 2:9) was to be made immortal. The "tree of knowledge of good and evil" (Genesis 2:9) in the garden was God's own special possession and God forbade them to eat from this tree.

The forbidden tree which belonged to God was a small test of the love, loyalty, and obedience of Adam and Eve. To eat from "tree of knowledge of good and evil" (Genesis 2:9) was to disobey God and to steal from God.

The Temptation and the Fall

Having been cast out of heaven, Satan went throughout the universe seeking those among the sinless worlds who would take his side of the controversy with God. God says of Satan, "Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God." Ezekiel 28:13. Satan came to earth, to the garden of Eden which was the home of Adam and Eve, the first human pair as "the tempter." Matthew 4:3.

Satan, having lost heaven, was angry and envious of the happiness of Adam and Eve and the paradise that God had prepared for them. He determined to cause the holy, sinless pair to join him in his rebellion against God that they too might be found to be disobedient to God.

Satan hid himself from Eve's sight and spoke to her, as if through a serpent, for it is evident that serpents cannot speak. He succeeded in causing Eve to enter into a conversation with what she thought was a serpent. Satan deceived her by his actual statements and by what his statements implied. Suddenly, Eve felt that the restriction God had placed on the "tree of knowledge of good and evil" (Genesis 2:9) was burdensome and unreasonable.

God had said, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Genesis 2:16, 17.

When Satan "said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die" (Genesis 3:4) if she ate from the "tree of knowledge of good and evil" (Genesis 2:9) she believed his lie. Satan also said that the reason why God withheld the "tree of knowledge of good and evil" (Genesis 2:9) from them was because, "God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Genesis 3:5. This was

especially convincing to Eve for Satan represented God as having a deceitful motive for God's restriction.

"The woman being deceived was in the transgression" (1 Timothy 2:14) for she believed that "God, that cannot lie" (Titus 1:2) was a liar as was implied by what Satan said.

"And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat." Genesis 3:6. Thus, Adam and Eve, the first human pair, fell into sin because they ate from the "tree of knowledge of good and evil" (Genesis 2:9) and thereby disobeyed God and also stole from God.

Consequences of the Fall

When Adam and Eve sinned, they joined Satan in his rebellion against God by giving their allegiance to Satan instead of to God. Adam and Eve took Satan's side in the great controversy and, thereby, the great controversy was extended to the inhabitants of the earth.

The minds of Adam and Eve became carnal, which is to say, their minds became evil and depraved, just like that of Satan and his host of "evil angels." Psalm 78:49."For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7), "because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Romans 8:7.

Adam and Eve's original sinless perfection with which they were created by God was corrupted by sin. Originally, their thoughts were pure, and their aims holy, but through their disobedience selfishness took the place of love.

While they were in their sinless state, Adam and Eve held joyful communion with God. But after their sin, they could no longer

find joy in holiness, and they, therefore, sought to hide themselves from the presence of God.

"Wherefore, as by one man" (Romans 5:12), Adam, "sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Romans 5:12. By the great law of heredity, all of Adam and Eve's descendants have inherited their sinful nature and so all of mankind became the enemies of God.

Speaking of all humanity, God says, "They know not to do right, saith the LORD." Amos 3:10. "And they bend their tongues...for lies: but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the LORD." Jeremiah 9:3. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." Ecclesiastes 8:11.

"For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." Ecclesiastes 7:20. All of humanity follow Satan's ways. Satan, God's rival, has the love, affections, and allegiance of all mankind.

The Promise Made

When during a discussion within the Godhead regarding the what the Bible calls the gospel, the Father said "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?", it was Christ, the Son, who said, "Here am I; send me." Isaiah 6:8. Christ volunteered to die "for the sins of the whole world." 1 John 2:2. So, the gospel, God's plan of redemption, called for the sacrifice of God Himself.

"The counsel of peace shall be between them both." Zechariah 6:13. In accordance with the counsel within the Godhead, the Father has made a promise, a covenant, with Christ to save all mankind from eternal death "through the blood of the everlasting covenant." Hebrews 13:20.

It was God's plan that Christ should be "our Saviour Jesus Christ, who...abolished death, and...brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." 2 Timothy 1:10. In accordance with the gospel, Christ would "abolish death" (2 Timothy 1:10) for the human race by Himself dying "for the sins of the whole world." 1 John 2:2.

Christ covenanted with the Father that as the man named "Jesus" (Matthew 1:21), who would be the Representative of the human race, He would be obedient to all the specifications of God's law of love as given in the ten commandments and would die for all of humanity's sins.

The question that arises is, "How can the everlasting covenant cause humanity to overcome all sin and, hence, keep God's law of love?" Specifically, how could Christ, coming to the earth in human flesh, that is, becoming incarnate, help humanity to be saved from "everlasting destruction" (2 Thessalonians 1:9), from eternal death?

Would He not also be born with a sinful nature like all of mankind and come under the condemnation of God's law of love? The answer is not immediately evident in what has been said so far about the everlasting covenant. In order to understand the answer to this question, we must look into many things which we will do in subsequent chapters of this book.

First of all, let us understand the goal of the everlasting covenant. It is this: "He [God] also did predestinate [predestined mankind] to be conformed to the image of his Son." Romans 8:29. God predestined sinful mankind to have a character of love identical to Christ's holy character. By this means, humanity could also keep God's law of love.

All humanity then must have a change of character, a change of heart. How can this come about? As was said before, we will now look into many things, into some of the intricacies of the gospel, in order to understand how a change of character, a change of

heart from selfishness to love, on the part of all mankind can come about.

As we will see, the key to the necessary change of heart on the part of humanity lies in the nature of Christ and the manner in which Christ met temptations to sin.

The Law and the Gospel

From the very beginning when Adam and Eve sinned, in the garden of Eden, God gave the first human pair the promise of Christ as a "Saviour" (2 Samuel 22:3), the One who saves from sin. At that time, God gave the "ten commandments" (Exodus 34:28) to Adam and Eve as ten brief, comprehensive commandments describing His law of love from which they had deviated.

It was given to meet them in their fallen condition as a standard of character which they should meet. If they met the standard, then they would have kept God's law of love. They would "be holy and without blame before him in love." Ephesians 1:4.

God once again gave the ten commandments to humanity when "he [God] gave...two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God." Exodus 31:18. God said, "I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written." Exodus 24:12. These ten commandments given on "two tables of testimony" (Exodus 31:18) were "God's law [of love]." Nehemiah 10:29.

This second giving of the law occurred after many generations of humanity had lived on earth, at a time when God Himself spoke the ten commandments audibly to some people and wrote them Himself on two tables of stone.

The two tables of stone on which God Himself wrote the ten commandments were also called the "two tables of the covenant." Deuteronomy 9:15. The ten commandments then represented the terms of the "everlasting covenant" (Hebrews 13:20) between Christ and the Father.

The ten commandments were a prophecy of the testimony that would be given by "the man Christ Jesus." 1 Timothy 2:5. He would be "the faithful and true witness" (Revelation 3:14) who would testify that His life demonstrated that "God is love." 1 John 4:8.

Thus, the law, which is a revelation of God's heart of love, gave rise to the gospel whereby Christ would be One who "keepeth the law." Proverbs 29:18. Christ would "be holy and without blame before him," (Ephesians 1:4), God, "in love." Ephesians 1:4. Christ's obedience to the law would ensure that mankind too could "be holy and without blame before him," (Ephesians 1:4), God, "in love." Ephesians 1:4.

"The law prophesied" (Matthew 11:13) that "the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5) would keep God's law of love in all its entirety and would not deviate from the law in any particular. Christ's character being "faultless" (Jude 1:24), would be identical to God's character of love. That is, the ten commandments were a prophecy of the character that Christ would have when He would be born into the world as a baby boy named "Jesus." Matthew 1:21.

What was the purpose of God giving the law to humanity when it was impossible for them in their sinful nature to keep the law? Impossible for mankind as sinful as they were to be "be holy and without blame before him in love." Ephesians 1:4.

These commandments signified that if Christ, as humanity's Representative before God, could keep the law then all mankind could also keep the law. Looked at in this way, the ten commandments are seen to be a promise to all humanity that they too could keep God's law of love. God says, "Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people" (Isaiah 55:4), to all mankind.

God also prophesied of Christ, saying, "I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people." Isaiah 42:6. God says, "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ" (Galatians 3:24) to know and understand the prophecy about Him.

Christ then would be humanity's perfect Example of the human race and one that they *must* imitate.

"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Romans 5:19. How can this be? Read on and it will be made clear. To reiterate, the goal of the gospel is to bring fallen mankind up from the depravity of sin to the standard of God's law of love.

Christ's Prophesied Conflict With Satan

Christ, according to prophecy, would be the One who would "bruise...[the] head" (Genesis 3:15) of Satan thereby inflicting a "mortal wound" to Satan. In the process, Satan would "bruise...[the] heel" (Genesis 3:5) of Christ, thereby harming him. The "mortal wound" would be that the doom and death of Satan would be made certain by the work of the Christ.

Christ would be a victorious Warrior, a Conqueror, the One who would defeat Satan though sustaining harm in the process.

God's Plan to Save Humanity: Two of Its Provisions

God has a plan, known as the plan of redemption or the "gospel" (Matthew 4:23) to win the love and affections of the human race and so save them from annihilation which is eternal death. This is God's remedy for their sinfulness. The plan is comprehensive in its scope and there are two provisions that apply directly to humanity. These provisions were given to Adam and Eve as a promise by God to the human race.

Firstly, every person's past sins may be forgiven because God would send His Son, Christ, to die "for the sins of the whole world." 1 John 2:2. Thus, justice for all the sins committed by humanity would be satisfied by the death of Christ. Secondly,

every person may become sinless just as Adam and Eve were when they were created and before they sinned, because Christ will "put enmity" (Genesis 3:15) in their heart for sin and Satan. This is the promise of God to all mankind.

To Adam and Eve, the future work of Christ to save them from eternal death was a star of hope which illuminated the dark and terrible future and relieved it of its utter desolation which arose because of their sins. God's heart yearns for the human race because He knows that they may become sinless if they so choose.

Eden Lost to Humanity

"And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest [in order to prevent the possibility that] he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore, the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So, he [God] drove out the man [and woman]; and he [God] placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims [angels], and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." Genesis 3:22 – 24.

So it was that the garden of Eden was lost to humanity and with it all access to "the tree of life." Genesis 2:9. Therefore, human beings do not live forever, all die at some point.

God and the Sinful Human Race

The Godhead says to all humanity, "O ye...[people], our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged" (2 Corinthians 6:11), which is to say, our hearts are wide open to you. "Ye are not straitened in us" (2 Corinthians 6:12), that is, you are not constrained in our hearts, "but ye are straitened in your own bowels" (2 Corinthians 6:12), in other words, you are cramped in your own affections.

Mankind then, in their sinful state, could no longer find joy in holiness and so they seek to hide themselves from the presence of God. Thus, God is faced with the task of winning the hearts of humanity who find no joy in communion with Him.

God's strategy ever since the entrance of sin into the world, has been to restrict mankind's access to God, because God would not communicate with Adam and Eve after they had sinned as He did when they were without sin. Since then until today in our age, God hides His face from mankind because God wishes every person to be attracted to Him, not by His glory, magnificence and might, but by His character of love, truth, righteousness, mercy, kindness, compassion and long-suffering.

"God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed" (Acts 17:24-26), decreed the set times which He had prearranged, "and the bounds of their habitation." Acts 17:26.

"That they should seek the Lord, if haply [perhaps] they might feel after [search for] him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being...For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device." Acts 17:27-29.

God says to all mankind, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." Jeremiah 31:3. God has loved all mankind and He has drawn us to Himself in that He has sought to win our love and affections. Considering God's character of love, we can wholeheartedly say that God is worthy of all humanity loving Him in return.

God's Law: The Ten Commandments

In order to meet them in their fallen condition after they had sinned, God gave Adam and Eve the "ten commandments" (Exodus 34:28), which were ten precepts, ten moral instructions. These commandments are brief, comprehensive, authoritative, and are based on the great fundamental principle of love. They cover mankind's duty to God and to his fellow human being.

The first four of the ten commandments, which cover mankind's duty to God, may be summarised by the first great commandment which says, "Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." Deuteronomy 6:5. The last six of the ten commandments may be summarised by the second great commandment which says, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Leviticus 19:18.

The ten commandments are not a different law from the two great commandments discussed before. They are an expression of God's law of love and may, therefore, simply be referred to as "God's law." Nehemiah 10:29. The ten commandments are as follows—

1. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Exodus 20:3.

2. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments." Exodus 20:4-6.

3. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in

vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." Exodus 20:7.

4. "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it." Exodus 20:8-11.

5. "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." Exodus 20:12.

6. "Thou shalt not kill." Exodus 20:13.

7. "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Exodus 20:14.

8. "Thou shalt not steal." Exodus 20:15.

9. "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour." Exodus 20:16.

10. "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's." Exodus 20:17.

A Comparison of the Law of God With God's Character

We will now compare God's law with His character as it is revealed in the Bible.

- *God is good.* "He [God] is good." Psalm 106:1. *God's law is good.* "The law is good." 1 Timothy 1:8.

- *God is holy.* "God...is holy." Isaiah 5:16. *God's law is holy.* "The law is holy." Romans 7:12.

- *God is perfect.* "Your Father [God] which is in heaven is perfect." Matthew 5:48. *God's law is perfect.* "The law of the LORD is perfect." Psalm 19:7.

- *God is pure.* "He [God] is pure." 1 John 3:3. *God's law is pure.* "The commandment of the LORD is pure." Psalm 19:8.

- *God is just.* "A God...without iniquity [wickedness], just and right is he." Deuteronomy 32:4. *God's law is just.* "The law is...just." Romans 7:12.

- *God is true.* "God is true." John 3:33. *God's law is true.* "Thy law is the truth." Psalm 119:142.

- *God is spiritual.* "That spiritual Rock...that Rock was Christ [God]." 1 Corinthians 10:4. *God's law is spiritual.* "The law is spiritual." Romans 7:14.

- *God is righteous.* "The LORD is righteous." Psalm 129:4. *God's law is righteousness.* "All thy commandments are righteousness." Psalm 119:172.

- *God is faithful.* "God is faithful." 1 Corinthians 1:9. *God's*

law is faithful. "All thy commandments are faithful." Psalm 119:86.

- *God is love.* "God is love." 1 John 4:8. *God's law is love.* "Love is the fulfilling of the law." Romans 13:10.

- *God is unchangeable.* "For I am the LORD, I change not." Malachi 3:6. *God's law is unchangeable.* "And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle [the least specification] of the law to fail." Luke 16:17.

- *God is eternal.* "The everlasting God." Genesis 21:33. "From everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." Psalm 90:2. *God's law is eternal.* "All his commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever." Psalm 111:7, 8.

As shown by the Bible texts above, God's law is a transcript of His character, in that, the law accurately describes God's character. God says, "The law of the LORD is perfect" (Psalm 19:7) and, hence, it cannot be improved upon. Any change in God's law of love would render the law imperfect and evil and would mean that God's character is imperfect and evil.

Since, God says, "I am the Lord, I change not" (Malachi 3:6) and I am "God, that cannot lie" (Titus 1:2), then this means that God's law of love, which is perfect, and is truth, is also unchangeable and eternal.

God's Plan to End the Great Controversy

"The LORD trieth [tests] the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth." Psalm 11:5. In the end, God will eradicate sin from the universe by destroying the wicked among mankind who cling to their sins, along with Satan and his evil angels. On the other hand, God will save from eternal death those among humanity who choose to become sinless.

In the interim, Satan employs all his deceptive arts to prevent sinful humanity from turning away from their sins and becoming sinless. Thus, the invisible war in the universe continues to be waged on earth. God's battle plan for humanity, the Bible, is comprehensive in its scope, and it teaches mankind how to resist Satan and his warfare against humanity.

God says to all mankind, "That thy trust may be in the LORD, I have made known to thee this day, even to thee. Have not I written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge, that I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth; that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee?" Proverbs 22:19-21.

God also says, "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 perfect, throughly [fully] furnished unto all good works." 2 Timothy 3:16, 17. "Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life." Proverbs 4:13.

The Bible is also God's love letter to mankind in order to save them from eternal death, and instead cause them to gain paradise and immortality by becoming sinless. Each person who understands the truths of God's word is to share the "words of truth" (Proverbs 22:21) with others so that they too might be saved.

God's plan will not fail any person if it is followed. They will obtain the bliss that prevailed in the universe before evil entered it and, with joy, will live in God's presence forever. "The LORD is King for ever and ever." Psalm 10:16.

God's Wisdom Demonstrated

"To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?...Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood

from the foundations of the earth? It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in...To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith [God] the Holy One." Isaiah 40:18-25.

The wisdom of God is infinitely greater than that of any of His creation. As finite human beings, we cannot comprehend everything there is to know about the infinite God and His ways, but in the word of God, the Bible, God gives us an understanding of Himself. True, there are mysteries beyond our comprehension in the Bible, but in its pages, God reveals much about Himself and His dealings with both His earthly and heavenly creation.

Chapter Five

Enemy Tactics

God says, "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." Isaiah 59:2. The relationship between God and mankind was broken on the part of all humanity for they have "wickedly departed from...God" (2 Samuel 22:22) by choosing Satan's ways. Notwithstanding this, God says, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." Jeremiah 31:3.

In His love for humanity, God has contended with Satan in an attempt to win the love and affections of all mankind. Of paramount importance to God, is that He unmasks Satan by revealing Satan's stratagem which He employs in opposing God in the universe.

This chapter then will first look at an overview of "the wiles [trickery] of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11), Satan, followed by a detailed look at some aspects of Satan's tactics. The whole word of God, the Bible, is filled with revelations of Satan's policy in the great controversy between himself and God.

This book, in its few pages, will not give an exhaustive treatment of this subject. Instead, this book in its remaining chapters will

focus on how Christ won a victory over Satan, and how every human being, as a soldier in God's army, may successfully fight against Satan.

Overview of Satan's Tactics

One of Satan's tactics in his warfare against God and humanity is to seduce them into sin. Here he employs the three great leading temptations that assail mankind. These three temptations are appetite, presumption, and love of the world.

In seeking to overcome humanity, Satan's first resort is to tempt them to indulge appetite. When this object is gained, Satan can come with his two other leading temptations, presumption and love of the world, and find ready access to mankind. His numerous temptations grow out of these three great leading points.[1]

Satan's policy in his many temptations that grow out of the three leading temptations, fall under the general headings of affections, persuasion, bribery, and compulsion. As a last resort when all else fails in overcoming persons, Satan employs the tactic of compulsion.

This then is an overview of Satan's tactics in his warfare against God. But God has given humanity a battle plan, the Bible, which will result in every individual having victory over sin and Satan, if the plan is followed.

A Detailed Look at Satan's Tactics

The Bible is full of "instruction" (Job 33:16) and in it, God reveals the tactics of the enemy, Satan, for God says "I will forewarn you." Luke 12:5. We will now take a detailed look at Satan's manoeuvres.

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1. Ellen G. White, (egwwritings.org), Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 4, page 44, paragraph 2.

Satan seeks by his cunning and deceit to cause all humanity to fail to follow God's battle plan, the Bible. In pursuing his wicked purpose, Satan bases his tactics on his experience that he can gain a foothold in the life of every human being because of their sinful nature.

Therefore, Satan appeals to "the deceitful lusts" (Ephesians 4:22) of humanity's sinful nature, so that they "fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition [eternal ruin]." 1 Timothy 6:9.

God calls humanity's lusts, deceitful, because "all the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes" (Proverbs 16:2), "every way of a man is right in his own eyes." Proverbs 21:2. Every human being truly believes that their ways are right even though they are sinners in God's sight. In this they are deceived.

In his warfare against God, Satan has found that he has an ally in the great mass of mankind who are unwilling to exchange error for truth. For the vast majority of mankind are satisfied with their present condition, and have no desire to be converted to God's ways.

Satan's manoeuvres fall under the general heading of causing mankind to substitute errors for the truths of "the word of God." 1 Samuel 9:27. Through these errors prepared by Satan for humanity, they "are taken captive by him at his will." 2 Timothy 2:26. God counts Satan's captives as loyal members of Satan's army, which fights against God, for "they willingly are ignorant" (2 Peter 3:5) of the great controversy and the part they play in it.

Indulgence of Appetite[2]

Consider humanity's original diet as prescribed by God. "And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is

2. Ellen G. White (egwwritings.org), Temperance

upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat [food]." Genesis 1:29. This diet was designed by God to keep humanity's physical, mental, and moral powers in optimal condition.

But Satan's policy is to take the things given by God as food, such as the fruit of the vine and wheat, and convert them into poisons. He knows that this would ruin mankind's physical, mental, and moral powers, and so overcome the senses that Satan would have full control of the person. Under the influence of liquor (alcohol), humanity would be led to commit crimes of all kinds. Through perverted appetite the world would be made corrupt.

The blessings that God has provided mankind Satan has turned into a deadly curse. Satan has filled humanity with a craving for liquor (alcohol) and tobacco, and this unnatural appetite has destroyed its millions. Satan's strongest hold on mankind is through the appetite, and this he seeks to stimulate in every possible way.

By this means Satan has overcome his millions. Through the gratification of the taste, the nervous system becomes excited and the brain power enfeebled, making it impossible to think calmly or rationally. The mind is unbalanced. Its higher, nobler faculties are perverted to serve animal lust, and the sacred, eternal interests are not regarded.

Satan knows that he cannot overcome any human being unless he can control the will. Here Satan succeeds by deceiving humanity so that they cooperate with him in transgressing the laws of nature in eating and drinking. In so doing, mankind transgresses the law of God for these "fleshly lusts...war against the soul." 1 Peter 2:11.

Satan is taking the world captive through the use of liquor (alcohol), tobacco, tea, and coffee. For by the use of tea and coffee an appetite is formed for tobacco, and the use of tobacco encourages the appetite for alcohol. Thus, the God-given mind, which should be kept clear, is perverted by the use of these items. The brain is no longer able to distinguish correctly. Satan, the enemy, has

control. Humanity have sold their reason for that which makes them mad. They have no sense of what is right.

Now intemperance and profanity and licentiousness are sisters. These sins are commonplace among humanity. So, God says, "Of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage." 2 Peter 2:19. "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" Romans 6:16.

If we yield ourselves to Satan to obey sin, we shall reap eternal death, but if we yield ourselves to God to obey righteousness we shall reap eternal life. The choice is ours to make.

Presumption and the Love of the World

Having gained a foothold through indulgence of the appetite, Satan then tempts mankind to commit "presumptuous sins" (Psalm 19:13) and to "love...the world... [and] the things that are in the world." 1 John 2:15. One commits a presumptuous sin when one takes liberties with God by doing acts without God giving one any authority or permission to do so.

But God says, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." 1 John 2:15-17.

"The lust of the flesh" (1 John 2:16) refers to the twin sins of indulgence of appetite and licentiousness, where the latter is the lack of moral restraint, particularly in sexual conduct. "The lust of the eyes" (1 John 2:16) refers to "covetousness, which is idolatry" (Colossians 3:5) and self-love, "envy" (James 4:5), and "the love of money." 1 Timothy 6:10.

"The pride of life" (1 John 2:16) refers to the pride of display, power, and fame. These are "the deceitful lusts" (Ephesians 4:22) to which Satan first appeals in his attempt to overcome mankind.

Other Temptations

Satan tempts humanity in many, varied ways such as causing them to have "inordinate affection" (Colossians 3:5) which is evil passion. Also, by persuading them to "call evil good, and good evil" (Isaiah 5:20), and to be they that "taketh reward" (Deuteronomy 10:17), take bribes, to pervert justice. All these temptations grow out of the three leading temptations.

Compulsion

God never forces the will or the conscience; but Satan's constant resort—to gain control of those whom he cannot otherwise seduce to sin—is compulsion by cruelty. Through fear or force he endeavours to rule the conscience and to secure homage to himself. To accomplish this, he works through both religious and secular authorities, moving them to the enforcement of human laws in defiance of the law of God.[3]

Just before the return of Christ to the earth, Satan will "cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed." Revelation 13:15. "And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark...of the beast." Revelation 13:17. To "worship the image of the beast" (Revelation 13:15) or to have "the mark...of the beast." (Revelation 13:17) is, in effect, to worship Satan. So, through fear of death or want of food and other necessary

3. Ellen G. White, (https://egwwritings.org/), The Great Controversy, page 591, paragraph 2.

things, Satan will seek to force the will and conscience of those who do not give him homage.

I will not in this book attempt to define what is "the image of the beast" (Revelation 13:15) and "the mark...of the beast." Revelation 13:17. This will be done in a subsequent book in this series of books which will be released in the future. For now, it is sufficient to understand that compulsion by cruelty is Satan's last resort in order to gain the worship of those he cannot otherwise seduce to sin.

Therefore, God says, "The adversary and enemy is this wicked" (Esther 7 :6), Satan. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil [Satan], as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." 1 Peter 5:8. Nevertheless, there will come a time when "shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume." 2 Thessalonians 2:8. Then Satan will stand before the universe revealed as he really is, "a deceiver" (Genesis 27:12) and "a murderer from the beginning." John 8:44.

Chapter Six

Christ's Warfare on Earth: A Promise Kept

All humanity, "all we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." Isaiah 53:6. Thus, all mankind finds no joy in God's holiness and all have turned their backs on God and sought their own pleasure away from God.

God's Love for Humanity

Nature and the revelation of God given in the Bible, alike testify of God's love. Look at the beauty of nature. Think of its marvellous adaptation to the needs and happiness of mankind and all living creatures. "Consider the wondrous works of God." Job 37:14.

Consider the sunshine and the rain, the variation in the surface of the earth in its hills, mountains, seas and plains, the sky above with its brilliant blue, the covering of the bare brown earth with a living carpet of green, the variety of plants and living creatures. All speak to us of God, "the Creator" (Isaiah 40:28) of all that there is, and His love for all His creatures.

It is God who supplies the daily needs of all. As one of the authors of the Bible said so beautifully—

"The eyes of all wait upon thee;
And thou givest them their meat [food] in due season.
Thou openest thine hand,
And satisfiest the desire of every living thing."
Psalm 145:15, 16.

God's Love Letter to Humanity

God says, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love" (Jeremiah 31:3) and "as I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" Ezekiel 33:11.

In pouring out His heart of love for humanity, God devised the "gospel" (Matthew 4:23) which is a plan to save mankind, because God was not content to see the human race become extinct with the death of both Adam and Eve. Thus, the good news of the "everlasting gospel" (Revelation 14:6) exists because God is love.

God is love, and God has written a love letter to humanity, for these are the people whom God loves. This love letter is known as the Bible and it is given to humanity because God cares for them.

In the Bible God makes Himself known to humanity with the hope that they will be drawn to Him and will, therefore, enter into a close, intimate, loving relationship with Him. The Bible then is the means to an end and not the end in itself, the end being that humanity would love God with their whole heart.

Such is the love letter, the Bible, which God has written to humanity. God has much to say to us and He hopes that we will listen and be instructed. Ultimately, God designs that the Bible should lead us to love Him with the whole heart just as His love for us is unsurpassed.

The love of God for mankind is immeasurable, and He will not be turned away from His purpose to save humanity. Praise God that the love in His heart for us is steadfast!

God's Love in the Face of Rejection

In the face of His rejection by humanity, God says, "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." Song of Solomon 8:7. "God hath said, I will dwell in them [mankind], and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." 2 Corinthians 6:16.

The relationship between God and humanity was broken when Adam and Eve sinned and transferred their love, affections, and allegiance from God to Satan, God's rival. It is the longing desire of God's heart to mend the broken relationship with humanity.

Humanity's Need of Christ

God, as the "Maker" (Job 4:17) of human beings and, therefore, the One with all knowledge about His creation, knew that mankind could not recover themselves and overcome sin in their own strength, by their own best efforts.

Looking forward to the future and seeing every human being who would ever live, God says, "I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land" (Ezekiel 22:30), that is, "stand in the gap" (Ezekiel 22:30) for the world, "that I should not destroy it: but I found none." Ezekiel 22:30. A solution to this problem, that only the wisdom of the divine mind could devise, was found.

God "saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him." Isaiah 59:16. So, God devised the "gospel" (Matthew 4:23) which is a plan whereby sinful human

beings could once again be found "faultless" (Jude 1:24) and "holy and without blame before him in love" (Ephesians 1:4), just like the sinless character of Adam and Eve when they were created. Therefore, God sent His Son, Christ, to the earth to live among mankind.

To reiterate, the question that arises is, "How can the everlasting covenant cause humanity to overcome all sin and, hence, keep God's law of love?" Specifically, how could Christ, coming to the earth in human flesh, that is, becoming incarnate, help humanity to be saved from "everlasting destruction" (2 Thessalonians 1:9), from eternal death? We will answer these questions in this chapter.

The Promise Kept

God says, "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips." Psalm 89:34. God had made a promise to Adam and Eve after they had sinned that God would make a way for all humanity to be saved from eternal death. God keeps His promises and this promise to Adam and Eve regarding the everlasting covenant is no exception.

The Incarnation of Christ

Over 2,000 years ago, Christ, a member of the Godhead, took on Himself human flesh. He became a Representative of the human race and a "Saviour" (2 Timothy 2:10), the One who saves, when He was born as a baby boy named "Jesus." Matthew 1:21. Christ in human flesh was known as Christ incarnate.

Christ fulfilled the prophecy which foretold that Christ Himself, would become incarnate and would be "the LORD...a man of war: the LORD is his name." Exodus 15:3. Christ as a "a man of war" (Exodus 15:3), as a Warrior, would enter into warfare between

Himself and Satan. "For this purpose," Christ, "the Son of God..." (1 John 3:8), would be, "manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." 1 John 3:8.

The Nature of Christ

Christ, when He was born into the world as the baby boy named "Jesus" (Matthew 1:21) was "God with us." Matthew 1:23. At the same time, Christ was the "one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." 1 Timothy 2:5. "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ" (Ephesians 5:32) for God said, "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Colossians 2:9.

Jesus Christ was born with the divine nature, a sinless nature, which was mysteriously blended with the sinful nature of humanity. He was born into the world with two natures, blended in one Person in a way that we know not how. He was 100% God and 100% man at one and the same time.

On this subject of the nature of the incarnate Jesus Christ, we would do well to heed God's words, "Draw not nigh hither" (Exodus 3:5), do not come near: "put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." Exodus 3:5. "The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of...[God's] law [of love]." Deuteronomy 29:29.

What we do know, however, is that Christ was born sinless unlike the rest of humanity. If this was not so, Christ Himself would have sinned from His birth because of a sinful nature. He would thus be disqualified from being the Saviour of mankind from the moment of His birth.

In other words, Christ was born with two natures blended into one Person—the divine nature "without iniquity, just and right" (Deuteronomy 32:4) which is incapable of sin, blended with the sinful, human nature "that cannot cease from sin." 2 Peter 2:14.

"But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Galatians 4:4, 5. Christ in His human nature was "made under the law" (Galatians 4:4), "in the likeness of sinful flesh [sinful human nature]" (Romans 8:3), just like the rest of the human race who are "them that were under the law." Galatians 4:5.

To be "made under the law" (Galatians 4:4) meant that, in His human nature, Christ was faced with the utter impossibility of being able to "cease from sin." 2 Peter 2:14.

When the time came for Christ to become incarnate, Christ said according to the prophecy that God gave beforehand, "Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me)" (Hebrews 10:7), written of me in the Bible which is the word of God, "to do thy will, O God." Hebrew 10:7. Christ also said, "A body hast thou prepared me" (Hebrews 10:5) indicating that mankind's sins spring from the appetite and passions of the lower nature of the body and from a sinful mind.

"For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7) in character and "the thought of foolishness is sin." Proverbs 24:9. The mind controls the whole man and, from the mind flows thoughts and feelings which lead to words and actions, and actions repeated lead to habits, and habits form the character which is either holy or unholy.

We must be careful to understand that Jesus Christ did not have an evil, depraved heart for He was divine as well as human and, hence, Jesus Christ was perfect and holy and no evil thoughts arose in Christ's pure mind to defile Him.

The Incarnate Christ's Conflict With Sin and Satan

Satan, "the tempter" (Matthew 4:3) came to Christ when Christ was on earth, "when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, [and] he was afterward an hungred [famished, that is, exhausted by

want of food]." Matthew 4:2. Satan, thinking to overcome Christ with sin in Christ's weakened state, tempted Christ with humanity's three great leading temptations—appetite, presumption, and the love of the world.

But Christ achieved a victory over Satan on behalf of the human race, for Christ was mankind's Representative before God. How did Christ succeed in this contest with Satan? The answer to this question is of supreme importance to humanity because Christ, in His life on earth, is the perfect Example for the human race in their own warfare against sin and Satan.

Two Natures in Conflict

The blending of the two natures in Christ resulted in a constant conflict in Him between the sinless, divine nature and the sinful, human nature. Now God says, "Let not sin therefore reign in your...body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield...[yourself] unto God...and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." Romans 6:12, 13.

"Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" Romans 6:16. The battle with sin that Jesus Christ faced was a battle for the mind—whether His mind would be subject to the will of God or to the will of Satan.

Christ was called by God to "choose...whom ye will serve" (Joshua 24:15), whether God or Satan. It was left up to Christ to choose which of His two natures would have supremacy.

Thus, although Christ was born sinless, He faced the same problem of temptations to sin and the impossibility of not falling into sin as all mankind does. For the only difference between Himself and humanity was that His divine nature caused His mind to be pure and free from "evil thoughts" (Mark 7:21.

"For even Christ pleased not himself" because He could say "the reproaches" (Romans 15:3), the criticism, defamation, shame, and disgrace, "of them that reproached thee [God]" (Romans 15:3), that criticised, defamed, shamed, and disgraced you, "fell on me." Romans 15:3. So Christ chose to do the will of God at all times regardless of the circumstances in which He found Himself.

Here then is the first indication of the solution of the sin problem of mankind in that they need a new nature in order to overcome sin. This new nature is humanity combined with divinity just like that which was found in the incarnate Christ. This then is the first part to the answer to the questions posed earlier.

Also, here we see the role of the will in deciding the course Christ's life would take. This then is the second part of the solution to mankind's sin problem, in that they too must chose to do God's will at all times. They must choose to obey God's law of love at all times. That is, in essence, they must submit their will to God's will.

The Necessity of Faith

Christ, "being not weak in faith...He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God...being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform." Romans 4:19-21. Christ had faith in God that He was able to keep Him from sin. By faith in God and by the proper exercise of His will, Christ submitted and committed Himself to God. It was His joy to obey God.

The Necessity of the Holy Spirit's Help

Christ, while He was in human flesh, could say in truth, "I am as a man that hath no strength." Psalm 88:4. He was "without [moral] strength" (Romans 5:6) to resist temptation. Hence, Christ prayed, asking God for the help of the Holy Spirit, and, hence, He

was found "striving according to his working" (Colossians 1:29), the Holy Spirit's working, "which worketh in...[Him] mightily." Colossians 1:29. That is to say, Christ received moral strength from the Holy Spirit.

As a result of Christ's faith, submission, prayers, and striving, Christ was given a guarantee by God that "according to the power that worketh in...[Him]" (Ephesians 3:20), by the power of the Holy Spirit, "sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." Romans 6:14. What is grace? It is God's unmerited favour whereby humanity receives the blessings of God so that they can overcome all their sins.

This then is the third part of the solution to the sin problem of humanity in that they too, having already submitted themselves to God's will, must have faith in God, must pray, and must be found "striving according to his working" (Colossians 1:29, the Holy Spirit's working, "which worketh in...[them] mightily." Colossians 1:29. That is, they must receive moral strength from the Holy Spirit.

Thus, something more than the exercise of the will was necessary for Christ to be able to overcome sin. God gave an indication of this when it was said of Christ, "The Word" (John 1:14), who was Christ, "was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten [the sole child] of the Father,) full of grace and truth." John 1:14.

This meant that Christ needed the all-powerful help of the Holy Spirit in order to overcome sin. The Holy Spirit is "the Spirit of truth" (John 14:17) and "the Spirit of grace and of supplications." Zechariah 12:10. Supplications mean humbly and earnestly asking God for help by praying to God. It is through "the Spirit of grace" (Zechariah 12:10) that overcoming power is bestowed upon mankind to keep them from sinning.

Moral strength then to follow the way of truth was available to Christ by means of the all-sufficient grace provided by the Holy Spirit, if Christ would choose to do God's will. Now, in the case of all mankind who are sinners, grace is unmerited. How much more

then should Christ who was born sinless receive God's grace, receive God's favour?

God's assurance to Christ of His grace was given when God said, "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:16), in other words, set your will to be obedient to God's law of love and go in that direction, "and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh [of the sinful nature]. For the flesh [the sinful nature] lusteth [wars] against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh [sinful nature]: and these are contrary the one to the other so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the" (Galatians 5:16-18) condemnation of the "law." Galatians 5:18.

Christ was He "who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him [God] that was able to save him from death...was heard in that he feared." Hebrews 5:7. That is, Christ had reverence for God.

The only way open before Christ in His quest to overcome sin was through the help of the Holy Spirit for He could pray "Help, LORD" (Psalm 12:1) and He would be heard by God and indeed receive God's help. For God says, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Psalm 66:18.

God said, if Christ chose to "walk in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:16) then God would say of Christ in truth, "Ye are of God...and have overcome them [Satan and the other demons]: because greater is he [God] that is in you, than he [Satan] that is in the world." 1 John 4:4. For the Holy Spirit's power working in Christ was greater than the power of Satan and all the other demons who would tempt Christ to sin.

The promised aid of the Holy Spirit made Christ such that "He shall not fail nor be discouraged" (Isaiah 42:4) "for with God nothing shall be impossible." Luke 1:37. "Though he [Christ] were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." Hebrews 5:8, 9.

Christ Succeeds Where Adam Failed

Jesus Christ "was in all points tempted like as we [human beings] are, yet without sin." Hebrews 4:15. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." Romans 8:3. In His temptations to sin, Christ met all the temptations any human being will ever meet in their life experience.

Christ in His life on earth passed over the same ground where Adam and Eve fell and Christ overcame on behalf of all humanity. The test which He endured was greater than any human being will ever be called upon to endure. His "strength" (Exodus 15:2) was found in His being in full, entire dependence upon God every step of the way that He took in His life on earth.

Jesus Christ "condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3), condemned sin in humanity, thus making a "new man." Ephesians 2:15. Jesus Christ, during His entire life on earth, entered into singlehanded combat against the sinfulness of fallen human nature and against the temptations of Satan, who tried to cause Christ to sin and by this means overthrow the plan of redemption.

There was no sin in Jesus Christ being tempted, "in all points tempted like as we [human beings] are." Hebrews 4:15. It is yielding to temptation that is sin. By faith in God's power to give Him moral strength and by His submission to God, Christ was victorious in this combat with sin and Satan. God's record is that Christ was "without sin." Hebrews 4:15. The victorious Christ says to humanity, "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done." John 13:15.

Christ, when He was on earth, said, "I have kept my Father's commandments" (John 15:10) indicating that He had kept God's law of love, in that, He was One "who did no sin." 1 Peter 2:22. In all respects then, Jesus Christ fulfilled God's prophecy. He

maintained a holy character in His life as a man on earth and He did not break God's law of love.

In other words, Christ fulfilled the prophecy about Him as Christ Himself was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." Hebrews 7:26. He was "the Holy One" (2 Kings 19:22) separate from all sinners. Christ fulfilled this prophecy in that He did not break God's law of love during His life on earth—he was not tainted with sin.

Had Christ transgressed God's law of love in even one particular, He would have been a sinner, His offering as a sacrifice for sin would have been a failure, but not upon a single point did Satan overcome Him with his temptations to sin.

Christ Dies for the Sins of Humanity

Before Jesus Christ was born, God said, "The LORD is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honourable." Isaiah 42:21. This was God's prophecy of Jesus Christ that He would obey the requirements of God's law which states: "Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deuteronomy 6:5) and "thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" Leviticus 19:18.

When Christ came to the earth in human flesh as the man Jesus, He was such that "we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." Hebrews 2:9. So, Christ as humanity's Sin Bearer, exhausted the penalty of death when he did, in fact, "taste death for every man." Hebrews 2:9.

It was Christ, as "the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5), who died almost 2,000 years ago for the sins of all mankind thus exhausting the penalty of death for sin. In so doing, "the everlasting covenant" (Hebrews 13:20) between Christ and God was ratified (confirmed)

by the blood of Christ thereby making the plan of redemption secure for all eternity future.

From the time of Adam and Eve, grace had been extended by God to all mankind, but it was only by Christ's death that the salvation of humanity was made sure. So, Christ's death made secure the forgiveness of sins for all humanity and the bestowal of moral strength upon humanity. This forgiveness of sins is the fourth part of the solution to the sin problem of mankind as the third part already consisted of receiving moral strength from the Holy Spirit.

Christ, when He was on earth, said, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." John 10:17, 18.

Now, Deity cannot die for Christ is fully God, but Christ Jesus in human flesh could die the death of a man. Human nature would be inadequate to bear the weight of God's punishment for sins, but Christ Jesus, with humanity and divinity combined, was able to bear the load of the punishment for the sins of all mankind.

And "Christ died for our sins." 1 Corinthians 15:3. Christ's life on earth ended when He was murdered. "They crucified him." Matthew 27:35. His death was by crucifixion where His outstretched arms and his feet were nailed to a cross, which was constructed of two pieces of wood assembled in the shape of a "t." That is, the cross had a horizontal piece of wood to which His hands were nailed and a vertical piece of wood to which His feet were nailed.

Christ "Jesus...[is He] who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Hebrews 12:2. The cross was a most cruel, shameful way to die.

The prophecy of Christ as a warrior against Satan was fulfilled in that Satan did indeed "bruise...[the] heel" (Genesis 3:15) of

Christ by causing the death of Christ. By this "heinous crime" (Job 31:11) Satan himself sealed his own doom and death, for he was uprooted from any sympathy he might have had among the intelligences in the heavenly realms. That is, by this crime, Satan was unmasked before them as a "murderer" (John 8:44) and so Christ did indeed "bruise...[the] head [of Satan]." Genesis 3:15.

Having fulfilled the prophecy about Himself, Jesus Christ stood before God as a perfect Representative of the human race. As mankind's Representative, Christ is the Substitute for the penalty of sin for the whole human race, and the Surety, the Guarantee, that the human race will not become extinct on account of their sins. Now "this is the promise that he [God] hath promised us, even eternal life" (1 John 2:25) and this promise, has been made sure by Christ.

Christ, the Perfect Example for Humanity

Christ's perfect, holy character of love was manifested when He lived in the midst of sin on earth approximately 2,000 years ago. For Christ, throughout His life on earth, kept God's law of love and never deviated from it in any particular. So then, Christ, on one hand, is a perfect representation of God and, on the other hand, He is perfect specimen of sinless humanity.

Christ has combined divinity and humanity. Through "the gospel of Christ" (Romans 1:16), the law maintains its high and holy position as the standard humanity must meet in order to have eternal life, in that the law was not changed nor the standard lowered to meet mankind in his sinfulness. For the God's law of love is unchangeable and eternal. Instead, God has made a provision for sinful humanity to come up to the high standard of God's law of love.

Summary of the Solution to Sin as Effected by Christ

So far, we have seen that the answer to our earlier questions has four parts. The first part of the solution for the sin problem of mankind depended on their humanity being combined with divinity just like Christ. The second part of the solution for all humanity is to exercise their will in choosing to obey God's law of love as Christ Himself did. In other words, choosing to submit their will to God's will.

The third part of the solution to the sin problem of humanity is that they like Christ, having already submitted themselves to God's will, must have faith in God, must pray, and must be found "striving according to his working" (Colossians 1:29), that is, the Holy Spirit's working, "which worketh in...[them] mightily." Colossians 1:29. For, Christ, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, received moral strength to overcome all temptations to sin. The fourth part of the solution for mankind is to be forgiven of their sins.

We have found the answers then to all the questions posed earlier about how the incarnate Christ could help humanity escape the condemnation of the law. For the bestowal of the divine nature on those who meet the necessary conditions of submitting their will to God's will and exercising faith in God through prayer, allows them to receive moral strength from God which enables them to cease from sinning in the present and in the future. Further, the forgiveness of sins of mankind makes it possible for those who meet God's conditions to be absolved from the penalty of eternal death for past sins.

In later chapters of this book, we will examine the details of how the four components of the solution to the sin problem of mankind are made effective in the life of an individual.

Christ's Victory Over Satan

"God the Father" (John 6:27), "when he bringeth in the firstbegotten [firstborn] into the world, he saith, and let all the angels of God worship him." Hebrews 1:6. "But unto the Son" (Hebrews 1:8), Christ, "he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre [a royal symbol of authority] of righteousness is the sceptre [is the royal symbol of authority] of thy kingdom." Hebrews 1:8.

Speaking of Christ, God says, "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him." Romans 6:9. "For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God" (Romans 6:10) that is, Christ lives according to God's will. "This man [Christ], after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God." Hebrews 10:12.

"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit" (1 Timothy 3:16), that is to say, preserved as One who is holy by the Holy Spirit, "seen of angels, preached unto the...[the world], believed on in the world, received up into glory." 1 Timothy 3:16.

Christ did "war a good warfare." 1 Timothy 1:18. He did "fight the good fight of faith." 1 Timothy 6:12. "And having spoiled [damaged irreparably] principalities and powers" (Colossians 2:15), of Satan and his evil angels, "he made a shew [an exhibition] of them openly" (Colossians 2:15), before the onlooking universe, "triumphing over them in it." Colossians 2:15. Thus, Christ "is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him." 1 Peter 3:22.

When Christ ascended to heaven, the holy angels received him joyously and triumphantly. "God is gone up with a shout" (Psalm 47:5), Christ is ascended to heaven with a shout, "the LORD with the sound of a trumpet." Psalm 47:5. The angels said among themselves, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye

everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle." Psalm 24:7, 8.

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory." Psalm 24:9, 10.

For "Christ Jesus...being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men [of human beings]: And being found in fashion as a man [as a human being], he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Philippians 2:5-8.

"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...in heaven, and...in earth. And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Philippians 2:9-11.

So, in the end of the great controversy, even Satan and his evil angels will "confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Philippians 2:11. "O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph. For the LORD most high is terrible [to be reverenced and feared]; he is a great King over all the earth." Psalm 47:1, 2.

Chapter Seven

Consequences of Christ's Victory

Christ became the "daysman betwixt us" (Job 9:33), between God and man, "that might lay his hand upon us both" (Job 9:33) the moment when Adam and Eve transgressed God's law of love. As soon as there was a need, Christ, as the Representative of the human race, instantaneously became a Mediator, an Intercessor, between God and man.

"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2:5, 6) mankind, "to be testified in due time." 1 Timothy 2:5, 6. It is Christ who "is able also to save them" (Hebrews 7:25), to save all persons "to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Hebrews 7:25.

Christ's Mediatorial Work as Victor

Christ's work in the plan of redemption did not end with His death, resurrection and ascension to heaven. "Neither by the

blood of goats and calves, but by his [Christ's] own blood he [Christ] entered in once into the holy place [of the Temple (Sanctuary) in heaven], having obtained eternal redemption for us [the human race]." Hebrews 9:12. Thus, on His ascension to heaven, Christ entered upon a new phase of His work for the salvation of mankind, that of a mediatorial work of intercession as the victor over Satan.

As a conqueror over sin and Satan, Christ took on the role of "High Priest" (Hebrews 3:1), in heaven. Prior to Christ's death, the high priest on earth approached God with the blood of an animal on behalf of the people, where the blood symbolised the promised atonement by Christ for the people's sins.

The high priest on earth then was a symbol of Christ, who in His mediatorial work taken up on His ascension to heaven, was both the Offeror and the Offering. Christ was both the One who offered sacrifice before God and the Sacrifice.

As One "equal with God" (Philippians 2:6), Christ who became the sacrifice for "the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2) took up the work of an High Priest in offering His own blood before God in humanity's behalf. Thus, God said, "For such an high priest became us" (Hebrews 7:26), was fitting for us [the human race], "who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." Hebrews 7:26.

Christ became an Intercessor for every person who meets the necessary conditions. He pleads His blood before the Father for "forgiveness of [the] sins" (Ephesians 1:7) of such persons, because Christ Himself had borne the guilt of these souls and paid the penalty that was due. In His intercession, Christ claims for the sinner "all [the] spiritual blessings" (Ephesians 1:3) that the everlasting covenant embraced. Christ's intercession is acceptable to the Father because of the righteous life which Christ lived on earth as the Representative of the human race, so that He can stand "faultless" (Jude 1:24) before God.

All of Christ's prayers succeed with the Father so that His requests are granted by the Father. "For all the promises of God in him [Christ] are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (2 Corinthians 1:20), in that, all the blessings of the gospel are bestowed on mankind because of Christ.

In Christ, "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." 1 John 2:1. Christ is He "in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." Colossians 1:14. In Christ, the sinner has a Friend in heaven for no one can be forgiven of their sins without the intercession of Christ on their behalf.

For even if all humanity became "holy and without blame before him [God] in love" (Ephesians 1:4) and "faultless" (Jude 1:24) they would still be under the condemnation of God's law of love for their past sins. Praise God for Christ's work on behalf of mankind for God will forgive their sins!

God says, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." Proverbs 28:13. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9.

In forgiving the sins of an individual, God accepts the sacrifice of Christ, who died "for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2), on that individual's behalf if they meet the necessary conditions. That is, all humanity may be forgiven for their sins by God if they meet God's requirements.

"The wicked" (Psalm 37:32), comprising Satan and his evil angels, and the wicked among mankind, "watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay [kill] him." Psalm 37:32. Satan hates humanity because God has so great love for the sinful race, and because God designs to take them to heaven from which Satan and his evil angels have been banished.

Now "we," all humanity, "have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God...For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities"

(Hebrews 4:14, 15), our moral frailty; "but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace [of unmerited favour], that we may obtain mercy, and find grace" (Hebrews 4:15, 16), unmerited favour, "to help in time of need." Hebrews 4:16.

The Role of the Holy Spirit

"The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities" (Romans 8:26), our moral frailty, "for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Romans 8:26.

Closely connected with the blessings granted the sinner by Christ's intercession with the Father, is the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit intercedes for the sinner with Christ and His prayers on behalf of the sinner always succeeds. Also, the Holy Spirit gives to the sinner purity of mind and moral power from Christ so that the sinner might, henceforth, do good, and only that which is good and holy.

The Role of the Holy Angels

God says of His holy angels, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" Hebrews 1:14. So, the holy angels in heaven have also been given a part to play in the plan of redemption.

Speaking of Himself, God says, "For he [God] shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." Psalm 91:11. Every human being has been granted a guardian angel by God to protect them from the unsleeping malice of Satan. These holy angels bring the light of truth and blessing to the sinner from God.

God's Plan for the Transformation of Mankind

We will now take a further look at God's plan of warfare against Satan and his ways. This plan is intended to cause humanity to become sinless, which is to transform humanity into the likeness of Christ's character of love. For now, here is the main concept to grasp: "To whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness." Romans 6:16.

Either we obey God's law of love or we do not obey by committing sin. To obey is to have eternal life and to disobey is to be condemned to eternal death.

The first thing to understand about humanity becoming sinless is that they must meet the required conditions. Those people who do so will, individually, receive through the working of the Holy Spirit "the gift of righteousness" (Romans 5:17) from God, which is Christ's holy character of love, so that they are able to obey God's law of love. This character of love given to individuals is the same character that was maintained by Christ during His life on earth.

This gift causes you to be such that "ye put off...the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts" (Ephesians 4:22), "and that ye put on the new man, which after God" (Ephesians 4:24), according to God's character, "is created in righteousness and true holiness." Ephesians 4:24. Think of it as receiving the gift of a new mind from God, which is "the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16), or we may say, it is the receiving a change of heart from selfishness to love.

The old self must die and we must begin a new life as a "renewed" (Ephesians 2:3) person. In this sense then, Christ is "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jeremiah 23:6) for as we can see it is only through Christ that we can become righteous.

This provision of God, "the gift of righteousness" (Romans 5:17), takes care of present and future sins because we will cease from sinning. But what about our past sins for which we are already condemned to die an eternal death? The answer to this question is that our sins may be forgiven and we may, therefore, escape the penalty of death for our sins.

But our sins are not automatically "forgiven" (Leviticus 4:20), for there are reasonable conditions to be met before God will forgive our sins. Having met God's conditions, our sins are forgiven since Christ stands before God as our Substitute, having paid the penalty of sin on our behalf by His death. "There is therefore now no condemnation" (Romans 8:1) of such persons.

By means of both provisions of God, "the gift of righteousness" (Romans 5:17) and "the forgiveness of sins" (Ephesians 1:7), every person is in right standing before God in that they may cease from sinning. That is, they may become sinless, and may stand "faultless" (Jude 1:24), "holy and without blame before him [God] in love." Ephesians 1:4.

Every person may once more "have right to the tree of life." Revelation 22:14. All mankind may be "transformed" (Romans 12:2) from being sinners to being people who are holy and who keep God's law of love. "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Romans 5:10.

Our salvation, our being saved, would not be possible without the work of Christ on behalf of all mankind, for Christ our is only hope and "Deliverer" (2 Samuel 22:2) from sin. It is only by Christ's merits, his holy character of love that He maintained while He was on earth, and which is gifted to us by God as individuals that we might be saved from eternal death.

The question that arises is, "Is every human being saved?" Unfortunately, no. For God's two provisions to be applied to our lives it requires a change of heart of each person who must "yield" (Romans 6:16) themselves to God, so that He can work in their

lives. Sadly, not everyone is willing to be "transformed" (Romans 12:2) by God. They choose to remain in their sins and so they die in their sins and, hence, lose the gift of eternal life.

The Church Established by Christ

Ever since the fall of Adam and Eve into sin, God has had a church on earth. You may ask, "What is a church?" A church is made up of people who believe in God and are those of whom God says, "Ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law." Isaiah 51:7. "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." 1 Peter 2:9.

The first church on earth was made up of an unbroken line of godly people, who like Adam and Eve, confessed and turned away from their sins and, therefore, became partakers of God's grace, His unmerited favour. They received a new nature which was humanity combined with divinity, the aid of the Holy Spirit in the conflict with sin and Satan, and the forgiveness of their sins, and became those who could stand "faultless" (Jude 1:24), sinless, before God.

Later, in the course of time after Adam and Eve had died, the nation of Israel was called to be God's visible church on earth. On the other hand, God's invisible church is made up of all the people on earth, wherever in the world they may be, who "receive not the grace of God in vain." 2 Corinthians 6:1. God has both a visible and an invisible church.

Why did God choose Israel? They were chosen by God because they were the descendants of a man named Abraham and his son, Isaac, and descendants of Isaac's son, Jacob, godly men who found favour with God. These three men, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, received the promise from God that Christ would be born on

earth as one of their descendants. This was a high privilege and honour that was bestowed upon Israel by God.

Israel's commission from God was to reveal God's character of love through their lives which were to be in accordance with God's law of love. They were to make God attractive to the world and gather into their nation all who desired to leave the wicked world and become true followers of God's law of love. In this way, Israel was to be God's representatives to the rest of the world.

But the people of Israel forgot God and failed to fulfil their holy mission to the world. The blessings and advantages they received from God brought no blessings to the world. They shut themselves away from the world in order to avoid temptation to sin by building up a wall of separation between themselves and all other nations. Thus, they robbed God of the service of love which He required of them and robbed the rest of humanity of religious guidance and a holy example by their godly lives.

These errors and sins of Israel, Christ set out to correct when he was born as a Jew, a member of the Jewish nation, Israel. But Israel would have none of Christ for they would not accept Christ as their Messiah, the One prophesied to "save his people from their sins." Matthew 1:21. Because of their rejection, God rejected the nation of Israel as His visible church on earth. Jews, as individuals, can still be saved but before this they must accept Christ as the promised Messiah.

Christ, while He was on earth chose twelve men as His closest disciples, "whom also he named apostles." Luke 6:13. For three and a half years these disciples were under the personal instruction of the greatest Teacher the world has ever known. It was at the ordination of the Twelve that the first step was taken in the organisation of the visible Christian church which Christ left on earth when He ascended to heaven.

The Christian church was to carry out Christ's work for the saving of mankind, that is, for the salvation of mankind. Christ Himself, during His earthly ministry, began to break the partition

wall between the Jews and the non-Jews, who are called Gentiles. Christ set the disciples an example which they were to follow in declaring to all the world what they had seen and heard of Christ's holy character of love.

Before ascending to heaven, Christ gave to His disciples their commission, a message of mercy to be given to both Jews and Gentiles. All who believed the testimony of the disciples were to be gathered into one Christian church on earth and were themselves, in turn, to give God's message to the world.

Christ's gospel commission to His disciples was, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Matthew 28:18-20.

Baptism is a public ceremony where the individual is submerged under water and brought up again out of the water, signifying death to the old self and the birth of a new man. It is meant to testify that the individual has left the ranks of Satan's army to join God's army by receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit. However, sadly not everyone who has been baptized by water has also been baptized by the Holy Spirit.

Unlike Israel, the members of this new, visible church established by Christ Himself, were not to wait for the people to come to them, but instead they were to go to the people with God's invitation of mercy.

The gospel commission is still in force today in the twenty-first century as the great missionary work of both the visible and invisible Christian church. Every word and act of the members of the church is to direct the people's attention to Jesus Christ for "neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Acts 4:12.

The visible Christian church is God's instrument for the salvation of mankind. Organised for service, the visible church's mission is to carry the gospel to the world. For God is He "who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4) about God and the great controversy.

Before Christ's second coming to the earth, both the visible and invisible Christian churches will combine to form one visible Christian church on earth, after God purges the visible Christian church of all sinners. It is through this newly-formed, morally pure, visible Christian church that it will eventually be demonstrated, even "unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places" (Ephesians 3:10), the final and full display of God's love. Every question in the great controversy between Christ and Satan would then have been answered in the sight of heavenly beings and all humanity.

The Judgment

"God shall judge the righteous and the wicked." Ecclesiastes 3:17. God says, "As righteousness tendeth to [eternal] life: so he that pursueth evil pursueth it to his own [eternal] death." Proverbs 11:19.

As a result of the entrance of sin in the universe, God will judge the angels and humanity, the two groups of created intelligent beings among whom sin arose. It has become necessary for God not only to judge but to execute the sentence of eternal death on the evil.

In this way, God will separate the good from the evil and will eliminate evil in the universe. The best interests of the universe will be served by God's judgment and the stability of God's government and the happiness of the universe placed on a secure, eternal footing.

"We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." 2 Corinthians 5:10. It is Christ who, having successfully carried out the plan of redemption by His life and death, has been appointed by God as Judge. There will come a time when Christ will judge all the angels and humanity.

Speaking of Himself, God says, "The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all." Psalm 103:19. The question you may be asking is, "Will God's judgment be fair?" In answer to this question, God says, "It is an abomination to kings [for God] to commit wickedness: for the throne is established by righteousness." Proverbs 16:12.

"A false balance [scale] is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight." Proverbs 11:1. "A divine sentence is in the lips of the king [God]: his mouth transgresseth not in judgment." Proverbs 16:10. "He [God] shall judge...in righteousness, he [God] shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness." Psalm 9:8.

"God shall judge the righteous and the wicked." Ecclesiastes 3:17. "Take away the wicked from before the king [God], and his [God's] throne shall be established in righteousness." Proverbs 25:5. "The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked." Nahum 1:3. "God...saveth the upright in heart." Psalm 7:10.

"God is greatly to be feared" (Psalm 89:7), to be held in great respect and awe, "in the assembly of the saints" (Psalm 89:7), the assembly of the righteous of both angels and mankind, "and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." Psalm 89:7.

The Judgment of the Angels

God says, "The word spoken by angels was stedfast [steadfast], and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward" (Hebrews 2:2) from God. "God spared not the

angels that sinned, but cast them down...and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." 2 Peter 2:4.

"And the angels which kept not their first estate [rule], but left their own habitation [place], he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." Jude 1:6. The angels who sinned and would not repent, God has judged as evil. He has cast them out of heaven until the "great day" (Jude 1:6) when the sentence of eternal death will be executed by God.

The Judgment of Humanity

Speaking of humanity, God says, "Gather my saints" (Psalm 50:5), those who have consecrated themselves to God and who delight to do God's will, "together unto me" (Psalm 50:5), thus separating them from the wicked. For the saints among mankind say, "I will hear what God the LORD will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly." Psalm 85:8.

At the end of Christ's judgment, mankind's probation, which was granted by God as humanity's second trial after Adam and Eve failed the first trial, shall be closed. Christ will then say, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still." Revelation 22:11-13.

"To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil." Romans 2:7-9. At the close of probation, the destinies of all who have ever lived on earth shall be fixed for all eternity future.

The Confirmation of God's Judgment

After Christ's judgment, the saints are granted the privilege by God to confirm His judgment of angels and humanity. Speaking of the saints whom he saw in a vision, a man named John wrote, "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God...and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (Revelation 20:4) in heaven.

Those whom God now calls saints can say in truth, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" 1 Corinthians 6:2. "Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" 1 Corinthians 6:3.

God says, "Let the saints be joyful...Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and" (Psalm 149:5, 6), figuratively, "a twoedged [two-edged] sword in their hand; to execute vengeance upon the heathen [those who do not believe in God], and punishments upon the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the LORD." Psalm 149:6-9.

God says, "If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked." Deuteronomy 25:1.

"Judgment was given to the saints of the most High." Daniel 7:22. The saints are commanded by God "to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him" (Jude 1:15) who is God. Thus, the saints will judge the angels and the world by the standard of God's law of love.

"For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the...wicked shall be cut off [shall be annihilated by God]." Psalm 37:28.

The Second Coming of Jesus Christ

At the time of Jesus Christ's ascension into heaven holy angels from heaven said to His disciples, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Acts 1:11. Thus, it was prophesied that Christ would come to the earth a second time, not as a baby at that time, but as "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." Revelation 19:16.

Why does Christ come to the earth a second time? "To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." Jude 1:15.

"For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Matthew 24:27. "And, behold, I [Christ] come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." Revelation 22:12.

"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his" (John 5:28), Christ's, "voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." John 5:28, 29.

To be resurrected is to come to life again from the dead. Those who come forth in the "resurrection of life" (John 5:29) will receive eternal life, while those who come forth in the "resurrection of damnation" (John 5:29) shall receive "everlasting destruction" (2 Thessalonians 1:9) and "they shall be as though they had not been." Obadiah 1:16. The wicked shall be annihilated by God and shall cease to exist.

"The resurrection of life" (John 5:29), "this is the first resurrection" (Revelation 20:5), when the "the dead in Christ" (1 Thessalonians 4:16), that is, the righteous dead, are resurrected by God. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power." Revelation 20:6. "The first resurrection" (Revelation 20:5) occurs at the second coming of Christ to the earth.

"But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." Revelation 20:5. At the end of "the thousand years" (Revelation 20:5) the wicked dead are brought to life again by God in "the resurrection of damnation." John 5:29. After sentence is passed upon them by God in the final phase of the judgment, the wicked experience "the second death" (Revelation 20:6) when they die a second time. The second death, however, is "a perpetual sleep" (Jeremiah 51:39) from which there is no hope of resurrection to life.

God's Reward for the Righteous

Christ says, "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." Revelation 22:12. God promises a reward to all humanity when Christ comes to the earth the second time. The righteous, those people who overcame sin in their lives and, hence, became sinless, will be rewarded with eternal life. On the other hand, the wicked, those people who failed to overcome sin and whose characters became fixed in evil, will be rewarded with eternal death.

Christ says, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Revelation 3:21. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." Revelation 2:7.

"He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." Revelation 2:11. "To him that overcometh will I give...a new name...which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." Revelation 2:17.

"He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment [garments]; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." Revelation 3:5. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." Revelation 21:7.

Soon "the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom." Daniel 7:22. "The saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever." Daniel 7:18. "And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him." Daniel 7:27. There shall no longer be sin and sinners in the universe.

"Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his [God's] holiness." Psalm 30:4. "O love the LORD, all ye his saints: for the LORD preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer." Psalm 31:23. "Ye that love the LORD, hate evil: he preserveth the souls of his saints; he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked." Psalm 97:10.

"Praise ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints." Psalm 149:1. "And they sing the song...saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints." Revelation 15:3.

The Great Controversy Addressed

Christ, by His life on earth and His death, addressed the issues of the great controversy and, at the same time, provided a solution to the sin problem of humanity.

A Look at God's Character in Light of the Gospel

We would do well to compare God's description of love in the Bible with God's character as revealed in the Bible, which is the word of God. In so doing, we will be looking at God's character in light of the gospel. (Note that "charity" (1 Corinthians 13:4) is the old English word for "love.") In the comparison which follows we will give the Bible's definitions of love (charity) followed by the related characteristic of God.

"Charity [love] suffereth long." 1 Corinthians 13:4. "And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering." Exodus 34:6. *Charity [love]...is kind." 1 Corinthians 13:4.* "I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness...for in these things I delight, saith the LORD." Jeremiah 9:24. "

Charity [love] envieth not." 1 Corinthians 13:4. The members of the Godhead "were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common." Acts 4:32. "All mine are thine, and thine are mine." John 17:10. There is no envy within God's heart.

"Charity [love] vaunteth not itself [is not boastful]." 1 Corinthians 13:4. Of the Godhead, it can truly be said "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." Philippians 2:3. The members of the Godhead do not boast of themselves.

"Charity [love]...is not puffed up [arrogant and full of pride]." 1 Corinthians 13:4. "I [God] am meek and lowly in heart." Matthew 11:29. *"Charity [love]...doth not behave itself unseemly [in a rude manner]." 1 Corinthians 13:4, 5.* "For I am the LORD your God...and...I am holy." Leviticus 11:44.

"Charity [love]...seeketh not her own." 1 Corinthians 13:4, 5. "Let no...[one] seek his own, but every...[one] another's wealth." 1 Corinthians 10:24. "Look not every...[one] on his own things, but every...[one] also on the things of others." Philippians 2:4. God is not selfish.

"Charity [love]...is not easily provoked." 1 Corinthians 13:4, 5. "The LORD your God...is slow to anger." Joel 2:13. *"Charity [love]...thinketh no evil." 1 Corinthians 13:4, 5.* "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." Jeremiah 29:11. No evil thoughts arise in God's heart.

"Charity [love]...rejoiceth not in iniquity." 1 Corinthians 13:4, 6. "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity [wickedness]." Habakkuk 1:13. God abhors wickedness. *"Charity [love]...rejoiceth in the truth." 1 Corinthians 13:4, 6.* "A God of truth." Deuteronomy 32:4.

"Charity [love]...beareth all things." 1 Corinthians 13:4, 7. "And he [Christ] is the propitiation" (1 John 2:2), an expiation, "for the sins of the whole world." 1 John 2:2. Thus, Christ bore the sins of mankind so that they could be saved from eternal death.

"Charity [love]...believeth all things." 1 Corinthians 13:4, 7. "God commendeth [demonstrated] his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8. It is "God, who...calleth those things which be not as though they were." Romans 4:17. God firmly believes that all humanity can turn from their sins.

"Charity [love]...hopeth all things." 1 Corinthians 13:4, 7. "[God] who will have all men to be saved" (1 Timothy 2:4) for "the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness;

but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 2 Peter 3:9. God hopes that all mankind will be saved and, hence, gain paradise.

"Charity [love]...endureth all things." 1 Corinthians 13:4, 7. "Jesus [Christ]...who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame...is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Hebrews 12:2. "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." Isaiah 53:4. God endured sorrow, grief, pain, and shame for humanity's sake.

"Charity [love] never faileth." 1 Corinthians 13:8. God says, "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death." Song of Solomon 8:6. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." John 15:13. Jesus Christ laid down His life for all mankind. "Praise ye the LORD. O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever." Psalm 106:1. It is God's love which leads Him to be merciful. His love never fails, it endures forever.

As we have seen in the above comparisons between God's description of love and God's character, that they are identical. We can see then that indeed "God is love." 1 John 4:8.

God's Love Demonstrated

O wonderful condescension of Christ, that He would take upon Himself, not the sinless nature that Adam and Eve originally had, but fallen human nature! Infinite self-denial of Christ that He would come to this earth as a human being and leave aside His kingly crown and the worship and adoration of holy angels and unfallen worlds!

More than this, it was "God [who] so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son [His sole child]" (John 3:16) to the world to face a terrible conflict with sin and Satan and at the risk of failure. It was Christ who "humbled himself" (Philippians 2:8)

for He was not "lifted up with pride [such that] he [should] fall into the condemnation of the devil." 1 Timothy 3:6.

God demonstrated that His character of love meant that He was meek and humble. For it is God who says, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." Philippians 2:3.

God has, therefore, made plain to the holy angels and the intelligences of the unfallen worlds the "heinous crime" (Job 31:11) of Satan in his rebellion against God, in that, Satan was indeed "a murderer from the beginning." John 8:44. Yet even then with the death of Christ, all the issues involved in the great controversy between God and Satan were still not clear to these intelligences.

These issues are the "things the angels desire to look into." 1 Peter 1:12. "The elect angels" (1 Timothy 5:21), who are the "the holy angels" (Matthew 25:31), desire to understand the full breadth and depth of the great controversy and the plan of redemption whereby mankind might be saved.

These issues were also certainly not clear to those among mankind who desired to have an understanding of these things. Now God testifies of many of those among mankind that "they willingly are ignorant" (2 Peter 3:5) of the great controversy and Satan's real object in his rebellion against God.

We see that "without controversy" (1 Timothy 3:16) the "gospel of Christ" (Romans 1:16) demonstrates that "God is love" (1 John 4:8), where love is a principle of self-denial and a chief concern for the welfare of others such that one does good, and only good, to others.

God could have wiped humanity from the face of the universe by executing the penalty of death upon Adam and Eve for their sin. But, no! "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son [His sole child], that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life!" John 3:16. He is "God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments." Nehemiah 1:5.

We can know that God is "altogether lovely" (Song of Solomon 5:16) because God sacrificed Himself in order to save mankind from eternal death. "Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" Psalm 107:8. "Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises. For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding." Psalm 24:6, 7.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Humanity's Warfare: The First Battle

GOD SAYS, "LOOK UNTO me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Isaiah 45:22. God's words apply to Adam and Eve and to all who would ever live on earth. It is a battle cry from God to all humanity that they should enter into their first battle against sin and Satan. This is a battle that every human being needs to fight and win.

How can an individual fight this battle and win? This and subsequent chapters of this book will answer this question, so read on and it will be made clear.

God Appeals to Us

God appeals to all humanity, to all the billions of people on earth, and He says, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." Jeremiah 31:3. O the love of God for fallen, sinful humanity! For God says, "I will make a man more precious than fine gold." Isaiah 13:12.

God also says, "And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." Malachi 3:17. "And there shall be no more curse...and they shall see his face...and they shall reign for ever and ever...These sayings are faithful and true." Revelation 22:3-6.

God says to all humanity, "Come unto me." Matthew 11:28. "Come. And let him that heareth say" (Revelation 22:17), to others, "Come." Revelation 22:17. "Say, Come ye, and let us go...to...the LORD, to...God...and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths." Isaiah 2:3.

"And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." Jeremiah 29:13. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as [white as] wool." Isaiah 1:18.

"Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many" (Proverbs 4:10), they shall be an eternity of years. "My son, forget not my law" (Proverbs 3:1), my law of love, "but let thine heart keep my commandments: For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee." Proverbs 3:1, 2. "Cease to do evil; learn to do well." Isaiah 1:16, 17.

God says that sinners are they who "walk in the vanity" (Ephesians 4:17), the moral depravity, "of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." Ephesians 4:17, 18. Thus, God's perfect diagnosis of all humanity is that they are ignorant of, and blind to, their own moral depravity.

But praise God that we need not remain blind! For God says, "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them." Isaiah 42:16.

"For thou wilt light my candle: the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness." Psalm 18:28. "For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life." Proverbs 6:23.

"Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners...the way. The meek will he guide...and the meek will he teach his way." Psalm 25:8, 9. "What man is he that feareth the LORD" (Psalm 25:12), in other words, has reverential awe for the Lord? "Him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose." Psalm 25:12.

Now "wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding." Proverbs 4:7. "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." Job 28:28.

"Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding." Proverbs 4:1. "Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge" (Proverbs 8:10) of God, "rather than choice gold." Proverbs 8:10. "Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not." Proverbs 8:33.

"He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul: but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding." Proverbs 15:32. "He is in the way of life that keepeth instruction: but he that refuseth reproof erreth." Proverbs 10:17. "A fool despiseth his father's instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent." Proverbs 15:5. "He that regardeth reproof shall be honoured" (Proverbs 13:18) but "before honour is humility." Proverbs 15:33.

"Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end." Proverbs 19:20. "Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life." Proverbs 4:13. For "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 perfect, throughly [fully] furnished unto all good works." 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

It is God who "openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, that he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man." Job 33:16, 17. Note that, as was said before, that the members of the Godhead, namely, The Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit, very rarely speak to us by an audible voice. Instead they speak to us in a supernatural form of "communication" (2 Samuel 3:17) that enters into our mind and is perfectly understandable to every individual. We could say that they speak to us by impressing their thoughts upon our mind.

"Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God...and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the LORD." Jeremiah 3:13. "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him [God] a liar, and his word" (1 John 1:10), the word of God which is the Bible, "is not in us." 1 John 1:10. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." 1 John 1:8.

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." Proverbs 28:13. God says, let this be the purpose of your heart, "I press toward the mark [goal] for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14), the high calling of a life of holiness.

Speaking of Himself, God says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son [His sole child], that whosoever believeth in him" (John 3:16), Christ the Son, "should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16.

This then is God's battle cry to every human being, that they should enter upon their first battle in their warfare against sin and Satan. We will now look at the series of steps to be taken by the individual in order to win their first battle according to God's battle plan, the Bible.

God's reward for those persons who win this first battle is that they will cease being "enemies" (Romans 5:10) of God and instead

be "reconciled to God." Romans 5:10. They will then be in right standing before God because they have received "a new heart" (Ezekiel 36:26) from God. They have had a change of heart from being evil to being good.

To reiterate, think of it as their receiving the gift of a new mind from God, which is "the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16), so that they change from selfishness to love. Thus, they are prepared by God to successfully fight their second battle, which is their final battle, against sin and Satan.

The Role of Each Member of the Godhead in Our Salvation

The members of the Godhead, namely, the Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit, each play an active role in our salvation for they "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." 1 Timothy 2:4. The three divine Persons are interested to see all humanity saved.

Now the Bible, which is the word of God, does not lay out in detail their individual roles, but we can glean some insights from the Bible into their work for the salvation of mankind.

The Unity of the Godhead

Christ, the Son of God, when He was on earth in human flesh, said, "For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak." John 12:49, 50. Therefore, Christ and the Father are in perfect agreement on all things.

Christ also said, "the Spirit of truth...will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear,

that shall he speak: and he will shew [show] you things to come. He shall glorify me" (John 16:13, 14), in other words, He shall extol and exalt me, "for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew [show] it unto you." John 16:14. Thus, Christ and the Holy Spirit are also in perfect agreement in all things.

Since Christ only speaks what the Father speaks, and the Holy Spirit only speaks what Christ speaks, it follows that all three members of the Godhead are in perfect harmony with each other. This is what Christ meant when He said, "All things that the Father hath are mine" (John 16:15), including the Father's words, "therefore said I, that he" (John 16:15), the Holy Spirit, "shall take of mine, and shall shew [show] it unto you." John 16:15.

All three divine Persons "speak the same thing, and...there be no divisions among...[them]; but...[they are] perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." 1 Corinthians 1:10. Thus we see that the members of the Godhead do not contradict each other at any time.

Our Prayers Go Up to God

"The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities" (Romans 8:26), our moral frailty: "for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he," Christ, "that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he," the Holy Spirit, "maketh intercession for the saints," for those individuals who have truly consecrated themselves to God, "according to the will of God." Romans 8:26, 27.

All of the prayers on our behalf by the Holy Spirit succeed with Christ. This is the role of the Holy Spirit in communicating our needs to Christ. But this is not to say that we do not need to pray to God ourselves, but only that "the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities" (Romans 8:26), helps us in with our moral frailty.

Our own prayers are to be directed to God, the Father, for Christ, when He was on earth in human flesh, said, "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven." Matthew 6:9. These prayers are drawn out of us by the Holy Spirit who impresses us to pray and the prayers come up to Christ on the way to the Father. This is the role of the Holy spirit in our own prayers to the Father through Christ.

"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Romans 8:34. "But this man" (Hebrews 7:24), "the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5), "because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Hebrews 7:24, 25.

Christ is the Intercessor before the Father for all humanity that they might be blessed. "Your Father which is in heaven...he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Matthew 5:45. All these are blessings received by mankind through the merits of Christ.

Especially, does Christ become an Intercessor with the Father for every person who meets the necessary conditions. He pleads His blood before the Father for "forgiveness of [the] sins" (Ephesians 1:7) of such persons, because Christ Himself had borne the guilt of these persons.

Now all of the Holy Spirit's prayers on our behalf are accepted by Christ and presented to the Father. But, regarding our prayers on our own behalf, God says, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psalm 66:18) when I pray to Him. So, not all of our prayers made to God, the Father, are accepted by Christ and presented to the Father on our behalf. The prayers from a wicked heart are rejected by Christ.

In Christ, "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." 1 John 2:1. In Christ, the sinner has a Friend in heaven

and, in His intercession, Christ claims for the sinner "all [the] spiritual blessings" (Ephesians 1:3) that "the everlasting covenant" (Hebrews 13:20) embraced. This is the role of Christ in asking blessings from the Father on our behalf.

The Father, "he hath made us accepted in the beloved" (Ephesians 1:6), who is Christ. The intercession of Christ is wholly acceptable to the Father because of the righteous life which Christ lived as the Representative of the human race so that He can stand "faultless" (Jude 1:24) before God and because of Christ's death for the sins of the world.

All of Christ's prayers succeed with the Father so that His requests are granted by the Father. "For all the promises of God in him," Christ, "are yea, and in him Amen," (2 Corinthians 1:20), which is to say, "So be it," "unto the glory of God by us." 2 Corinthians 1:20. All the blessings of the gospel are bestowed on mankind because of Christ.

Blessings in Answer to Prayers Come Down from God

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Ephesians 1:3. "God shall supply all your need," both physical and spiritual needs, "according to his riches in glory" (Philippians 4:19), according to God's goodness, "by Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:19. This is the role of the Father in blessing us through Christ.

The blessings granted by the Father in answer to our prayers, Christ presents to the Holy Spirit who works in the individual in such a way as to cause him or her to be blessed. For "he, the Spirit of truth" (John 16:13), "he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." John 16:8.

This is the role of the Holy Spirit in causing us to be individually convicted of our sins. In addition, the Holy Spirit imparts moral

strength which causes persons to be "transformed" (Romans 12:2) into a character identical to Christ's character of love.

Summary of the Role of the Godhead

To summarise what was said so far, the Holy Spirit originates prayers and sends them to Christ on our behalf and all such prayers succeed with Christ. These prayers which Christ receives are then presented to the Father who accepts all of them and grants us blessings through Christ. Christ communicates these blessings to the Holy Spirit who works to make the blessings effectual in our lives, works to produce the desired effect in our lives.

Our own prayers to God, the Father, are drawn out of us by the Holy Spirit who impresses us to pray and they come up to Christ on the way to the Father. Our prayers are rejected by Christ and are not presented to the Father if there is iniquity (wickedness) in our heart. Otherwise, our prayers are accepted by Christ and presented to the Father with the fragrance of Christ's merits and thus all such prayers succeed with the Father.

So, the Father grants us blessings through Christ. Christ communicates these blessings to the Holy Spirit who works to make the blessings effectual in our lives. That is, the Spirit works to produce the desired effect in our lives.

Repentance[1]

By nature, you are a sinner. You cannot change your heart and thus make yourself holy. You cannot have a thought toward God without Christ. You cannot have an inclination to come to Christ

1. Ellen G. White, (egwwritings.org), Steps to Christ, pages 23-65.

unless He sets in motion influences and impresses His Holy Spirit upon the human mind.

If there is anyone on the face of the earth who has any inclination toward God, it is because of the many influences that are set to work by God to be exerted upon his or her mind and heart. Those influences call for your allegiance to God and an appreciation of the great work that God has done to save you from eternal death (annihilation).

God says, "Is not thy wickedness great? and thine iniquities [sins] infinite?" Job 22:5. And the Holy Spirit is constantly speaking to every human being to convict them of their sins.

Now, many in the world, when convicted of their sins by the Holy Spirit, are asking, "How should man be just with God?" Job 9:2. "What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?" Job 15:14. "What shall we do [to be saved from eternal death by God]?" Acts 2:37. God's answer is, "Repent ye...and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." Acts 3:19.

Thus, the first step to be taken in humanity's warfare against sin and Satan, the first battle, is to repent of their sins. Repentance is remorse for sins. But we shall not renounce sins unless we see our sinfulness, and until we turn from sin in heart there will be no real change in the heart from selfishness to love.

Many fail to understand the nature of true repentance. That is, many seeing their sins make an outward reformation through fear of the suffering that will come upon them because of their wrongdoing. But this is not repentance in the Bible sense. They lament the suffering but not the sins themselves.

Four examples of this are: (1) A man named "Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright...[and] afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected [by God]: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." Hebrews 12:16, 17. (2) A man named Balaam who when "the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel

of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand...he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face...And Balaam said unto the angel of the LORD, I have sinned." Numbers 22:31-34. Balaam only confessed his sin for fear he would otherwise lose his life.

(3) A man named Judas Iscariot who said, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood." Matthew 27:4. Judas confessed his sin because of "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation" (Hebrew 10:27) for betraying Jesus into the hand of Jesus' murderers. But he had no heartbreaking remorse for denying His Lord and for selling Him for a few pieces of silver.

(4) Pharaoh, king of ancient Egypt, who said, "I have sinned... Intreat the LORD (for it is enough) that there be no more mighty thunderings and hail; and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer...And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants. And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, neither would he let the children of Israel go; as the LORD had spoken by Moses [a leader of ancient Israel]." Exodus 9:27-35.

These all lamented the consequences of sin but not the sin itself. Such is not true repentance.

As we begin to see our own sinfulness in the light of God's holiness and purity, the Holy Spirit, "according to the power that worketh in us" (Ephesians 3:20), works "to give [us] repentance." Acts 5:31. That is, the Spirit works to give us the gift of repentance from God which causes us to have remorse for our sins.

"For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death." 2 Corinthians 7:10. "The sorrow of the world" (2 Corinthians 7:10) causes us to regret the consequences of our sins but we have no remorse for having committed sins. "Godly sorrow" (2 Corinthians 7:10), on the other hand, is deep remorse for our sins.

In bringing us to repentance which is remorse for our sins, the Holy Spirit draws us to see the infinite love of God in giving Christ to die "for the sins of the whole world." 1 John 2:2. Even one ray of light from God, revealing the purity of Christ and penetrating our understanding, makes every spot of our own defilement painfully distinct, and opens to our view the deformity and defects of the human character.

It makes apparent the unholy desires, the infidelity of the heart, the impurity of the lips. As we view the pure, spotless character of Christ, our acts of disloyalty in making void God's law of love are exposed to our sight and we are deeply affected and afflicted. God says, "Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall lothe [loathe] yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities [for your wickedness] and for your abominations." Ezekiel 36:31.

This is the very first step toward reaching God's ideal for mankind, which is for the individual to "be holy and without blame before him [God] in love." Ephesians 1:4. For to be "faultless" (Jude 1:24) and, hence, reach God's ideal is to escape eternal death (annihilation) and instead have eternal life.

Here is where many may err in thinking that they cannot come to Christ unless they first repent. Thus, they fail to receive the very help which Christ desires to give them. Yes, it is true that we must first repent before God will forgive our sins. For only those whose hearts have been made broken and remorseful on account of their own sins will feel the need of a Saviour.

But must repentance be made an obstacle between the sinner and Christ, their Saviour? Must the sinner wait till they have repented before they can come to Jesus? Away with such erroneous thoughts! In no way does the Bible teach that the sinner must repent BEFORE they can accept Christ's invitation: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28.

We cannot of ourselves "repent" (Matthew 3:2), it is beyond the reach of our power to accomplish this. But "Him [Christ] hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for [Christ] to give [us] repentance...and forgiveness of sins." Acts 5:31. We see then that it is virtue that goes forth from Christ that leads anyone to genuine repentance. That is, repentance is only obtained from Christ through the working of the Holy Spirit to awaken our "evil conscience." Hebrew 10:22. Likewise, we cannot be pardoned by God of our sins without Christ.

Now you might say, "I am not aware of any sins that I have committed" or you might see one, two, or a just a few of your sins. Well, such is "the blindness of...[the] heart." Ephesians 4:18. Ask God to reveal to you your sins. Ask in sincerity and "God shall reveal even this unto you." Philippians 3:15. Here we are utterly dependent upon God to reveal to us the abundance of our sins. For God cannot save us until we see and acknowledge our own sins.

If you see your sinfulness, do not wait to make yourself better before you come to Christ. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." Jeremiah 13:23. So, we cannot expect to become better through our own efforts. Our only help is in God. Do not wait for stronger persuasions, better opportunities, or for a holier temperament. Come to Christ just as you are.

Let us not resist "the work of God" (John 6:29) through the Holy Spirit, but instead say with our "whole heart" (Psalm 9:1), "The Lord GOD hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back." Isaiah 50:5.

Confession

The heart of the individual who has received the gift of "repentance" (Acts 5:31) from God will be melted with tenderness and

contrition as they comprehend the infinite sacrifice that Christ has made on behalf of mankind. Such an individual will "seek righteousness" (Zephaniah 2:3) through Christ. They will seek for the purity of heart that is in harmony with God's law of love and the character of Christ.

"A broken and a contrite [remorseful] heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Psalm 51:17. The humble and broken heart, subdued by genuine repentance, will in true penitence bring all their sins before God. Our acknowledgement to God that we have done wrong should include the confession of all the specific sins which the Holy Spirit brings to our remembrance.

The confession that comes from the depths of our heart finds its way to the God of infinite pity. And we can say of God in truth, "The LORD is nigh [near] unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite [remorseful] spirit." Psalm 34:18. In confession, our sins might be of a nature as to be brought before God only. Or they may be wrongs that should be confessed to those persons who have suffered injury through them. Or they may be public sins and should then be publicly confessed. But whatever our sins may be, confession should be definite and to the point, acknowledging the very sins of which we are guilty.

God says, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." Proverbs 28:13. True repentance will lead us to confess our sins to God and to turn away from our sins, thus meeting God's requirements. True repentance will lead us to bear our own guilt ourselves and to acknowledge our guilt without deception or hypocrisy. There will be no excuse for sin or attempt at self-justification.

Why does God say, "Only acknowledge thine iniquity" (Jeremiah 3:13)? God requires this because "every way of a man is right in his own eyes" (Proverbs 21:2) and this spirit of self-justification in a wrong course must be corrected if God is to eradicate sin from the universe. The first step then whereby God will "cleanse

us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9) is to repent so that we acknowledge that we have done wrong.

When he was in heaven, Satan persisted in justifying himself in his sins and "hardened his heart" (Exodus 8:15) until he reached the point of no return, "till there was no remedy" (2 Chronicles 36:16) for his iniquities (sins). God, therefore, had no choice but to pass the sentence of eternal death (annihilation) upon Satan for his wickedness. Self-justification in an evil course is the spirit of Satan, it is to follow in Satan's ways.

If we have not humbled ourselves before God in acknowledging our guilt, we have not yet fulfilled the first condition of acceptance by God. If we have not with true humbleness and brokenness of spirit because of our remorse confessed our sins, despising our wickedness, we have never truly sought God for the forgiveness of our sins. And if we have never sought, we have never found the peace of God. Thus, the only reason why we do not have the pardon of our past sins is that we are not willing to comply with conditions which God has laid out in the Bible.

Our confession will not be acceptable to God unless it is accompanied by sincere repentance and reformation. We must decisively make the necessary changes in our life, putting away from us everything that is offensive to God. This will be the sure result of genuine repentance, genuine sorrow, for our sins. For God says to all humanity, "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for [defend] the widow." Isaiah 1:16, 17.

"What man is he that desireth [eternal] life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile [deceit]. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it." Psalm 34:12-14. "If we confess our sins, he [God] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9.

Surrender

By nature, all humanity is "alienated from the life of God" (Ephesians 4:18) for we are "dead in trespasses and sins." Ephesians 2:1. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying [dripping] sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified [soothed] with ointment." Isaiah 1:5, 6. We are caught in "the snare of the devil," who is Satan, "taken captive by him at his will." 2 Timothy 2:26.

In view of our condition, God says of each of us, "I will heal him." Isaiah 57:19. God desires to heal us, and to set us free from Satan and, therefore, God says, "Turn unto me" (Nehemiah 1:9) "with the whole heart." Psalm 119:2.

"Neither yield ye your members" (Romans 6:13), the parts of your body, "as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members" (Romans 6:13), the parts of your body, "as instruments of righteousness unto God." Romans 6:13.

Our healing from the corruption of sin requires an entire transformation, a "renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2) and, hence, we must yield ourselves completely to God. Not only are we to confess our sins, but we are also "with purpose of heart" (Acts 11:23) to turn away from them by choosing not to sin anymore, thus yielding ourselves to God.

God says to all humanity, "My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways." Proverbs 23:26. So, God declares that the whole heart must be yielded to God, or the change by which we are restored to the likeness of Christ's character of love can never be accomplished in us.

"For the flesh" (Galatians 5:17), the sinful nature "with the affections and lusts" (Galatians 5:24), "lusteth" (Galatians 5:17), that is, wars, "against the [Holy] Spirit, and the [Holy] Spirit [wars] against the flesh" (Galatians 5:17), against the sinful nature, "and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Galatians 5:17.

The warfare against self is the greatest battle that was ever fought. The yielding of self, the surrendering all to the will of God, requires of us a struggle. But God says, "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:16), practice the truths brought to light by the Holy Spirit, "and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh [the sinful nature]." Galatians 5:16.

In other words, God says, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." James 4:7. The individual must submit to God before they can be renewed such that they become holy. We must be willing to be made willing to do the will of God. Praise God that we are not left to struggle on our own against our sinful nature but the Holy Spirit helps us in our warfare against self!

Here we need to understand the true force of the will. It is the governing power in the nature of mankind, the power of decision, the power of choice, which God has given to all humanity, and it is theirs to exercise. Everything, even our salvation, depends on the right action of the will.

In choosing not to sin anymore, you can give God your will. That is, you can *choose* to serve God in living according to God's law of love. If you do so, it will be true of you that "it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Philippians 2:13. Your whole nature will be brought under the control of "the Spirit of Christ" (Romans 8:9) and your affections will be centred upon Christ, your thoughts will be in harmony with Christ.

How is this so? The answer is that having brought conviction of our sinfulness, and presented before our mind, Christ, the stan-

dard of righteousness, the Holy Spirit withdraws the affections from "the things that are in the world" (1 John 2:15) and fills us with a desire for holiness, a desire to be like Christ in character.

Through a right exercise of the will, an entire change may be made in your life. For we cannot change our heart, neither can we of ourselves give to God the affections of our heart. The only thing that lies within our power is the power of choice in that we can *choose* to serve God. For all humanity is "without strength" (Romans 5:6) to do that which is right.

By yielding up your will to Christ, you ally yourself with His power which is above all the "principalities and powers" (Colossians 2:15) of Satan. Hence, you will have strength from God to hold you steadfast in doing God's will. This is true surrender to the will of God.

Faith and Acceptance

You cannot atone, which is to say, make amends or give satisfaction to God, for your past sins. You cannot change your heart and make yourself holy. But God promises to do all this, to forgive your sins and cleanse you, through Christ.

Now there are those of whom God says, "ye...repented not...that ye might believe." Matthew 21:32. Unless we repent, we cannot believe the gospel of Christ. Why? The reason is that without conviction of sin which leads to repentance, we will not feel the need of a Saviour. If we do not feel a need, we will not believe in Christ as our Saviour from the bondage of sin and its penalty. For the pride of "the carnal mind" (Romans 8:7) feels no need of salvation. Those who feel a need for Christ will humble themselves and repent.

Now, "God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith" (Romans 12:3) and, therefore, God says, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him" (John 6:29), that you believe in Christ. So, the

ability to believe God, our faith in God, is a gift from God. And this faith, this gift from God, is yours if you yield to the Holy Spirit. For "this is the word of the LORD [God]...saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts." Zechariah 4:6. "Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost [Holy Spirit]." 1 Corinthians 12:3.

Therefore, take God at His word, in other words, *believe* His promise. So then, you have confessed your sins, and in your heart put them away from you. You have resolved to give yourself to God. You *will* to serve God. Just as surely as you *do* this, God will fulfill his word to you. "For he [God] is faithful that promised." Hebrews 10:23. The important thing to grasp here is that you *must believe* God's promise. If you *believe* God's promise—believe that you are forgiven and cleansed—God supplies the fact and you *are* healed from your sins. It *is* so *if* you *believe* it.

God says, "I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, *believe* that ye receive them, and ye *shall* have them." Mark 11:24. There is a condition to this promise—that we pray according to the will of God. But it is the will of God to cleanse us from sin, to make us His children, and to enable us to live a holy life. So we may ask for these blessings, and believe that we receive them, and thank God that we *have* received them.

It is our God-given privilege to go to Jesus and be cleansed, and to stand before God's law of love without shame or remorse. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh [the sinful nature], but after the Spirit." Romans 8:1.

Do not wait to *feel* that you have been forgiven and cleansed. Faith and feeling are two very different things. But say, I *believe* it because God's promises can never fail of being fulfilled. What God promises, He will *certainly* do.

By exercising such faith, you believe in Christ, that He can do for you what you cannot do for yourself, that through Christ you have been forgiven and cleansed of every sin. To disbelieve God is to make God out to be a liar and, hence, God cannot work in us to make effective that in which we do not have any faith. "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace [by God's unmerited favour and power]." Romans 4:16.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:8-10.

"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Galatians 3:26. It is by giving ourselves to God and believing His promises, that we become His children, "the children of God." Galatians 3:26.

Through the simple act of giving ourselves to God and believing His promises, the Holy Spirit has created a new life in your heart and you are "born again." John 3:3. You are now as a child born into the family of God, and Christ says of the Father, "thou...hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." John 17:23.

You have now received "the gift of righteousness" (Romans 5:17), the gift of the righteousness of Christ, for Christ is "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." Jeremiah 23:6. The moment you as a penitent sinner believe in Christ, you stand without any condemnation in the sight of God because at that instant the righteousness of Christ is yours. In other words, Christ's perfect love and obedience has been implanted in you for you have now received "a new heart" (Ezekiel 36:26), you have been "renewed in...your mind." Ephesians 4:23.

In addition, all your past sins are now forgiven, just as a man named Abraham "he believed in the LORD [God]; and he [God] counted it to him [Abraham] for righteousness." Genesis 15:6. How is this so? Well, because of your repentance and faith in God's

promises, God has accepted Christ's death for your sins in the place of your death for the sins you have committed. And God now treats you as if you had never sinned.

You are now "accepted [by God] in" (Ephesians 1:6), Christ, "the beloved" (Ephesians 1:6) for you are now among those individuals who have become "partakers of the divine nature." 2 Peter 1:4. Now God's decree for you, "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith [such] that ye...[are] rooted and grounded in love." (Ephesians 3:17), has come to pass. For now "the love of God is shed abroad" (Romans 5:5), supernaturally poured, "in our hearts by the Holy Ghost [Holy Spirit] which is given unto us." Romans 5:5.

God's promise that "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people" (Hebrews 8:10) has become true in your life. For "he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law...Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." Romans 13:8-10.

Thus God has written His law of love in your heart thus enabling you to have a character of love just like God's own character. Now you may say, in truth, "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." Psalm 40:8.

Now when Christ dwells in your heart by faith, you will be so filled with His love, with the joy of communion with Him, that you will cleave to Him. Moreover, in the contemplation of Christ, self will be forgotten. For you may now say, in truth, "all my springs are in thee" (Psalm 87:7), O God. In other words, love for Christ will be the spring from which flows all our actions.

It is your faith in God's promises, that is the crowning step to be taken in order to be accepted by God. Repentance is essential, "but without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Hebrews 11:6.

For God has "given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by [believing] these [promises] ye might be partak-

ers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." 2 Peter 1:4.

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Romans 5:1. Our faith causes us to be "justified" (Romans 5:1), which is to be declared righteous by God and to be in right standing before God. This is known as "justification by faith."

Now you have met both conditions required for justification, which are "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Acts 20:21. One or the other is not sufficient for justification; both steps must be taken. And *genuine* faith is only possible when there is a *prior* repentance.

As one who has been justified, you have now become a Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ. You are now among those "whose names are in the book of [eternal] life." Philippians 4:3.

With respect to our salvation, including "our justification" (Romans 4:25), "all things are of God" (2 Corinthians 5:18) and "Christ is all, and in all" (Colossians 3:11) for those who "have faith in God." Mark 11:22. Let us, therefore, say with our whole heart, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory" (1 Corinthians 15:57), over sin, "through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 15:57.

Now that you have given yourself to Jesus, do not draw back, do not take yourself away from Him, but each day say, "I am Christ's; I have given myself to Him," and ask Him to give you His Holy Spirit and keep you by His grace. As it is by giving yourself to God, and believing Him, that you become His child, so you are to live in Him. "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him." Colossians 2:6.

Proof of Discipleship

Those who have been "justified" (Romans 5:1) will give evidence of the change brought about by God in their lives. The proof of

their discipleship will be manifested first in an inward change which will then make itself outwardly apparent to others.

Repentance

With respect to the repentance of the justified, God says, "Bring forth therefore fruits meet [fitting] for repentance." Matthew 3:8. There is no evidence then of genuine repentance unless it works in the reformation of the life. Therefore, it is true of the justified that the things that as a sinner they once hated they now love and the things that the sinful heart loved they now hate. A change then is seen in the character, the habits, the pursuits.

Faith

Those who are justified are those who "believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15) and God says of them that they have "unfeigned faith" (2 Timothy 1:5), they have genuine faith. Now "faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." James 2:17. In other words, genuine faith manifests itself outwardly in "good works." Ephesians 2:10.

Love

The justified have "unfeigned love" (1 Peter 1:22), genuine love, in their hearts. This love is a gift from God for "the love of God is shed abroad [supernaturally poured] in our hearts by the Holy Ghost [Holy Spirit] which is given unto us." Romans 5:5.

LOVE FOR GOD

If you are justified by God then it is true of you that it is God "whom having not seen, ye love...whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." 1 Peter 1:8. You "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,

and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." Matthew 22:37. That is, above all others you have supreme love for God, in that, God takes first place in your affections.

Love for Others

If you are justified by God it is also true of you that you "love thy neighbour as thyself." Matthew 22:39. Now "love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." Romans 13:10. "He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law." Romans 13:8.

Desires

Those justified by God can truly say of God, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." Psalm 73:25. "As the hart [deer] panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." Psalm 42:1. The whole desire of their heart is to know God.

Purposes

The language of the heart of the justified is such that they say to God, "When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek." Psalm 27:8. Of these, God says, "They seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God." Isaiah 58:2.

Obedience

The language of the heart of the justified is such that they say, "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." Psalm 40:8. The whole purpose of their heart is to heed God's

commandment which says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Matthew 6:33.

They render willing obedience to God's law of love in every respect. Their lives reflect "the fruit of the Spirit [which] is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law [of love]." Galatians 5:22, 23.

Justification is Through Christ

You who have been "justified" (Romans 5:1) by God, Christ has said to you, "Be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." Matthew 9:2. "Ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11) for you have received the help of the Holy Spirit in turning away from your sins.

You have become "partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." 2 Peter 1:4. In you, humanity and divinity are combined as it was in Jesus Christ. Therefore, you as an individual "hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." John 5:24. For you who are justified, the blessings of heaven have begun here on earth in this life.

"God commendeth [exhibited] his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his [Christ's] blood, we shall be saved from wrath [God's justifiable anger] through him [Christ]." Romans 5:8, 9. "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." 1 Peter 1:18, 19. All these blessings have come to you who are

justified through the holy life of Jesus Christ and His death for the sins of the whole world.

Only One Way to Salvation

We have now seen how the various components of the solution of the sin problem of mankind, as worked out by Jesus Christ, are made effective in the life of an individual. This same solution was made effective in the lives of Adam and Eve and all those people who lived before the death of Christ and who themselves complied with the necessary conditions.

In their case, they received the blessings of salvation based upon God's promises to humanity, for it was only at the death of Jesus Christ that the promise of "the blood of the everlasting covenant" (Hebrews 13:20) was made sure for all eternity future. All this is to say, that from the time of Adam and Eve until the second coming of Christ, there has *ever been and ever will be* only *one* means of salvation and that is through the grace bestowed on the individual by God.

Winning the First Battle: A Summary

We may summarise the path to be taken for our justification as follows: The first step to be taken is repentance and the second and final step is faith in God's promises. This then is the way to win humanity's first battle in the warfare against sin and Satan.

Christ says, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end" (Revelation 21:6), where, "alpha" is the first letter of the Greek alphabet and "omega" is the last letter of the Greek alphabet. So, we would say with reference to the English alphabet, "Christ is the A and the Z." God also says that we are to be "looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." Hebrews 12:2.

These statements mean that "all things are of God" (2 Corinthians 5:18), which is to say that we are entirely dependent on God for not only material blessings but also for "all spiritual blessings." Ephesians 1:3. As it pertains to our justification, we are entirely dependent upon God for this from the start to the finish for unless we become "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4) we can never be saved.

God With Humanity

You who have been justified, "ye are the temple of God, and...the Spirit of God dwelleth in you." 1 Corinthians 3:16. It is Jesus Christ, "in whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest [the pledge] of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." Ephesians 1:13, 14. The Holy Spirit now dwells with you.

Christ says, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." John 14;21. "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we [the Father and I, Christ,] will come unto him, and make our abode with him." John 14;23. For you who have been justified, both the Father and Christ also now dwell with you.

For "now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes" (Ephesians 2:13), who at one time, "were far off are made nigh [near to God] by the blood of Christ." Ephesians 2:13. "And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee." Psalm 9:10.

Having the presence of the Godhead—The Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit—dwelling with you is a foretaste of

heaven here on earth. It can truly be said of God that "in thy presence is fulness of joy." Psalm 16:11. Here then is our source of joy, peace, and contentment. Praise God that He has not forsaken the human race but instead has sought to bring them near to Himself in love!

Baptism

A man called John the Baptist was the forerunner of Jesus Christ. John called the nation of Israel to repentance in preparation for the soon coming public ministry of Christ, when Christ was on earth. It was John who began the rite of baptism of individuals which signified the individual's repentance of their sins and their hope in the Messiah (Christ) who was to come to the earth. Christ Himself was baptised by John *only* in order to set an example for the human race, for Christ had no sins of His own of which He needed to repent.

God says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Mark 16:16. The individual who is found in their heart to "believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15) and who is baptized will be saved to eternal life.

Baptism then is a rite of the Christian church, the church Jesus Christ Himself established. Baptism means to be completely submerged under water, just as Jesus Christ was, and then to emerge from the water just like Jesus Christ, for "Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water." Matthew 3:16.

The act of baptism itself has great significance. For God says, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death" (Romans 6:3-5), if we have like Christ overcome

all temptations to sin, "we shall be also [planted together] in the likeness of his resurrection." Romans 6:5.

"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is [spiritually] dead [to all temptations to sin] is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him." Romans 6:6-8. Thus, figuratively, in baptism we die to sin and rise to live a new life free from sin.

The Godhead—the Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit—are all present at our baptism which is a public declaration that we have left the service of Satan and have instead entered into the service of God.

Baptism is the pledge of the individual that they will henceforth so order their life that, when the work of God is complete in their life, they may be able to say in truth, as Christ Himself said, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." John 17:4. Christ glorified God by living in accordance with God's law of love while He was on earth and, in so doing, Christ accomplished His mission to the world which was to "save his people from their sins." Matthew 1:21.

This is not to say, however, that everyone who is physically baptised will be saved, for there is a difference between baptism by water and the baptism of the Holy Spirit when Christ "shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost [Holy Spirit]." Matthew 3:11. The physical act is meant to signify the spiritual reality of one's justification by faith, when one is "born again" (John 3:3) by the Holy Spirit.

Unfortunately, some persons undergo the physical act of baptism without any corresponding baptism of the Holy Spirit. Such persons will not be saved unless they come to "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Acts 20:21. In other words, in some cases, baptism testifies to a prior conversion to Christ. Sadly, however, in the remaining cases of baptism, there has been no change in the natural condition of the sinful heart. In

such cases, without repentance on their part they will be lost in that they will not be saved by God.

You who are justified by God ought to be baptised according to the word of God, the Bible. Typically, one becomes a member of a Christian denomination by means of baptism. The question then is, "Which of the tens of thousands of Christian denominations should I choose to join by baptism?" The answer is that, most importantly, you want to join a church that teaches true Christianity and not counterfeit Christianity.

You may then ask, "How can I discern between true and counterfeit Christianity?" This book and the subsequent books that I will release in the future will answer this question by giving you discernment to know the difference.

For now, though, I recommend the Seventh-day Adventist Church, of which I myself am a member. However, you should not just accept my recommendation without any rationale for your choice other than that it is the church that I have recommended to you. For God says, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." Romans 14:5.

You must yourself go to God who promises that "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye." Psalm 32:8. Therefore, join the church to which God leads you. I am convinced though that God will lead you to join the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

You can find the Seventh-day Adventist Church on the Internet www.adventist.org. It is a worldwide church and is to be found in over 215 countries across the world. If you cannot find a church near you through the church's website, try a Google search at www.google.com. Otherwise, contact the General Conference using the contact information on the church's website.

Sanctification, the Final Battle

There is yet another step, another battle to fight, after our justification by faith, in order to reach God's ideal for humanity. You must be, like Jesus Christ was, "in all points tempted" (Hebrews 4:15) and be found "yet without sin." Hebrews 4:15. Why this testing? God says, "That I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law [of love], or no." Exodus 16:4.

God had placed all the angels on probation to test them, "That I [God] may prove them, whether they will walk in my law [of love], or no." Exodus 16:4. However, angelic perfection failed in heaven when some of the angels in heaven fell into sin. Now God designs that all His created intelligences, including the angels and humanity, shall be tested and tried in order to make them secure against all temptations to sin and so ensure the future happiness of the universe.

Therefore, the next phase of our salvation is known as "sanctification" (1 Corinthians 1:30) and it is only accomplished by our faith in Christ and, just like the example of Jesus Christ, by our "striving according to his working" (Colossians 1:29), the Holy Spirit's working, "which worketh in...[us] mightily." Colossians 1:29.

This means that from now on you must cooperate with divine power by putting forth your human effort to subdue sin. For, having been justified, you now have two natures which are in constant conflict with each other—the sinful nature with which we were born and the new divine nature—just as Christ had two natures.

God says, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." James 1:12. It is up to you to decide which of your two natures shall have supremacy.

Sanctification requires that "as ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him." Colossians 2:6. As you have been enabled by "the gift of righteousness" (Romans 5:17) you are to "walk in love" (Ephesians 5:2), which is to live in harmony with Christ's character of love. Only then can you stand complete in Christ, "holy and without blame before him [God] in love." Ephesians 1:4.

We will take a detailed look in subsequent chapters at sanctification, the second and final battle that the individual must fight and win if they are to gain paradise and immortality.

Chapter Nine

The Final Battle: The Way to Victory

We can say of ourselves according to the word of God, the Bible, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Romans 5:1. You who are justified are now "reconciled to God." 2 Corinthians 5:20. You are now in right standing before God.

Now comes the next phase of your salvation which is "sanctification" (1 Corinthians 1:30), and it is a lifelong process. This next phase occurs immediately after the moment we are justified by God. This phase is the second and final battle that the individual is called by God to fight and to win according to God's battle plan, the Bible.

In the School of Christ

Those who have been justified are now enrolled by God in the heavenly school of Christ where they are under God's training. The school of Christ is an invisible, spiritual school. Speaking of these heavenly students, God says, "I will make a man more

precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir" (Isaiah 13:12), where Ophir was a land renowned for its gold.

It is Christ who through "the word of God...effectually worketh...in you that believe" (1 Thessalonians 2:13) in order "to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight" (Colossians 1:22) to God. So, at the end of the process of sanctification then, you are among those of whom God says "[He] keepeth the law." Proverbs 28:7. This is true Bible sanctification.

God's Purpose in Our Sanctification

Now "the flesh lusteth [wars] against the [Holy] Spirit, and the [Holy] Spirit [wars] against the flesh [the sinful nature]: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Galatians 5:17. You who are justified now have two natures which are in conflict with each other, just like it was in Jesus Christ—the sinful nature, known as the flesh, with which you were born and the divine nature which was implanted in you by Christ through the Holy Spirit.

"The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD'S throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men. The LORD trieth the righteous." Psalm 11:4, 5. "What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him? and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him? And that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment?" Job 7:17, 18.

God tests all humanity to see if they will turn from their sins, that is, to see if they will repent and go on to be justified by God. Only those who are already justified are "being sanctified by the Holy Ghost." Romans 15:16. Sanctification then, is God's testing of the justified individual to see which of their two natures which are in conflict with each other will have supremacy—the sinful nature or the divine nature.

God wishes to prove to the onlooking universe that we who are justified will not choose to sin under any circumstance just like Jesus Christ chose not to sin. Hence, we will be found, like Jesus, to be "yet without sin." Hebrews 4:15. Only then will we have a character of love that makes it safe for God to save us and take us to heaven, for then throughout all eternity future we will not fall into sin like Satan and his evil angels did.

Speaking of Himself, God says, "He [God] will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time." Nahum 1:9. After the end of the great controversy, sin will never arise again, a second time, in the universe. In this way, God would have ensured the future happiness of all his created intelligences throughout all eternity future.

Steps to Our Sanctification

God says, "As for the pure, his work is right." Proverbs 21:8. How can we become pure? God says, "I am the LORD which sanctify you" (Leviticus 20:8), which is to be made pure and holy by God. We will now look at the steps you who are justified must take in order to be "sanctified." John 17:19. These steps are repeated over and over again throughout our lifetime, if we do not rebel against God in the process, until we are cleansed from all sin.

God Reveals Our Defects of Character

Sanctification is a lifelong process in which God, by His providence, allows us to come into circumstances by which means we are "in all points tempted like as" (Hebrews 4:15) Jesus Christ Himself was tempted. Now then, "let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." James 1:13.

But God permits us to come into circumstances whereby the defects of our sinful nature, which is in conflict with the divine nature of the justified, become apparent to us. For "every way of a [natural] man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts." Proverbs 21:2. All humanity then are born as the "generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness." Proverbs 30:12.

God says of all humanity, "Who can understand his errors?" (Psalm 19:12), which is to say, "Who can understand the defects of his sinful nature?" Of ourselves, we cannot see our faults. In light of this, God says, "What man is he that feareth the LORD? him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose." Psalm 25:12. God Himself chooses the means by which "God shall reveal even this unto...[us]" (Philippians 3:15), even our defects of character through the errors of our sinful nature.

The Role of the Law

In bringing us into various circumstances by His providence, Christ, through the Holy Spirit, admonishes us, "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass [mirror]: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." James 1:22-25.

The law is like a mirror, a perfect representation of Christ's character of love. By our looking into this mirror, Christ working through the Holy Spirit, causes us perceive the defects of our sinful nature. In other words, by looking into the mirror, we compare ourselves with Christ's character which is in accordance with God's law of love, "the perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25), such

that the character flaws of our sinful nature stand revealed in our sight.

Christ, who is a perfect representation of God's law of love, is our Example and so, it is Christ with whom we are to compare ourselves. For God says we should be such that "we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise." 2 Corinthians 10:12.

Prayer

Prayer is the means of communication between our finite minds and the mind of God, the Infinite One. By prayer, we come into the audience chamber of God and receive God's undivided attention as if there were not any other beings in the whole universe. Prayer helps to mend the broken relationship between God and all humanity by re-establishing our communion with God. Prayer is absolutely essential to our salvation. It cannot be dispensed with and we still be saved.

Now having perceived the defects of our sinful nature, we may pray, in accordance with the word of God, the Bible, saying, "O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting [sitting down] and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest [discern] my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether." Psalm 139:1-4.

Praying, we should say, you are God who "knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for...[you] knew what was in man." John 2:24, 25. Therefore, in response to God's revealing of our character flaws, we should pray to God saying, in truth, "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity [wickedness]

have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." Psalm 32:5.

Self-Denial

Christ says, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." Luke 9:23. This statement of Christ means that the formation of a right character, a character of love, is first and foremost, achieved by self-denial, by denying the natural inclinations of the sinful nature. This is the goal of our sanctification.

By revealing our character flaws to us, God causes the conscientious individual to deny self and to "flee these things; and [to] follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness." 1 Timothy 6:11. Such a justified individual, guided by "a good conscience" (1 Timothy 1:5) which was fashioned by the "divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4) implanted in them by God, will pray earnestly to God for help.

They will pray to God saying, in accordance with the word of God, the Bible, "Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression [sin]." Psalm 19:12, 13.

Moreover, by denying self, the language of our hearts will be, "I esteem all thy precepts" (Psalm 119:128), all your moral principles, "concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way." Psalm 119:128. "Lead me in the way everlasting." Psalm 139:24. "Let thine hand help me; for I have chosen thy precepts" (Psalm 119:173), I have chosen your moral principles.

"I have chosen the way of truth." Psalm 119:30. "Uphold me according unto thy word, that I may live" (Psalm 119:116), eternally: "and let me not be ashamed of my hope." Psalm 119:116. "Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not." Psalm 17:5.

You can never be successful in elevating yourself in God's sight, unless your will is on the side of Christ, cooperating with the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit. Do not feel that you cannot, but say, "I *can* overcome sin, I *will* overcome sin." In this way, you deny self, you deny your evil inclinations. God has pledged His Holy Spirit to help you in every decided effort on your part.

"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." James 4:7. God cannot save any person against his will, from the power of Satan devices. Each person must work with his human power, aided by Christ's divine power, to resist Satan and to conquer at any cost to themselves. In short, each person must overcome sin in the same way that Christ overcame sin.

In other words, each person must do *their* part. They must be a victor over Satan on their own account, through the strength and grace that Christ gives them. Each person must be a co-worker with Christ in the labour of overcoming sin.

Those among humanity, who are the victims of evil habits and who are held tightly in Satan's grasp, must be aroused to the necessity of making an effort for themselves. Other persons may put forth the most earnest endeavour to uplift them, the grace of God may be freely offered, Christ may entreat, His angels may minister, but all will be in vain unless they themselves are roused to fight the battle on their own behalf.

To every child of humanity, a candidate for eternal life, are these words of God spoken, "Be strong, and quit [conduct] yourselves like men, O ye...[people], that ye be not servants unto" (1 Samuel 4:9), Satan: quit [conduct] yourselves like men, and fight." 1 Samuel 4:9. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit [conduct] you like men, be strong." 1 Corinthians 16:13. "Be thou strong...and shew [show] thyself a man." 1 Kings 2:2.

Let this then be the prayer of your heart, "Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness." Psalm 143:10.

Faith

You then, as an individual who has prayed to God for help in overcoming sin, will be found among those "who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." Hebrews 6:18. "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast [steadfast]" (Hebrews 6:19) in that God "is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Philippians 3:21), even to "subdue our iniquities." Micah 7:19.

Therefore, if you have "staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but...[were] strong in faith, giving glory to God" (Romans 4:20), giving all praise and honour to God; "and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform." (Romans 4:20, 21), then this faith of yours causes God's promises to be a reality in your life. "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure." Romans 4:16.

Taking hold of God's promises by faith, you will say, in accordance with the word of God, the Bible, "It is God that girdeth [secures] me with [moral] strength, and maketh my way perfect." Psalm 18:32. For God says, "The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide." Psalm 37:31.

You may then say in truth, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Galatians 2:20.

The key then to success in attaining to true sanctification is our faith in Christ. For God says you are to be such "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; [such] that ye...[are] rooted and grounded in love." Ephesians 3:17. This means that, by exercising faith in Christ, we have come to love Christ with our whole heart and, by extension, to love the Father and the Holy Spirit, and to

love all God's created intelligences, including, your fellow human beings.

Christ says, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." John 15:4, 5. Using the illustration of a grapevine, Christ says that in order to be sanctified we must, by faith, have a relation to Him like that of a branch to the parent stock.

The branch, in order to grow and bear fruit, must remain in constant connection with the parent stock and thereby receive lifegiving nutrients, otherwise the branch will wither and die. So, in order to be sanctified we must, at all times, retain our connection with Christ in that our faith in Christ is to be steadfast for as Christ says, "without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5), that is, do nothing good.

"The just shall live by faith" (Hebrews 10:38), or in other words, shall have eternal life by their faith. "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him." Colossians 2:6. We are to continue walking in the steps which were already taken by us in order to be justified by God.

Thus, sanctification is God's test to see if we who are justified will remain "stedfast [steadfast], unmoveable" (1 Corinthians 15:58) in our faith in Christ such that we do not resist the working of God's "divine power." 2 Peter 1:3. It is by our consent that we allow God's power to "subdue our iniquities" (Micah 7:19), to subdue the sinful nature.

Then God says of us, "Ye have put off the old man with his deeds" (Colossians 3:9) for "the old man...is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." Ephesians 4:22. "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him [Christ], that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Romans 6:6.

Now then "being rooted and grounded in love" (Ephesians 3:17) you are now "renewed in...your mind" (Ephesians 4:23), such "that ye put on the new man, which after God" (Ephesians 4:24), according to the likeness of God's character of love, "is created in righteousness and true holiness." Ephesians 4:24.

Through constant surrender to God and steadfast faith in God's promises, you will be enabled to "walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4), enabled to live the new life in harmony with Christ's character of love, even the life of faith.

Obedience

"Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways." Haggai 1:5. In response to God, we should say with our "whole heart" (Psalm 9:1), "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies" (Psalm 119:59), which is the word of God, the Bible. "I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments." Psalm 119:60.

There is danger in delaying to obey any commandment of God of which we are aware. For God says, "Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither [where] he goeth." John 12:35. That is, God says that we are to practice the truth, which is to walk in the light, lest the darkness of sinful ways settles upon our minds such that we cannot "discern between good and evil." 2 Samuel 19:35.

So, God says, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" Isaiah 5:20.

How do we walk in the light of truth? We do so when "we all, with open face" (2 Corinthians 3:18), with unveiled faces, "beholding as in a glass" (2 Corinthians 3:18), as in a mirror, "the glory of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18), the perfect character of Christ, "are changed into the same image from glory to glory" (2 Corinthians

3:18), from one degree of goodness to another, "even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Corinthians 3:18.

It is by loving Christ, by copying Christ, by depending completely upon Christ, that we are "transformed" (Romans 12:2) into the likeness of Christ's perfect character of love.

You then, are to be such as have "purposed in...[your] heart" (Daniel 1:8) to obey God's law of love. Thus, by faith, we will "walk in love" (Ephesians 5:2) and say "the Lord GOD will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." Isaiah 50:7.

By turning our feet into the path of obedience with fixedness of purpose, we will be such that we "labour, striving according to his working" (Colossians 1:29), the working of the Holy Spirit, "which worketh in...[us] mightily." Colossians 1:29.

We are to be found "looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2), seeing Jesus Christ our Example with the spiritual eye. For when the mind dwells upon self, it is turned away from Christ, who is our source of strength and spiritual life. Therefore, we should be mindful "lest Satan should get an advantage of us" (2 Corinthians 2:11), and we should be such that "we are not ignorant of his [Satan's] devices." 2 Corinthians 2:11.

It is Satan's constant effort to keep our attention diverted from Christ, our Saviour, and thus prevent our union and communion with Christ. The pleasures of the world, life's cares and perplexities and sorrows, the faults of others, or our own faults and imperfections—to any or all of these—Satan will seek to divert the mind. Be careful then that you are not misled by Satan's devices, for by separating us from Christ, Satan hopes to gain the victory over us.

Believe in Christ, believe that "he is able...to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Hebrews 7:25. Let self be lost sight of in the contemplation of Christ.

"Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness" (James 1:21), lay aside all moral defilement and the abundance of depravity, "and receive with meekness the engrafted word" (James 1:21), the implanted word of God, "which is able to save your souls." James 1:21.

The word of God is implanted in our hearts and minds by the Holy Spirit as a guide for us in our daily lives such that "the Lord direct...[our] hearts into the love of God" (2 Thessalonians 3:5), into the same love that resides in God's heart. "Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength" (Isaiah 26:4), moral strength to overcome sin.

So, God says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Romans 8:1. "For if ye live after the flesh," (Romans 8:13) according to the sinful nature, "ye shall die" (Romans 8:13) "the second death [which is eternal]" (Revelation 20:6), "but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Romans 8:13) eternally.

You are free from the condemnation of God's law of love if you do not now live according to the sinful nature, but instead live according to the new life born in you through the Holy Spirit, according to the righteousness of Christ that is in you.

A Knowledge of God

There are many ways in which God seeks to make Himself known to us and to bring us into communion with Him. Nature speaks to our senses without ceasing, it speaks to our hearts inviting us to become acquainted with God who made all the things of nature. God also speaks to us through His providential workings and through the influence of the Holy Spirit upon our hearts.

Furthermore, God speaks to us in His word, the Bible, in which we have more clearly the revelation of God's character, of His dealings with humanity, and His great work of redemption. Now

God says of Himself, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." John 17:17.

The word of truth, which is the word of God, the Bible, is essential to our sanctification. Therefore, in this book, I have set out to find the precious gems of truth in the Bible for God says, "The holy scriptures...are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Timothy 3:15.

Just as sanctification is a lifelong process, so the study of the Bible is a lifelong undertaking of those who wish to come to "the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature," unto the full degree, "of the fulness [perfection] of Christ." Ephesians 4:13. In studying the Bible for yourself, you may avoid being among those of whom God says, "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God." Matthew 22:29.

All throughout human history, God has declared regarding many, "I [was] grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways." Psalm 95:10. "Do not err, my beloved." James 1:16.

We will take a detailed look at how the Bible can give us a clear knowledge of God, and specifically, how to study the Bible for ourselves in a subsequent chapter.

The Cultivation of Right Thoughts

God says, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." Proverbs 23:7. Our thoughts then are an indication of our character. God says of the "the natural man" (1 Corinthians 2:14), "from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man." Mark 7:21-23.

"The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Romans 8:7. "To be

carnally minded is [eternal] death; but to be spiritually minded is [eternal] life and peace." Romans 8:6.

"The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD" (Proverbs 15:26), but God says, with respect to those who have been "transformed" (Romans 12:2) by God, "The thoughts of the righteous are right." Proverbs 12:5. We must at all times cultivate right thoughts. We should not allow our minds to wander and fasten on "evil thoughts" (Mark 7:21)—these must be resisted immediately and our minds turned to profitable subjects.

For Satan and the other demons, the "evil angels" (Psalm 78:49), will suggest unholy thoughts to our minds in an effort to corrupt our minds, thus causing us to sin. Our sinful nature will also give rise to evil thoughts and the world around us will entice us to sin, but the mind must be trained to turn from these things.

You might say, "How can I resist Satan, my sinful nature, and the world, all of which tempt me to sin?" God says, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." 1 Corinthians 10:13.

What is the way of escape which God provides? It is prayer, the turning of our minds to God for help. Say to God, "Unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul" (Psalm 25:1) and start talking to God asking God to help you not to sin. Thus, you are found to be "continuing instant in prayer." Romans 12:12. Meet every temptation instantly with prayer to God. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Psalm 46:1.

After praying, by faith believe that you have received the blessing from God which you desired. Now, the language of our hearts should be "I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love" (Psalm 119:113), "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day." Psalm 119:97. God's law of love is a profitable subject to which we can turn our minds when we are tempted to sin.

Moreover, God says, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Philippians 4:8.

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law [of love] doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." Psalm 1:1-3.

Two Errors to Guard Against

There are two errors which the justified, who are known as the children of God, particularly those of the justified who have just come to trust in God's grace, especially need to guard against.

Now the first error is attempting to keep the law apart from Christ, that is, attempting to be saved by one's own merit. The second error is attempting to be saved in one's sins, because of the belief that, since we are justified by faith, our works have nothing to do with our salvation. We will now look at what God has to say about these two errors.

The Error of Attempting to be Saved by One's Own Merit

Speaking of mankind, God says, "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes." Proverbs 21:2. Almost all of humanity believe that they are good. But God says, "Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled." Titus 1:15. "Because

the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Romans 8:7.

Therefore, God declares that all humanity who have not been justified can say of themselves in truth, "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Isaiah 64:6. Humanity's thoughts and feelings, if they have not been justified by God, are corrupt and they have "an evil conscience." Hebrews 10:22. All humanity's deeds then, even their good deeds, are tainted with sin because their motives, their spring of action, is evil.

God says, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." Job 14:4. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." Jeremiah 13:23. So, those professed Christians who look to their own works, trusting to anything they can do to bring themselves into harmony with God, are in error. He who is trying to become holy by his own works in keeping God's law of love, is attempting an impossibility.

All that humanity can do without Christ is polluted with selfishness and sin. It is *only* "the grace of Christ" (Galatians 1:6), through faith, that can make us holy.

Such persons bring their good deeds before God as if they had met God's requirements and earned their salvation, but God declares their good deeds to be "dead works." Hebrews 6:1. They have no merit in God's eyes. These persons are attempting an impossibility by seeking to be saved by their own merit.

To some who have already been justified by Him, God says, "Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh" (Galatians 3:3), by the sinful nature?" "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the [works of] law; ye are fallen from grace." Galatians 5:4.

For God says, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall

no flesh [no human being] be justified." Galatians 2:16. "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh [no human being] be justified in his [God's] sight." Romans 3:20.

"The works of the law" (Galatians 2:16) and "the deeds of the law" (Romans 3:20) refer to one's attempts to keep the law without Christ dwelling in the heart by faith. Such an attempt always results in what God calls "dead works" (Hebrews 6:1) and not "good works." Ephesians 2:10. Even those who have been justified by God are not immune to this error.

The only remedy is to be justified by God at which time those who are justified become "rooted and grounded in love." Ephesians 3:17. Thus, love becomes the motive of all that the person does instead of selfishness.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:8-10. It is only by faith in Christ that we become "rooted and grounded in love" (Ephesians 3:17) "because the love of God is shed abroad [supernaturally poured] in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Romans 5:5. Therefore, we are enabled by God to obey God's law of love.

"Now the end [goal] of the commandment is charity [love] out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned [sincere faith]" (1 Timothy 1:5) in Christ. God says, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Revelation 22:14) which is "the heavenly Jerusalem." Hebrews 12:22. God's reward of paradise and immortality then is only for those people who are righteous in God's eyes.

God says, "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." Matthew 24:13. For "when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity [sin], and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth,

shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die." Ezekiel 18:24.

No matter how many victories the individual has won in their past life in humanity's second battle, if in the end, they are not found to be justified, in right standing before God, they will not be saved.

True obedience to God's law of love manifested in "good works" (Ephesians 2:10) is the fruit of faith, which is to say, the result of faith. True obedience does not *precede* our justification, but instead *follows* our justification. Therefore, anyone attempting to keep the law in their own strength, apart from Christ, in order to be justified is attempting an impossibility.

The Error of Attempting to be Saved in One's Sins

God says of you who are justified, "Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the [condemnation of the] law, but under grace." Romans 6:14. Some interpret this Bible verse and even teach others that it means that the law has been done away with.

Since faith in Christ alone is the crowning step by which we become partakers of God's grace, they say that our works have nothing to do with our salvation. They say that it is only necessary to believe in Christ and this belief has released us from keeping the law. "Only believe", they say, "and you shall be saved". They say, "We are under the grace of God and have no need of the law." Such persons sin every day and have no remorse for their sins.

But God says, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law." Romans 3:31. "What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the [condemnation of the] law, but under grace? God forbid" (Romans 6:15), which is to say, "Absolutely not!"

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Romans 6:1, 2. "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" Romans 6:16. "Reckon ye...yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 6:11.

The teaching that we are not accountable to God's law is a dangerous error, for it causes those who hold this doctrine to make no effort to keep God's law of love. This teaching is contrary to what God says in His word, the Bible: "Whoso keepeth the law is a wise son." Proverbs 28:7. It is "the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Timothy 3:15.

"God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." Romans 6:17, 18.

"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth [breaks] also the law: for sin is the transgression [breaking] of the law." 1 John 3:4. But "blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Revelation 22:14) which is "the heavenly Jerusalem." Hebrews 12:22.

We can see then the fallacy of the belief that our works have no bearing on our salvation, because only those found to be obedient to God's law of love will "have right to the tree of life." Revelation 22:14. Those who commit sin will, if they do not repent and do "good works" (Ephesians 2:10) through faith in Christ, suffer the penalty of eternal death for their sins.

Comparison of the Two Errors

One group of professed Christians exalt God's law but, in error, seek to earn their salvation by their own best efforts in keeping the law. These fail of obtaining salvation because they sought it not through "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Acts 20:21. They are of "the works of the law." Galatians 2:16.

But God says, "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Romans 4:4, 5. "Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith." Habakkuk 2:4. Only faith "in Jesus Christ...availeth any thing" (Galatians 5:6) towards our obtaining salvation and eternal life.

The other group of professed Christians, in error, cast away God's law and claim salvation on account of their belief in Christ, which in fact, is a superficial belief. They live in sin and yet claim to be followers of Christ. They have not heeded God's instruction, "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art...called." 1 Timothy 6:12. Such persons do not "war a good warfare" (1 Timothy 1:18) against sin and Satan and so they fail of obtaining salvation.

For God says, we should know that "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: [He, Christ,] who did no sin." 1 Peter 2:21, 22. Christ is He "who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." Hebrews 7:26. "If, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid." Galatians 2:17.

Only the individual "that is without sin" (John 8:7) shall obtain salvation and eternal life.

God Encourages Humanity

God says, "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? But thus saith the LORD, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save [you]." Isaiah 49:24, 25. All humanity are lawful captives of Satan and destined for eternal death, but God has promised to save them from eternal death, and instead give them eternal life.

God's promise will benefit only those among all humanity who "war a good warfare" (1 Timothy 1:18) according to God's battle plan, the Bible. For God says, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." Galatians 5:24.

Of such people, God says, "Ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned [sincere] love of the brethren" (1 Peter 1:22), your fellow human beings, "ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." 1 Peter 1:22. They are "faultless" (Jude 1:24) before God and, therefore, God's promise is fulfilled in them.

God says, "We do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying." 2 Corinthians 12:19. "Hear, O my...[child], and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many" (Proverbs 4:10), the years of your life shall never end. The key then to winning this second and final battle against sin and Satan is to follow God's battle plan, the Bible.

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." James 1:12. Paradise and immortality is worth everything to us. We must not run any risk in this matter. God has crowns for those that overcome sin.

Now Christ says, with respect to the judgment of all who have ever lived on earth, if "he...overcometh [sin]...I will not blot out his name out of the book of [eternal] life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." Revelation 3:5.

"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." Revelation 2:7. Thus, your name will be retained in God's book of eternal life if in the judgment you are found to be faithful, and you will have eternal life by eating from "the tree of life." Revelation 2:7.

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." 2 Corinthians 5:10. So, "to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life." Romans 2:7. In other words, "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved [by God to eternal life]." Matthew 24:13.

"The LORD thy God...he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing." Zephaniah 3:17. "Whoso keepeth the law is a wise son" (Proverbs 28:7) and "a wise son maketh a glad father." Proverbs 15:20.

Everyone who enters "the holy city, new Jerusalem" (Revelation 21:2), they who "seek for glory and honour and immortality" (Romans 2:7) will enter it as a conqueror. He or she will not enter it as a condemned criminal, but as a child of God. And the welcome from Christ given to everyone who enters there will be, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Matthew 25:34.

This chapter has given only an introduction to the process of sanctification. In the following chapters, we will take a detailed look at some aspects of sanctification.

Chapter Ten

The Final Battle: Reasons to Pray

Prayer is absolutely essential to our sanctification and, hence, essential to our salvation. It is essential to our winning our second and final battle with sin and Satan. As was said before, prayer is two-way communication with God. In its true sense, prayer is not a monologue where we talk all the time and do not listen to God.

Now we know that God is omniscient, which is to say, God is all-knowing. The question then arises, "Since God is all-knowing, why should we pray?" The answer is that, according to God's word, the Bible, there are many reasons for us to pray. We will now look at some of these reasons.

It Gives Us Access to God

When the first human pair, Adam and Eve, sinned the human race was destined for extinction "for the wages of sin is [eternal] death." Romans 6:23. If God had carried out the penalty of death for sin, Adam and Eve would have died and that would have been the end

of the human race because at the time of their sin they had not yet had any offspring.

Why did Adam and Eve not die immediately? The answer is that Christ, the Son of God, a member of the Godhead, "he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed" (Numbers 16:48) in that the death penalty was averted. Thus, "there is...one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." 1 Timothy 2:5, 6.

Adam and Eve lost their open, face-to-face access to God when they sinned, because God would not communicate with Adam and Eve after they had sinned as He did when they were without sin.

Now God says, "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." Isaiah 59:1, 2.

God says, "I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land" (Ezekiel 22:30), which is to say, for the world, "that I should not destroy it: but I found none." Ezekiel 22:30.

"The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one." Psalm 14:2, 3. God knew that none among humanity would be qualified to stand guiltless before Him as a mediator for the human race, since all of humanity have sinned.

"And he [God] saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor" (Isaiah 59:16), none "that...might plead for a man with God" (Job 16:21): "therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him." Isaiah 59:16.

"Therefore he said that he would destroy them, had not..." (Psalm 106:23), Christ, "his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath, lest [for fear that] he [God] should destroy them." Psalm 106:23. "For the wages of sin is [eternal] death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 6:23.

So, all humanity now has no direct access to God. Our only access to God is through our "mediator...the man Christ Jesus." 1 Timothy 2:5. Christ is He who "through him we...have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Ephesians 2:18. It is Christ "in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him" (Ephesians 3:21), by "the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12) which is the faith that we receive as a gift from God to exercise in taking hold of God's promises.

Christ is He "by whom...we have access by faith into this grace" (Romans 5:2), into this divine influence upon our hearts, "wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:2), wherein we rejoice in hope of receiving God's sinless character of love. Our access to God is solely through Christ by faith.

"The LORD is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous." Proverbs 15:29. "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." 1 Peter 3:12.

If we come to God without "a wicked mind" (Proverbs 21:27) we have access to God and God hears our prayers. When we pray, we are inviting God into our lives, otherwise our relation to God is that we are "alienated and enemies in...[our] mind by wicked works." Colossians 1:21.

Thus, "being confident of this very thing" (Philippians 1:6) that I am counted by God as among the righteous, when I pray, by faith, I believe that "the LORD hath heard my supplication; the LORD will receive my prayer." Psalm 6:9. Christ Himself presents my prayers to the Father along with Christ's own merits and it is

wholly acceptable to the Father. In this way, we have access to God by our prayers.

To Worship God

"Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit [a mind] to them that walk therein" (Isaiah 42:5), "Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness." Psalm 29:2. "For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God." Exodus 34:14.

"The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit" (John 4:23), that is to say, with their whole mental disposition, "and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." John 4:23, 24. "For them that honour me I [God] will honour" (1 Samuel 2:30), God says, "and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." 1 Samuel 2:30.

Therefore, let all humanity say, "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker" (Psalm 95:6), for "holy and reverend is his name." Psalm 111:9. "O give thanks unto the LORD; call upon his name: make known his deeds among the people." Psalm 105:1. Let every human being say, "I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth." Psalm 34:1.

Having reverence then and profound awe for God, all of mankind should pray to God, worshipping God by paying homage to Him with thanksgiving and praise. Let all humanity say of themselves, "Let them shout for joy, and be glad...yea, let them say continually, Let the LORD be magnified" (Psalm 35:27), in that the Lord is to be highly praised.

To Agree With God's Plan

God says, "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name." (Matthew 6:9), that is, your name is to be reverenced. "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Matthew 6:9, 10. "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen." Matthew 6:13.

God "in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen." 1 Timothy 6:15, 16.

God's agenda includes that His kingdom of righteousness be established on earth as it is in heaven, and that all humanity should acknowledge God as the "only Potentate" (1 Timothy 6:15) on earth, the only monarch of the earth and all the universe. Also, God's plan is that mankind should acknowledge that God is Ruler forevermore.

The context of all our prayers then should be that we acknowledge that it is God to whom we pray, and that we agree with God's agenda and plan. For God says, "Them that honour me I [God] will honour." 1 Samuel 2:30.

Because God Satisfies Our Deepest Need

God says, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." Jeremiah 31:3. "For he [God] satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness." Psalm 107:9. God satisfies the deepest human need which is to love, and to be loved in return.

Hence, we may say, "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD" (Psalm 27:4), the beauty of His character of love, "and to enquire in his temple." Psalm 27:4. "Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom." 1 Kings 10:8. We pray to God then because we are drawn to God by His love for us, and we love God in return.

To Know God

God says that all humanity should say of themselves in truth, "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." Ephesians 3:14, 15. I pray "that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man. Ephesians 3:16.

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." Ephesians 3:17-19.

We are to pray for a knowledge of the love of God in all its fulness. "We...pray...and...desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God" Colossians 1:9, 10. "Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord." Ephesians 5:10. Our prayer then should be for a knowledge of God's will.

Let our prayer be, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant." Psalm 119:176. "Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts, cause thy face to shine" (Psalm 80:19), that is, show us your favour;

"and we shall be saved." Psalm 80:19. It is God who gives us a knowledge of Himself by causing us to turn from our evil ways and to walk in His ways.

"And this is the confidence that we have in him [God], that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." 1 John 5:14, 15.

So, knowing the love of God and His will for humanity, we are to pray in accordance with God's will. When we do this, we learn to bring our own hearts into alignment with God's will. Every person may then say, "Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden [withheld] the request of his lips." Psalm 21:2.

God's will now becomes our will, and so we live in constant agreement with God. In this way, we come to know God by experience. Prayer then is essential to our knowing God.

It Builds a Relationship With God

In the case of those who are justified by God, "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Galatians 4:6. "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." Romans 8:15.

Through faith in Christ, we are drawn to regard God as a tender, loving Parent and so we pray affectionately saying, "Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:6), where "Abba" is the Greek word for father. In so doing, we obey God's command, "Draw nigh [near] to God, and he will draw nigh [near] to you." James 4:8.

As we go "from faith to faith" (Romans 1:17), as we increase in faith going from one level of faith to a higher level of faith, we can pray in truth saying, "Trust in him [God] at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us." Psalm 62:8.

"My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise." Psalm 57:7.

Through faith we learn to trust God and over time our trust develops into steadfast love for God. Therefore, with love for God in our hearts, we can pray saying in truth, "The Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him." John 8:29. Genuine faith in God then is followed by love for Him, which is followed by obedience.

Then it is true of God that "the father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wise child shall have joy of him." Proverbs 23:24. For through communion with God and in the practice of righteousness in our daily life, we please God in all things and bring joy to His heart.

On the other hand, we can say of God, "Thou [God] wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Psalm 16:11. So it is that God gives us joy and pleasures forevermore. In all of this, our prayers to God help us to build a loving relationship between ourselves and God.

Jesus Christ Set Us an Example

When Christ was on earth, "in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he [Christ] went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." Mark 1:35. "And it came to pass in those days, that he [Christ] went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God." Luke 6:12. "And it came to pass, that, as he [Christ] was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray." Luke 11:1.

Now Christ says, "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done." John 13:15. Jesus Christ set all humanity an example when He made prayer to God a priority in His life.

We too must follow Christ's example and make prayer to God a priority in our lives. We too can ask God, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1) and we can be assured that God will indeed teach us how to pray.

God Commands Us to Pray

God says to all humanity, "Enter into his [God's] gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name." Psalm 100:4. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be [white] as wool." Isaiah 1:18. "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." Jeremiah 33:3.

Moreover, God says, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." Matthew 7:7, 8.

"Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving." Colossians 4:2. In other words, you are to be watchful and pray so "that ye enter not into temptation." Matthew 26:41. God also says, "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." 1 Timothy 2:8.

Furthermore, God says, "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (Hebrews 4:14, 15), touched by our moral frailty; "but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace" (Hebrews 4:15, 16), the throne of God, "that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Hebrews 4:16.

Thus, God commands us to pray to Him and, because He has invited us to pray, we need not be afraid of approaching God. For God desires us to commune with Him in prayer. The language of our hearts should be, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace" (Hebrews 4:16), the throne of unmerited favour, "that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Hebrews 4:16.

It Keeps Us From Sinning

God says, "A whisperer separateth chief friends" (Proverbs 16:28), separates the best of friends. This means that the whispered temptations of Satan constantly entice us to sin. Let our constant prayer then be "Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart. Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight." Psalm 119:34, 35.

God says, "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint." Luke 18:1. "Pray without ceasing." 1 Thessalonians 5:17. "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost [Holy Spirit], keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." Jude 1:20, 21. Prayer to God for help against temptation then keeps the love of God in our hearts so that we are not found to be "haters of God." Romans 1:30.

If we neglect prayer through which we gain moral strength, we shall deviate from the right path and the darkness of Satan will settle upon our minds and hearts. Therefore, God exhorts all of humanity to pray to Him, for prayer is essential to our having spiritual life which keeps us from sinning. Under no circumstances should we allow our communion with God to be broken up by "the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11), the trickery of Satan.

To Receive Blessings

God says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17), that is to say, neither the changing shadow of the sun as the earth turns. "Yet ye have not, because ye ask not." James 4:2. There is not the very least plausible excuse to accuse God of fickleness in granting us blessings, for some blessings will not come unless we pray and ask for them.

All humanity can say of God, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Ephesians 1:3. When it comes to "spiritual blessings" (Ephesians 1:3), if we pray asking for these, God's answer is always an unequivocal, "Yes."

With respect to all other blessings for which we ask, it is often true that "we know not what we should pray for as we ought." Romans 8:26. In such cases, God's answer to our prayer may be, "No." Notwithstanding this, God is always eager to shower us with blessings. Therefore, we may continually say, "O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: because his mercy endureth for ever." Psalm 118:1.

To Relieve Us of Our Burdens

God says, "Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved" (Psalm 55:22), never allow the righteous to be shaken in their faith in God. "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." 1 Peter 5:7.

"Be careful for nothing" (Philippians 4:6), do not be anxious about anything; "but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto

God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:6, 7.

God reveals Himself as He truly is, a Burden Bearer, One who cares for all humanity in every way, not willing that they should be bowed down with cares, anxiety, and worry.

Now God says, "Is any thing too hard for the LORD?" Genesis 18:14. "Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?" Jeremiah 32:27. "For with God nothing shall be impossible." Luke 1:37. The answer then is that there is nothing too hard for God.

"Thou [God] wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." Isaiah 26:3. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is." Jeremiah 17:7. "O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee." Psalm 84:12.

God is more than capable of solving any difficulties or perplexities in our lives. But we must, by faith, leave our burdens with God and go happily on our way knowing that God will bless us as He sees fit for our best good.

To Ask God to Direct Our Lives

God says that all humanity may say among themselves, "Pray...unto the LORD thy God...that the LORD thy God may shew us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do." Jeremiah 42:2, 3. They may individually pray, "Lead me in the way everlasting." Psalm 139:24. In this way, we may ask God to direct our lives.

In answer to such prayers, God says, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding...Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD" (Proverbs 3:5-7), have reverential awe for God, "and depart from evil." Proverbs 3:7.

To Save Souls

We will now consider how our prayers can help in souls, that is, persons, being saved from eternal death by God. Now "The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name." Exodus 15:3. For Satan fights against God to keep souls in darkness so that they cannot be saved, but God fights against Satan to deliver them so that souls may be saved. For every human being who is saved at last it is God "who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." 1 Peter 2:9.

Now God says, "To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is [eternal] life and peace." Romans 8:6. God's war with Satan is a battle for the mind of persons so that instead of their being "carnally minded" (Romans 8:6) they might be "spiritually minded." Romans 8:6.

God's Legal Framework for War With Satan

God says of all humanity, "Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations." Isaiah 66:3. Moreover, God says, referring to Satan and the other demons, "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered?" Isaiah 49:24. There is a sense in which Satan has a legal claim to humanity in that they have chosen Satan's ways and not God's ways.

Therefore, God asks all humanity, "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee?" (Psalm 94:20), which is to say, "Shall you have fellowship with Satan?" Our answer should be, "Absolutely not!"

God says, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Psalm 66:18. "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination." Proverbs 28:9. For

"without faith it is impossible to please him [God]: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Hebrews 11:6. God will not hear the prayers of the unrepentant sinner unless they come to Him in faith.

But the righteous may say in truth, "I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill." Psalm 3:4. "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." 1 Peter 3:12. Thus, God says, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." James 5:16.

A righteous man called "Elisha said" (2 Kings 3:14), to an evil king, "As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of" (2 Kings 3:14), the righteous king, "I would not look toward thee, nor see thee [the unrighteous king]." 2 Kings 3:14. Likewise, in the spiritual realm, unless the Christ and the righteous intercede, that is, pray, and confess the sins of the wicked and seek a blessing for them, God will not bless the wicked in certain ways.

Now "your Father which is in heaven...he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Matthew 5:45. In this way, God blesses all humanity, but some blessings will not come upon the wicked without intercession. "For the LORD hath a controversy with the nations, he will plead with all flesh [all people on earth]; he will give them that are wicked to the sword, saith the LORD." Jeremiah 25:31.

God therefore says, "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he [God] shall give him [eternal] life for them that sin not unto [eternal] death. There is a sin unto [eternal] death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto [eternal] death." 1 John 5:16, 17. To "sin unto death" (1 John 5:16) is to be finally impenitent and, hence, grieve away the Holy Spirit. The prayers

of the righteous "availeth much" (James 5:16) in the salvation of souls, in the salvation of persons who "sin not unto [eternal] death." 1 John 5:16.

We should say, "God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you." 1 Samuel 12:23. Neglecting to pray for others is a sin. In light of this, God also says, "Curse ye...curse ye bitterly...because they came not to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty." Judges 5:23. This means that praying for others, which is known as intercessory prayers, is not optional for the Christian, for God pronounces a curse on those who do not put forth efforts to win souls to Christ.

When we pray for others, even for those who not believe in God, there is a sense in which we give God legal permission on their behalf to intervene in their lives in order to save them. The prayer of faith brings those for whom we pray into the audience chamber of God where they may receive a blessing. For God's goal in blessing anyone is that through His blessing they may be saved from eternal death.

Ultimately, unless Christ intercedes for souls the Father will not bless them. "God commendeth" (Romans 5:8), God exhibited, "his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Romans 5:6.

"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Romans 5:10. It was God who took the initiative through our Mediator, Christ, in seeking to save mankind from eternal death.

It is Christ who takes the initiative in interceding for humanity, though they are wicked. Nevertheless, the prayers of the righteous "availeth much" (James 5:16) in that they, in effect, add further weight to Christ's intercession resulting in greater blessings for those persons for whom the righteous pray. In this way, even the prayerless may be blessed as long as they are not finally impen-

itent, in which case they have committed the unpardonable sin and so God will not hear prayers on their behalf.

This then is God's legal framework for His warfare against Satan. It is built upon intercessory prayer, especially those by Christ and the Holy Spirit. The intercession of the righteous among mankind, whom God calls saints, is highly esteemed by God and adds further weight to God's right to bless humanity.

Christ Makes War With Satan

God says, "Who will rise up for me against the evildoers? or who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?" Psalm 94:16. "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Isaiah 6:8. "For the transgression of a land many are the princes thereof: but by a man of understanding and knowledge the state thereof shall be prolonged." Proverbs 28:2.

Satan calls himself "the prince of this world" (John 12:31), the ruler of the earth. So, Satan and his evil angels, known as demons, are "the princes" (Proverbs 28:2) to whom God refers. This means that God is saying that many are the demons that Satan has set over a land or a country to cause evil to prevail there.

But thank God for Christ! For Christ answers God saying, "Here am I; send me." Isaiah 6:8. He is the "man of understanding and knowledge" (Proverbs 28:2) who was victorious over Satan's temptations to sin and who intercedes so that the inhabitants of the land, that is, the whole world, are not destroyed, so that "the state thereof shall be prolonged." Proverbs 28:2.

God says, "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils [booty]." Luke 11:21, 22. Satan is the "strong man" (Luke 11:21), Christ is the One who is "stronger than he" (Luke 11:22) and Satan's "goods" (Luke 11:21)

and "his spoils" (Luke 11:22), his booty, are the souls that Satan has kept in darkness.

This means then that Christ is able to lead souls from the darkness of Satan's lies into the light of God's truths. Thus, God says, "A wise man scaleth the city" (Proverbs 21:22), penetrates the defences by climbing over the walls of the city, "of the mighty, and casteth down the strength of the confidence thereof." Proverbs 21:22. Christ is the "wise man" (Proverbs 21:22) who overcomes Satan "the mighty." Proverbs 21:22.

In addition to Christ's intercession whereby souls are blessed, Christ is the "captain of the host of the LORD" (Joshua 5:14), the captain of "the angels of God" (Genesis 28:12) in heaven. He is "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." Ephesians 1:21.

Now God says, "Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening [being obedient] unto the voice of his word. Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure." Psalm 103:20, 21. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" Hebrews 1:14.

Christ is ruler over all the angels in heaven. Now every human being has been granted a guardian angel by God and this angel guards them from Satan's evil designs while there is hope that they might be saved, while they have not become finally "impenitent." Romans 2:5. "The angels of God" (Genesis 28:12) "minister" (Hebrews 1:14) to humanity seeking to draw them away from sin unto holiness according to God's "commandments" (Psalm 103:20) and "the voice of his word." Psalm 103:20.

Heaven then is a place of activity as God Himself seeks to draw sinners to Himself and He sends the angels on missions of mercy for those perishing in their sins. In this endeavour it is Christ who conducts the war against Satan on God's behalf.

Christ Gives us Power Over Satan

Just as God said to Christ, He also says to all humanity, "Who will rise up for me against the evildoers? or who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?" Psalm 94:16. God says that as Christians we should wage war against Satan and the wicked among mankind who have not obeyed God's command to "grieve not the holy Spirit of God." Ephesians 4:30.

The finally impenitent are those who have chosen Satan and his ways and have grieved away the Holy Spirit. God says of them "because ye have forsaken the LORD, he hath also forsaken you." 2 Chronicles 24:20. These wicked people then are the agents of Satan, so they wage war against those whom God calls Christians. This is spiritual warfare and God has sounded the battle cry.

Armed for Battle

In order for the Christian to engage in this spiritual war, God says, "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles [trickery] of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." Ephesians 6:10-13.

"Stand therefore, having your loins girt about [girded] with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching

thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." Ephesians 6:14-18.

The Christian must, first and foremost, be armed for battle against sin and Satan. "For of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage." 2 Peter 2:19. If the Christian has been overcome by Satan and is, therefore, in bondage to sin they cannot be "a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Timothy 2:3) for he or she is ineffective. Regarding such persons God says, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination." Proverbs 28:9.

Regarding the individuals who have been overcome by Satan and are in his power, and yet they seek to war against Satan, God says it is as if Satan, "he esteemeth iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood. The arrow cannot make him flee: slingstones" (Job 41:27, 28), stones flung from a sling, "are turned with him into stubble. Darts are counted as stubble: he laugheth at the shaking of a spear." Job 41:28, 29. In other words, Satan laughs at the attempts of such individuals to engage in spiritual warfare with him.

But if the Christian has on "the whole armour of God" (Ephesians 6:11) then they may say, "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" Romans 8:31. "My defence is of God, which saveth the upright in heart." Psalm 7:10. Those then who are spiritually armed are invincible in that Satan cannot overthrow them.

Putting Demons to Flight

Those who are not transformed by God are those who are in "the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will." 2 Timothy 2:26. They are influenced by evil angels who control their will. Therefore, the task of bringing their mind into conformity with God's law of love involves a battle for the mind of these individuals. This can only be accomplished by successfully

wresting control of their mind from the evil influence of Satan and the other demons and instead causing their mind to be controlled by God.

In this warfare, there is no middle ground, either we are controlled by Satan or we are controlled by God. Those who have chosen Satan's ways are his followers, and Satan uses them as his agents in his warfare against God and the righteous.

But how can the Christian battle against Satan and his followers among mankind? In answer to this question let us consider what Christ says in this regard. "Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you." Luke 10:19.

"Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Matthew 18:18. "Howbeit this kind [of demon] goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." Matthew 17:21.

The Christian can fight in this war only in the spiritual realm through prayer. For Christ has given the true Christian "power to tread on serpents and scorpions" (Luke 10:19), power to triumph over demons. By prayer, asking God to bind the demons and to loose their victims, our God in heaven acts to answer these prayers by His mighty power.

For God says, "The LORD shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten [defeated] before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways." Deuteronomy 28:7. So, when we pray, our prayers may cause demons, who are the evil angels, to flee through the authority granted us by Christ.

God says that the true Christian may say in truth, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds [strongholds];) casting down imaginations, and every high thing [every demon] that exalteth

itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." 2 Corinthians 10:3-5.

In this warfare, the Christian is victorious when first of all their own mind, and after that the minds of those for whom they pray, are such that God's grace has brought "into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." 2 Corinthians 10:5. It is their prayers and not physical warfare wherein they "war after the flesh" (2 Corinthians 10:3) which have prevailed with God to make themselves and those for whom they pray obedient to God's law of love. This means that the Christian may say in truth, "We are labourers together with God." 1 Corinthians 3:9.

Now God said of a particular king, "He went forth and warred against the Philistines, and brake down the wall of Gath, and the wall of Jabneh, and the wall of Ashdod, and built cities about Ashdod, and among the Philistines." 2 Chronicles 26:6. This king prevailed against his enemies and built cities, probably garrisons which are military posts, in the territory of his enemies.

Likewise, in the spiritual realm, the Christian who is victorious in prayer may establish strongholds for God in the midst of Satan's kingdom, by rescuing souls from Satan's power.

The Example of Daniel

Let us consider the example of a godly man named Daniel who said, "In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled...Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen." Daniel 10:2-5.

"And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee...for unto thee am I now sent. Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten

thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words." Daniel 10:11, 12.

"But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia." Daniel 10:13. "Then said he, Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee? and now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia." Daniel 10:20.

God sent an angel from heaven to speak with Daniel in answer to his prayers. The angel was seeking to wrest control of the minds of the rulers of Persia from the demon which the angel called "the prince of the kingdom of Persia." Daniel 10:13. Three full weeks elapsed before "Michael" (Daniel 10:13), who is Christ, intervened to assist the angel. This example of Daniel shows the warfare going on in the spiritual realm that is invisible to our sight.

Now God says, "I will lead on softly [gently], according as...[they] be able to endure, until I come unto" (Genesis 33:14) the desired end. In other words, the salvation of persons often involves victories that God wins day by day in turning their minds from sin to holiness.

We can learn from the example of Daniel that in praying to save souls, we are not to let go of God's arm too soon. We must continue praying until we have evidence from God that He has the victory over Satan. This final victory may not come until after a long, protracted process of God leading the person "in the way everlasting." Psalm 139:24. Thereafter, our prayers are still necessary to keep them on the right path because they continue to receive God's grace.

We may not see any evidence of the desired end, which is their conversion to God, before weeks, months, or years have passed. We may even pray for a lifetime and die without seeing an answer to our prayers. But God will continue to work to answer every sincere prayer even after we have died and so our prayers are not in vain.

God Calls for United Prayer

Christ says, "I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Matthew 18:19, 20.

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." 2 Chronicles 7:14. God calls for those who pray for others to unite in prayer.

Moreover, God says, "The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest." Luke 10:2. God who is "the Lord of the harvest" (Luke 10:2) calls the gathering of a crop of persons converted from sin to righteousness from all over the earth His harvest of souls. This harvest God says is great in that there are many persons to be gathered into heaven forever to live in God's presence.

Nevertheless, God says that those among all humanity who "are labourers together with God" (1 Corinthians 3:9) are few. For God says, that in addition to praying for others, we are to obey God's gospel commission, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15), that is, to every person. But God says those who labour in prayer, and in the spreading of the gospel in whatever way they can, are few in number.

Therefore, God says, these labourers should pray to God that their numbers might be increased when God shall "send forth labourers into his harvest." Luke 10:2. In other words, God calls for the worldwide, united prayer and the earnest work of those who are now themselves "labourers together with God." 1 Corinthians 3:9.

For God says, "Ye shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword. And five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight: and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword." Leviticus 26:7, 8.

Five praying, true Christians, can put one hundred demons to flight and likewise one hundred such praying Christians can put ten thousand demons to flight. But God also says, "One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the Lord your God, he it is that fighteth for you, as he hath promised you." Joshua 23:10. "How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight?" Deuteronomy 32:30.

Now the demons control the will of the wicked and whisper evil thoughts to them, not audibly but in a supernatural way, which stirs the evil passions of the sinful nature. Putting the demons to flight, removes this ungodly influence and makes the wicked more susceptible to hearing what God has to say to them through the Holy Spirit.

How is it then that a thousand or more demons may be put to flight by one or two persons? We find the answer when we consider the instance of a godly man named Elijah. "Elias [Elijah] was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." James 5:17, 18.

Elijah prayed and God gave him his request in that it did not rain for three and a half years because of the people's sins. Elijah prayed again and once again God gave him his request for God sent rain to water the earth once more when the people turned back to God from worshipping idols.

Now not many praying Christians have ever seen such powerful answers to their prayers. Why is this so? What made the difference with Elijah such that his prayers were met with the favour of God?

We find the answer when we consider the end of Elijah's life on earth.

"There appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire...and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." 2 Kings 2:11. "By faith" (Hebrews 11:5), Elijah, "was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." Hebrews 11:5. Elijah was taken to heaven by God without him ever dying because God was pleased with him.

What made the difference with Elijah was that his character was perfected by God's divine influence such that he was obedient to God's law of love. So, the more fully we become transformed by God into Christ's character of love, the greater the favour with which our prayers are received by God. This then is the reason why it is possible that "one man of you shall chase a thousand" (Joshua 23:10) demons.

God Delivers Us and Others from Satan

All humanity may pray to God saying of themselves, "Mine enemies would daily swallow me up: for they be many that fight against me, O thou most High." Psalm 56:2. "Plead my cause, O LORD, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me. Take hold of shield and buckler [large shield], and stand up for mine help." Psalm 35:1, 2.

"Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I am thy salvation." Psalm 35:3. "I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies." Psalm 18:3. Now we may say that we have no enemies, but the reality is that everyone who has left the ranks of Satan's army to follow Christ has enemies.

Who are these foes? They are Satan and his evil angels as well as Satan's agents among mankind and the world in general which is opposed to righteousness. These are they who are "despisers

of those that are good." 2 Timothy 3:3. But fear not because of your numerous enemies. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Romans 8:31.

If we know that we have God's favour we may say, "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" Psalm 27:1. In other words, we may say, "God gives me the light of His truth and saves me from eternal death because His divine influence is" "the [moral] strength of my life." Psalm 27:1.

The experience then of those who have God as their defence is that "he [God] delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me." Psalm 18:17. Such persons may say in truth "When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident." Psalm 27:2, 3.

Likewise, our prayers for others *might shield them* from Satan's malice "for them that sin not unto [eternal] death." 1 John 5:16. For "our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased." Psalm 115:3. God is He who "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Ephesians 1:11), "wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence." Ephesians 1:8. "For...he also did predestinate [predestine us] to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Romans 8:29), to be conformed to Christ's character of love.

Our prayers to God for others *might shield them* and not *will always shield them* from Satan if they are walking in Satan's ways. Even so we may trust God's wisdom in whatever happens to those for whom we pray. For every human being may know that "he [God] restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." Psalm 23:3.

"Thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety." Psalm 4:8. Our prayers then for ourselves and others *will always* defend the godly, but *might* defend the ungodly from Satan's wickedness.

Intercessory Prayer a Proof of Our Love

God says, "There is a sin unto [eternal] death: I do not say that he shall pray for it." 1 John 5:16."For the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart." 1 Samuel 16:7. We cannot read the heart, only God can.

God alone knows the exact spiritual condition of an individual, whether they "sin unto [eternal] death" (1 John 5:16) or not. Therefore, our part is to pray to God saying, I pray "for them that sin not unto [eternal] death" (1 John 5:16), and then leave the results of our prayers with God.

Now God says, "He who loveth God love his brother also." 1 John 4:21. Thus, all mankind should say of themselves, "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." 1 John 4:7, 8. For if we will not even pray for others, this is a sure indication that while we may profess to be Christians, we are Christians in name only for we do not have true love in our hearts.

Daily our earnest work should accompany our prayers in that we should seek to edify everyone and, hence, be labourers together with God. In so doing, we "sow beside all waters" (Isaiah 32:20) not knowing if the gospel seed we have sown "whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good." Ecclesiastes 11:6.

This then is proof that we are the people of whom God says, "Ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law." Isaiah 51:7. God's law of love is written in our hearts.

The Fruit of Our Labour

God promises us saying, "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Psalm 2:8. When we pray for others, God promises to save those who do not resist His will and God counts these persons as those who have been won to Christ by our prayers. This then is the fruit of our "labour of love." 1 Thessalonians 1:3.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Final Battle: How to Pray

PRAYER CAN SIMPLY BE understood as two-way communication between ourselves and God—God speaks and we listen to God. But the question that arises is, "How do you actually pray?" This question is of paramount importance for prayer is truly a weapon in the hands of the saints, who by faith, as soldiers in God's army, make war against Satan's army.

Prayer thus plays an important role in our sanctification, our second and final battle against sin and Satan. How to pray effectively then is the subject to which we now turn our attention in this chapter.

A Conversation with God

God says to all humanity that we should be such that "our conversation is in heaven." Philippians 3:20. Here, God teaches us the essence of prayer in that our prayers should take the form of a conversation with God. Prayer then is two-way communication—we speak to God and God speaks to us.

God's people must learn to "hear what God the LORD will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints" (Psalm 85:8), who are those who have been justified by Him: "but let them not turn again to folly." Psalm 85:8. So, God says we should choose not to return to sin. You should *never* leave prayer without hearing from the Lord. For it is God who "shall direct thy ways." Proverbs 3:6. We absolutely *must* hear from God if we are to be directed by God.

It was said before that God very rarely speaks to us in an audible voice. Instead God speak to us in a supernatural form of "communication" (2 Samuel 3:17) by impressing His thoughts upon our mind.

"The sacrifice [religious acts] of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight. The way of the wicked is an abomination unto the LORD: but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness." Proverbs 15:8, 9.

How to Have a Conversation with God

How do we hear from God? To reiterate, God will communicate with us via thoughts in that new thoughts will come to our minds. Often these thoughts convey a reference to a Bible verse, for example, God might say to us, "Matthew 6:33." Thus, God will speak to us through the Bible which is the word of God.

We should then open our Bible and read the verse, say, Matthew 6:33. In so doing, the Holy Spirit will impress upon our minds the message God has in this verse for us. I recommend that you also write down the Bible verse itself word-for-word, say, Matthew 6:33, in a special notebook set aside for this purpose. For often in the process of writing the Holy Spirit will give us new insights into the relevance of the verse to us.

In our discussion before, it was concluded that there are over a million of God's thoughts in the Bible and so there is much that God has to say to humanity. But when God speaks to us as an

individual, what He says is *directly relevant* to our own life and this is how God directs each individual.

You should have something to say to God in response to His message to you. In addition to responding to God in your own words, you should also find one or more verses in the Bible to use as your response to God. Why should we use the Bible? Well, the Bible contains all the elements of a right relationship with God that is essential to our salvation. Therefore, we can *always* find in the Bible suitable verses that communicate what we want to say in answer to God.

This is where daily reading and studying of the Bible is helpful. For we have God's promise, "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost...he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." John 14:26. So, in searching the Bible for an answer to return to God, the Holy Spirit comes to us to teach and to cause us to remember what we have previously read or studied in the Bible.

When you have found your answer to God in the Bible, write this down word-for-word as well in your notebook. In a subsequent chapter, we will look at how to find appropriate Bible verses if you do not know the exact Bible reference, say, John 14:6. Using the Bible in this manner, causes us to uncover its hidden truths and to grow in our understanding of the Bible.

Furthermore, in using the Bible to respond to God, new fields of Bible study will often suggest themselves to our mind. In a subsequent chapter we will consider in detail how to study the Bible in a way that is guided by the Holy Spirit. Prayer then consists of "listening" to God and "hearing" from God.

When to Pray

You may ask, "When should I pray?" God says we should be able to say of ourselves in truth, "Evening, and morning, and at noon,

will I pray, and cry aloud: and he [God] shall hear my voice." Psalm 55:17. You should pray in the morning, at evening, and at midday.

Your morning and evening prayers should *never* be neglected. However, you may find that at times there is no opportune time to pray at midday. If so, do not be overly concerned. Find a later or earlier time *before* your evening prayer so that you are consistent with your "middle" of the day prayer. There is *such a blessing* to be had in prayer that we should *always* endeavour to daily commune with God in prayer.

When you awaken in the mornings, prayer should be the first thing you do. Now God says that we should say of ourselves in truth, "I have esteemed the words of his [God's] mouth more than my necessary food." Job 23:12. Our morning prayer then should come before our breakfast which is our necessary food. In the evenings, start your prayer early enough so that you have time to pray before bedtime and so that you do not fall asleep while praying.

How Long to Pray

You may say that all this sounds time-consuming. *So it is*. How long should you spend in prayer? God says, "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" Matthew 26:40. This is an indication that we should spend *at least* one hour each morning and one hour each evening in prayer. Spending *at least* two hours in the morning and two hours in the evening is even better.

Your midday prayer, on the other hand, need not be very long since, with morning and evening prayers, you are already spending a minimum of two to four hours in prayer each day. You may ask, "How will I find the time in my busy day?" The answer is we make time for what is important to us in our temporal life. Is not God more important than all these things? *Make the time in your day*. If you have a will to do so, you will find the time. You may

have to give up some things in order to find time for communion with God. *This is as it should be.*

Personally, I love to pray to God and so I will at times pray longer than two hours. I do so when I feel that I have not heard from God during prayer, or when God is saying many things to me during prayer, or when I have a pressing issue that I have brought before God and I need His wise counsel.

Often, I will have to stop praying because there are other important things to be accomplished in my day, or I need to go to sleep so that the next day is not shortened by my waking up at a very late hour. However, I have been known to pray all through the night or until the early hours of the morning such as 2:00 a.m., 3:00 a.m., or 4:00 a.m.

Having said that, God is able to wake you up feeling alert and refreshed from sleep even if you have only slept a few hours. Therefore, there is never any need to rush through prayer.

In fact, one morning many years ago, I was rushing through my prayer as I was worried about getting to work on time, when God caused me to start singing the hymn, "Make Time to be Holy." When I reached for my hymnal and began to sing the entire hymn to God, I realised that God was saying to me that I was not to rush my communion with Him. It was a lesson well learnt.

My prayer time with God is precious to me and I do my best to have uninterrupted prayer. However, this is not always possible. If I do have leave prayer for necessary things, I endeavour to take the least possible time away from prayer and not do anything that can wait until I have finished praying. When I do resume prayer, I *ensure* that my total time spent praying is at least two hours. If I did not do this, I would leave open a door for Satan to keep me from prayer by multiplying interruptions.

Ongoing Prayer

God says, "Pray without ceasing." 1 Thessalonians 5:17. This means that, aside from the time set apart for morning, evening, and midday prayers, cultivate the habit of speaking to God constantly as you go about your daily life. Talk to God all day as one would with a friend by your side. Let your mind be always be lifted up to God in prayer and God will respond to you throughout your day.

Speak to God, "casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." 1 Peter 5:7. God says that we are to keep your wants, our joys, our sorrows, our cares, and our fears before God for we cannot burden Him nor weary Him. God is interested in every detail of our lives.

We should choose to always, continually, to speak to God and to speak less in the world for God says, "Let thy words be few." Ecclesiastes 5:2. In so doing, our finite minds come in contact with the infinite mind of God for "his understanding is infinite." Psalm 147:5. Then we shall be richly blessed because God "is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Hebrews 11:6.

Seek God at all times so "that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world." Philippians 2:15. "While we look not at the things which are seen: for the things which are seen are temporal [temporary]; but the things which are not seen are eternal." 2 Corinthians 4:18.

God, Our Only Confidant

God says, "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?" Isaiah 2:22. That is to say, why should any mortal human being be held in higher esteem than God? For "thus saith the LORD; cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm" (Jeremiah 17:5), who makes any

human being their strength, "and whose heart departeth from the LORD." Jeremiah 17:5.

"Put not your trust in princes" (Psalm 146:3), where princes refer to those in authority, "nor in the son of man" (Psalm 146:3), the common person, "in whom there is no help." Psalm 146:3. "It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes." Psalm 118:8, 9.

"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is." Jeremiah 17:7. Moreover, God says, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." Matthew 10:37.

We should make God our only confidant and not any human being, who are flesh and blood like ourselves and cannot help us. For God says to all humanity, "Trust in him [God] at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us." Psalm 62:8. Prayer then is the opening of the heart to God as to a Friend, for God is "the only wise God" (Jude 1:25), the only One who is wise, and the divine Lover of our souls.

When we make God our only confidant, we shall be "called the Friend of God" (James 2:23) because we have a special relationship with God, set apart from our relationship with our fellow human beings.

Silent Prayers

God says, "Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." Matthew 6:6. Aside from prayer with our spouse, in the family circle, and public prayer, we must have secret prayer to God. Consider what God also says regarding prayer, "She spake [spoke] in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard." 1

Samuel 1:13. This is silent prayer which by its very nature is secret prayer.

Now we may go alone into some place where no human being can hear us pray, but what about the angels both good and evil? Can they hear our prayers? Well, God is He "who maketh his angels spirits." Psalm 104:4. Therefore, angels are not restricted by walls, doors, locks and bolts—there are no physical barriers we can erect so that they do not have access to us.

So, when we pray aloud, we must be aware that Satan and the other demons can hear us. Satan cannot read our mind, but if we pray aloud, we reveal what is in our mind, and, therefore, Satan is able to tailor his temptations to meet our case. The best strategy then is to pray silent prayers, without even moving our lips, for such prayers baffle Satan in his efforts to ensnare us.

Moreover, as we go about our daily life, even in crowds of the street and in the midst of a business engagement, we can lift our hearts to God in silent prayer. For there is no time or place in which it is inappropriate to pray. You may ask, "How then will then will God hear my prayers if I pray silently?" Remember that God says, "I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them." Ezekiel 11:5. Thus, silent prayers reach the ears of God, the Ruler of the universe.

When we are so moved by the Holy Spirit to give thanks and praise to God, feel free to say these aloud without revealing anything that is on your mind. Most certainly, if we have any fears, we should *never* speak these aloud for then Satan is informed about this matter.

Furthermore, the advantage of silent prayers is that when God answers us, in whatever way that He may choose, we are instructed and know for certain that it is God alone who has heard our prayers. Silent prayers then build the loving relationship between God and us, and fosters our trust in God and a knowledge of God's ways because our communications with God are truly secret.

Pray Scripture

When you pray you are to be such that you are "speaking thine own words." Isaiah 58:13. In so doing, we should pray and "ask...according to his will." 1 John 5:14. If we do this, God "he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him" 1 John 5:14, 15. In other words, we are to pray scripturally-informed prayers.

Moreover, God says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms" (Colossians 3:16), which are sacred poems in the Bible, "and [in] hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." Colossians 3:16.

This is an indication that, in addition to other forms of prayer, we should come before God in prayer with Scripture on our lips, or in other words, we should pray Scripture. We should pray the Scriptures verse-by-verse.

In so doing, we may say in truth, "The Spirit of the LORD spake [spoke] by me, and his word was in my tongue." 2 Samuel 23:2. For we are speaking to God with the very words which were inspired by the Holy Spirit.

This does not mean that we should just recite Scripture in prayer. Instead, it means that, in prayer, with respect to the subject of each verse or each passage (which is two or more consecutive verses), we should respond to God according to how the subject of the verse or passage applies to us individually. Therefore, we should rejoice because we can say in truth, "I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil [treasure]." Psalm 119:162.

Next, regarding what the verse in question says, "if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you" (Philippians 3:15) if you have sinned. If so, then "repent ye." Mark 1:15. In repenting, have remorse for your sins, confess your sins

and surrender your will to God so that through "the riches of his [God's] grace" (Ephesians 1:7) you turn away from these specific sins.

Then be among those who have "believed in the LORD" (Genesis 15:6) such that "he [God] counted it to him for righteousness." Genesis 15:6. That is, repentance and faith in the promises of God bring blessings wherein "the love of God is shed abroad [supernaturally poured] in our hearts by the Holy Ghost [Holy Spirit] which is given unto us." Romans 5:5. God's law of love is now written in our hearts.

Next "give thanks unto the LORD" (Psalm 105:1) and "praise him" (Psalm 150:1) for "the LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works." Psalm 145:9. We may praise and thank God, saying, "But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand." Isaiah 64:8.

Then be such that you can say in truth, "I rejoice in thy salvation." 1 Samuel 2:1. Yes, rejoice because God has done a work of grace in you with His goal being that you should be saved. Finally, be among those who say to God, "I will hear what God the LORD will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly." Psalm 85:8. We are to listen to what God has to say to us. This process then is the suggested approach to praying Scripture.

I have personally been edified, enriched, and blessed overall by praying Scripture. At the present time, I have chosen to daily pray verse-by-verse through the books of Psalms, Proverbs, and Romans in the Bible. I have found that the experience has served to bring many things to my understanding in the Scriptures, and to aid me in remembering what I have read in the Bible. I highly recommend this practice to you. You will be richly blessed.

Confession

God says, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." James 5:16. This means that we should confess our sin to others if we have done them wrong, and confess our sin in public if our sin was done in a public manner, and ask for forgiveness.

In no case are we to make private sins public, thus making others our confidant. God alone should be our confidant. And every sin is to be taken to the prayer-hearing God asking for the forgiveness of our sins. All sincere, fervent prayers will be received favourably by God and He will, in response, work to heal our sin-sick souls.

Praying for Others

As we have already seen, God urges us to pray for others, which is to say, we should come before God with intercessory prayers.

For Whom Should We Pray?

God says that as individuals we should say, "I exhort [urge] therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour." 1 Timothy 2:1-3.

"O that one might plead for a man with God, as a man pleadeth for his neighbour!" Job 16:21. We will now look at a suggested approach to intercessory prayer.

Now "the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." 1 Peter 3:12. Therefore, in praying "for all" (1 Timothy 2:1) we should

exclude those people that "sin unto [eternal] death" (1 John 5:16), and pray only for those that "sin not unto [eternal] death." 1 John 5:16.

Why exclude some people from our prayers? The reason is that, as God says, "Let favour be shewed [shown] to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the LORD" (Isaiah 26:10), which is to say, they will not perceive the excellency of the Lord.

Thus, God explains that the case of such persons is hopeless as they have become fixed in their ways and, hence, it is impossible for them to be "transformed" (Romans 12:2) by God into people with a character of love. Regarding these people, God says, "Pray not for this people for their good." Jeremiah 14:11. Therefore, it is an insult to God to ask Him to bless such people.

With that said, we should pray for an ever-widening circle of people. First and foremost, should be prayer for those in our home, in other words, for our household, which often consists of our own family. There is no missionary field, that is to say, no group of persons among whom to work for their conversion to Christ, more important than this and it should by no means be neglected. Next, intercede for your family who live outside your home.

Next, intercede for a prayer list consisting of the names of friends, co-workers, fellow students, neighbours, and others. These are typically people you know personally or those with whom you have come in contact.

You can put people on your prayer list even if you do not know their names. Just describe them to God who knows every human being. For example, you may say to God, "I put on my prayer list that homeless person I saw on the street today." God knows exactly who this person is and He will regard them as being included on your prayer list.

Next, pray for various groups of people, the Christian church, for missionaries who are they who typically go to foreign lands in order to spread the gospel, and also pray for all saints. Who are the saints? The saints are all those on earth who have been justified by God.

That is, we should be "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." Ephesians 6:18. Praying for the saints is, in effect, praying for the invisible church of God.

After this, pray for your enemies. For God says, "I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Matthew 5:44, 45.

After this, intercede for your nation and its leaders, also for all that are in authority in the world. For God says, "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people." Proverbs 14:34. Finally, pray for all them in the world that "sin not unto [eternal] death." 1 John 5:16. With this approach to intercessory prayer, we would have obeyed the commandment to pray "for all." 1 Timothy 2:1.

How to Pray for Others

Especially, should we seek to ever be in right standing with God and it is, therefore, necessary that we confess our own sins to God before seeking to pray for others. Otherwise, God will not hear our prayers.

So, God says that we should purpose in our hearts that "for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." John 17:19. That is, for the sake of others, we should

seek to be holy so that God will favourably answer our prayers that others may also become holy.

Now, knowing that it requires great wisdom to understand the science of saving souls, we should spend much time in secret prayer before making personal efforts for the salvation of others. Before communicating with others, we should first commune with God, and at God's "throne of grace" (Hebrews 4:16) we are to obtain a preparation for ministering to people. Let us then pray earnestly for others, bringing them by faith one by one into the presence of God.

Due to the limitations of time, you will only be able to pray for a limited number of others one by one, for example, your household and maybe a few more persons. Why? The reason is that, in praying for an individual, you may wish to wait and listen for God to give an indication of His gaining a victory in that person's life, before moving on to pray for another person. All of this, of course, takes time.

Intercessory prayers, however, should not consume all our prayer time with God. We ourselves need to open our hearts to God and to individually hear from God and this too takes time.

God says that the language of our hearts should be, "evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he [God] shall hear my voice." Psalm 55:17. Thus, as was said before, we should pray three times a day, every day. One approach could be to pray for at least two hours each morning and each evening, and pray for, say, half an hour during the day. Thus, we would have communed with God in prayer for a total of four and a half hours each day.

This time is not wasted, it is well spent for we shall be blessed in so doing. Now, we may split up our daily intercessory prayers into three parts over the three times we come before God in a day so that our morning prayer is not unduly long.

Praying for God to Give Us a Message

According to our purpose of spreading the gospel, the prayer of our hearts should be "that utterance [words] may be given unto me" (Ephesians 6:19), by God, "that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel." Ephesians 6:19.

We should ask others to be "praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance" (Colossians 4:3), which is to say, open an opportunity for us to speak to others, "to speak the mystery of Christ...that I may make it manifest [clear], as I ought to speak." Colossians 4:3, 4.

What then is "utterance" (Ephesians 6:19)? It is when God says, "Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say." Exodus 4:12. In other words, it is when God put words in our mouths to speak to others. For we do not know the hearts of individuals and, hence, we do not know what to say that will have the desired effect. Even if we knew their hearts, our finite wisdom as human beings is insufficient to know what to say that will lead them to Christ.

Asking for the Prayers of Others

Furthermore, we should ask others to "pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified." 2 Thessalonians 3:1. Pray that the gospel may be unimpeded and that it is esteemed to be glorious.

By our own prayer and the prayer of others we should ask God to bless those perishing in their sins. The blessing we should seek from God is that He will, says Christ, "open their eyes, and...turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified" (Acts 26:18), them which are made holy, "by faith that is in me [Christ]." Acts 26:18.

Let us, by our prayers, "bear...one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2) which is God's law of love. In all of this, just like Christ, we should "not fail nor be discouraged." Isaiah 42:4.

Praying in an Unknown Tongue

God says of some disciples of Christ, "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Acts 2:4. This means that the disciples received from God the ability to speak in other known languages. This is one of the "spiritual gifts" (1 Corinthians 14:12) that God bestows upon the true Christian and is a genuine gift.

God also says that we should say, "If I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit [mind] prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful." 1 Corinthians 14:14. "For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit [mind] he speaketh mysteries." 1 Corinthians 14:2.

This refers to speaking in a known language which no one in your hearing understands. But it also refers to speaking "mysteries" (1 Corinthians 14:2) that not even God understands. That is, it refers to meaningless speech, or in other words, gibberish, and such speech is a counterfeit of the genuine gift. Such gifts are manufactured by men and women, aided by Satan, the great deceiver.

So, we should say, in accordance with the word of God, the Bible, "What is it then?...I will pray with the understanding...I will sing with the understanding also." 1 Corinthians 14:15. For God says, "Else when thou shalt bless...how shall he that occupieth the room [the place] of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?" 1 Corinthians 14:16.

"Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying" (1 Corinthians 14:12), of those who hear. "Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret." 1 Corinthians 14:13.

Therefore, God says, "I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied" (1 Corinthians 14:5), which is to say, that you speak under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, "for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the...[people] may receive edifying." 1 Corinthians 14:5.

"If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course" (1 Corinthians 14:27), one after the other, "and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence...and let him speak to himself, and to God." 1 Corinthians 14:27, 28.

Praying in Your Sleep

God says, "Keep thy father's [God's] commandment, and forsake not the law... Bind them continually upon thine heart...[and] when thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee." Proverbs 6:20-22. God's law of love is meant to govern us, not only when we are awake but also when we are asleep, even in our dreams.

Reasons for Concern

There is reason to be concerned about our dreams as it relates to our salvation. You might say, "What? What do my dreams have to do with my salvation?" Well first of all, God says, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." Proverbs 23:7. "The thought of foolishness is sin" (Proverbs 24:9) but "the thoughts of the righteous are right." Proverbs 12:5. If the thoughts that we have in our dreams are not right, we have sinned in our sleep.

Furthermore, our words and actions in our dreams, if not right, is sin. Now God desires "that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ" (Philippians 1:10), till the day that Jesus Christ returns to the earth. Therefore, we want to be found among those individuals who can say in truth, "I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men." Acts 24:16.

Temptations While Sleeping

We might find that in our dreams while sleeping we are tempted to sin, and we may even say and do things in our dreams which are sinful because our sinful nature is yet unsubdued by the grace of God.

But even while sleeping we may cry out to God for help and for forgiveness. This ability to pray to God in our sleep comes when, in our waking hours, we have trained our minds to immediately turn to God in prayer when we are tempted or have fallen into sin. If we do pray in our sleep, help will come to us from God to deliver us from temptation and sin in our sleep.

Now God says, "The law...when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee." Proverbs 6:20-22. The law convicts us of sin even those committed when we sleep. So, if we do sin in our dreams, and we remember our thoughts, words, and actions when we awaken and the Holy Spirit convicts us that we have sinned, we must cultivate the habit of praying and confessing our sins to God and seeking God's forgiveness.

Dreams From God

Speaking of Himself, God says, "In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruc-

tion, that he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man." Job 33:15-17. Thus, God sometimes communicates with us via dreams while we sleep.

Therefore, we should seek to be such that we can truly say, in accordance with the word of God, the Bible, "I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel: my reins [mind] also instruct me in the night seasons." Psalm 16:7. "Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited me in the night; thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing; I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress." Psalm 17:3.

In our dreams while sleeping, we may respond righteously to God's testing and proving of our hearts if we "keep...[God's] commandment, and forsake not the law." Proverbs 6:20. For God says that He tests us, "that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law [of love], or no." Exodus 16:4.

Submitting Our Dreams to God

We should purpose in our hearts to submit all our dreams to God. Therefore, if we awaken during the night, and remember our dream, we should pray and ask God to take our dream away from us according to His will, and assuredly God will take away the dream if He so chooses.

For, as was said before, God says, "Keep thy father's [God's] commandment, and forsake not the law... Bind them continually upon thine heart...[and]...when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee." Proverbs 6:20-22. That is, God's law of love will convict us when we awaken, of any sins we might have committed in our sleep.

Having prayed and submitted our dreams to God, when God takes away a dream from us, this will prove to be a lesson to us. For, even some dreams that seemed to us to be innocent or pleasant, if we pray, God will take them away from us as such dreams are not for our best good.

Before Going to Sleep

God says, you have "your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed" (Jeremiah 29:8) because "a dream cometh through the multitude of business [of affairs]." Ecclesiastes 5:3. That is, if our daily affairs are holy our dreams will be holy, otherwise our dreams are evil. Also, if our daily affairs are sinful, we have opened a door so that Satan and the other demons can find access to us to harass us and to lead us away from right paths with dreams in our sleep.

Now do not despair at the thought of sinning in your sleep for, by faith, we may know that "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Psalm 46:1. Therefore, before going to sleep, we should pray and claim God's promise which says, "When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet." Proverbs 3:24. Such prayer is necessary to protect us from Satan's unsleeping malice.

We should also consecrate ourselves to God before going to sleep, asking God to baptize us anew with the Holy Spirit, and to keep us from sinning in our sleep. If we do so with a sincere heart, God will surely favour us and bless us so that, even aside from dreams from God, we shall not sin in the other dreams that we have while we sleep.

Thus, we may be found among those "who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." 1 Peter 1:5. In this way, we may be armed for battle against sin and Satan in our sleep.

But God will not keep us from sin in our sleep without any effort on our part. Therefore, in order to keep from sinning in our sleep, we must cultivate right thoughts and be obedient to God's law of love in our waking hours. Now only the justified can truly succeed at expelling "evil thoughts" (Mark 7:21) from their mind.

Praying in Your Sleep: Conclusion

The working of God's grace in the individual life reaches even to the time when they are asleep, in that, they should not sin in their dreams. Now God, speaking of Christ, says, "He is able even to subdue all things unto himself." Philippians 3:21. We may conclude then that when our sinful nature has been subdued, we will not sin, not even in our sleep.

Receiving Answers to Prayers

God says, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." John 15:7. This means that if our life is in accordance with the word of God, our prayers will always receive a favourable response from God, because we will only ask for that which is according to God's will. This then is the condition for an answer of "Yes" to all our prayers.

On the other hand, God says, "Ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, (James 4:2, 3), which is to say, you ask for wrong things, things outside the will of God, "that ye may consume it upon your lusts." James 4:3.

Thanksgiving and Praise

God says, "Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" Psalm 107:8. "Give thanks unto the LORD, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people." 1 Chronicles 16:8.

In response we should say, "I will praise thee, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will shew [show] forth [recount] all thy marvellous works. I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High." Psalm 9:1, 2. When we consider the infinite sacrifice made on the part of God to save mankind, our

lips should be unsealed to praise God and give Him thanks with our "whole heart." Psalm 9:1.

The language of our hearts should be "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation." Psalm 68:19. "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." Psalm 103:2. For "the LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy...He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities [our wickedness]." Psalm 103:8-10.

Prayer and Meditation

We will now look at prayer and meditation, both of which go hand and in hand.

What is Meditation?

Meditation is the contemplation of "spiritual things" (1 Corinthians 2:13) being guided by the Holy Spirit and by the word of God, the Bible. It is focused thought, a time when we think deeply about the "spiritual things" (1 Corinthians 2:13) of the Bible, and consider them in a calm, deliberate manner. This is biblical meditation.

The Purpose of Meditation

God says that every individual should be such that "his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." Psalm 1:2. Then, those who do meditate on God's law of love under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, may say to God in truth, "Through thy precepts [moral instructions] I get understanding." Psalm 119:104. "Therefore I esteem all thy precepts [moral instructions] concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way." Psalm 119:128.

What is the purpose of meditation upon God's law and His commandments? It is to understand the law and so to perceive that "the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." Romans 7:12. It is to choose to do right and to keep the law under all circumstances. To keep in remembrance the things of the law, and to understand how the law is applied in practical life. Essentially, it is to agree with God in all things.

How to Meditate

Prayer is a time of meditation, a time when we meditate on what God says to us while in a conversation with God, when we examine ourselves, when we meditate on Scripture and the life of Christ.

Meditating While in a Conversation with God

As was said before, prayer is a conversation with God in that it is a time to speak to God, and to listen to God. Prayer is also a time to meditate upon God's words to us. Having thought upon God's message to us, we may not at first understand how it applies to our lives and so we should ask God to help us to understand His meaning. Thus, in this way God directs our thoughts while in prayer.

God will often respond to our request for light to be given to us so that we can see and understand His meaning, and so a dialogue with God ensues. Each time God speaks to us, we should meditate upon what He has said to us and, if necessary, ask God for more light on the subject matter at hand.

Sometimes when we make a petition to God in prayer, God will say nothing to us. This means either that we have unconfessed known sin in our lives, for God says, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Psalm 66:18. Otherwise, it may mean that God has already given us adequate light on the subject

of our petition and we are to "walk in the light of the LORD." Isaiah 2:5.

For God will give no further light until we obey what He has already commanded us to do. It is crucial that we understand this latter point for it is presumptuous and insulting to God to ask Him to tell us again that which is already plain to our understanding. It means that we are being hypocritical and insincere, and instead of asking God to speak to us, we should subject ourselves to deep self-examination.

Meditation and Self-Examination

God says, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates" (2 Corinthians 13:5), morally worthless?" Therefore, it is vital that we meditate on our past life in light of God's word to see and understand wherein we have erred and sinned.

We must investigate our motives and our acts and closely analyse our feelings and acts. When the Holy Spirit reveals to us that we have sinned and we are in prayer, we should repent, confess our sins, surrender our will to God, and believing God's promises, seek God's forgiveness and cleansing from God. In addition, we should also examine ourselves closely and honestly. We should seek to identify in detail what happened, what were the consequences of our sin, what caused us to sin, identifying what was it in our thoughts, feelings, motives, and desires, that caused us to sin.

We should do all this self-examination in the light of the word of God, the Bible, finding relevant Bible texts and asking God to help us to truly understand ourselves, and to show us how to avoid repeating the same sin and what restitution to make, if any.

In light of our sins, God says, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." James 4:7.

Therefore, we should submit our will in this matter to God and ask God to keep us from this and all sins for God says, "the desire of the righteous shall be granted." Proverbs 10:24.

So, by faith, we may believe that what we have asked of God, He will grant it to us. Thus we "are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." 1 Peter 1:5. "The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way: but the folly of fools is deceit." Proverbs 14:8.

Thus, meditation is the contemplation of our sins and the thoughts, feelings, and motives that led to our sin, leading us to ask God for the help of His Holy Spirit so that the righteousness of Christ is ours. For we may claim God's promise which says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9. We must then exercise our faith in believing that God has done as He has promised.

Meditating on Scripture

Merely hearing or reading the word of God is not enough. If we wish to be benefited by the Scriptures, we must meditate upon the truths they present to us. Now God says of the holy angels, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" Hebrews 1:14. Moreover, we may say of God, "Thou wilt light my candle: the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness." Psalm 18:28.

Therefore, for those who embark upon the endeavour of meditating on the Scriptures with humility of heart, a pure purpose and simple, earnest faith, seeking for divine guidance, angels will draw near and the Holy Spirit is given to enlighten the mind.

In this way, we are enabled to skillfully use the "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Ephesians 6:17. That is, as we go through our daily lives, Christ through the Person of His Holy Spirit causes us to meditate upon the word of God day and

night and to bring it into practical life such that we are kept from sinning.

Meditation on the Life of Christ

Christ, when He was on earth, said, "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done." John 13:15. "Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart." Matthew 11:29. In order to learn the lessons that we should from the life of Christ, we need to meditate on His life and seek to imitate Him in all respects.

Meditation is the contemplation of "Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2) and the mission of Him who came to save us from our sins. In contemplating Christ, God bids us fill our minds with holy thoughts. For God says, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Philippians 4:8.

Now God says, "We all, with open face" (2 Corinthians 3:18), with unveiled faces, "beholding as in a glass" (2 Corinthians 3:18), as in a mirror, "the glory" (2 Corinthians 3:18), the perfect character "of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory" (2 Corinthians 3:18), from one degree of goodness to another, "even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Corinthians 3:18.

Thus, we should meditate upon Christ's love and mercy and His wondrous work in the plan of redemption, and as we meditate upon Him, a holy desire is kindled in our hearts to be wholly transformed to be like Him in purity. In this way, daily, we behold Christ in His perfection and are changed into the likeness of His character by his Holy Spirit.

Overall Benefits of Meditation

There are many overall benefits of meditation for those who practice it correctly. Meditation causes us to "by reason of use have...[our] senses exercised to discern both good and evil." Hebrews 5:14. It gives us an understanding of God's will for humanity and the many forms which temptation can take.

Having obtained discernment beforehand and purposed in our minds to choose the good at all times, we are better prepared for the circumstances of daily life and we, therefore, obey God's command, "Neither give place to the devil." Ephesians 4:27. We should give no place for evil to gain a foothold in our hearts and minds.

Recommended Video: How to Pray

As an example of how to pray, I recommend that you watch my YouTube video of my prayer session demonstrating how to have a conversion with God at tinyurl.com/or-how-to-pray-1. NOTE: This link contains TINYURL.COM.

Chapter Twelve

The Final Battle: The Role of Prayer

As was said before, prayer is a weapon in the hands of the saints, who by faith, as soldiers in God's army, make war against Satan's army. Prayer thus plays an important role in our sanctification, our second and final battle against sin and Satan. The role of prayer is the subject to which we now turn our attention in this chapter.

Prayer and Faith

God says of Himself, "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Hebrews 11:6.

We may say then, "Let us draw near" (Hebrews 10:22), to God, "with a true heart in full assurance of faith." Hebrews 10:22. God encourages us, saying, "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." Ephesians 6:16. So, we see that prayer and faith go hand-in-hand.

When Answers to Prayer are Delayed

"The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities" (Romans 8:26), our moral frailty: "for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. We, as human beings, are so erring and shortsighted that we may ask for things that will not prove to be a blessing to us.

Therefore, God in His love towards us, will instead give us that which is for our highest good—things that we would ourselves desire if with our vision divinely enlightened, we could see things as they really are. So, when we do not receive the very things we ask for, at the time we ask, then it is the time to exercise faith in God. We are to still believe that God hears and that He will answer our prayers at the time that He chooses.

When our prayers seem not to be answered by God, cling to God's promise, "Ask, and it shall be given you." Matthew 7:7. For God's timing in answering our prayers will surely come and we shall then receive the blessing that we need most. But to claim that our prayer will always be answered in the very way and for the particular thing we desire, is presumption.

For God is too wise to err in His dealings with us, and He says of Himself, "no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Psalm 84:11. Then, let us not fear to trust God, even though we do not see the immediate answer to our prayers.

When We are Perplexed

If we take counsel with our doubts and fears, or try in our human strength to solve everything that we cannot see clearly, our perplexities will only increase and deepen. But if we come to God, feeling helpless and dependent as we really are, and in humble, trusting faith "by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving

let...[our] requests be made known unto God" (Philippians 4:6), God can and will attend to our cry.

For God is He whose "understanding is infinite" (Psalm 147:5) and He "who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Ephesians 1:11. God says, "Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?" (Jeremiah 32:27) and the answer is "with God nothing shall be impossible." Luke 1:37.

God holds up billions of stars in the universe and He can unravel any perplexity and, in so doing, give you a blessing. All that is required is sincerity in our prayers which brings us into connection with the mind of God, the Infinite One.

Take to God everything that perplexes the mind for nothing that in any way concerns our peace is too small for God to notice. There is no sincere prayer of ours of which God is unobservant and in which He does not take immediate interest. Thus, when we pray, we may not have any special evidence that Christ, our Saviour, is bending over us in compassion and love, but this is even so.

We may not feel His visible touch, but His hand is upon us for God says of Himself, "The Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (James 5:11) and God is He whose "charity [love] never faileth." 1 Corinthians 4:8. By faith then, "trust ye in the LORD for ever." Isaiah 26:4. For we may say of God in truth, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory" (Psalm 73:24), receive me to paradise. Our perplexities dissolve into nothingness when we trust in God.

Watchfulness

God commands us, saying, "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not" (Proverbs 1:10), "neither give place to the devil" (Ephesians 4:27), give the devil no foothold in your life. "The end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer."

1 Peter 4:7. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit [mind] indeed is willing, but the flesh [human nature] is weak." Matthew 26:41.

"Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving" (Colossians 4:2) "lest Satan should get an advantage of us" (2 Corinthians 2:11) for we are to be such that "we are not ignorant of his devices." 2 Corinthians 2:11. Without unceasing prayer and diligent watching we are in danger of growing careless and, hence, deviating from the right path.

Watching means to be constantly on the lookout for temptations to sin, so that we can close the doors through which Satan seeks to enter by prayer to God for help, always choosing to do God's will. Satan ever seeks to obstruct our way to God so that we may not by earnest prayer and faith obtain grace and power to resist temptation.

To reiterate, we need to meet every temptation to sin with prayer to God for help, "and all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Matthew 21:22. We are to be such that we are "continuing instant in prayer" (Romans 12:12), in that, the moment that we are tempted we immediately start praying to God for help. Only then can we "watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Matthew 26:41.

If we respond to every temptation of Satan with prayer, we remove Satan's opportunity to say to God that we are on Satan's side of the great controversy and that we do not desire God's protection. Thus, God says, "My son, be wise, and make my heart glad, that I may answer him that reproacheth me." Proverbs 27:11. This means be wise in meeting every temptation with prayer to God and in living in accordance with your prayers.

For God says, "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High" (Psalm 91:1), he who dwells in God's heavenly audience chamber, "shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty" (Psalm 91:1), under God's protection. While the content of our prayer is to be in accordance with God's will, our watchfulness and the

timeliness of our prayers will keep us in the audience chamber of God under His never-ceasing protection and care.

When praying to God for help to meet temptations, we may pray in our own words. It is also important to meet every temptation and with Scripture, with the word of God, the Bible. This is what is meant by using "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Ephesians 6:17. For in the Bible is to be found the answer to every possible temptation to sin.

When tempted, we should search the Bible for what God says is His will with regard to such temptations. If we do not know what to look for in the Bible, ask God to show you His will as recorded in the word of God. Then we should present God's word to God Himself in prayer, saying, "It is written" (Matthew 4:4) and the actual words of the Bible, and claim God's help to live in accordance with His revealed will in the Bible.

If we take this approach with a sincere desire to do God's will, God says, "Grace be with all them that love...[the] Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." Ephesians 6:24. God's grace will cause us to be successful in resisting Satan and his temptations. For God stands by His word, the Bible, and He will give us moral strength to live in accordance with the Bible.

Another benefit of taking the approach of praying Scripture, is that we will come to an increasing understanding of the Bible by "experience." Romans 5:4. Thus, we "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18) every day, into the likeness of Christ's character of love.

For often, when we do sin, it is because we cannot bring to mind at the time what God says in His word. Thus, we are left to follow our own evil inclinations and sinful thoughts with respect to the temptation at hand. This is why daily reading and studying the Bible is so important if we are to be victorious over sin and Satan.

"For we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7), "while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal [temporary];

but the things which are not seen are eternal." 2 Corinthians 4:18. If we keep our eyes fixed on God, fixed on the eternal, we shall not stumble and fall into sin.

Taught by God

Having been justified by God, we are now enrolled by God in the heavenly school of Christ in order that we may be found among those individuals who have "learned Christ" (Ephesians 4:20), who "have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus." Ephesians 4:20, 21. The school of Christ is invisible and we learn from Christ as we, by faith, believe that Christ speaks to us and that He teaches us. In other words, the school of Christ is a spiritual school and not a physical school here on earth.

Therefore, the prayer of our hearts should be "teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments." Psalm 119:66. "Thou art good, and doest good; teach me thy statutes." Psalm 119:68. "Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end." Psalm 119:33. "I will hear what God the LORD will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly." Psalm 85:8.

If we do come to God in submission to His will and with a teachable spirit, God says, I will "teach them the good way wherein they should walk." 1 Kings 8:36. "They shall be all taught of God." John 6:45. "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye." Psalm 32:8. "Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One...I am the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go." Isaiah 48:17.

Then we may know that "now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also

we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual." 1 Corinthians 12:12, 13.

"But the natural man" (1 Corinthians 2:14), the ungodly person, "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Corinthians 2:14. Prayer then is a time to be instructed by God and also a time to make decisions to obey God's will as it has been revealed to us.

Now God says of His dealings with humanity, "He [God] led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: So the LORD alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him." Deuteronomy 32:10-12.

The manner in which the eagle teaches its young to fly is an illustration of how God teaches those who submit themselves to His will. God first instructs us and guides us, and then the individual is such that "God left him, to try him, that he [God] might know all that was in his heart." 2 Chronicles 32:31.

If at such times of God's testing we do not transgress, then we may know that we have learned the lessons which God desired to teach us and that we have made progress in our spiritual life. "For whom he [God] did foreknow, he also did predestinate [predestined] to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Romans 8:29), Christ, and we may know that we are being conformed to the likeness of Christ's character of love.

"Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way." Psalm 25:8. "The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way." Psalm 25:9. "What man is he that feareth the LORD" (Psalm 25:12), that is to say, has reverential awe for the Lord? "Him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose." Psalm 25:12.

God says, "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." John 12:25. Therefore, as a Christian, you will discover that a lifetime of learning in the school of Satan will need to be discarded in order for you to become a good student in the school of Christ. Plans of life must be relinquished, and earthly hopes surrendered. Individuals who do so are those who are taught by God.

Those who are called to unite with Christ must leave all, in order to follow Him. For God says, "I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man...be a fornicator" (1 Corinthians 5:11), one who practices sexual intimacy outside of marriage, "or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer" (1 Corinthians 5:11), who is an abusive person, "or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat." 1 Corinthians 5:11.

"Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." James 4:4. "Make no friendship with" (Proverbs 22:24) "sinners." Genesis 13:13.

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Corinthians 6:14), who are therefore sinners: "for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" 2 Corinthians 6:14. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean...and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." 2 Corinthians 6:17, 18.

So, old associations must be broken up and no new associations formed with sinners. This applies to friendships, business associations, any new marriage, and so on. We will look at God's guidelines for existing marriages in a subsequent chapter.

Why does God command us not to associate with sinners? The reason is as God says, "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners." 1 Corinthians 15:33. If we "keep company" (1 Corinthians 5:11) with sinners they will surely corrupt us so that,

if we do not repent, we will like them be under the condemnation of God's law of love and shall not have eternal life.

Now God says, "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Matthew 7:1) by God. "Speak not evil one of another...He that speaketh evil of his brother"(James 4:11), his fellow human being, "and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver" (James 4:11, 12), God, "who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?" James 4:12.

In disassociating ourselves from sinners, we are not to judge them by usurping God's prerogative as Judge and condemning them as being finally impenitent. Yes, they are perishing in their sins but we cannot read the heart and, hence, we cannot tell if their character has become fixed in evildoing. How then should we treat sinners? We are to show mercy to them by treating them as a missionary field, as candidates for paradise and immortality.

So, those persons who disassociate themselves from sinners are those who are taught by God.

Led by God

To all humanity God says, "In all thy ways acknowledge him [God], and he shall direct thy paths." Proverbs 3:6. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Romans 8:14.

If we have submitted our lives to the leading and guidance of God, then we may say in truth, "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." Psalm 23:1-3. God likens those who have yielded their lives to God's control, to sheep under the tender loving care of a shepherd.

But what is the whole purpose of God's leading in our lives? It is that we may be able to say at the end of our life here on earth,

just as Christ said to the Father at the end of His life on earth, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." John 17:4.

We may, therefore, ask, "What does it mean to glorify God?" It is to accurately and fully manifest God's character of love in our own lives. This work God will accomplish in us if we do not allow a perverse will to come between us and God. Let us then, in accordance with God's word, the Bible, be found "being confident of this very thing, that he [God] which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6) when Christ will return to the earth.

We may also ask, "Has God given me a work to do just like Christ?" Yes, He has. For "all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation...Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." 2 Corinthians 5:18-20. The work which God has given every human being to do is to obey the gospel commission.

We will now consider two practical, necessary steps to take in doing the work which God has assigned to us individually. First of all, "delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass." Psalm 37:4, 5.

Make God the delight of your life and consecrate yourself to God morning and evening, surrendering all your plans to God to be abandoned, modified, or approved as God so chooses. In consecrating ourselves to God, we seek God's help before temptation comes upon us and then we will find that "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1) when we are tempted to sin.

Secondly, we are to be found among those who "asked...counsel at the mouth of the LORD." Joshua 9:14. We are to seek God's will *before* we embark on any endeavour so that we "are led by the

Spirit of God" (Romans 8:14) at all times. God will answer us by impressing His thoughts upon our mind or by the word of God, the Bible. For "where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety." Proverbs 11:14.

Where do we find such counsellors? The word of God, the Bible, says that we should acknowledge to God that "thy testimonies" (Psalm 119:24), the word of God, the Bible, "are my delight and my counsellors." Psalm 119:24.

The multiple authors of the whole Bible, who wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, are our counsellors and here alone is to be found safe counsel. For God says, "Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I [God] am understanding; I have strength." Proverbs 8:14. "There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD." Proverbs 21:30.

God also says, "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them." Isaiah 42:16.

"There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen: The lion's whelps" (Job 28:7, 8), the lion's young offspring, "have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it." Job 28:7, 8. This means that we can safely and confidently follow where God leads for Satan, with his supremely selfish heart, is confounded and baffled by the wisdom of God's ways.

We are to be such that God Himself can say of His work in us and through us, "He [God] led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye." Deuteronomy 32:10. So, we are to allow God to use us in any way that He may choose to accomplish the work that God designs to do through us, in that, we are to be God's hands, feet, and mouth in the world.

By yielding up our will to Christ, we ally ourselves to the "omnipotent" (Revelation 19:6) God. Therefore, we will have strength from God to hold us steadfast in God's ways and through constant surrender to God, we are enabled to live the new life, even the life

of faith. It is imperative then that we do not resist God's will, and if we do not allow a perverse will to come between ourselves and God we shall *certainly* be saved.

In following God's leading, we are to say in truth, "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Philippians 4:11. For God says, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." 1 Thessalonians 5:18.

In following God's way, as we are led by Him, we are not to be found mourning, complaining, or repining. Instead, the prayer of our hearts should be, "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." Psalm 40:8. "Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day." Psalm 25:5. For "the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Proverbs 4:18), the day when we shall have become sinless having been made holy by God.

The religion that the Bible prescribes is not a theory, but it enters into and governs what we understand to be reality. Hence, such a religion governs how we should live our lives in that we should order our lives according to the worldview that the Bible gives us.

Hidden by God

God says of the justified, "Ye are dead" (Colossians 3:3), to sin, "and your life is hid with Christ in God." Colossians 3:3. For "they have taken crafty [devious] counsel against thy [God's] people, and consulted against thy hidden ones." Psalm 83:3. In this life, the justified, who are those hidden by God, are opposed by Satan, all his demons, and the wicked among mankind.

But "we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast [steadfast] unto the end" (Hebrews 3:14)

of our life here on earth, and, hence, our salvation will be sure. For the spiritual life of the justified is securely sustained by God, and therefore, they cannot be overthrown by Satan or any human being for they are hidden by God.

To reiterate, God says, "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High" (Psalm 91:1), he who dwells in God's heavenly audience chamber, "shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty" (Psalm 91:1), under God's protection.

The justified are individuals "who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:5), ready to be revealed when Jesus Christ returns to the earth.

God says, "And now, little children, abide in him" (1 John 2:28), that is to say, abide in Christ, "the true vine" (John 15:1); "that, when he [Christ] shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him [Christ] at his coming." 1 John 2:28. "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward." Hebrews 10:35. Again, this is what it means to be one of God's "hidden ones." Psalm 83:3. Such are instantaneous in prayer and "pray without ceasing." 1 Thessalonians 5:17.

You who are justified, if you remain faithful to God and become sanctified, which is to be made holy by God such that you become sinless with your sinful nature subdued by your divine nature, shall be saved from eternal death. Saved "to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." 1 Peter 1:4.

The prayer of the hearts of the justified should be "Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked; from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity." Psalm 64:2. "Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings." Psalm 17:8.

In response to such prayer, God says to them every day, "Hear...ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies: let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them; for the LORD your God is he that

goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you." Deuteronomy 20:3, 4.

Be "in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition" (Philippians 1:28), an evident indication of their coming destruction, "but to you of salvation, and that of God." Philippians 1:28.

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Ephesians 6:12. The justified, are engaged in spiritual warfare that is directed at them by Satan and his "evil angels" (Psalm 78:49) and the wicked among mankind every day of their lives.

Now Christ says, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." John 16:33. God says to you who are justified, "confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting [encouraging] them to continue in the faith" (Acts 14:22), "be of good cheer" (John 16:33), even though "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." Acts 14:22.

For "as many as received him [Christ], to them gave he power to become the sons of God" (John 1:12), holy and righteous, "even to them that believe on his name." John 1:12.

For God says, "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." John 5:28, 29. The justified, therefore, can die in hope of "the resurrection of life" (John 5:29), "in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." Titus 1:2.

Thus, even though Satan may cause the justified to suffer violence, physical harm, and even death, we, having presented our supplications to God, may confidently say to God, "Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about [surround me] with songs of deliverance."

Psalm 32:7. "Thou art my hiding place and my shield: I hope in thy word." Psalm 119:114. (We will look at how to meet opposition even when our lives are threatened in a subsequent chapter.)

"Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought [done] for them that trust in thee before the sons of men! Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues." Psalm 31:19, 20.

Therefore, God says, "Trust in him [God] at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us." Psalm 62:8. Praise the Lord for His protection! We may be such that confidently say, "I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust." Psalm 91:2.

"And a man" (Isaiah 32:2), that is to say, "the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5), "shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert [shelter] from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Isaiah 32:2.

"The LORD is my defence; and my God is the rock of my refuge." Psalm 94:22. "My defence is of God, which saveth the upright in heart." Psalm 7:10. "Unto thee, O my strength" (Psalm 59:17), my moral strength and my fortitude, "will I sing: for God is my defence, and the God of my mercy." Psalm 59:17. "For the LORD is our defence; and the Holy One...is our king." Psalm 89:18.

The Blessings of Communion with God

To those who are of the "generation that set...their heart aright, and whose spirit [mind is]...stedfast [steadfast] with God" (Psalm 78:8), God says, "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." Genesis 15:1. God is our reward in that there is no greater joy than that of entering into a loving relationship with God and so knowing for ourselves "the love of God." 2 Thessalonians 3:5.

Then it is that the individual can say of God in truth, "Thou hast made him most blessed for ever: thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance" (Psalm 21:6), with your facial expression showing approval. "Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Psalm 16:11.

God says to those who commune with Him, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost [Holy Spirit]." Romans 15:13. "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." Titus 1:2.

In response, the hearts of the justified say, "I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation." Psalm 13:5. "My soul shall be joyful in the LORD: it shall rejoice in his salvation." Psalm 35:9. "Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: let such as love thy salvation say continually, The LORD be magnified." Psalm 40:16.

God also says of Himself, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee" (Isaiah 26:3), whose mind takes hold of and is fixed on God: "because he trusteth in thee." Isaiah 26:3. "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." Isaiah 32:17. These then are some of the blessings that attend those that have loving communion with God in prayer.

Moreover, God says, "I, even I, am he that comforteth you." Isaiah 51:12. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God." Isaiah 40:1. Now "the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19) and the "righteous...dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, [are] vexed...[in their] righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds." 2 Peter 2:8.

So, in the midst of all this, God comforts us so that we may say of God in truth, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort." 2 Corinthians 1:3.

It is true of the justified individual that "he shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD." Psalm 112:7. Having a right knowledge of God, and holding blessed communion with God, fosters trust on our part in God—a trust that cannot be shaken by Satan and his schemes to ensnare us. Therefore, the language of our hearts may be, "I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies." Psalm 18:3.

Therefore, communion with God in prayer has its many blessings. Day by day we may "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." 2 Peter 3:18. For to "grow in grace" (2 Peter 3:18) is to gain continual victories over our sinful nature, growing more and more like Christ's character of love.

Now God desires that all humanity should say in truth, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God" (Psalm 66:16), all you who have reverence for God, "and I will declare what he hath done for my soul. I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue." Psalm 66:16, 17.

"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me: But verily [surely] God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me." Psalm 66:18-20. Many then are the blessings of communion with God.

Recommended Reading

For many insights into the role of prayer in the life of a Christian and how to have an effective prayer life, I recommend that you read the book entitled *Prayer* by Ellen G. White, one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. You can read all the writings of Ellen G. White for free at egwwritings.org. Other official websites related to Ellen G. White are to be found at whiteestate.org and ellenwhite.org.

There is also a free smartphone app named *EGW Writings 2* for Android phones and the iPhone with which you can freely read, search, and download the Ellen G. White writings to your phone. One great feature of the app is that once you have downloaded books to your phone, you can read them offline.

Chapter Thirteen

The Final Battle: A Knowledge of God

Sanctification is the second and final battle that every human being has to fight against sin and Satan. Warfare must be waged by the individual against "every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God." 2 Corinthians 10:5. We must fight against every demon, who are Satan and his evil angels, who seek to drive every knowledge of God from our minds. For when we do not "know God" (Titus 1:16) we are "abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" (Titus 1:16), morally worthless.

The Purpose of the Bible

God has given to humanity a battle plan, the Bible, as a blueprint for their warfare against sin and Satan. For God's desire is to mend the broken relationship with humanity and by giving us His word, the Bible, God has provided humanity with that which is designed bring us into harmony with His character of love, into harmony with His law of love.

God says, "He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law...Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." Romans 13:8-10. For all His created intelligences, God has prescribed that, "Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." Deuteronomy 6:5.

"This is the first and great commandment, and the second is like unto it" (Matthew 22:38, 39), namely, "thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Leviticus 19:18. These two great commandments are a summary of God's law of love.

God's great purpose in giving us the Bible then is so that every human being may be such that "the soul of" the individual "was knit [united] with the soul of" God, "and" the individual "loved him," loved God, "as his own soul" (1 Samuel 18:1), as his own person. This is God's desired endpoint of our sanctification and it depends on our obtaining a right knowledge of God.

When we reach this desired endpoint, we are prepared to live a pure and holy life here on earth and to live in the presence of God, the sinless angels, and the sinless beings of the unfallen worlds. An understanding of the Bible then is of crucial importance to our coming to a right knowledge of God and, hence, is vital to our sanctification. For in the Bible we find God's word to us individually as if He had spoken audibly to each one of us.

In this chapter, therefore, we will take a detailed look at how to study and understand the Bible for ourselves and not be reliant on other people's thinking, interpretation, and study of the Bible. Now this does not mean that you should stop reading this book at the end of this chapter, but rather that you should continue reading to the end of this book.

I have much to share with you in this book which will lay a firm foundation for your own individual Bible study. For there is much to know and to understand about God and how to have a loving, trusting relationship with Him. Continue reading this book then to the end and I pray that you will find it to be a blessing to you.

The Benefits of Bible Study

God says of His word, the Bible, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." John 17:17. Mankind then may be sanctified, which is to be made holy and fitted to dwell in the presence of God who Himself is holy, by the word of God which is truth.

God also says of the Bible, "The holy scriptures...are able to make thee wise unto 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 perfect, throughly [fully] furnished unto all good works." 2 Timothy 3:15-17.

Furthermore, God says that we ourselves may say in truth of God's word, the Bible, "Thy [God's] word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." Psalm 119:105. "The entrance of thy [God's] words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple" (Psalm 119:130) who are naïve and gullible. "For thou wilt light my candle: the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness." Psalm 18:28.

This means that to study the Bible is to learn to think the thoughts of God and to link His thoughts one to another and thereby bring out one perfect chain of truth, thus showing that the Bible is a harmonious whole. The Bible contains "the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3:8), "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Colossians 2:3. It is an inexhaustible fountain of knowledge.

Therefore, by assimilating the word of God, the Bible, we come into possession of "the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16) for God says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Philippians 2:5. Now if you do have "the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16) it means that you have become obedient to God's law of love.

For God says that you are to be such "that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in...your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God" (Ephesians 2:22-24), that is to say, which in accordance with God's character of love, "is created in righteousness and true holiness." Ephesians 4:24.

Then it is that, with a renewed mind, the language of your heart will be "thy testimonies" (Psalm 119:24), that is, the entire Bible which is the word of God, "are my delight and my counsellors." Psalm 119:24. "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through thy precepts [moral instructions] I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way." Psalm 119:103, 104. "I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil [treasure]." Psalm 119:162.

Then your lips will be unsealed and you will say, "I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth." Psalm 34:1. "Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." Psalm 103:1, 2.

"Praise ye the LORD: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely" (Psalm 147:1), which is to say, praise is beautiful. "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High." Psalm 92:1.

God's Counsel Regarding the Bible

God admonishes us saying, "Ye shall not add unto the word which I [God] command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it [any part of it], that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God." Deuteronomy 4:2. Moreover, God says of Himself, "Every word of God is pure: he [God] is a shield unto them that put their

trust in him [God]. Add thou not unto his [God's] words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar." Proverbs 30:5, 6.

So, we are to accept the entire Bible as being the word of God and not ignore any part of it, nor incorporate our own words or traditions. We should be able to say of ourselves in truth, "We are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ" (2 Corinthians 2:17), which is to say, we speak according to Christ's character of love.

God's counsels are given to make us secure against "the snare of the devil." 2 Timothy 2:26. For "the scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35), cannot be proven to be in error nor made to sustain error. If we take heed to God's cautions we shall be made "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Timothy 3:15. Hence, we would be able to thwart "the wiles [trickery] of the devil." Ephesians 6:11.

Now Christ says, "Search the scriptures; for...they are they which testify of me [Christ]." John 5:39. The entire Bible speaks of Christ in that He is to be found in all the books of the Bible. The central theme of the Bible is Christ and the plan of redemption. In light of this, God says, "Study to shew [show] thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing [interpreting] the word of truth [the Bible]." 2 Timothy 2:15.

This means that there is a right way and a wrong way to study the Scriptures. In this chapter, therefore, we will look at the right approach to Bible study.

So, God says, "Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life." Proverbs 4:13. For "whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock." Matthew 7:24, 25.

As we have seen, the study of the Bible brings many blessings to the Bible student. Therefore, under no circumstances should we allow ourselves to be weaned from Bible reading and Bible study by Satan.

A Mature Understanding of the Bible

God, employing the illustration of "newborn babes" (1 Peter 2:2), says we are to "desire the sincere milk of the word." 1 Peter 2:2. For example, God's commandment "Thou shalt not kill." (Exodus 20:13) is clear, plain, and easy to understand and would, therefore, be classified as "milk" (1 Peter 2:2) suitable for newborn babies.

Furthermore, God says, I "have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing...for every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat" (Hebrews 5:11-14), which is to say, solid food, "belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." Hebrews 5:14.

Thus, God says that unless the "newborn babes" (1 Peter 2:2) grow up and graduate to "strong meat" (Hebrews 5:14) which is solid food, they are unskillful in understanding the word of God, the Bible.

How can we grow up from being "newborn babes" (1 Peter 2:2) in our understanding of the Bible? First of all, God says, "They shall be all taught of God." John 6:45. "Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite." Psalm 147:5. "Behold...who teacheth like him" (Job 36:22), like God? Here we find one of the most important precepts, which are moral instructions, that are found in the Bible. It is that we all *need* to be taught of God.

"Whom shall he [God] teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the

milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept [moral instruction] must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little." Isaiah 28:9, 10. The Bible, which is the word of God, must be interpreted to us by God Himself and so, we *must* allow God to teach us.

The Bible student who is taught by God receives blessings from God such that they "grow in grace." 2 Peter 3:18. They advance in the Christian life by having continual victories over their sinful nature, and they grow "in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." 2 Peter 3:18. Let us then say, "To him [Christ] be glory both now and for ever. Amen." 2 Peter 3:18.

Clearly then, the Bible cannot be understood as one would approach the understanding of a novel, nonfiction book, or other literature of human production. Just here human intellect alone is insufficient. This is why one may read the entire Bible from beginning to end and still not understand its meaning for it is a spiritual book, the production of the infinite mind of God.

Having been taught by God, we can truly say, "we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which...[God] teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual...because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Corinthians 2:13, 14.

Nevertheless, without human effort, there will be no rich reward in opening to our minds the things of God that it is essential to know and which will make us "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Timothy 3:15.

For mystery after mystery may be unfolded to the mind of the diligent Bible student so that he or she beholds "wondrous things out of thy law" (Psalm 119:18), which is to say, out of God's law of love. Such will ever be the result of the finite mind of humanity coming in contact with the mind of the God, the Infinite One.

How to Study the Bible

There is a right way to study the Bible and it is imperative that we use this approach. This will prevent us from misinterpreting the Bible. We will now look at the approach to Bible study which I personally take and which, I believe, is approved by God.

Now it is God who teaches you so "that ye may approve things that are excellent." Philippians 1:10. So, try my methods and see if you "approve" (Philippians 1:10) of my methods of Bible study. See if you can agree with me that, in applying my approach, the Bible does open up to your understanding.

Meeting the Conditions Necessary for Understanding the Bible

God says, "The holy scriptures...are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Timothy 3:15. In order to accomplish our salvation, the Bible presents to us the word of God, "testifying" (Acts 20:21), that we should have, "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Acts 20:21.

Now God says, "Without faith it is impossible to please him [God]: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Hebrews 11:6. So, it is repentance and a correct faith in God, which we will call saving faith, which causes us to come to a right understanding of the Scriptures so that we may be "wise unto salvation." 2 Timothy 3:15.

If we do repent and have faith in Christ, then the Scriptures become a reality in our lives for we become such "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; [so] that ye [are]...rooted and grounded in love." Ephesians 3:17.

Now "love is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:10), "for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law." Romans 13:8. Therefore, "the righteousness of the law [is]...fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh" (Romans 8:4), that is to say, not according to the sinful nature, "but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:4), but in accordance with the teachings of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the fruit of genuine faith, saving faith, is love and obedience to God's law of love.

Such a faith brings our minds into harmony with the mind of God, into harmony with the word of God, the Bible. Only in this way can we have a correct understanding of the Bible.

Therefore, Christ says, "If any man will do his [God's] will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." John 7:17. The only way to understand the Scriptures is to have a heart that is willing to obey what is revealed therein.

If the heart is unwilling to obey, it is opposed to the will of God and so cannot see the light of truth, because it is true of God that *only* "in thy light shall we see light." Psalm 36:9. We should study the Bible then only so that we might know the will of God and obey it.

The disobedient to God's law of love are "turned aside like a deceitful bow" (Psalm 78:57), always missing the mark, for they do not "walk in truth." 3 John 1:4. They are "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." 2 Timothy 3:7.

They do not accept God's invitation, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD" (Isaiah 1:18), for God says they, "take counsel, but not of me." Isaiah 30:1. That is, the disobedient take counsel of Satan and are taught by the enemy of God. Hence, they are such as those "having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." Ephesians 4:18.

Moreover, the disobedient are unable to reason correctly concerning the Scriptures "for precept [moral instruction] must be

upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little." Isaiah 28:10. Of such God declares, "Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass [surround] yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow" (Isaiah 50:11) at your losing eternal life.

For the disobedient have kindled their fire from the "strange fire" (Leviticus 10:1) of Satan, having followed Satan, who is "the spirit of error." 1 John 4:6. Hence, they are in "the mist of darkness" (2 Peter 2:17) without the light of God's truth.

God says, "He that refuseth reproof" (Proverbs 10:17), from God, "erreth." Proverbs 10:17. "He that refuseth instruction" (Proverbs 15:32) from God, "despiseth his own soul: but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding." Proverbs 15:32. "He that hearkeneth [is obedient] unto counsel" (Proverbs 12:15) from God, "is wise." Proverbs 12:15. "Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand." Daniel 12:10.

Moreover, God says, "Study to shew [show] thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing [interpreting] the word of truth." 2 Timothy 2:15. The Bible must be studied in order to correctly understand "the word of truth." 2 Timothy 2:15. "The Spirit of truth...he will guide you into all truth." John 16:13. This is the work of the Holy Spirit to make all of mankind "wise unto salvation" (2 Timothy 3:15) in that "they shall be all taught of God." John 6:45. "

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Corinthians 2:14. So we see that "the natural man" (1 Corinthians 2:14), the one who does not have the Holy Spirit of God as a guide, cannot discern the truths of God's word.

These then are the conditions to be met if we are to understand the Bible.

Bible Study and Prayer

God says, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy [God's] word" (Psalm 119:9), the Bible. Let the prayer of our hearts then be "Thy [God's] word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." Psalm 119:11. "Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity [wickedness] have dominion over me." Psalm 119:133.

Pray saying, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" (Psalm 119:18), which is God's law of love. God will not turn away any sincere prayer and so we will be such that "then opened he [God] their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures." Luke 24:45.

First and foremost, Bible study is successfully accomplished by means of prayer, which is communion with God, for it is true of God that *only* "in thy light shall we see light." Psalm 36:9. Unaided human wisdom is useless in understanding the Bible. Only through the work of the Holy Spirit can we correctly interpret the things in the Bible which the Holy Spirit inspired men to write.

Therefore, *never* should the Bible be read or studied without prayer. For by prayer, we enter the audience chamber of God by faith, and listen with our spiritual ear for God's guidance and teaching as God impresses our minds with His thoughts.

Each morning as we should start our day with prayer spanning at least two hours in order to allow time for God to speak to us without our being in a rush, we are, in effect, doing a Bible study. For "who teacheth like him" (Job 36:22), like God? Likewise, we should close the day with prayer each evening spanning at least another two hours, which also is, in effect, a Bible study.

As we commune with God, study the Bible, and meditate upon God's word, we will need at minimum a journal to be used dur-

ing our daily prayer time as was outlined in a previous chapter. Also, we will need a notebook to make notes during the day as God impresses our minds with His thoughts. In addition, word processing software on a computer will be helpful as we organise and synthesize our notes and the light and truth unearthed from the Bible.

This rich feast of God's word is not then for ourselves only. For from this knowledge of God we may create sermons which are religious discourses, tracts, leaflets, pamphlets, books, websites, blogs, YouTube videos, courses, smartphone apps etc., so that others may come to a right knowledge of God and be saved.

Bible Reading Plan

Make it a goal to prayerfully read the Bible every day and to read it entirely from the beginning to the end, from the book of Genesis to the book of Revelation, over and over again without ceasing. In other words, reading the Bible should be a lifelong practice. If you read three chapters of the Bible each weekday and five chapters a day on weekends, you can complete reading the whole Bible in approximately one year.

This Bible reading plan should be the minimum rate at which you read the Bible. I recommend that you plan to read more chapters each day, say, four or five chapters each day in order to complete reading the entire Bible in less than a year.

Reading the Bible is essential to fruitful Bible study for God says, "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost [Holy Spirit]...he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." John 14:26. Thus, as we study the Bible the Holy Spirit will bring to our remembrance what we have read and studied in the past.

In other words, we should read the Bible and keep on reading it and Christ, through His Holy Spirit, will bring to our remembrance what we have read, even words, phrases, sentences, whole

passages of Scripture and Bible stories, as we conduct our Bible study.

Bible Study Plan

As was said before, each morning we should start our day with prayer and Bible study spanning at least two hours. Likewise, we should close the day each evening with prayer and Bible study spanning at least another two hours.

Besides this Bible study during your morning and evening prayer, in addition, take the time and slow down and study the Bible through from beginning to end at the rate of two chapters a day as outlined below. This will take up to an hour or up to an hour and a half each day. Yes, it's a lot of time but it is *most important* if you are *ever* going to come into possession of greater and greater riches from the Bible's store of spiritual wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. At this rate, two chapters a day, you will complete the whole Bible within two years. Then, start all over again and so on as a lifelong activity.

Bible study should, however, not be limited to set seasons of prayer and study in the mornings and evenings. For God says, "This book of the law" (Joshua 1:8), the Bible, "shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success." Joshua 1:8.

"Let the word of...[God] dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms" (Colossians 3:16), which are sacred songs, "and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace" (Colossians 3:16), which is to sing with the divine influence "in your hearts to the Lord." Colossians 3:16. Our minds should be constantly exercised in searching for the great truths of the Bible through meditation. In this way, we are engaged in a Bible study all day and every day.

The Bible as Its Own Interpreter

As we read and study the Bible and pray, the Holy Spirit, a divine Teacher, is beside us enlightening our understanding that we may interpret the Bible correctly. Thus, we may comprehend the great truths of God's word and, therefore, none need err in their understanding of the Bible.

As we compare Scripture with Scripture, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (1 Corinthians 2:13) we will find that the Bible is its own interpreter. Scripture is the key that unlocks Scripture, in that one portion of the Scriptures connects itself with the truth of another portion, until the whole Bible is blended into one harmonious whole. In other words, light from one Bible text illuminates some portion of the word of God that has seemed more obscure and so one passage of the Bible explains another.

By comparing Scriptures referring to the same subject, you will see a harmony and beauty of which you never dreamed. In other words, by comparing different Bible texts treating on the same subject, viewing their bearing in all aspects, the true meaning of the Scriptures will be made evident. In this way, light will be shed upon the hidden meaning of the word of God, the Bible.

Every time we compare Scripture with Scripture, we receive new light for jewels of truth are scattered all over the field of revelation which is the word of God. There are veins of truth yet to be discovered, but "spiritual things...are spiritually discerned." 1 Corinthians 2:13, 14.

Christ, when He was on earth, said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes" (Luke 10:21), to those who are as a newborn in a correct faith in Christ: "even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." Luke 10:21. "For ye see your calling...how that not many wise men after the

flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called" (1 Corinthians 1:26) by God.

"But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought [naught]" (1 Corinthians 1:27, 28), to render useless, "things that are: That no flesh" (1 Corinthians 1:28, 29), that no human being, "should glory in his [God's] presence." 1 Corinthians 1:28, 29.

What does this mean? It means that God has designed that those persons who are "wise in...[their] own eyes" (Proverbs 3:7), those who are "wise in...[their] own conceits" (Romans 11:25), who feel that they are too wise to "be...taught of God" (John 6:45), will not be able to discern the true meaning of the Bible.

For God says, "Light" (Psalm 97:11), the light of truth, "is sown [disseminated] for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." Psalm 97:11. This then is the reason why the Bible has a hidden meaning.

Understanding the Background and Context of the Bible

The Bible is written against the background and context of the times of past millennia. Therefore, in order to understand correctly all that is said in the Bible, we need to have some knowledge of biblical archaeology, the historical geography of the Bible, the history of the civilisations of the Ancient Near East, the history of the Christian church, culture in ancient Israel, and agriculture in ancient Israel.

Such knowledge will cause us to reap rich rewards in our study of the Bible. In this book, I do not cover these subjects but I will do so in subsequent books which I will release in the future.

Specifically, I aim, in giving the background and context of the Bible, to connect "the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15) with the visible material world.

I aim to connect the unseen with the seen so that you may have a better appreciation that God is indeed real and, hence, you will live your life in accordance with heavenly realities. For ultimately, we must be such that "we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal [temporary]; but the things which are not seen are eternal." 2 Corinthians 4:18.

Nature Teaches Us

The whole natural world is designed by God to be an interpreter of the things of God. In the natural world God has placed in the hands of mankind the key to unlock the treasure house of His word, the Bible. Thus, in the Scriptures, God makes reference to much of the natural world and it is by gaining an understanding of nature that we receive the key to unlock the treasure house of the messages and mysteries in God's word, the Bible.

This is the reason why the hidden meaning of the Scriptures and the grand truths of the Bible are not unearthed by the careless or superficial reader of the Bible. For only diligent and patient study, careful thought and investigation, and a prayerful approach will avail in bringing the Holy Spirit to our side as a divine Teacher.

Now the Godhead says, "we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying." 2 Corinthians 12:19. The things of nature brought to mind in the Bible then are for our learning.

The Best Approach to Bible Study

To come into possession of the truths of the Bible requires above all, time and prayer, earnest study and close investigation. Those

who do apply themselves in this way will be richly rewarded for Christ, through His Holy Spirit, will give them understanding.

Searching the Scriptures

God says, "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD" (Proverbs 2:1-5), understand reverential awe for God, "and find the knowledge of God." Proverbs 2:5.

"For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler [a shield] to them that walk uprightly. He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints. Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path." Proverbs 2:6-9. Thus, God points out the need to search diligently and prayerfully for the hidden treasures of God's word, the Bible.

In order to understand the Bible, we must earnestly and diligently search, study, pray with all perseverance focussing on one point until it is clear and all the more precious because of the effort it required to uncover it. Then focussing on another point and so on.

For the Bible is like the earth in which is hidden veins of precious and valuable ore and the Bible student must dig and search the Bible, just as the miner does to find and extract the ore. The student, by stretching his mind and applying all his strength, may systematically and meticulously unearth truths hidden below the surface in the Bible.

When we come to prayer and Bible study, we can expect God to guide our studies and to teach us, but we should not expect

that God will tell us the lengths, and breadths, and depths and heights of all we need to know. For God gave us a mind to reason. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD." Isaiah 1:18. Therefore, God seeks to develop, strengthen, and expand our minds by allowing us to use our minds to assimilate grand, elevated truths, and to grapple with great thoughts.

Meditation and Bible Study

Bible study is most effectively pursued by meditation while in prayer, wherein we speak to God and listen to His answers to us. Often God speaks to us by His giving us various Bible texts to consider, but also by impressing our minds with thoughts to consider.

Meditation in this way is, in effect, is a Bible study as we are led by God to search the Scriptures and identify relevant Bible texts. In meditating on the words of the Bible, try to gain insights into what God has to say to humanity. Build upon previous insights received and the resulting conclusions you have drawn.

The whole process is one of throwing light on God's precepts and His holy word, the Bible, leaving us fortified in our minds against temptations on the points in question and strengthened by God to do His will in the matters at hand.

The Verse-by-Verse Method

Take a verse, *preferably* one relevant to one's daily life and/or current circumstances, or a verse received in prayer from the Lord, and seek to ascertain the thought God has put in the verse for us. Then, take another verse, and likewise study it. This is known as the verse-by-verse method of study.

The verse-by-verse method then is where a single verse is chosen and becomes the focus of the Bible study in an attempt to understand the verse and its relation to one or more familiar

Bible themes. In addition, the verse-by-verse method can lead to the discovery of a hitherto unknown Bible theme, and to understanding the theme's relation to the Bible as a whole.

This method is the most profitable approach to Bible study rather than the reading of many verses, passages or chapters without gaining any understanding of what was read. In understanding the thought in a verse, you will find Scripture is the key that unlocks Scripture as the Bible is self-explanatory.

It is very important to choose verses *relevant to one's life* as in comprehending such verses we will be able to practice what God has commanded us and, hence, "grow in grace" (2 Peter 3:18), which is to have continual victories over our sinful nature.

Applications of Bible Passages

You will recall that it was said previously that each verse, each passage (where a passage consists of two or more consecutive verses in the Bible), each chapter, and each book in the Bible has up to six or more applications. Some of these applications are (1) the literal meaning, (2) the application to me as an individual, (3) the application to God, (4) to the church, (5) to heaven which is God's "dwelling place" (1 Kings 8:30), and (6) to Satan. Each application results in new thoughts that arise from the Bible.

As a fundamental rule when we interpret the Scriptures, our interpretation must be applicable in all ages, from the time of Adam and Eve until the second coming of Jesus, for the Bible contains one perfect chain of truth. If we find that an interpretation of ours does not harmonize with the whole Scriptures, then we must discard it.

We should recognise that God wastes no words in the Bible and its stories—each word, each phrase, and each sentence has significance. Moreover, we should consider that of all the many things that God could have said in the Bible, God chose to say the particular things found in the word of God. This itself that is an

indication that the particular words of the Bible are important and convey much meaning that may be unearthed by earnest Bible study.

The Guidance of the Holy Spirit in Answer to Prayer: Tools

Below are some of the tools which will help you in your Bible study. And whenever you pick up a tool (resource) to read and study it, it is because the Holy Spirit is guiding you and teaching you in your Bible study. Thus, the Holy Spirit guides us into all of God's truth.

- *Use a Bible*

Use the King James Bible (KJV) which is *the ONLY correct English translation of the Bible* from its original languages of Hebrew and Aramaic (Old Testament) and Greek (New Testament). For after the King James Bible was published in the year 1611, among a number of new translations into the English language in subsequent years, there was the Revised Version (RV), in the year 1881. This was markedly inferior and incorrect when compared to the King James Bible, some of the reasons for which are explained below.

Since 1881, there have been approximately 900 new translations into the English language, and these are referred to as Modern Bible Translations. Almost always, *among other reasons* for being *an INCORRECT English translation of the Bible,* one reason for translation errors is the *doctrinal bias* of the translators. That is to say, there are thousands of Christian denominations of the church with teachings (doctrines) that differ from each other and all erroneous except for the one true church which the Bible identifies as the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Thus, the translators of Modern Bible Translations, instead of translating

what the original language says, modify the translation to say what is in keeping with their own doctrinal beliefs.

In other words, instead of faithfully *translating* what the original language says, these translators *interpret* what they *think* the Bible *says* or *ought to say* and pass off *their own thoughts and beliefs* as a *translation* to the unsuspecting public. In all of this, we can be sure that Satan is the prime mover in his attempts to "corrupt the word of God" (2 Corinthians 2:17) so that, by believing and following error, people will lose their salvation, that is, lose eternal life.

- *Use a Bible Concordance and a Lexicon*

Use a Bible concordance for word study as the Holy Spirit leads. A Bible concordance lists all the Bible verses in which a particular word occurs. For example, a concordance may be used to find all the Bible verses in which the word “forgiveness” occurs.

Now the selected word may occur in a few to hundreds of verses. It is necessary only to scan the list of verses to identify those that give “precept...upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little.” Isaiah 28:10.

A Bible word study is often not an end in itself, but may only be a first step to further Bible study. In all of this, in all Bible study, let it be done prayerfully, and the Holy “Spirit...he will guide you into all truth.” John 16:13.

The tool used for a Bible search may be a paper concordance (e.g. Strong’s Concordance), or an electronic concordance for computers such as the search facility in a particular Bible software e.g. the e-Sword software which is available as a free download at www.e-sword.net. Also, a concordance may be the search facility in an internet resource (e.g. www.blueletterbible.org), or a free smartphone app (e.g. the Blue Letter Bible app). When you search for one or more words in these electronic resources you will get

a list of verses in which these words occur just as in the paper concordance.

Research into the meaning of Hebrew and Greek words and their usage in the Bible will prove enlightening. For this purpose, use Strong's Lexicons (Dictionaries) in Hebrew and in Greek, (e.g. using the free e-Sword software) to find the meaning in English of a Hebrew or Greek word found in the verse you are studying. Follow up with the use of an English dictionary, if necessary, to clarify the meaning of the English definition given in Strong's Dictionary.

Here is a brief, simple description of the format of the entries for a specific word or phrase in Strong's Dictionary. Firstly, every Hebrew word (Old Testament) in Strong's Dictionary is given a number, e.g. H4940, and likewise every Greek word (New Testament) is given a number, e.g. G3051. This makes it easy to refer to Hebrew and Greek words without knowing any of these languages by simply referring to what is known as the Strong's Number.

Next, in an entry in Strong's Dictionary, the Hebrew word is rendered in Hebrew alphabetic characters and likewise the Greek word is rendered in Greek alphabetic characters.

Next, a transliteration into English of the Hebrew or Greek word is given, where a transliteration is the process of giving the spelling of a word in one language in the alphabet of another language. Thus, in Strong's Dictionary the Hebrew and Greek words of the Bible are "spelt" using the English alphabet.

Next, the precise pronunciation of the Hebrew or Greek word is given using an easy-to-understand phonetic convention. After that, the meaning of the Hebrew or Greek word in English is given.

Lastly, after the punctuation mark :- (a colon followed by a dash) all the English words into which the Hebrew or Greek word has been translated in the King James Version of the Bible (KJV) are given in alphabetic order. Note that in this last section of an entry in Strong's Dictionary, various symbols e.g. +, x, (), [], are

often employed but the interpretation of these symbols is for the advanced user of Strong's Dictionary.

For the average user of Strong's Dictionary, who is not engaged in the study of Hebrew and/or Greek, it is sufficient to pull out from an entry in the dictionary only two things. These are (1) the meaning of the Hebrew or Greek word in English, and (2) the English words in the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible used to translate the Hebrew or Greek word.

For example, consider the following Bible verse: "For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me." Romans 15:3. The English word "reproached" which occurs in the verse has the Strong's Number G3679. The meaning of the corresponding Greek word in English is "to defame, that is, rail at, chide, taunt." This Greek word, referred to by the Strong's Number G3679, has been translated into English as "cast in teeth, (suffer) reproach, revile, upbraid" in the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible.

- *Use Bible Cross References*

A Bible cross reference for a particular verse is a verse that is deemed to be related to the specific verse under consideration. For your Bible study, find related verses and passages, as the Holy Spirit leads, using the cross references found in some Bibles and in the Treasury of Scripture Knowledge. The latter is a resource consisting of hundreds of thousands of cross references for the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible. It is available at www.tsk-online.com, at www.blueletterbible.org, and as a free download to the free e-Sword software.

- *Use an English Dictionary*

Use an English dictionary to clarify the meaning of words in the Bible as the Holy Spirit leads. Online dictionaries which you may find helpful are, as a first resort, the American Dictionary of the English Language (1828 edition) by Noah Webster (webs

tersdictionary1828.com) since this dictionary is close to the 1611 publication year of the King James Version of the Bible (KJV). And, secondarily, use The Free Dictionary (www.thefreedictionary.com) which is an excellent online dictionary.

- *Use a Bible Dictionary*

As the Holy Spirit leads, find related information using a Bible dictionary which is a kind of encyclopaedia of people, places, things, culture etc. of the Bible. Some Bible dictionaries are available for free online such as at www.blueletterbible.org where you can search multiple dictionaries at the same time. Otherwise, they are available as a free download to the free e-Sword software e.g. Easton's Bible Dictionary, Fausset's Bible Dictionary, Hitchcock's Bible Names, Smith's Bible Dictionary. Note that the paid Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (12 volumes) mentioned next has an excellent Bible Dictionary as one of its volumes.

• *Use a Bible Commentary*

There are many, many Bible commentaries available, some free and some paid. These commentaries give the author's Bible study notes on verses, passages, or chapters of the Bible. They can, to some extent, give helpful insights into the Bible. One Bible commentary that I highly recommend that you get is the paid Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (12 volumes). It is not perfect, but it is very useful in many ways. It is currently only available in electronic format from Logos Bible Software (www.logos.com) as a package costing US$149.99 which can be added to their free Logos Basic Base Package. Also, there are a number of Bible commentaries available for free online such as at biblehub.com where you can search multiple commentaries at the same time, and as a free download to the free e-Sword software.

• *Read the Only Repairer Bible Study Blog*

My Only Repairer website (onlyrepairer.com) has a blog (onlyrepairer.com/blog/) where there are dozens of Bible study blog

posts. These posts teach you how to study the Bible by example, through unpacking the meaning of various verses of the Bible and by illustrating the Bible study principles of what I call Jacob's Mansion, where each Room uses a specific principle. Read my blog then to learn different Bible study approaches.

The Guidance of the Holy Spirit in Answer to Prayer: Process

What follows is the process, the specific steps, to be taken in the Bible study plan of two chapters each day mentioned above, as the Holy Spirit leads. How does the Holy Spirit lead? When you pray asking for God's help in your Bible study, the Holy Spirit will guide your Bible study as He chooses. So, by faith, trust that God will guide your study as requested and God *will* do so.

- *Prayer*

Start your Bible Study with prayer asking God to direct the Bible study and listening to thoughts and impressions from God while in God's audience chamber, and having a conversation with God. Follow where God leads by His Holy Spirit, who is a divine Teacher.

Pray to God asking Him to "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." Psalm 119:18. For God says, "A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven." John 3:27.

- *Make Notes*

Make notes of the insights which God gives you during your Bible study and the conclusions you have drawn. It is essential to make notes or otherwise you might forget the Bible insights gained. The aim is to, over time, draw out from the Bible one perfect chain of truth.

In making notes, type them in a document using word processing software or write them out in a Bible study journal set apart for this purpose. Try to record your own thoughts and study instead of someone else's. The notes are useful so that each successive time you go through the Bible studying it, you can build off what you had already studied before instead of starting over each time.

- *Context*

Read the two chapters. What is the type of book/literature from which the two chapters are taken. Who wrote this, when, to whom, and why? What is the purpose of the text i.e. what is the big picture message and the intent of the author?

What is the arc of the letter/book/conversation/chapters/passage? That is, most of the times there is some kind of movement to the story in the passage and in making a point and it always points to God's goodness, faithfulness, and mercy!

- *Read the two chapters through again multiple times using the verse-by-verse method to understand the chapters*

Use the King James Bible (KJV) which is *the ONLY correct English translation of the Bible* from its original languages of Hebrew and Aramaic (Old Testament) and Greek (New Testament), as the Holy Spirit leads, in order to understand a Bible verse, a passage, and/or a Bible topic in your chapters by considering:

- What the Holy Spirit brings to remembrance from previous Bible reading and study.
- What Bible verses and passages the Holy Spirit directs you to consider.
- What new understanding the Holy Spirit gives as Scripture unlocks Scripture.
- What new understanding the Holy Spirit gives as verses and passages of Scripture are analysed according to at least

six applications.

- What new thoughts the Holy Spirit gives as the Scriptures are the subject of meditation.
- What research and study the Holy Spirit inspires you to pursue in order that you may grow in your understanding of the Bible. This may involve the use of non-biblical resources such as an internet search. For example, nature, history, biblical archaeology, and the historical geography of the Bible are helpful in understanding the Bible.
- *What are the themes?*

A theme is an implicit or recurrent idea that occurs in your two chapters. Themes will tell you something of a lens that the author and the audience are supposed use to understand the text of the two chapters.

- *What do you not understand?*

Look it up. Hunt down what you don't understand using all the Bible study tools mentioned above and more.

- *What did this mean for God's people?*

Commentaries really help with this. God's people are especially those who have entered into a loving relationship with Him. Often, in the Bible, God's people are made up of God's visible church beginning with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, then followed by the nation of Israel, and later the Christian church.

- *Where is Jesus in the text of your two chapters?*

All of Scripture, the Bible, centres on Jesus. He is the centre of it all!!!

- *How does this point to the great controversy?*

The whole Bible is written against the background of the great controversy, which is the conflict between Christ and Satan.

- *What does this teach about Christianity?*

The whole Bible, including and *especially* the Old Testament which consists of the books of Genesis through to Malachi, teaches all about Christianity.

- *Find the flow of thought that connects the passages and verses in your two chapters*

Oftentimes in reading the Bible, the things it says seem disconnected and bewilderingly disjointed, but it is NOT so. What is necessary to see the harmonious whole is to follow the flow of thought from point to point.

- *Prayer and meditation. Where is your worshipful application? How do I apply this to my life?*

Every time we read and study the Bible, it should lead us into the worship of God and cause us to have a worshipful application of what we have just read and studied. Further, we want to apply what we have read and studied to our lives so that we are taught and led by God. To accomplish all this, prayer and meditation on your two chapters is necessary. Thus, we are drawn into a deeper and deeper relationship with God and we glorify God more and more.

Maturing in Bible Study

As you progress in your Bible studies, it is worthwhile to purchase Bible software and to study the languages in which the Bible was originally written, which are Hebrew and Aramaic for the Old Testament and Greek for the New Testament. There are free resources for studying the biblical languages but you will also need to purchase some resources. Being able to read the Bible in its original languages is a great blessing.

How will you afford these things? You should be willing to give up some things so you can save for them because investing in spiritual things has consequences for all eternity to come. If it is not possible for you to save for these things, pray to God claiming His promise: "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:19. And trust God to provide if it is His will for you to have these things.

ACCORDANCE BIBLE SOFTWARE

I highly recommend that you purchase the Accordance Bible software, which is what I use. Accordance is available to download at accordancebible.com for a 90-day free trial and after that a cost of US$49 to permanently own your software and library. What you get is the *full feature* software and a library of over 60 free Bible resources. NOTE: This web address contains the word "BIBLE." The latest version of Accordance is Accordance 14 but typically new versions are released by Accordance every few years. As an owner of the Accordance software, you can upgrade to the new version at a deep discount. I paid approximately US$39 to upgrade from Accordance 13 to Accordance 14.

Note carefully: Accordance has collections and bundles of Bible resources selling for hundreds of US dollars but you do NOT need these. Also Accordance *always* has ongoing sales where the price of resources is discounted; to get notice of these sales sign up for their email newsletter at the Accordance website. Whatever resources you may need in addition to the free ones that you got with the software can usually be had at a discount during a sale even if you have to wait a while for the appropriate sale. That is, pick and choose what you want to buy from the extensive Accordance resource catalogue at the Accordance website and then wait for a new sale, if the current sale is not applicable.

I recommend that as you acquire Bible resources, typically books, that you get the electronic version. Now, many books are

available at Amazon.com and their online marketplaces worldwide as a Kindle E-book and thus can be had instantly as a digital download. However, I recommend that, if the same book is available in either Accordance or Logos Bible software, that you buy this version instead of a Kindle E-book. When you do so, there are advantages of having your book available within your Bible software.

Note that that not all books that you may wish to purchase are available in Accordance. If not, then check if it is available in the Logos Bible software at the Logos website (www.logos.com) and get that version. If it is not available in either Accordance or Logos, then get the Kindle E-book, if available. As a last resort, get the printed book in paperback or hardcover format unless you absolutely have a preference for printed books.

Now the Accordance Bible software has numerous features and it can be overwhelming to know where to start in learning how to use the software. Below are some videos from the Accordance YouTube channel to get you started quickly and smoothly. NOTE: Some of the links contain TINYURL.COM.

- Getting Started with Accordance YouTube Playlist (tinyurl.com/acc-get-started). This playlist is useful for getting familiar with Accordance terminology for their software.

- The Accordance 13 Five-Minute Quick Start Video #1 (tinyurl.com/acc-quick-start-1).

- The Accordance 13 Five-Minute Quick Start Video #2 (tinyurl.com/acc-quick-start-2).

- Accordance Quick Tips YouTube Playlist (tinyurl.com/acc-quick-tips). This playlist is useful for getting an introduction to a number of Accordance features.

Accordance has plenty of tutorials available within the software itself, at their YouTube channel, from the Accordance website, as well as help from online chat at their website.

Logos Bible Software

Regarding the Logos Bible software (www.logos.com), I recommend that you use the free version. NOTE: This web address contains the word "LOGOS." The link for this version can be found by doing a search at www.google.com for "logos bible software free version." You can get purchased books that are not available in Accordance to add to the free Logos version. Above, I had recommended that you purchase the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (12 volumes) at a cost of US$149.99 from Logos and add it to your free version of Logos.

Note that Logos paid versions are available as a *yearly subscription*. And the lower cost paid versions of Logos are *not* full feature whereas in Accordance their is one *full feature* version available for a *one-time cost*, with upgrades available for a price every few years.

Studying Biblical Hebrew

If you want to read the Old Testament of the Bible in its original Hebrew language, you need to learn Biblical Hebrew. For this, I recommend the Aleph with Beth YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/@AlephwithBeth) with its over 130 lessons to date. Note that Biblical Hebrew is different from Modern Hebrew which is the language spoken in Israel today.

Aleph with Beth uses a teaching method known as Comprehensible Input which, in essence, is teaching a language in the way that children learn their mother tongue. In contrast, the Grammar-Translate teaching method teaches grammar and vocabulary first then lets the student read and translate the Hebrew

by "decoding" each word. Now, grammar has its place in language learning but Aleph with Beth recommends that you become fluent in Hebrew FIRST, BEFORE taking a deep dive into Hebrew grammar.

First of all watch Lesson 1 of the Aleph with Beth lessons (tin yurl.com/awb-lesson-1). Now you have to complete up to Aleph with Beth Lesson 19 and the following video with a Hebrew Alphabet Song in order to learn how to read and write the Hebrew alphabet.

However, since the goal is to *read* the Old Testament of the Bible, after watching Aleph with Beth Lesson 1, I *preferred* to jumpstart the reading and writing of Hebrew BEFORE they are taught by Aleph with Beth. You can do this by doing the video lessons, Lessons 01-01 through to Lesson 02-04 from the textbook Beginning Biblical Hebrew by Mark D. Futato at dailydoseofhebrew.com, where you just need to scroll through the webpage to find the link to the video lessons. NOTE: This web address contains the word "DAILY."

Next, having learned how to read and write Biblical Hebrew from Daily Dose of Hebrew, go to the companion website for Aleph with Beth (freehebrew.online) and go to the Resources webpage (freehebrew.online/resources/). There, at the Resources webpage, download the Vocabulary List, the Grammar, and the Hebrew Scripts for the Aleph with Beth lessons. NOTE: This web address contains the word "ONLINE."

Then, I recommend that starting at Lesson 1 of the Aleph with Beth lessons, do this for each YouTube video lesson: (1) Watch the YouTube lesson, (2) read the corresponding Vocabulary List, (3) read the corresponding Grammar lesson, and (4) read the corresponding Hebrew transcript for the lesson, (5) do the corresponding Aleph with Beth quizzes at BibleLing (hebrew.bibleling.org/#/), where you just need to scroll through the webpage to find the link to the quizzes. NOTE: This web address contains the word "BIBLELING."

At the Resources webpage of the Aleph with Beth website, you can also download a Learning Schedule to guide you in how you go through and review the lessons. Now you may not need to review previous lessons as specified by the Learning Schedule you chose; do what works best for you. I recommend that you do ALL the Aleph with Beth YouTube video lessons that have been released to date by which time you should have gained some fluency in Biblical Hebrew. Here is Aleph with Beth's guide (tinyurl.com/awb-7-tips) on how best to learn biblical languages.

While you wait for new lessons to be released by Aleph with Beth, you may want to start on the approach in this Medium.c om article How I Learned Biblical Hebrew in a Few Months by Sang Tian (tinyurl.com/hebrew-tips). Note that the Grammar and Workbook mentioned in the article are available for the Logos Bible software, both as standalone books and as bundle of two books at a discount.

The article mentions purchasing a physical Hebrew Bible as a Reader's edition which has grammar and vocabulary helps at the bottom of each page. For a free electronic resource with some or all of the same features, go to STEP Bible (www.stepbible.org). NOTE: This web address contains the words "STEP BIBLE." Here is a YouTube video by Dr. Phillip Marshall that teaches how to use STEP Bible (tinyurl.com/pm-step-bible).

If you want an electronic or physical Hebrew Bible *without* helps, go to my Only Repairer website at onlyrepairer.com/biblic al-hebrew/. NOTE: This web address contains the words "ONLY" and "BIBLICAL." There you will find the Hebrew Bible in *four* parts and in *large print* to read free online, download as free PDFs, and to purchase from amazon.com and all their marketplaces worldwide.

Alternatively to the Medium.com article, or in addition, AFTER you have done ALL the Aleph with Beth released lessons and are waiting for the release of new lessons, you could try the paid resource, Biblingo (biblingo.org), which is similar to Aleph with

Beth. Biblingo "incorporates insights from the latest research in both second language acquisition and general linguistics" and they have a free 10-day trial where you can study *both* Biblical Hebrew and Biblical Greek.

Note that Biblingo has a Free Forever plan with alphabet lessons and flashcards. The cost for Biblingo *paid* plans starts at US$9 each month for *one* language. Biblingo paid plans have flashcards, video lessons, a built-in textbook, and a graded reader (readings at the level you have reached in the lessons) and more. And you can practise typing Hebrew answers to study questions which helps with learning Hebrew.

Now each lesson on Biblingo has multiple sub-lessons and one tip is to *read* the built-in textbook for a sub-lesson *before* you do *any* of the sub-lesson activities.

Studying Biblical Greek

If you want to read the New Testament of the Bible in its original Greek language, you need to learn Biblical Greek also known as Koine Greek. Note that Biblical Greek is different from Modern Greek which is the language spoken in Greece today.

Now the original manuscripts of the Greek New Testament known as *autographs* have long since disintegrated from age and continued high use and handling. But the original texts were preserved by Greek copies, translations into other languages known as *versions*, and hundreds of quotations by early Christians. And all these were handwritten.

Of note is the fact that the handwritten Greek copies of the first generation were themselves copied making second generation handwritten copies of copies, and these, in turn, were copied making third generation handwritten copies of copies of copies and so on for about 1,500 years. To reiterate, all these generations of copies were handwritten. It was not until *after* the printing press was invented by Johannes Gutenberg around the year 1440

A.D. that Desiderius Erasmus published the printed Greek New Testament in the year 1516 A.D.

Now the generations of handwritten copies, by the very nature of the expected human error in copying and, in some cases, by the intentional changes made by the copyists, typically differ from each other in places. This phenomenon of varied readings of the Greek texts is referred to as *textual variants*. This phenomenon, coupled with the fact that, in many instances, manuscripts only contain *portions* of the Greek New Testament, means that in order to arrive at a *complete* Greek New Testament it is necessary to draw upon a *number* of Greek manuscripts. And this is what Erasmus did in 1516 A.D.

After the 1516 A.D. Greek edition of the New Testament by Erasmus, a number of other persons published Greek New Testaments which all differed from each other to varying degrees depending on which Greek manuscripts were compiled to produce their Greek New Testament. One such Greek New Testament was promoted as the *Received Text*, that is, the *Textus Receptus* in the Latin language. Since then this term *Textus Receptus* has been applied to *all* those published Greek New Testaments which varied little from Erasmus' Greek New Testament of 1516 A.D. I maintain though that the True Textus Receptus are the autographs, that is, the original writings of the authors of the Greek New Testament.

Now, the Textus Receptus has been translated into many languages, including the English language. As was said before, the King James Version of the Bible (KJV) is the *only* CORRECT translation of the Bible into the English language as a Spirit-led and prayerful study of the KJV will prove. And the translators of the KJV used a number of Greek Textus Receptus manuscripts to arrive at the English language KJV. However, it turns out that the 1550 A.D. edition of the Greek New Testament published by Robert Estienne (1503-1559) who was born in Paris, France, and was also known as Robert Stephanus in Latin or Robert Stephens in English, is almost 100% identical to the King James Version of

the Bible. Thus, in the Stephanus 1550 Greek New Testament we have the Textus Receptus that is closest to the Greek autographs.

Now, since the year 1881, when the Revised Version (RV) of the Bible was published there have been many versions of the Bible in the English language and all these are known as Modern Bible Translations. What then is the difference between the King James Version of the Bible (KJV) and Modern Bible Translations? A whole lot. Why? The reason is that the Revised Version (RV) was based on an hitherto unknown Greek text created in the main by two men, Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort, both commonly referred to as Westcott and Hort.

This unknown Greek Text created by Westcott and Hort was the product of their own Greek theory which had no foundation in fact or logic. In essence, their Greek theory was the result of their Satan-inspired imaginations. Nevertheless, the Westcott and Hort Greek theory was taken up by others and taught as truth which it was not. The result has been *never-ending streams* of new editions of the Greek New Testament known as Greek critical texts, with one stream in its 28th edition. These Greek critical editions are called updates and they all differ from each other for they were produced by people according to their own imaginations and tastes inspired by Satan.

Thus, we have the multiplicity of Modern Bible translations based on the many Greek critical texts which are copyrighted so that they are a moneymaking source of revenue for the copyright holders. On the other hand, the King James Bible (KJV) is in the public domain, except in the United Kingdom, and therefore free from copyright. Anyone then can print and distribute the KJV outside of the United Kingdom without seeking permission to do so.

I have made the Stephanus 1550 Greek New Testament available on my Only Repairer website at onlyrepairer.com/biblical-greek/ to read free online and download as a free PDF. It is also available for purchase online at the Lulu.com Bookstore in

E-book, paperback, and hardcover formats—links to the books at Lulu.com are at my Only Repairer website at onlyrepairer.com/biblical-greek/. NOTE: These web addresses contain the word "BIBLICAL." Also the E-book from Lulu.com is an EPUB file. You can import it into your Kindle E-Reader device or into the free Amazon.com Kindle app on your computer or smartphone using www.amazon.com/sendtokindle.

Unfortunately, at the time of this writing, there is no free learning resource for Biblical Greek similar to Aleph with Beth for Biblical Hebrew. Therefore, of all the paid learning resources for Biblical Greek, I recommend the paid resource, Biblingo (biblingo.org), as described above. Also Biblingo has a Free Forever plan with alphabet lessons and flashcards. The cost for Biblingo paid plans starts at US$9 each month for *one* language.

Again, just as in the case of Biblical Hebrew, each Greek lesson on Biblingo has multiple sub-lessons and one tip is to *read* the built-in textbook for a sub-lesson *before* you do *any* of the sub-lesson activities.

While studying Biblical Greek with Biblingo, you should be able to benefit from the Alpha with Angela YouTube channel which has over 30 lessons released so far (tinyurl.com/awa-lesson-1). Alpha with Angela is a companion YouTube channel to Aleph with Beth. The corresponding website for Alpha with Angela is freegreek.online. Here is Alpha with Angela's guide (tinyurl.com/awa-greek-tips) on how best to use their videos for learning Biblical Greek.

Now, for learning Biblical Greek using the Grammar-Translate method, I recommend the free Online Greek Textbook (tinyurl.com/dr-shirley-greek) by Dr Shirley J. Rollinson. This textbook is a standalone resource. For textbooks with accompanying videos lessons, I recommend two paid resources. Learn to Read New Testament Greek by David Alan Black has accompanying lessons on YouTube at tinyurl.com/dab-greek-lessons and at dailydoseofgreek.com/learn/. Also, Beginning with New Testament Greek

by Benjamin L. Merkle and Robert L. Plummer has video lessons and downloadable resources at dailydoseofgreek.com/learn-biblical-greek/ and at tinyurl.com/bha-greek.

For helps in studying the Greek New Testament, I recommend the following online resources:

- The website www.blueletterbible.org which has the Stephanus 1550 Greek New Testament as its version of the Textus Receptus with helps for studying it. Here is the link to their Blue Letter Bible YouTube tutorial: tinyurl.com/blue-letter-tut-1.

- The STEP Bible at www.stepbible.org has an unspecified version of the Textus Receptus for study. Here are links to two tutorials for the STEP Bible: tinyurl.com/pm-step-bible and tinyurl.com/ddg-step-bible.

- The Kata Biblon website at tinyurl.com/kata-biblon which has the Greek Byzantine text in the form of the Robinson-Pierpont 2005 text for study. Also, note that the Byzantine Greek text differs from the Stephanus 1550 Greek text in about 1,400 places. I only mention the Byzantine Greek text because it has a full suite of free learning resources. At the Kata Biblon website, if you click on a Greek word you will get a popup with grammar and vocabulary helps. In addition, you can get electronic versions of the Robinson-Pierpont Greek texts for download at byzantinetext.com. Also, you can listen to the Robinson-Pierpont 2005 Byzantine Greek text read at tinyurl.com/mr-byzantine in Erasmian pronunciation. This is very helpful for learning Biblical Greek listening skills. Erasmian pronunciation is the most popular pronunciation for learning Biblical Greek as it applies a unique sound to each letter of the Greek alphabet, which helps with learning how to spell Greek words. If you do read and

listen to the Byzantine text, make sure to compare it with the Stephanus 1550 Greek text to see the differences.

Memorisation of Scripture

Make it a habit to memorise Bible texts because the Scriptures are our safeguard, our defence, against temptations in that "the sword of the Spirit...is the word of God." Ephesians 6:17. How is the Bible a defence? God says that the Scriptures are a defence when we can say in truth, "Thy [God's] word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." Psalm 119:11.

So, when temptations come to us from our sinful nature, the world at large, and from Satan, we may, wherever we are, search our memories and find the appropriate Bible text and purpose in our heart to obey it, praying instantaneously to God for help to walk in His ways.

Keep your Bible with you, perhaps on your smartphone (e.g. the Blue Letter Bible app), and fix verses in your memory as you walk along the streets or wait for something. For God says, "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost." John 6:12. This means that as it relates to time, make good use of every fragment of time during your day so that there are no wasted moments. This will prove to be a profitable approach to increasing in the knowledge of the Scriptures.

Symbolism in the Bible

God says, "He that tilleth [cultivates] his land shall be satisfied with bread: but he that followeth vain [worthless] persons is void of understanding." Proverbs 12:11. "He that tilleth [cultivates] his land shall have plenty of bread: but he that followeth after vain [worthless] persons shall have poverty enough." Proverbs 28:19. These Bible verses have both a literal and symbolic meaning.

Symbolism is widely used in the Bible and, in this way, God has compressed over a million of His thoughts in the few words given in the Bible. Further, by the use of symbolism, God has hidden many grand truths in plain sight. Thus, the careless, superficial reader of the Bible does not discern the truths that are like precious ore hidden in the earth. We will now discuss both these verses and unpack their literal and symbolic meaning.

First, we will look at the literal meaning of these verses. In both verses, God is saying to us that he who cultivates his land, say, in planting wheat, will receive a harvest from this and may, therefore, prepare bread for his food, sufficient for his need. In other words, he that is diligent in cultivating the land, will have plenty of food to eat.

On the other hand, vain, worthless persons do not understand that if they are to have food to eat they must cultivate the land. Hence, they will suffer from poverty in that they lack food to eat. This is the literal meaning of both these verses.

But there is a symbolic meaning to both of these Bible verses and it revolves around what the Bible means by the word "bread." Christ, when He was on earth, said, "I am that bread of life...This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." John 6:48-51.

Christ refers to Himself as the "bread of life" (John 6:48) which, if anyone eats of it, they shall not die but "shall live for ever" (John 6:51), that is, they shall have eternal life.

Christ also said, "The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." John 6:51. Bread then is a symbol of Christ's flesh, His body, or in other words, His life, which He gave so that humanity may have eternal life. So, the question then arises, "Must we eat of Christ's literal flesh in order

to have everlasting life?" The answer is, No! We must dig even deeper for the Bible's hidden meaning.

God says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." John 1:1. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." John 1:14. This is a reference to Christ for He is the One, the member of the Godhead, who took upon Himself human flesh when He was born as a baby boy named Jesus.

"His name" (Revelation 19:13), Christ's name, "is called The Word of God." Revelation 19:13. How is Christ the word of God? Christ's life on earth was in accordance with God's law of love, in that it was in accordance with the word of God, the Bible, which in its entirety describes God's law. In effect, Jesus Christ in human flesh was God's thought, the word of God, made audible.

Therefore, when Christ said He was the "bread of life" (John 6:48) He was really referring to Himself as "The Word of God." Revelation 19:13. So, God is saying to us that we must "eat" the word of God, the Bible, if we are to have eternal life.

But what does it mean to "eat" the word of God? In answer to this question, consider what God says: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." John 17:17. Our sanctification then which makes us fit for everlasting life in the presence of God, the holy angels, and the sinless created intelligences of the unfallen worlds, depends on the word of God.

But how does the word of God accomplish our sanctification? Well, just as bread, or more generally, food, nourishes our bodies promoting physical life and health, so "eating" the word of God, the Bible, nourishes our spiritual life so that we are sanctified, which is to be made sinless and fit for eternal life. In other words, if we practice what God says in His word, which is to live in accordance with God's law of love, we shall be sanctified, made fit for everlasting life.

So far, we have concluded that to eat the bread of life is to, symbolically, eat the flesh of Christ, which means to "eat" the

word of God, which is to live in harmony with God's law of love as revealed in the Bible and so be saved.

Now, coming back to our original two verses, we may conclude that if one cultivates their land they will receive a harvest from which they may prepare food such as bread. This symbolically means that one should nourish one's spiritual life with the word of God and thereby be sanctified and, hence, have eternal life.

But what does God mean when He says, "He that tilleth [cultivates] his land" Proverbs 12:11, Proverbs 28:19? Well, literally, these verses imply that one must put forth diligent effort if one is to receive a harvest from the land. Symbolically then, it means that one must put forth diligent effort in reading and studying the Bible if one is to reap a rich reward from the word of God, in that the Bible is effective in our sanctification and, therefore, we may have eternal life.

For only earnest study and close investigation of the Bible will avail in our reaping the blessings of the word of God. It requires patient, persevering effort just as is required in cultivating land. No halfhearted, indifferent work in cultivation will avail for reaping a crop from the land and, similarly, no halfhearted, indifferent work in Bible study will avail anything for our salvation.

So, in just a few words in both of the Bible verses originally considered, God has conveyed two of His thoughts. Who would have thought that God's advice about successful farming has anything to do with our salvation? It does, and this example is typical of much of the Bible in that there are many grand truths to be unearthed by understanding the Bible's symbolism. Note that by comparing Scripture with Scripture we were able to extract the hidden meaning of God's word, the Bible. This is an example of how the Bible is its own interpreter.

Now, the process of unpacking of the meaning of both verses originally considered is an example of what God means when He says, "precept [moral instruction] must be upon precept, precept

upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little." Isaiah 28:10.

The word "bread" in the Bible conveys a multifaceted line of thought in the Bible in that this thought interconnects other lines of thought and other symbolism in the word of God. Thus, a Bible study of the word "bread" will require much effort to unearth related meaning, but will yield rich rewards in that the efficient Bible student will find much celestial gold in the Bible.

Selecting an Area of Focused Study

A key to understanding the Bible is to identify what you do not know or do not understand as you read or study the Bible. The next step is to do a focused enquiry of the Scriptures on these areas. In this way, you will come into greater knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures.

Another key to understanding the Bible is to seek to connect all that you think that you do know and understand into one harmonious whole. This approach will help you to see gaps in your knowledge, errors and inconsistencies in your interpretation of the Bible and, hence, overcome them. This is accomplished by close attention and contemplation of the Scriptures in order to connect the precepts of the Bible into one perfect chain of truth.

In addition to having identified areas on which to target your investigation of the Bible as described above, you may select for your study, for example, (1) particular words for Bible research, (2) a Bible verse or passage for research of the words occurring in them, (3) a topic in the Bible, or (4) select a person mentioned in the Bible for specific consideration of their life and character. These are just some of the ways in which you may choose a focus for your study of the Scriptures.

The Bible and Our Everyday Life

The entire Bible is an essential tool in our endeavour to live godly lives. It is applicable to our daily lives as we will see in the discussion which follows.

GOD'S PROVIDENCE

We "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18) when we obey God's law of love. That is, we come into new light, a new perspective of God and an understanding of "the manifold wisdom of God." Ephesians 3:10. For "he [God] hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence." Ephesians 1:8.

So, we come to a new understanding of the Bible and, hence, to a better knowledge of God through our experience in life as God directs our lives through His providence, or in other words, through His care, guardianship, and control.

Even familiar texts of the Bible open up to us giving us greater understanding of the Bible as we follow in the way in which God leads us. When God's providence leads us through various circumstances in our lives, our experience and observations of the world around us at that time cause us to come to an understanding of the Scriptures which we never had before.

Then it is that things we could not understand in the Bible before we had this experience become plain. We should understand that God has a purpose in all that He does. For the Godhead says, "We do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying." 2 Corinthians 12:19.

Thus, God answers the prayer of our hearts, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law [of love]." Psalm 119:18. We may therefore say, "What hath God wrought!" (Numbers 23:23), which is to say, "What God has done!"

Our Need for Discernment

Without "eyesalve" (Revelation 3:18), which is, literally, a poultice or medical dressing for the eye, and figuratively, discernment, we cannot interpret the Bible correctly. For unless you have eyesalve you cannot "study" (2 Timothy 2:15), the Bible, "to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing [interpreting] the word of truth." 2 Timothy 2:15.

Without eyesalve, we cannot be "those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." Hebrews 5:14. For there are many "dissemblers" (Psalm 26:4) in the world, people who "by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Romans 16:18), the naïve and gullible.

Thus, God says, "Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers" (Philippians 3:2), but without eyesalve, we are unsuspecting and will fall into "the snare of the devil." 2 Timothy 2:26. For *only* "in thy [God's] light shall we see [the] light" (Psalm 36:9) of truth. We can *only* become enlightened in our understanding of the world around us when we correctly interpret "the word of truth." 2 Timothy 2:15.

As was said before, the Bible is full of "instruction" (Job 33:16) and in it, God reveals the tactics of the enemy, Satan, for God says "I will forewarn you." Luke 12:5. Therefore, God says, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Matthew 11:15. "Beware." Philippians 3:2.

"The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way" (Proverbs 14:8) of life, and "a prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself" (Proverbs 27:12) in God for "God is a refuge for us" (Psalm 62:8); "but the simple" (Proverbs 27:12), the naïve and gullible, "pass on, and are punished." Proverbs 27:12.

For "the simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going" (Proverbs 14:5), that is to say, carefully considers the direction of his life.

The Bible and Our Speech

As Christians, "our conversation is in heaven." Philippians 3:20. That is, we maintain a constant conversation and communion with God, and we obey God's instruction regarding our words that we speak in this world, for God says, "Let thy words be few." Ecclesiastes 5:2.

When we do speak, we should obey God's instruction, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles [utterance] of God." 1 Peter 4:11. In other words, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers" (Ephesians 4:29) in that it is a blessing to the hearers.

This means that when we speak, we should say only scripturally-informed things. If we so speak, we will be like Jesus Christ for He was "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matthew 10:16), in that, when "the Pharisees...took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk" (Matthew 22:15) they could not prevail against Him.

So, when we speak according to the word of God, our words will then be pure for "the words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times" (Psalm 12:6) and we cannot be entangled in our talk. For "the scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35), in that the Scriptures, the Bible, cannot be proven to be wrong, neither can it be made to sustain error.

Such speech on our part reinforces and aids us in our Bible reading and study of the Bible. How is this so? The reason is that we have obeyed God's command, "Let the word of...[God] dwell in you richly in all wisdom." Colossians 3:16. Thus, it shall come to pass that we have been "enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost [Holy Spirit], and have tasted the good word of God, and the [divine] powers of the world to come." Hebrews 6:4, 5.

For "every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matthew 12:36, 37) by God to eternal death (annihilation).

Preparing Bible Studies for Others

"The liberal [generous] deviseth liberal [generous] things; and by liberal [generous] things shall he stand" (Isaiah 32:8) free of condemnation by God in the judgment. "The liberal [generous] soul shall be made fat [be blessed]: and he that watereth [gives a drink of water] shall be watered also himself [receive a drink of water]." Proverbs 11:25. This is to say that he that satisfies the need of those thirsty for the word of God shall have his own thirst for God satisfied. So, in seeking to bless others by preparing Bible studies for them, you are yourself blessed by God.

For the process of preparing Bible studies requires much prayer, study, research, thinking, meditation, observation of the people and the world around you, and application of the Scriptures to what you observe and to your interaction with others.

Such preparations also require making notes, learning from God, analysis of God's precepts (moral instruction) and their relation to each other, weeding out of any previously held errors or misconceptions and, hence, harmonising the whole Bible into a perfect chain of truth.

The whole process causes us to increase in our knowledge of God and draws us into a closer union with God in that our hearts are in harmony with God's law of love. Thus, the receiver of the Bible studies and you, the giver, are both blessed by God.

Chapter Fourteen

The Final Battle: Practical Godliness

God says, "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." James 1:22. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you" (2 Corinthians 13:5), which is to say, that you have Jesus Christ's character of love, "except ye be reprobates" (2 Corinthians 13:5), morally worthless? The genuine Christian lives in accordance with God's word and by constant self-examination they ensure that they do not swerve from the right path.

For God says, "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil." Proverbs 4:25-27.

All these things apply to the entirety of our spiritual lives, including what we will call practical godliness, that which is revealed in the outward life. So, we will now look in detail at the effect of justification and sanctification, particularly as it relates

to practical godliness, for the inward life must be reflected in the outward life.

The Example of Christ

Christ, in a prayer to the Father at the end of His life on earth, said, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." John 17:4. For Christ said, "I must be about my Father's business" (Luke 2:49) which is the salvation of souls, the saving of persons from eternal death. Now, Jesus Christ glorified God by accurately and fully reflecting God's character of love and, hence, Christ lived a life in accordance with God's law of love.

In so doing, Jesus Christ spent all His energies and time carrying out His mission to the world to "save his people from their sins." Matthew 1:21. Thus, Christ went about His "Father's business" (Luke 2:49) in that He "who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him." Acts 10:38.

Christ says, "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done." John 13:15. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." John 15:13. "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you." 2 Corinthians 12:15. "For even Christ pleased not himself." Romans 15:3.

The Fruit of the Spirit

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." Galatians 5:22, 23. "The fruit of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22) is the result of the work of the Holy Spirit in the life, thus giving to the individual the attributes of God.

When the fruit of the Spirit is revealed in your character, then you may know that you have indeed received "the gift of righteousness" (Romans 5:17) from God and, hence, you are obedient to God's law of love. Now only the justified have God's character of love.

Love

God says, "Love one another." John 13:34. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." 1 John 4:11. "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Ephesians 4:32.

For God says, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity [love], I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity [love], I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity [love], it profiteth me nothing." 1 Corinthians 13:1-3.

Love is a principle whereby we do good, and only good, to others just as Christ did when He was on earth. Therefore, the language of our hearts should be, "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you." 2 Corinthians 12:15. This means that we are willing to go to above and even beyond the limits of our endurance in order to do good to others.

Moreover, God says, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he [Christ] laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16), for our fellow human beings. "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." 1 John 3:16-18.

God also says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." Proverbs 4:23. "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." Matthew 7:6.

So, we are to beware of forming close, emotional attachments with those who are unworthy of it. What God calls for on our part is our disinterested love, a love that is sincere but one that guards our hearts from potential hurt, abuse, and betrayal. In other words, we are to love sinners while simultaneously hating their sins, by seeking to bless them so that they might be saved, but we should not become "unequally yoked together with unbelievers." 2 Corinthians 6:14.

This then is how love manifests itself in the life of the justified. Their love is guided by prudence, and it can truly be said of them, "ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." 1 Peter 1:22. The justified then have a love that is just like the love in God's heart.

Joy

The "followers of...the Lord, having received the word" (1 Thessalonians 1:6) are filled "with joy of the Holy Ghost [Holy Spirit]" (1 Thessalonians 1:6), the "joy of faith." Philippians 1:25. "The disciples...[are] filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost [Holy Spirit]." Acts 13:52.

For Christ is He "by whom...we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:2), in hope of having a character identical to Christ's character of love.

God says of the justified, It is Christ "whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory [full of love]." 1 Peter 1:8. The joy of the genuine Christian is the natural consequence of having received the gift of Christ's righteousness from God. For

these Christians are filled with the same joy that sustained Christ while He was on earth.

God has been "confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith" (Acts 14:22), for they "must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." Acts 14:22. The life of the Christian is not free from trials and tribulations. Nevertheless, God commands them, "Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD." Psalm 105:3.

"Rejoice in the LORD, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness." Psalm 97:12. "Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart." Psalm 32:11. "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice." Philippians 4:4. "Rejoice evermore." 1 Thessalonians 5:16. "For the joy of the LORD is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10), your moral strength.

As Christians then we are not to be sad, discouraged, or discontented. Let us say then, "Let all those that put their trust in thee [God] rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee." Psalm 5:11. "For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his holy name." Psalm 33:21.

"I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Habakkuk 3:18. "I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High." Psalm 9:2. "My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee." Psalm 71:23. This then is the language of the hearts of the justified, the true Christians. Their joy is identical to the joy that resides in God's heart.

Peace

God says, "To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." Romans 8:6. "Great peace have they which love thy [God's] law: and nothing shall offend them." Psalm

119:165. So, peace rules in the hearts of those who keep God's law and no circumstance of life can disturb their peace.

God says of such individuals, "Thou [God] wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." Isaiah 26:3. Those who keep God's law are they who trust in God and such are at "perfect peace" (Isaiah 26:3) at all times.

God also says, "Be careful for nothing" (Philippians 4:6), which is to say, do not worry, neither be anxious about anything; "but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:6, 7.

The justified, they who are at peace with God, and in whose hearts peace reigns, are not anxious about anything. For they, through prayer, lay their burdens and cares upon God and trust the results to God's wisdom and goodness. Thus, the justified have the attribute of peace which is identical to that in God's heart.

Long-Suffering

God says, "Charity suffereth long" (1 Corinthians 13:4), that is, love is long-suffering. "Put on therefore, as the elect of God" (Colossians 3:12), the chosen of God, "holy and beloved...long-suffering." Colossians 3:12. So, God says that long-suffering is an attribute of love and He desires His chosen ones, the justified, to be long-suffering.

In light of this, the justified are "strengthened with all might, according to his [God's] glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness." Colossians 1:11. In other words, the justified, who are true Christians, have a character of love identical to that of Christ in that they are patient, forbearing, long-suffering, and forgiving at all times, even under provocation. That is, the justified manifest the same long-suffering like that of God.

Gentleness

God says, "The wisdom that is from above" (James 3:17), that is from God, "is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." James 3:17. The justified have received this wisdom from God and, therefore, they have "the...gentleness of Christ." 2 Corinthians 10:1.

Now God commands us saying that we are "to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle." Titus 3:2. "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men." 2 Timothy 2:24. Gentleness then is an attribute of the character of those, the justified, who keep God's law of love by being obedient to all of God's commandments. Thus, the justified manifest the same gentleness like that of God.

Goodness

"The LORD, The LORD God, [is] merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." Exodus 34:6. Goodness then is an attribute of God. Therefore, we may say in truth, "Oh how great is thy [God's] goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought [done] for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!" Psalm 31:19.

Hence, "the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth" (Ephesians 5:9) in the lives of the justified. These are they whom the Holy Spirit has transformed into the likeness of Christ's character of love, thus making them abundant in all goodness. In other words, their goodness is identical to that of God.

Faith

The justified are they who can say of themselves in truth, I am "found in him [Christ], not having mine own righteousness, which is of the [works of the] law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Philippians 3:9. "For whatsoever is born of God" (1 John 5:4), that is, has the "newness of life" (Romans 6:4), "overcometh the [sins of the] world: and this is the victory that overcometh the [sins of the] world, even our faith." 1 John 5:4.

These are they, the justified, whose faith in Christ keeps them from being overcome by sin and Satan because, by faith, they have received "the gift of righteousness." Romans 5:17. They have "the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12) which is "unfeigned faith" (2 Timothy 1:5), sincere faith, identical to that which Christ had when He was on earth.

These are they who, just like Christ, obey God's command, "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." Ephesians 6:16.

Meekness

God says, "Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart." Matthew 11:29. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." Proverbs 16:32. The justified, who are they that have learned from God, and thus have "a meek and quiet spirit." 1 Peter 3:4.

They have obeyed God's command, "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved...meekness." Colossians 3:12. In other words, they are meek just like God.

Temperance[1]

God says, "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims" (1 Peter 2:11), on earth, "abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." 1 Peter 2:11. We are to say of ourselves in truth, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest [in order to prevent the possibility] that by any means...I myself should be a castaway" (1 Corinthians 9:27) by God.

Thus, God speaks of temperance. What is temperance? It is the avoidance of taking anything that is unhealthy into the body, and being moderate in the intake of that which is healthful. Therefore, God says, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." 1 Peter 5:8.

"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31), that is, do all in a manner to honour God with your conduct.

Eating and Drinking

God says to the justified, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost [Holy Spirit] which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify [honour] God in your body, and in your spirit [mind], which are God's." 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20.

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17.

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1. Ellen G. White, (egwwritings.org), Temperance

"For many walk, of whom I have told you... and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." Philippians 3:18, 19.

No Christian will take into his system any food or drink that will cloud his senses, or that will so act upon the nervous system as to cause him to degrade himself, or to unfit him for usefulness. The temple of God must not be defiled. The faculties of mind and body should be preserved in health, that they may be used to glorify, that is, honour, God.

God speaks of an individual who He says, "is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard." Deuteronomy 21:20. God says, "Put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite." Proverbs 23:2. Thus, God condemns gluttony and drunkenness which are intemperance.

Also, God speaking of ancient Israel, said, "And they sinned yet more against him [God] by provoking the most High in the wilderness. And they tempted God in their heart by asking meat [food] for their lust." Psalm 78:17, 18. In this case, the people lusted after food which included the flesh of animals, what we today call meat. But God says, "We should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted." 1 Corinthians 10:6.

You may ask, "What? Eating meat is a sin?" Yes, it is a sin. For speaking to Adam and Eve, "God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat [food]." Genesis 1:29.

This was the original diet that God gave to humanity—grains, nuts, fruit, legumes (such as peas and beans), and vegetables—and it did not include meat. Hence, before Adam and Eve sinned there was no death of any of the animals.

God also said to Adam and Eve, "And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon

the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so." Genesis 1:30. The animals were to eat vegetables, or green plants, and grass. So, before Adam and Eve sinned, no animal killed another animal nor killed a human being for their food.

Furthermore, in the "new earth" (Revelation 21:1), "the paradise of God" (Revelation 2:7), "there shall be no more death." Revelation 21:4. Therefore, the killing of animals which prevails today on earth is a departure from God's will.

To accommodate mankind's lust for flesh, God made "a difference between the unclean and the clean, and between the beast that may be eaten and the beast that may not be eaten." Leviticus 11:47.

Even so, God says, "Ye shall eat no manner of fat, of ox, or of sheep, or of goat." Leviticus 7:23. "Moreover ye shall eat no manner of blood, whether it be of fowl or of beast." Leviticus 7:26. "It shall be a perpetual statute for your generations throughout all your dwellings, that ye eat neither fat nor blood." Leviticus 3:17.

Thus, God condemns the eating of any fat or blood of even the clean animals which God says may be eaten. Now it is *impossible* in the preparation of flesh meat for food to eliminate *all fat and blood* from the meat. We may therefore conclude that God is reinforcing His condemnation of humanity in their eating of meat when He says that we are to eat no fat or blood.

What then should humanity eat? Consider the example of a man named Daniel. "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat [food], nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself." Daniel 1:8. "Then said Daniel to Melzar...Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse [things grown, that is, a plant-based diet] to eat, and water to drink." Daniel 1:11, 12.

"So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days. And at the end of ten days their countenances [looks]

appeared fairer and fatter in flesh" (Daniel 1:14, 15), looked better and plumper, "than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat. Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat [food], and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse [things grown, that is, a plant-based diet]." Daniel 1:15, 16.

God recorded this incident in the Bible as a lesson to mankind. God does not want us to eat meat unless there is nothing else available and affordable to provide our necessary food. Instead, God has given us an abundant supply of fruits, grains, vegetables, legumes, and nuts sufficient for a nutritious diet. Also, as indicated by the example of Daniel, water is the only beverage that we need and the only beverage that is desirable.

Alcohol

God says, "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise." Proverbs 20:1. "Woe to...the drunkards...that are overcome with wine!" Isaiah 28:1. Thus, God condemns the drinking of alcohol in any form or in any amount. For moderate drinking is the school in which people are receiving an education for the drunkard's career.

When the appetite for alcohol is indulged, reason is paralyzed, the intellect is benumbed, the animal passions are excited, and then follow crimes of the most debasing character. They are selling themselves to Satan. They are a slave to the will of Satan. They are a slave to licentiousness and violence.

There is no crime that they will not commit; for they have put into their mouth that which has intoxicated them, and made them, while under its influence, a demon. We should abstain then from drinking alcohol in any form.

Stimulants

The stimulating diet and drink of today and the intake of other stimulants are not conducive to the best state of health. Tea, coffee, and tobacco are all stimulating, and contain poisons. They are not only unnecessary, but harmful, and should be discarded.

Tea is poisonous to the system. Coffee is also a hurtful indulgence. Christians should let them alone. The influence of coffee is in a degree the same as tea, but the effect upon the system is still worse. It temporarily excites the mind, but the aftereffect is exhaustion, great loss of natural strength and vigour, paralysis of the mental, moral, and physical powers. The mind is deprived of vitality, and unless through determined effort the habit is overcome, the activity of the brain is permanently lessened.

Tobacco using is a habit which frequently affects the nervous system in a more powerful manner than does the use of alcohol. It binds the victim in stronger bands of slavery than does the intoxicating drink; the habit is more difficult to overcome. Body and mind are, in many cases, more thoroughly intoxicated with the use of tobacco than with alcohol, for it is a more subtle poison.

When once an appetite for this narcotic has been formed, it takes firm hold of the mind and the will of man, and he is in bondage under its power. Satan has the control of the will, and eternal realities are eclipsed.

Temperance: Conclusion

God says, "Every man that striveth for the mastery" (1 Corinthians 9:25), over sin, "is temperate in all things." 1 Corinthians 9:25. For it is impossible for one who loves these stimulants—tea, coffee, and tobacco—or who loves alcohol, and accustoms himself to their use, to "grow in grace." 2 Peter 3:18. He or she becomes gross

and sensual; the animal passions control the higher powers of the mind, and virtue is not cherished.

God's desire for humanity is "that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will." 2 Timothy 2:26. But apart from divine power, no genuine reform can be brought about. Human barriers against natural and cultivated tendencies to evil are but as the sandbank against the torrent.

However, when one surrenders to Christ, the mind is brought under the control of the God's law of love; but it is "the royal law" (James 2:8), which proclaims liberty to every captive. Subjection to the will of Christ makes the individual "free from sin." Romans 6:18. It means restoration to perfect humanity, to the sinlessness of Adam and Eve when they were created by God. This then is the condition of the justified whose temperance is identical to that of Christ when He was on earth.

Guidelines for Dressing

Regarding women's dressing, God says, "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." 1 Peter 3:3, 4. This also applies in principle to men's dressing.

Furthermore, God says, Let it be "that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety [soberness]; not with broided [broidered] hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works." 1 Timothy 2:9, 10.

Let it not be like that of "a woman with the attire of an harlot [prostitute]." Proverbs 7:10. Be such "that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear." Revelation 3:18.

Again, the principle applies to both men and women's dressing. Both should attire themselves "in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety [soberness]." 1 Timothy 2:9. All immodesty is to be avoided.

On another area of adornment, God says, "Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh...nor print any marks upon you: I am the LORD." Leviticus 19:28. "Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen" (Jeremiah 10:2), who are unbelievers in God. Tattoos and such like then are "an abomination to the LORD." Proverbs 15:8.

God says, "She decked herself with her earrings and her jewels...and forgat [forgot] me, saith the LORD." Hosea 2:13. "Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters." Exodus 32:2. "Put off thy ornaments from thee." Exodus 33:5. The principle is that all ornamentation of the body of either a man or a woman "is an abomination to the LORD." Proverbs 15:8. This applies to all forms of jewellery such as rings and chains.

Moreover, God says, "Thou...paintedst thy eyes." Ezekiel 23:40. "Thou rentest [disfigured] thy face with painting, in vain shalt thou make thyself fair [beautiful]" (Jeremiah 4:30) in your own eyes. Speaking of a wicked queen, God says, "Jezebel...painted her face, and tired [adorned] her head." 2 Kings 9:30. All who use cosmetics are following in the ways of that wicked woman, Jezebel. God has nothing good to say about this practice. It "is an abomination to the LORD." Proverbs 15:8.

Guarding the Eyes and Ears

God says that all humanity should say of themselves in truth, "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me." Psalm 101:3. So, we are to guard our eyes from seeing evil.

"And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD." Psalm 40:3. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms" (Colossians 3:16), sacred songs in the Bible, "and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." Colossians 3:16.

Thus, *only* spiritual things should be the theme of that which we sing about, listen to, read, meditate upon, teach, speak, and we should guard our ears from hearing of evil.

Now to reinforce what was said before about guarding our eyes and ears, let us consider some moral principles given to us by God. "The sinners...are afraid" (Isaiah 33:14), God says, "fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites." Isaiah 33:14.

"Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood [bloodshed], and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil." Isaiah 33:14, 15.

"He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure. Thine eyes shall see the king [God] in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off" (Isaiah 33:16, 17), they shall see heaven. "For our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29) and sinners are consumed with fire by the presence of God.

Furthermore, God says, "And if thy right eye offend thee [entice you to sin], pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee [entice you to sin], cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." Matthew 5:29, 30.

Hell is where sinners are annihilated by God. Plucking out the eye and cutting off the hand is not to be taken literally. What God means is, just as we prize our eye and hand, it is better to put away our darling, cherished, prized sins rather than suffer eternal death (annihilation) in hell.

Now God also says, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Philippians 4:8.

God also says, according "to the law and to the testimony" (Isaiah 8:20), which is the word of God, the Bible, "if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Isaiah 8:20. If persons do not speak according to the Bible, they do not have the light of truth.

Such are "after [according to] the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." 2 Thessalonians 2:9, 10.

In view of the above then, God has commanded us, by His moral principles, to guard our eyes and ears from anything—television, movies, videos, video games, music and such like—that is not in accordance with the Bible.

Such things are not good and the time they consume is, therefore, wasted. They cannot help us to be justified or to "grow in grace." 2 Peter 3:18. Now God says we are to be "redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16), which is to say, rescue our time from being lost or wasted. For God says, "Gather up the fragments" (John 6:12) of time, "that nothing be lost." John 6:12.

These things that God forbids lead to sinful, violent, and lustful thoughts and, hence, should be discarded if we wish to be justified by God. Moreover, many of these things are fictitious and, there-

fore, they do not meet the criteria of thinking on "whatsoever things are true." Philippians 4:8.

Competition

God says, "Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart." Matthew 11:29. "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." Philippians 2:3, 4. "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth." 1 Corinthians 10:24.

God also says, "For I say...to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly." Romans 12:3. "For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased" (Luke 14:11) by God; "and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 14:11) by God.

Moreover, God says, "Now the works of the flesh" (Galatians 5:19), the sinful nature, "are manifest [apparent], which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance [contention], emulations [jealousies], wrath, strife, seditions [divisions], heresies [dissensions], envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings [revelry], and such like: of the which I tell you...that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Galatians 5:19-21.

In all of what God says above, we can see that God forbids any form of competition between fellow human beings, for example, sports. All humanity has learned to be competitive in the school of Satan in that they seek the highest place for themselves. But God says that He Himself is "meek and lowly in heart" (Matthew 11:29) and He says, "Learn of me." Matthew 11:29.

Guidelines for Marriage

God, speaking of Himself, says, "And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man." Genesis 2:21, 22.

"And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." Genesis 2:23, 24.

God is therefore the Creator of the institution of marriage for it was God who married the first human pair, Adam and Eve. God designed marriage to be a loving, lifelong commitment between a man and a woman.

God says, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers [debauchees] and adulterers God will judge." Hebrews 13:4. "Now...it is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication" (1 Corinthians 7:1, 2), which is sexual intimacy outside of marriage, "let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband." 1 Corinthians 7:2.

"But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that." 1 Corinthians 7:7. So, being content in singleness, which is to never marry, is a gift from God.

"Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife." 1 Corinthians 7:3, 4.

"Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency [incontinence]" (1 Corinthians 7:5), tempt you for your lack of self-restraint.

Through the words of a man named Paul, God also says, "I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I" (1 Corinthians 7:8), as a single man. "But if they cannot contain" (1 Corinthians 7:9), cannot exercise self-restraint, "let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn" (1 Corinthians 7:9), better to marry than to be inflamed with lust.

"And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart [separate] from her husband: But and if she depart [separate herself], let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away [divorce] his wife." 1 Corinthians 7:10, 11. "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Mark 10:9), let not anyone break it apart.

Moreover, God says, "Let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband." Ephesians 5:33. God does not look with favour on the separation of husband and wife, except in the case of abusiveness and violence in the marriage. Neither does God look with favour on divorce under any circumstances.

God also says, "If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away [divorce her]. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him [divorce him]." 1 Corinthians 7:12, 13.

"But if the unbelieving depart" (1 Corinthians 7:15), separates himself or herself, "let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace. For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?

But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk." 1 Corinthians 7:15-17.

Practical Godliness: Conclusion

God says, "Abstain from all appearance of evil." 1 Thessalonians 5:22. "Adorn" (Titus 2:10), make beautiful in the eyes of others, "the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." Titus 2:10.

"He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered" (Proverbs 28:26) from sin. "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth [is obedient] unto counsel [from God] is wise." Proverbs 12:15. "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of [eternal] death." Proverbs 16:25.

This then is God's counsel to all humanity regarding practical godliness. It involves every aspect of the life of the individual and is to be carefully observed.

Chapter Fifteen

The Final Battle: God Equips Us

So far, we have looked at the inward conflict between the two natures of the justified—the sinful nature and the divine nature—and how to ensure that the divine nature has the supremacy. We have also looked at God's call to pray, which is to intercede, for others. But God's battle plan also calls for us to help others so that they might be saved. This is the subject to which we now turn in this chapter.

Christ Equips the Labourers

Christ, when He was on earth, spoke a parable, which is a short story conveying a moral lesson, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several [individual] ability; and straightway took his journey." Matthew 25:14, 15.

Let us first unpack the symbolism of Christ's parable before we attempt to understand its moral lesson. In the parable, a man has servants. The subject of the parable then is that God has claims on all humanity as His servants.

But not all of humanity recognise God's claims on them. Therefore, in the parable, it is only Christians, those who have professed to accept Christ's service, who are represented in the parable as Christ's own servants. In other words, the "servants" (Matthew 25:14) represent the followers of Christ.

The man in the parable who travels to a far country represents Christ, who at the time He spoke this parable, was soon to die, be resurrected, and ascend to heaven from which He originally came to the earth. The far country then is heaven.

The "talents" (Matthew 25:15) in the parable represent money. This is symbolic of all the talents, which are aptitudes, that God bestows to equip individuals. In the parable, some receive more money than others. The money is bestowed according to their individual ability, that is, by implication, according to their individual ability to put the money to use and to multiply it. So it is in the real world, some have more talents (aptitudes) than others.

Let us now try to learn the moral lesson of the parable. The lesson is that Christ, who has ascended to heaven, has claims on every Christian, who are those who profess that they have accepted God's call to place themselves in Christ's service.

Every Christian has received talents (aptitudes) from God, some receiving more than others, and so every Christian is called to become "labourers together with God." 1 Corinthians 3:9. They are to use these talents (aptitudes) from God to work in cooperation with Christ for the salvation of others.

In the parable, to His own servants, the Christian, Christ commits "his goods" (Matthew 25:14)—something to be put to use for Him. Thus, Christ gives "to every man his work." Mark 13:34. Some of these "goods" (Matthew 25:14) are intangible such as the gifts of the Holy Spirit—mental faculties, speech, influence, time,

health, strength, kindly impulses and affections. Other "goods" (Matthew 25:14) are tangible such as money.

Nevertheless, all of Christ's goods are to be put to use for Him. For God gives all these to the Christian in order to equip them for labour in His cause on earth which is the salvation of souls, that is, the saving of persons from eternal death.

So, Christ teaches that the true object of life is ministry to others so that they might be saved and have eternal life. That is, Christ's followers have been redeemed, bought back from Satan by Christ's blood, for service. Therefore, Christ gives to His followers the law of service—service to God and service to their fellow men.

All of this then is included in the moral lesson of the parable which Christ taught when He was on earth.

Christian Ministry

Christ, at the end of His life on earth and before He was crucified, prayed to the Father, saying, "I have glorified thee" (John 17:4), I have fully manifested your character of love, "on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. " John 17:4. So, Christ Himself was a worker for the salvation of all.

We too then, as Christians and according to the godly example given us in the life of Christ when He was on earth, should glorify God by our lives and finish the work that God has given us to do.

We should give up our own pleasure and bend all our time and energies to sowing the gospel seed, for God is He "who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." 1 Timothy 2:4. If we do so, we will live in accordance with God's law of love.

God says that as Christians we should be able to say in truth, "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stew-

ards, that a man be found faithful." 1 Corinthians 4:1, 2. We are to put Christ's goods to use in blessing others with the utmost of our ability at all times as we go about our "Father's business." Luke 2:49. "Not slothful in business; [but] fervent in spirit" (Romans 12:11), in mental disposition; "serving the Lord." Romans 12:11.

"The liberal [generous] soul shall be made fat [blessed]: and he that watereth [gives a drink of water] shall be watered also himself [receive a drink of water]." Proverbs 11:25. By living to minister to others, the Christian is brought in connection with Christ, for the law of service is the connecting link that binds us to God and to our fellow man. In this way, both ourselves and our fellow men are blessed by God. This then is the definition of Christian ministry.

Where to Labour

We may ask, "Where shall we labour for God?" The answer is that just as surely as Christ has said, "I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2) in the heavenly "mansions" (John 14:2), so surely there is a special place on earth designated by God where each Christian is to work for God. If we daily live in close, intimate, communion with God there is no possibility of us making a mistake in identifying that special place designated by God where we are to labour.

Gifts of the Holy Spirit[1]

God says, "Now there are diversities [a variety] of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations [service], but the same Lord. And there are diversities [a variety] of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the

1. Ellen G. White, (egwwritings.org), Christ's Object Lessons, pages 327, 328.

manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal [all together]." 1 Corinthians 12:4-7. The talents that Christ entrusts to His church represent especially the gifts and blessings imparted by the Holy Spirit.

"For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits" (1 Corinthians 12:8-10), discerning of either demonic spirits or the divine spirit; "to another divers kinds [a variety] of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame [same] Spirit, dividing [distributing] to every man severally [individually] as he will. 1 Corinthians 12:10, 11.

As was said before, all Christians do not receive the same gifts (talents or aptitudes), but to every servant of Christ, our Master, some gift of the Holy Spirit is promised. In this way God equips the Christian for labour in the cause of God on earth which is the salvation of all humanity, that is, the saving of souls from eternal death.

"Unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ" (Ephesians 4:7), the Holy Spirit "dividing [distributing] to every man severally [individually] as He will." 1 Corinthians 12:11. The gifts are already guaranteed us by God's plan of redemption, the gospel, but their actual possession depends upon our reception of the Spirit of God through repentance and faith in Christ.

How do these gifts of the Holy Spirit work? The answer is that learning, talents (aptitudes), eloquence, every natural or acquired endowment may be possessed, but without the presence of the Spirit of God working with us, no heart will be touched, no sinner converted to Christ.

On the other hand, if the Christian has a connection with God through Christ, if the gifts of the Spirit of God are theirs, then the

poorest and most ignorant of Christ's disciples will have a power that will have an impact on hearts. God makes such disciples His channel for the accomplishments of the highest influence in the universe, of God Himself.

"All things are of God." 2 Corinthians 5:18. We must submit ourselves to God's will so that we may be justified by God and, hence, God can work through us to convert to Christ those perishing in their sins. In such a work, there is no merit in the human being so that a great work is accomplished for sinners, but it is God who does the work.

In the case of the genuine Christian, this is the "work of faith, and labour of love" (1 Thessalonians 1:3) and "this is acceptable with God." 1 Peter 2:20.

Other Talents[2]

The special gifts of the Spirit are not the only talents (aptitudes) represented in the parable of the talents (money) which Christ taught. It includes all gifts and endowments, whether original or acquired, natural or spiritual. All are to be employed in Christ's service in blessing our fellow human beings.

In the parable, one received five talents, another two talents, and yet another one talent, everyone "according to his several [individual] ability." Matthew 25:15. God does not apportion the talents (aptitudes) unpredictably. He who has ability to use five talents receives five. He who can improve but two, receives two. He who can wisely use only one, receives one. God only expects returns "according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." 2 Corinthians 8:12.

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2. Ellen G. White, (egwwritings.org), Christ's Object Lessons, pages 328-365.

The question that most concerns us regarding talents (aptitudes) is not, "How much have I received from God?" Instead, the question is, "What am I doing with that which I have?" Having made a profession of faith in Christ, we have pledged ourselves to God to become all that it is possible for us to be as workers for Christ, our Master. Therefore, we should cultivate every one of our faculties to the highest degree of perfection so that we may do the greatest amount of good of which we are capable.

God says, let this be the purpose of your heart, "I press toward the mark [goal] for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14), the high calling of a life of holiness.

Mental Faculties

God requires the training of the mental faculties. He designs that His servants shall possess more intelligence and clearer discernment than the worldly-minded person. God is displeased with those who are too careless or too lazy to become efficient, well-informed workers for God.

He bids us to "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." Matthew 22:37. This puts upon us the obligation of developing the intellect to its fullest capacity, that with all the mind we may know and love God, our "Creator" Ecclesiastes 12:1.

God says, "He that hearkeneth [is obedient] unto counsel" (Proverbs 12:15), from God, "is wise." Proverbs 12:15. "Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning." Proverbs 9:9.

Such a person can say in truth, "Thou [God] through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me." Psalm 119:98. Christians are not to be such that "the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light" (Luke 16:8), wiser than the children of God.

The uneducated man who is consecrated to God and who longs to bless others can be, and is, used by the Lord in His service. But those who, with the same spirit of consecration, have had the benefit of a thorough education, can do a much more extensive work for Christ. For they have an advantage over the uneducated.

Speech

God says, "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners." 1 Corinthians 15:33. A corrupt communication does not mean only words that are vile. It means any expression contrary to holy principles and contrary to "pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father." James 1:27. It includes impure hints and covert insinuations of evil. Unless instantly resisted, these lead to great sin. Therefore, we should be careful of our words.

"But sanctify [regard with reverence] the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." 1 Peter 3:15. We should speak of Christ to those who know Him not. Wherever we are, we should watch for an opportunity to speak to others of Christ, our Saviour.

If we follow Christ's example in doing good, hearts will open to us as they did to Him. We can tell them, not in an abrupt manner, but with the tact born of divine love, of Christ who is the "Chiefest among ten thousand" (Song of Solomon 5:10) and the One "altogether lovely." Song of Solomon 5:16. This is the very highest work in which we can employ the talent of speech. It was given to us that we might present Christ as the sin-pardoning Saviour.

Influence

God says that the Christian should be able to say of themselves in truth, "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus

judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." 2 Corinthians 5:14, 15.

God has invested every person with an influence that makes it impossible for anyone to live for himself or herself. For we are, individually, connected with our fellow human being, a part of God's great whole, and so we stand under mutual obligations. This is a responsibility from which we cannot free ourselves.

Our words, our actions, our deportment, even our facial expression, has an influence. Upon the impression made by these there hangs results for good or evil which no one can measure. If by our example we aid others in the development of good principles, we give them power to do good. In their turn, they exert the same influence upon others, and these others upon still others. Thus, by our unconscious influence thousands may be blessed.

Never should we forget that influence is no less a power for evil. To lose one's own soul, which is to lose eternal life, is a terrible thing; but to cause the loss of other souls is still more terrible. That our influence should be a "savour of death unto death" (2 Corinthians 2:16), which is to say, the cause of the eternal death of others, is a fearful thought; yet this is possible. Therefore, we should be careful of the kind of influence that we have on others.

Time

Time is a talent that God has given to every human being. This talent, like all other talents, is to be used in the cause of God on earth which is the salvation of souls from eternal death.

Redeeming the Time

God says to all Christians, "See then that ye walk circumspectly [prudently], not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time" (Eph-

esians 5:15, 16), that is, rescuing the time from being lost, or in other words, improving your opportunity, "because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." Ephesians 5:16, 17.

"Walk in wisdom toward them that are without" (Colossians 4:5), that is to say, them that are outside the Christian faith, "redeeming the time." Colossians 4:5. We may ask, "How do I redeem the time by making the best use of it?" The answer is that we have to look no further than the life of Christ when He was on earth. Christ spent all His energies and time working for the saving souls and so should we.

Our time belongs to God. Every moment is His, and we are under the most solemn obligation to improve it to His glory. Of no talent He has given will He require a stricter account than of our time.

Finding Time

God says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Matthew 6:33. This means that we should give God first place in our lives, and God promises that if we do so, He will supply all our needs, both physical and spiritual.

Now, a key aspect of our lives which is impacted by our becoming a true Christian is the use of our time. As a Christian, we *must* prioritise and find time each day for "spiritual things" (1 Corinthians 2:13), which is to say, we must find time for God each day.

Otherwise our profession of faith in Christ will be only lip service and we will be Christians in name only and destined for "the second death" (Revelation 20:6) when we will cease to exist. Often, finding time for God will mean the giving up and weeding out of our lives many of the things that daily consume

our time. Often our entire daily and weekly schedule will need to be reorganised.

You may ask, "How can I decide what activities can be dispensed with?" The answer is, apply this simple test. Consider your activities outside of useful labour which is work that must be done by someone, for example, the washing of clothes is useful labour. Ask yourself, "Will the activity help me in my spiritual life so that, at the end of the world as we know it, when Christ returns to the earth, I will receive 'the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him (James 1:12)?' "

That is, will this activity cause me to "have right to the tree of life" (Revelation 22:14) so that I may have eternal life? If the answer is, No, then dispense with this activity. Everyone can find time in a day for God. Christianity requires an intelligent faith and we must intelligently analyse our use of time and reorganise this for our own spiritual benefit.

Now, God says, "no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Psalm 84:11. Thus, if we are faithful and diligent to make the best use of our time given our present circumstances, God will respond by reshaping our circumstances so that adequate time can be allocated to spiritual things.

In other words, God "is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Hebrew 11:6. God's providence may lead us in a path that is vastly different from what we had envisioned for our lives. Even then we are trust in God, for God says, "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." Jeremiah 29:11.

If we do not resist God's will for us, but instead allow God to control our lives, including our time, thereby leading us from sin to holiness, we shall be saved.

THE SABBATH

God says, in the fourth of His "ten commandments" (Exodus 34:28), "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is

the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates." Exodus 20:8-10.

"For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it" (Exodus 20:11), which is to say, that God made the Sabbath day holy.

Moreover, God says, "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of...[my people]: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it." Isaiah 58:13, 14. If we honour God's holy Sabbath day, He will richly bless us.

God requires that we take one-seventh of our time on the seventh day of the week, which is from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset, to worship Him. We should do no secular work on the Sabbath nor cause anyone to do such work on the Sabbath. Instead we should engage in "spiritual things." 1 Corinthians 2:13. The day is not to be spent in idleness. On the Sabbath, we may, for example, go to church, enjoy God's created works in nature, do "good works" (Ephesians 2:10) such as visiting the sick, study the Bible, pray.

You may ask, "Which church should I attend on the Sabbath?" The answer is, as you may recall was said before, that you should join the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which I recommend to you as a member of that church. But do not join the Seventh-day Adventist Church on my recommendation only. Instead take the matter to God in prayer and let Him lead you. I am sure that God will lead you to join the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Health

God says, "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God" (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20), bring honour and glory to God, "in your body, and in your spirit [mind], which are God's." 1 Corinthians 6:20.

Health is a blessing of which few appreciate the value; yet upon it the efficiency of our mental and physical powers largely depends. Anything that lessens physical strength enfeebles the mind and makes it less capable of discriminating between right and wrong. We become less capable of choosing the good and have less strength of will to do that which we know to be right.

Those who shorten their lives and unfit themselves for service by disregarding nature's laws, are guilty of robbery toward God. And they are robbing their fellow men also. The opportunity of blessing others, the very work for which God sent them into the world, has by their own course of action been cut short. The Lord holds us guilty when by our injurious habits we thus deprive the world of good.

Transgression of physical law is transgression of the moral law; for God is as truly the author of physical laws as He is the author of the moral law. His law is written with His own finger upon every nerve, every muscle, every faculty, which has been entrusted to man. And every misuse of any part of our organism is a violation of that law. So, God requires that we maintain optimal physical health so that our life is not cut short and so that we can indeed be a blessing to the world as God intended.

Strength

We are to love God, not only "with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matthew 22:37), but "with all thy strength." Mark 12:30. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." Ecclesiastes 9:10. This covers the full, intelligent use of the physical powers.

Christ was a true worker in temporal as well as in spiritual things, and into all His work He brought a determination to do His Father's will, and He is humanity's perfect Example.

All our work is to be done from love to God and in accordance with His will and "with all thy strength." Mark 12:30. But God will not accept the greatest talents or the most splendid service unless self is dead. The spring of action must be holy, else whatever we do cannot be acceptable to God.

The case of a man named Daniel has a lesson for us. We learn of Daniel that in all his business transactions, when subjected to the closest scrutiny, "they could find none occasion [pretext] nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him." Daniel 6:4. He was a sample of what every businessman may be. His history shows what may be accomplished by one who consecrates the strength of brain and bone and muscle, of heart and life, to the service of God.

Money

"Thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth." Deuteronomy 8:18. It is God who provides us with wealth to be used according to His purposes.

The Purpose of Money

Money has great value, because it can do great good. In the hands of God's children, it is food for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, and clothing for the naked. It is a defence for the oppressed, and a means of help to the sick.

But money is of no more value than sand, only as it is put to use in providing for the necessities of life, in blessing others, and advancing the cause of Christ. In the use of every penny, it will be seen whether we love God supremely and our neighbour as ourselves.

"The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts." Haggai 2:8. All humanity may then say of God, "all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine" (1 Chronicles 29:11) and "all things come of thee." 1 Chronicles 29:14.

All of mankind then and, in particular, Christians, are stewards, that is to say, managers, of that which belongs to God. Thus, mankind owns nothing in that God has only placed "his goods" (Matthew 25:14) in their hands to use wisely for themselves, and to use in such a manner that they are a blessing to others. He who realizes that his money is a talent from God will use it economically, and will feel it a duty to save that he may give.

Tithes and Offerings

Furthermore, God said to ancient Israel before the first coming of Christ, "And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD'S: it is holy unto the LORD." Leviticus 27:30. "Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year." Deuteronomy 14:22. "And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the LORD." Leviticus 27:32.

The tenth, the tithe, of all their increase was set aside as holy to the Lord and was to be used for sustenance of the priests who "ministered" (Numbers 3:4) regarding holy things. Also, when Christ was on earth, He rebuked the rulers in Israel, for He said, "Ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin [cumin], and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." Matthew 23:23.

Thus, Christ affirmed the setting aside of a tithe as holy. This practice which God commanded Israel to do was not for them only but also for the whole world. Today, in the twenty-first century, the practice is still applicable and the tithe, a tenth, which is ten percent, as holy, is to be given to the church for support of the ministers.

For God says, "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat [food] in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. " Malachi 3:8-10.

"And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts." Malachi 3:11, 12.

God says, we are to return to Him not only the tithe which is ten percent of our increase, but also "freewill offerings" (Leviticus 22:18), where an offering is any amount of money given to the cause of God on earth. Those who do not return to God tithes and offerings have robbed God and are cursed. Those who bring the tithes into the storehouse which is the church are blessed by God.

How do we calculate the tithe? Is it ten percent of our gross income or ten percent of our net income? God says the tithe is a tenth of all our increase, therefore, it is ten percent of our gross income. If there is no income, then there is no tithe to return to God. For God says, "It is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." 2 Corinthians 8:12. You should return tithe on a particular increase only once and not over and over again.

Our Responsibility

We are not to transfer the large share of our money or wealth to others for God has given us money and wealth so that we may ourselves minister to the world. Our responsibility cannot be transferred to others and we still receive God's favour. He will hold us accountable in the judgment for our individual stewardship of these resources.

Kindly Impulses and Affections

Kindly affections, generous impulses, and a quick apprehension of spiritual things are precious talents, and lay their possessor under a weighty responsibility. All are to be used in God's service. Those who possess large affections are under obligation to God to bestow them, not merely on their friends, but on all who need their help.

Social advantages are talents, and are to be used for the benefit of all within reach of our influence. The love that gives kindness to only a few is not love, but selfishness. It will not in any way work for the good of souls or the glory of God. Such are guilty before God for misused and unimproved talents.

God and Our Talents

We will now look at the remaining moral lessons to be learned from the parable which Christ taught.

Talents Multiplied by Use

In the parable, "He that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents; and likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two." Matthew 25:16, 17.

Talents used are talents multiplied. God desires us to use every gift we have; and if we do this, we shall have greater gifts to use. By every wholehearted, earnest sacrifice for the Master's service our powers will increase. Every effort made for Christ will react in blessing upon ourselves.

The One Talent

"But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money." Matthew 25:18. It was the one with the smallest gift who left his talent unimproved. But God says, "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much." Luke 16:10.

The Lord in His distribution of gifts is testing character. The man who neglected to improve his talent proved himself an unfaithful servant. Had he received five talents, he would have buried them as he buried the one. His misuse of the one talent showed that he despised the gifts of heaven.

Talents Returned

"After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them." Matthew 25:19. To each of those who had multiplied their talents, "His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." Matthew 25:21.

When the Lord takes account of His servants, the return from every talent will be scrutinized. The work done reveals the character of the worker. When the Master receives the talents, He approves and rewards the workers as though the merit were all their own. It is the faithfulness, the loyalty to God, the loving service, that wins the divine approval.

"Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed" (Matthew 25:24), not winnowed by separating the husks from the wheat: "And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine." Matthew 25:25.

The master does not deny the charge of the wicked servant, unjust as it is; but taking him on his own ground he shows that his conduct is without excuse. Ways and means had been provided whereby the talent might have been improved to the owner's profit. "Thou oughtest," he said, "to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury" (Matthew 25:27), with interest.

Our heavenly Father requires no more nor less than He has given us ability to do. He lays upon His servants no burdens that they are not able to bear. All that He claims from us we through divine grace can render.

The Lord measures with exactness every possibility for service. The unused capabilities are as much brought into account as are those that are improved.

The Talent Removed

Upon the slothful servant the sentence was, "Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents." Matthew 25:28. The talent is taken from the one who hid it in the earth and given to the one who had received five talents, and who by trading had gained another five, so that he had a total of ten talents.

Here, as in the reward of the faithful worker, is indicated not merely the reward at the final judgment but the gradual process of retribution in this life. As in the natural, so in the spiritual world: every power unused will weaken and decay.

"The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal [all together]." 1 Corinthians 12:7. Employed to bless others, his gifts increase. Shut up to self-serving they diminish, and are finally withdrawn. He who refuses to impart that which he has received will at last find that he has nothing to give. He is consenting to a process that surely dwarfs and finally destroys the faculties of the soul.

Giving an Account

God calls upon all humanity to "watch for your souls, as they that must give account" (Hebrews 13:17), as they that ought to work for the salvation of every human being according to God's battle plan, the Bible. Those who have accepted God's call and have entered His service, God equips with "spiritual gifts" (1 Corinthians 12:1) from the Holy Spirit and other talents, all of which are God's goods, to be put to use in God's cause.

In the end, at the day of final rewards for all humanity, God will say to each person, "Give an account of thy stewardship" (Luke 16:2) of my goods. "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." Ecclesiastes 12:14. Thus, in the coming judgment it is God "who will render to every man according to his deeds." Romans 2:6.

In the great judgment day those who have not worked for Christ, those who have drifted along, carrying no responsibility, thinking of themselves, pleasing themselves, will be placed by "the Judge of all the earth" (Genesis 18:25) with those who did evil. They all receive the same condemnation of God's law of love and are sentenced to eternal death. But those who have worked willingly and faithfully for Christ will receive the reward of eternal life.

Chapter Sixteen

The Final Battle: Enduring to the End

God's battle plan, the Bible, is a lifelong guide for daily life. Every human being is called to live in accordance with the Bible and so wage war against sin and Satan. But God says, "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." Matthew 24:13. That is, we are called to persevere and "war a good warfare" (1 Timothy 1:18) until the end of our life. Only those who do so will receive the reward of paradise and eternal life.

In this final chapter, we will look at the three main activities that should consume our time as warriors in God's army until the end. These activities are prayer, Bible study, and obeying God's gospel commission which is called witnessing. We will also look at some final topics.

Prayer

Much has already been said before in this book on the subject of prayer. Suffice it to say at this point as God says, "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1), not fail to pray.

"Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving." Colossians 4:2. "Pray without ceasing." 1 Thessalonians 5:17.

The key thing that God is trying to impress upon our minds that we should by no means stop communing with God and so lose our connection with Him. For God says, "without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5), can do nothing good.

Bible Study

This book has already said much about studying the Bible and, at this point, suffice it to say that we should be able to say in truth, "How sweet are thy [God's] words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" Psalm 119:103. We should enjoy studying the Bible. What follows are a few closing words about the applicability of the Bible to our lives.

Take a serious look at the world around you—every day, every hour, every minute. See if you don't agree with God. Agree that each person needs to play their part if there is to be a better world. God saw the inevitable consequences of our actions. For God says, "They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind." Hosea 8:7. We can see for ourselves that God's words are true, that is, "thy word is truth." John 17:17. We can see that God is all-wise.

"The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom." Job 28:28. To fear the Lord is to have awe and respect for Him, such that we do not question His words to us. Therefore, we can walk and talk with Him every day, every hour, every minute. "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Amos 3:3. Thus, we grow to admire, to love and respect God, and to understand His character.

God's word, the Bible, is an ongoing, never-ending conversation with each of us. As we read the Bible, we see the story of our lives written there, in situations, emotions, decisions, conflicts and so

on. We see the story of the lives of our friends, family, neighbours and, indeed, the whole world written in the pages of the Bible.

Every Bible phrase has profound meaning and applicability. Every Bible story illustrates a lesson through its literal meaning, and the story contains layers upon layers of symbolism, as new gifts to be found only for the seeking.

Throughout the 66 books of the Bible are chains of thought which intersect and merge and branch out seemingly endlessly. All this in a book that was written by about 40 different people, over a period of approximately 1600 years. Now Christ says, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39), Christ.

Here's God's invitation then to you: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD." Isaiah 1:18.

Obeying the Gospel Commission

Jesus Christ, before He ascended to heaven from earth, said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15), to every person." "And Jesus...spake [spoke]...saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost [Holy Spirit]: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." Matthew 28:18-20.

This then is Christ's gospel commission which every follower of Christ, which is to say, every Christian, is to obey. For God is He "who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." 1 Timothy 2:4.

The question then arises, "How do we go about accomplishing the task given to us by God?" The answer is given by God who

says, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye." Psalm 32:8.

God Gives Utterance

In order to obey Christ's gospel commission, I must first of all, pray and ask God "that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel." Ephesians 6:19. In response, God will put the right words into our mouths such that we can say in truth, "The Spirit of the LORD spake [spoke] by me, and his word was in my tongue." 2 Samuel 23:2.

For it is God who "shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost [Holy Spirit], and with fire." Matthew 3:11. This means that when we have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, our experience will be that "his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones...and I could not stay." Jeremiah 20:9. In other words, I could not refrain from speaking the words that God gave to me.

The moment that we have been "born again" (John 3:3) by the Holy Spirit, "the love of Christ constraineth [compels] us" (1 Corinthians 5:14) to seek to be a blessing to others. Since a missionary spirit has been born in our hearts, we have an irrepressible urge to tell others of the blessings of God's wonderful salvation which we have already received.

So, God says, "Sanctify" (1 Peter 3:15), consecrate yourselves to, "the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." 1 Peter 3:15.

Sent by God

Jesus Christ, when He was on earth prayed to the Father, saying, "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." John 17:18. Every follower of Christ, every disciple

of Christ, having received a message from God who gives them utterance, is sent into the world. Then will the follower of Christ say with joy, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the [Christian] ministry" (1 Timothy 1:12) to others.

Sowing the Gospel Seed

God says, "The seed is the word of God" (Luke 8:11), thus likening the gospel message to the seeds of a plant. God has given His word, the Bible, to the world and God says to His disciples who spread the gospel, "Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters." Isaiah 32:20. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good." Ecclesiastes 11:6.

This means that we are to "preach the word; be instant in season, out of season" (2 Timothy 4:2), which is to say, "be ready always" (1 Peter 3:15) to preach; "reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." 2 Timothy 4:2. When the Bible speaks of preaching, it is not restricted to the minister speaking from the pulpit, but it refers to every Christian when they speak to others about "spiritual things." 1 Corinthians 2:13. This is what is meant by sowing the gospel seed.

Now God says, "How shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" Romans 10:15.

Such disciples will be able to say, in truth, "when I came to...preach Christ's gospel...a door was opened unto me of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 2:12), meaning that God led the disciple to those who had receptive hearts. These are people who will gladly receive the word of God which is preached to them, and will themselves become disciples of Christ. "For the LORD searcheth

all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts" (1 Chronicles 28:9) of every human being.

The disciple will speak to the people with the "utterance" (Ephesians 6:19) which God gave them, and which "utterance" (Ephesians 6:19) is in accordance with the word of God, the Bible. They will say, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." 2 Corinthians 5:20.

Making Disciples of Christ

In sowing the gospel seed, God promises the worker, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves [harvest of grain] with him." Psalm 126:5, 6. This means that, if the work of spreading the gospel in the world is done faithfully by the worker for God, persons will *surely* be converted to Christ.

When this occurs, the disciple may say, in truth, "I have planted...[another] watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." 1 Corinthians 3:6, 7.

For the Holy Spirit alone is competent to teach and to convict of sin. Unless the one speaking the word of God is approved by God, the Holy Spirit will not work with their efforts to set home the truth in the hearts of the hearers and, therefore, their work will be in vain.

Now God says, "I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise." Isaiah 42:8. "Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips." Proverbs 27:2. The worker should not take all of God's praise to himself or herself for the conversion of people to Christ.

For God says to His disciple, "When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do." Luke 17:10. "For we are labourers together with God." 1 Corinthians 3:9. Even so, God says, "He that winneth souls is wise." Proverbs 11:30.

Under no circumstances should we allow our voice as ambassadors for Christ to be silenced by Satan. For God says that we should say, "Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" 1 Corinthians 9:16.

God Uses Trials for Our Benefit

God works in our lives so that we "may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace." Psalm 144:12. God does not make one useless blow in hewing and squaring us as stones from the quarry when He allows trials to come upon us. For, in this way, God polishes the roughness from our character.

Therefore, God designs then that all humanity should say, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Romans 8:28.

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." Jeremiah 29:11. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:8, 9.

When trials come, "cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence [recompense] of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise" (Hebrews 10:35, 36) of eternal life.

To Discipline Us

God says in His "exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth [disciplines], and scourgeth [flogs] every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth [disciplines] not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons." Hebrews 12:5-8. Thus, God allows trials to come upon us to discipline us.

"Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits" (Hebrews 12:9), the Father of humanity, "and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." Hebrews 12:9, 10.

"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed." Hebrews 12:11-13.

That is, do not be discouraged by God's disciplinary work, lest you cause others to become discouraged and to go astray from "right paths" (Proverbs 4:11), but rather let God's discipline correct and purify you. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God" (Hebrews 12:15), fail of benefitting from the divine influence; "lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." Hebrews 12:15.

When we have learned the lesson that God desires to teach us we may say in truth, "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but

now have I kept thy word." Psalm 119:67. Now God says, "My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth." Proverbs 3:11, 12. God desires that we learn His lessons the first time so that further discipline will not be necessary in order to correct us.

"In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." 1 Thessalonians 5:18. We can give thanks because God says, "Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away." Isaiah 41:9. "For many are called, but few are chosen." Matthew 22:14. All humanity are called to turn away from sin "perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1), but only a few respond positively to God's call and these then are God's chosen people.

God only works on those who "sin not unto [eternal] death" (1 John 5:16), those for whom there is still hope that they will repent and, hence, have eternal life. These individuals then God considers to be material which has value, for God does not put forth effort to work on worthless material such as those who are finally "impenitent." Romans 2:5.

Christ says, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup [dine] with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh [sin] will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame [sin], and am set down with my Father in his throne." Revelation 3:19-21.

To Test Our Faith

God says, "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers [various] temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." James 1:2-4.

You, who are justified, "are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:5-7), when Christ returns to the earth.

God allows trials to come upon us to test our faith in Him. To see if we truly love and trust Him and whether we "grow up into him [Christ] in all things" (Ephesians 4:15), which is to say, whether we are growing into the likeness of Christ's character of love. For Christ had the love that "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 Corinthians 13:7) and the "charity [love that] never faileth." 1 Corinthians 13:8.

To Strengthen Us

Christ, "though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." Hebrews 5:8, 9. Likewise, God says to those among humanity who are not finally "impenitent" (Romans 2:5), "Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." Isaiah 48:10.

"For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." 1 Peter 2:20, 21.

Now, Christ says, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." John 16:33. So then, God says that the justified may say of themselves, "We glory in

tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Romans 5:3-5.

For "the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." 1 Peter 5:10.

God says, "My grace" (2 Corinthians 12:9), that is to say, my divine influence, "is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." 2 Corinthians 12:9. Therefore, we may say, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities" (2 Corinthians 12:9), in my moral frailties, "that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." 2 Corinthians 12:9, 10.

What this means is that we will rejoice in our perception of our moral frailty whereby we feel a need for Christ and His grace, for then God is able to work in us so that instead of being weak in moral strength we become strong to resist temptations to sin. Those who feel no need for God's help will remain without help. They will continue to be "dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1) and, unless they repent, will be sentenced to eternal death by God.

Thus, we may say, "Though he slay [kill] me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him." Job 13:15. "But he [God] knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." Job 23:10. God says, "War a good warfare." 1 Timothy 1:18. "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called." 1 Timothy 6:12.

For God says, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory" (1 Peter 4:12, 13), His majestic

presence, "shall be revealed" (1 Peter 4:13), at the time of Christ's return to the earth, "ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." 1 Peter 4:13.

Therefore, we may say with our whole heart, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory" (Romans 8:18), with the likeness to God's character of love, "which shall be revealed in us." Romans 8:18.

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17), that is, it works in us the eternally enduring likeness to God's character of love. So, God says, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." James 1:12.

Thus, God allows trials to come upon us to strengthen our resolve to turn away from all sin, to give us moral strength.

Meeting Opposition

Satan opposes the spread of the gospel on earth in any way that he can. That is why God says, "Pray...that the word of the Lord may have free course" (2 Thessalonians 3:1), is not hindered, "and be glorified" (2 Thessalonians 3:1), be esteemed as glorious on the earth.

The Wicked

God says, "He that is upright in the way is abomination to the wicked." Proverbs 29:27. "The wicked plotteth against the just." Psalm 37:12. "The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him." Psalm 37:32. "Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment." Isaiah 59:15.

God Encourages Us

Therefore, God says, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." 1 Peter 5:8, 9. Anyone on earth who has left behind the service of Satan and chosen to serve God instead will be opposed by Satan and all his evil angels as well as the wicked among mankind.

To the extent that God permits, Satan and his host of demons will bring trials and perplexities into our lives. Furthermore, God says, "Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved." Matthew 10:22. "For many...are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." Philippians 3:18, 19. Thus, Satan will stir up the evil passions of the wicked among mankind to oppose us.

Here we are utterly defenceless. But, in accordance with the word of God, the Bible, we should say of God, "He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defence; I shall not be moved." Psalm 62:6. "He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord GOD will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? lo, they all shall wax old [decay] as a garment; the moth shall eat them up." Isaiah 50:8, 9.

God says, I am He "which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?" Jeremiah 5:22. In this Bible verse, the waves of the sea are a symbol of Satan, his host of evil angels and the wicked among humanity.

Thus, God says that Satan cannot prevail over us because God has limited Satan's sphere of operation on earth. "The Lord GOD will help" (Isaiah 50:9), God will protect, those who remain confident in God's help and who do not worry themselves out of His hand because of the trials that have come upon them.

What if my life is threatened? Do not fear because, first of all, you cannot "die before thy time" (Ecclesiastes 7:17) because "the LORD [has] appointed a set time" (Exodus 9:5) for us to die. But if you are called by God to die, to be a martyr, "for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 1:9), again I say, do not fear.

For God says of those who will be saved, "And they overcame him" (Revelation 12:11), overcame Satan, "by the blood of the Lamb [Christ], and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." Revelation 12:11. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." Revelation 14:13.

"Forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." 1 Corinthians 15:58. Think of the coming resurrection when Christ returns to the earth. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power." Revelation 20:6.

For Christ says, "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his [Christ's] voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." John 5:28, 29. The "resurrection of life" (John 5:29) is the first resurrection which occurs when Jesus returns to the earth.

What Happens When We Die?

You may ask, "What happens when we die?" We "sleep the sleep of death." Psalm 13:3. Yes, death is a sleep. How can we be sure of this? Consider the case of a man named Lazarus, a beloved friend of Christ, of whom it was said, "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." John 11:3. Christ said of him, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep." John 11:11.

"Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead." John 11:12-14.

Are we conscious in death? God says of those who have died, "The living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun." Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6.

"His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." Psalm 146:4. "In death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?" Psalm 6:5. "The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down" (Psalm 115:17), to the grave, "into silence." Psalm 115:17.

"As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away: so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more" (Job 7:9), not before the time of the first or the second resurrection. "He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more." Job 7:10. "His sons come to honour, and he knoweth it not; and they are brought low, but he perceiveth it not of them." Job 14:21. So, there is no consciousness in death.

What then is the second death? It is when "they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the King, whose name is the LORD of hosts." Jeremiah 51:57. It is Satan and his evil angels and

the wicked among mankind who rise from the dead in the second resurrection and who, after being sentenced by God, receive the second death as punishment for their sins.

For God says, "Every one that is proud in heart" (Proverbs 16:5), that is, the wicked, "is an abomination to the LORD: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished." Proverbs 16:5.

What about those persons who say that they have seen and spoken to those who are dead? God says, "They are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto...the whole world." Revelation 16:14. It is "the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness." 2 Thessalonians 2:9, 10. Satan and his demons can easily impersonate those who have died.

Therefore, God says, "I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent [Satan] beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." 2 Corinthians 11:3. "Be not deceived." Galatians 6:7. "Take heed that no man deceive you." Matthew 24:4. "Let no man deceive you by any means." 2 Thessalonians 2:3.

"The simple" (Proverbs 14:15), the naïve and gullible, "believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going" (Proverbs 14:15), in other words, the prudent man is discerning.

Rest for the Soul

God says, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he [Christ] also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Hebrews 2:14, 15. All humanity then are in bondage to the fear of death.

To every follower of Christ, God says, "I will give you rest...Ye shall find rest unto your souls." Matthew 11:28, 29. Therefore, God

says, by faith "rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass." Psalm 37:7.

This means that we are to wait patiently for the return of Christ to the earth and not worry about Satan, his demons, and the wicked among mankind who do evil deeds. For God says of the wicked, "The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace." Isaiah 59:8.

But the disciple of Christ can say with full confidence, "Great peace have they which love thy [God's] law: and nothing shall offend them." Psalm 119:165. That is, "the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." Isaiah 32:17.

"O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him." Psalm 34:8. For God says, "Therefore, my beloved...be ye stedfast [steadfast], unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." 1 Corinthians 15:58.

God says, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." 1 John 4:18. It is "the love of God...shed abroad" (Romans 5:5), poured, "in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Romans 5:5) that causes the disciples of Christ to have no fear.

You then who have found rest for your soul shall be "in nothing terrified by your adversaries." Philippians 1:28. For all fear of death then is gone, swallowed up by love for God. These are they who "overcame him" (Revelation 12:11), Satan. These are they to whom it is said, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Romans 16:20. Such have won a complete victory over sin and Satan.

Winning the Prize

God says, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." James 1:12.

So, God says that those who have won a victory over sin and Satan can says of themselves in truth, "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption [a corruptible body] inherit incorruption" (1 Corinthians 15:50), which is incorruptibility of the body and, hence, an unending existence. "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." 1 Corinthians 15:51.

"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump [trumpet]: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible [this corruptible body] must put on incorruption" (1 Corinthians 15:52, 53), which is incorruptibility of the body and, hence, an unending existence, "and this mortal must put on immortality." 1 Corinthians 15:53.

"So when this corruptible [this corruptible body] shall have put on incorruption" (1 Corinthians 15:54), which is incorruptibility of the body and, hence, an unending existence, "and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." 1 Corinthians 15:54.

"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" 1 Corinthians 15:55. "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 15:57.

For "the Lord Jesus Christ...shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." Philippians 3:20, 21.

This then is what is called glorification when those who have successfully completed the process of sanctification, those who are "sanctified" (Exodus 19:14), are changed and receive a new kind of body. They have won the prize of paradise and eternal life.

God's Dealings With Humanity

God, in His infinite wisdom, said of Himself and humanity, "If thou [God] wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever." 1 Kings 12:7.

Therefore, when Christ was on earth, He said of Himself, "I am among you as he that serveth." Luke 22:27. "Even as the Son of man" (Matthew 20:28), Christ, "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Matthew 20:28. So, "God...doth...devise means, that his banished" (2 Samuel 14:14), all of humanity, "be not expelled from him" (2 Samuel 14:14) forever.

For God knew that "he that delicately bringeth up his servant from a child shall have him become his son at the length." Proverbs 29:21. In other words, God knew that if He dealt gently and patiently with humanity, that there would be those among them whom He could save to eternal life.

So, God says that those who are saved can say of themselves in truth, "It is God that girdeth [girds] me with [moral] strength, and maketh my way perfect." Psalm 18:32. The perfect are they of whom God says, "Whoso keepeth the law is a wise son." Proverbs 28:7. For "a wise son heareth" (Proverbs 13:1), is obedient to, "his father's instruction" (Proverbs 13:1) and "a wise son maketh a glad father." Proverbs 10:1.

"The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wise child shall have joy of him." Proverbs 23:24. Our obedience to God's law of love makes God's heart glad.

Now God is "he [who] hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." Psalm 103:10. "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him" (Psalm 103:11), those who have reverential awe for Him. "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." Psalm 103:12.

The time will come when Christ, looking at those who are saved, "shall see of the travail of his soul" (Isaiah 53:11), the result of His wearing effort, "and shall be satisfied." Isaiah 53:11. "They shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." Malachi 3:17.

"That day" (Malachi 3:17) is the day when God says, "The kingdoms of this world" (Revelation 11:15), the earth, "are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he [God] shall reign for ever and ever." Revelation 11:15. Then the saints, those who are saved, "they shall reign for ever and ever" (Revelation 22:5) with God.

For Christ said, "To him that overcometh [sin] will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Revelation 3:21. So, "God...the king doth...fetch home again his banished." 2 Samuel 14:13.

In "that day" (Malachi 3:17) God says, "The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing." Zephaniah 3:17. This then is how God's dealings with humanity will result in God's desired end for mankind.

God's Difficulty Resolved

All humanity is initially on the side of Satan which is the losing side. But they have a choice of whether to remain on Satan's side or take God's side of the conflict. To accomplish their change of allegiance, God gives His remedy for humanity's sinful nature to those who will accept it by complying with the necessary conditions. In this way, God wins them away from Satan.

Those among humanity who turn away from Satan, love God. For they are attracted to the love displayed by Christ, His Son, in volunteering to be the Representative of humanity before God. They desire to be like Christ and, by God's grace, His remedy for sin, they are changed into the likeness of Christ's character of love. By means of God's remedy, they have received a change of heart from hatefulness and selfishness to love. Thus, they delight in God and God delights in them.

Those among humanity who have come to love God, now love what God loves and hate what God hates. Therefore, they enjoy the companionship of God just as God enjoys the companionship of these people.

They among humanity who become like Christ are those whose eyes have been opened when God unmasks Satan as a liar and a murderer before their eyes. Through the instruction given in God's word, the Bible, which was given to humanity as God's battle plan, they have seen Satan as he truly is. In contrast, through the Bible, they have seen that indeed God is love and, therefore, they love God of their own free will. They recognise God's word, the Bible, as God's love letter to humanity. This then is how God's difficulty will be resolved.

The End of the War

God's people are delivered from "this present evil world" (Galatians 1:4) at the second coming of Christ to the earth when the first resurrection occurs. The righteous at that time go to heaven for a thousand years with Christ. During the thousand years, the righteous look at the records of the sins of Satan, his evil angels, and the wicked among mankind, and confirm God's judgment that they are deserving of the second death.

At the end of the thousand years, when the second resurrection occurs, at the time when the wicked are resurrected, the war between God's army and the army of Satan, the great controversy, will end. At that time, God causes the wicked to see their sins and He executes punishment on them for their sins and, hence, they are annihilated. For those who have become fixed in their evil ways, God will destroy.

God wins the war because He has unmasked Satan as evil before all the righteous in the universe. Satan's real object in his rebellion against God which was the overthrowing of God and His law of love has then been made apparent.

Every question in the great controversy would have been answered and all the holy intelligences, themselves then understanding all the issues of the great controversy, agree with God that the sentence of the second death for the wicked is justified.

Thus, God, by His infinite wisdom, would have retained the allegiance of all intelligences who have chosen good over evil and would have eliminated evil from the universe. The peace, joy, and harmony of the universe would have been restored and God would have ensured that sin would never again arise in the universe.

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About Author

Andrea P. Sutherland writes Christian nonfiction to cause everyone to desire everlasting life and to guide them on the path to becoming a victorious Christian. She loves God with her whole heart and she spends her time every day seeking to know God better. This is the all-consuming desire of her life. For more information about Andrea and her books, her other resources, and to contact her, visit her website at onlyrepairer.com. Andrea lives in Jamaica.