

Christianity For Fools
By Charles D. Watson

Copyright	3
Copyright	3
Acknowledgments.....	4
Dedication	4
About the Author	5
About This Book.....	6
Introduction.....	8
Being Right With God	10
Right Standing With God.....	13
Righteousness For Our Wrongness.....	17
Righteousness and The Cross	26
Righteousness is a Free Gift	30
Righteousness Brings Grace	37
Righteousness Brings Peace	43
Righteousness Brings Joy	47
Righteousness Brings Love.....	51
Righteousness Brings Hope	55
Righteousness Brings Glory	60
Righteousness Brings Blessings	65
John’s Throne Room Vision	68
Epilogue	72
The Gospel	73
Other Books By Charles	75
Glossary	76
Appendix.....	82

Copyright

Christianity For Fools

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978-0-9678519-4-5

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Wheaton, Illinois 60189
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Contributing editor: Terrence Burke

Published by:

Abounding Love Publishers

www.aboundinglove.org

alp@aboundinglove.org

Revised: 2012

ISBN: 978-0-9678519-4-5

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank all who have stood by me all of these years. I am grateful for your faith, hope, and love.

“Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is born of God and knows God.” (1 John 4:7, NLT).

I have received help editing this project from Terry, to whom I am forever thankful. You have been so gentle in offering criticism and suggestions. Your help has brought these efforts to completion.

It would not have been possible to bring this vision to pass without help from Cheryl and Janis, outside of prison. Thank you for your hours spent in front of the computer. You have made the difference in overcoming my limitations.

And thanks to you who have monetarily stood behind the ministry allowing this book to be brought to fruition, especially brother Lyle, who has suggested and made this e-book possible. Your desire to see souls come into the kingdom is evident. May Christ reward you richly.

Dedication

To all my four children, who are determined to succeed in life. They are my greatest ministry and the most marvelous demonstration of God’s will being done in extremely adverse conditions. They are blessings. They understand that their right standing with God is not based on what they do, but on the finished work at the cross of Calvary, by our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.



Charles does not profit financially from this book.

About the Author

Charles was born in 1945, in Dallas, Texas. He grew up in Copeville, 35 miles north of Dallas. He left Texas for California in 1967, believing that out west promised satisfaction through drugs, sex and rock 'n roll.

In California, he enrolled in college and secured a job, but soon dropped out in exchange for the fast life. He met Charlie Manson and ended up becoming a member of the "Manson Family." He was part of this group for a year. Manson offered a utopia, but in reality he had a destructive worldview, which Charles ended up believing in and acting upon. His participation in the 1969 Manson murders is a part of history that he deeply regrets.

For participation in these crimes, he received the death penalty, but this was overturned in 1972. Charles remained imprisoned with a life sentence. Three years later, Christ came into his heart and called him into the ministry. He began ministry training and co-authored the book, *Will You Die For Me?* in 1978. This book has touched thousands of prisoners spiritually. He founded the original Abounding Love Ministries in 1980 and became an ordained minister in 1981. He has spent all these years ministering to prisoners and to others around the world.

His website, www.aboundinglove.org, was created in 1997, and has received millions of hits worldwide. In recent years, he wrote the book, *Manson's Right Hand Man Speaks Out!* to answer the many questions he is still asked in interviews and through letters. His notorious past is a tragedy from any point of view, but for almost four decades, his life has testified to the awesome grace of God.

Charles is a man of peace and character, who shines brightly in a dark place. His identity has shifted from that of a murderer to a child of God. He no longer allows his crime to identify who he is. He sees himself as God sees him — a new creation in Christ.

He is not only a man of faith, but of compassion. He walks the prison yard while sharing what it means to be a Christian. He fellowships with other Christians and helps them to see God as their heavenly Father who loves them unconditionally.

He shares a Godly wisdom that has come through past failures and years of spiritual, mental and emotional growth. In 2009, he completed a B.S. Degree in Business Management.

He rejects "legalistic Christianity," where people are led to believe they can earn their salvation through their own good works, because right standing with God is possible only through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. He lives every day reaching out to unbelievers with the grace of God and prays with believers to understand their awesome inheritance obtained through their union with Christ's death, burial and resurrection.

About This Book

Christianity seems foolish based on the world's priorities. Yet, eternal salvation is more valuable than Hall of Fame, wealth and success pursued by the world. The truth is: *"If you think you are wise by this world's standards, you will have to become a fool so you can become wise by God's standards. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness to God."* (1 Corinthians 3:18, 19, NLT).

The message of the cross is for fools, but it is not our intention to call Christians or anyone a fool. However, the good news about Christ's death and resurrection for our sins sounds absurd to the self-centered. But to those of us who humbly bow in faith to the finished work of the cross, this message is the power of God, that snatches us from the torment of death, into eternal life.

The philosophers of this world try to solve every problem by logic and debate. They seek to use worldly wisdom to answer every question about God and life. To them, the cross seems simplistic and foolish, but in reality, all human efforts fall painfully short of obtaining the right standing with God that comes only by faith in Jesus Christ.

Christianity is for fools. We don't trust in what this world can get. We don't depend on this world's goods to bring happiness. Our peace, joy and love flow daily from a relationship with our Heavenly Father. A divine inheritance comes freely to all God's children, who depend solely upon Him for their wholeness. His resurrection power sends us forth and qualifies us for a life of righteousness, hope and blessings.

Our prayer is that this book will open your eyes to an entirely new vision for life. As you read it, we believe you will come to trust in Christ as your confident expectation of a wonderful future to come.

God's Own Fool

We in our foolishness
Thought we were wise,
He played the fool,
And He opened our eyes.

We in our weakness,
Believed we were strong,
He became helpless,
To show we were wrong.

So, we follow God's own fool,
For only the foolish can tell,
Believe the unbelievable,
Come be a fool, as well.

—Michael Card

Introduction

*A scorner seeketh wisdom, and
findeth it not: but knowledge is
easy unto him that understandeth
...King Solomon*

Christianity seems foolish based on the world's priorities. Yet, eternal salvation is more valuable than all the fame, wealth and success pursued by the world. The truth is: *"If you think you are wise by this world's standards, you will have to become a fool so you can become wise by God's standards. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness to God"* (1 Corinthians 3:18, 19, NLT).

The world is confused when it comes to Christianity. The need to understand what it means to be a Christian is evident. We see the Catholics shamed by the actions of their priests. The Episcopalians have their genders confused. In the Protestant church alone, there are several hundred denominations who can't agree. Do we have to be part of these organizations to be a Christian?

The Church is made up of those individuals who are called out of a confused world, not an organization confused by the world. Today, many are leaving one church organization shaking their heads in disgust, only to join another. Many are looking for someone to agree with their judgments. Others feel dependent on the church organization they "belong to" for their salvation. What is the truth?

The truth is not complicated, it is simple. Religion complicates things by creating rules on how to be right with God. A true relationship with God is expressed in one word — Jesus. He is the One who makes us right and gives us a relationship with God. He is the One who reveals to us that the search is over. We have found the truth. Truly, Jesus is the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6).

Our conscience tells us that things are not right. Something is missing. We fall down and get up many times in our search for that something. We search high and low for answers, thinking there must be something we can do to feel better. We wonder about God, but how do we get to Him? As the pain increases from our many failures, we become willing to try anything, even God.

We never give it a thought that a relationship with God could be so simple or even free. This Jesus thing sounds just too simple to me. I must have to do something more than believe in Him to figure out this thing called life. As all hope fades, it seems impossible to find true peace, joy and love. I just don't know what to do.

It is my hope that you will find true love as you read through these pages. I would suggest that you study and meditate on one chapter a day so that the Lord may do a quality work in your heart.

I pray that you will be assured that God truly loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life that begins with accepting Jesus Christ for your salvation. This may be too much to swallow at this point, but give Him a chance by reading the following pages with an open mind. The answer is Jesus Christ. He is your peace, joy and love.

Being Right With God

For as he thinketh in his heart,

so is he.

...King Solomon

Christianity is all about being right with God. When we come into this world, some would say we are innocent. It seems that way, but it does not take long for our conscience and actions to tell us otherwise. Then, we come face to face with the law of the land. We learn it is not right to lie, cheat and steal. If our parents don't discipline us; we soon learn to be the kings of our own life, doing what we want. Life becomes more and more painful as we find out our way just does not work. Something must be wrong!

OUR INSUFFICIENT STRENGTH

As we look around, we see people going in many different directions. We get used to the rat race, but if we would get out of it for a time and then return, we would see it for what it is — confusion. The mind is taken over by too many things to do. We say, “If we could only do this or if we had that, then we would find happiness.” Our life becomes possessed with finding contentment, moving from one state of mind to another. We seek excitement, going from one experience to another. Solomon said, “*There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death*” (Proverbs 14:12, NLT).

There are so many paths before us in life. As we get sucked into school, more paths seem to complicate things. There is peer pressure, grades, sports and then, career. We not only hear of adults committing suicide to stop the pain, but children too. Is there an answer to such complex problems?

Psychiatry would tell us they have the solutions, but we soon learn, they have no realistic answers. They may be able to define the problems, but have no real way to solve them. Some use medication, but they are only putting a Band-Aid on the symptoms. Some people may be demon possessed, by forces they have opened their hearts to. Is the power of God strong enough to cast out these devils within?

In our attempts to stop the pain, we have turned to alcohol, illegal drugs and sex. The comfort these addictions give does not last for long. Even by doing more drugs, the pain never ceases, but increases as these vices fail to heal the problems within. We lose hope as we become enslaved more and more to the monster that binds us.

There is this nature built into each one of us that says, “I'll do it my way!” We are so dependent on our own strength being sufficient for everything that comes along. Our strength is not sufficient! Man is not an island, but rather needing help to make it in life. Eventually, we cry out for help from God or from someone around us.

GOD IS OUR SUFFICIENCY

Most of the time, we are not concerned about being right with God. We might recognize wrong standing with our parents, or realize we are in conflict with those around us. Those we consider friends might not even like us any longer. In our mind's eye, we are failures, not knowing where to turn. Things are just so wrong!

Our ways that seemed so right become so wrong as things just don't work out. There must be something better than this insanity we are experiencing. We try the same solutions again and again, realizing no change. All we can do is cry out to God as we come to the end of ourselves, "Help God, help! You must have the answers for me!"

The Psalmist David cried, "*Send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion*" (20:2). "*Make haste to help me, O LORD my salvation*" (38:22). "*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble*" (46:1). "*Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man*" (60:11). "*Trust thou in the LORD: He is our help and our shield*" (115:11). "*My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth*" (121:2).

If we try to live life by our own strength, we frustrate the ability of God to help us. His strength is nullified because we are trusting in ourselves. We must let go of trusting our ability and let God. He has promised to help, and His promises are true.

We don't have the ability to live this life by our own strength. We often discover that the people and things we depend on are even more unstable. The Lord God told the Apostle Paul, "*My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in [your] weakness*" (2 Corinthians 12:9, emphasis added). This sense of helplessness is the first step to a spiritual awakening as we stop depending on things, or ourselves, or others and realize our strength depends solely on God.

EXTERNAL VS. INTERNAL

There are so many scenarios. We each have our own stories, but things simply are not right externally. If only things could be right again with my friends and family, then I would have peace. Why do things have to be so wrong?

Whatever your story, things are not right and only a relationship with God can get them right. But the answer is not getting all the external things right, but getting the internal right. It is the internal that must be made right for the external to shape up. Again Solomon says, "*For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he...*" (Proverbs 23:7).

We are the product of our thoughts today, whether we like it or not. We are experiencing today what we thought in years, days and minutes past. The thoughts we have followed have helped to create our situation today. The things we did or did not do, placed us in this present circumstance. The times we listened to wise counsel or failed to listen, produced what you are today.

There are so many things that can go wrong: a child in trouble, an accident, an arrest for drunk driving, a divorce or a death in the family. Whatever the circumstance, we cannot let them

control us. Things will not always be right, but when we are right with God, we gain the ability to overcome in any situation.

Our hearts must become right with God in order for the external to become right. As our hearts become right internally, circumstances and situations no longer control us. Things may not always change, but we will have the ability to overcome external problems. We have the promises of God to always count on as true. As our hearts become true to God, trusting in His promises, we will see our lives change.

WHO IS GOD?

God is the Creator of the universe. He created all the stars and galaxies. He placed the sun, the moon and all the planets in orbit. He made the land, the sea, and all that lives. He created mankind in His own image. This is God, Who gave us authority to rule in this world. We turned our back on Him and lost our authority to do things our own way. He has given us the way to return to Him and to become right with Him.

God desires to take all our wrongs and make them right with His righteousness. He has given us every provision for this to happen, but He needs our cooperation. We must hear His voice and turn to Him as He shines His light in our hearts. Won't you come to Him?

In Hebrew, God is often called "EL SHADDAI," which is usually translated: "God Almighty." The actual meaning is more like, "God, Self-Sufficient." Only God is truly self-sufficient! Some of the most important verses for a devout Jew are Deuteronomy 6:4-9. These verses begin by establishing that "God is ONE LORD." The very concept of a sole God is dependent upon Him being sufficient in and of Himself.

The prophet Moses sought the Lord for help in trouble. "*And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin...*" (Exodus 34:6, 7a).

He is a holy and loving God, Who has graciously gone out of His way to be merciful and forgiving since the beginning of time. He cares for us and desires more than anything that we turn to Him for help. If we do not, He is a righteous and just God, Who will judge our unrighteousness, "*...for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth*" (Psalm 96:13).

He is crying, waiting for you to open the door, "*Look! Here I stand at the door and knock. If you hear me calling and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal as friends*" (Revelation 3:20, NLT). God desires to dine with you. Oh, what a meal that will be!

Right Standing With God

*I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper
and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth*

...The Apostle John

Listen, I have Good News. Christianity is all about being right with God, not about being right with others. Getting right with others will come later. Let's concentrate on getting right with God. This is what counts.

OUR FEELING OF UNWORTHINESS

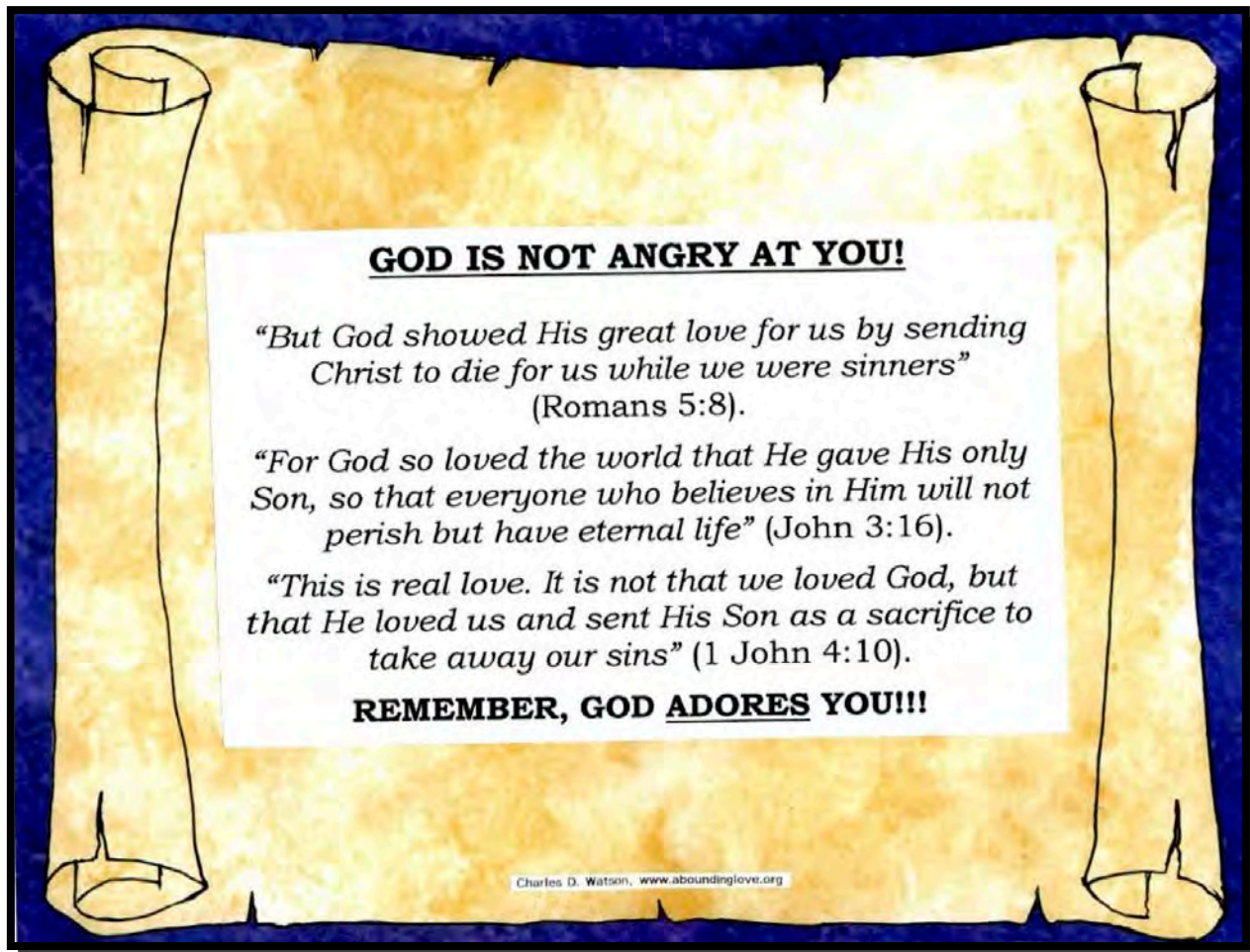
Christians are those who are made right with God. It should be Good News that being right with God does not happen by what we do or don't do. It is not up to us to become right with God. Righteousness is something that God gives to us. It is all about Him and not us!

We feel unworthy because of our past. Fear grips our heart, telling us that we can never be right with God because of past mistakes. We become angry at God, ourselves and others because He made life too difficult. We blame God and others for our mistakes, instead of taking responsibility for our choices. We feel that God must be punishing us, instead of realizing we are reaping what we have sown.

Sometimes we find it impossible to forgive ourselves, much less receive God's forgiveness. When in reality, our forgiveness is limited and never enough. We become overly responsible, accepting too much blame and waiting around for judgment from an angry God. This is condemnation, the expectation of judgment and damnation. We feel rejected not only by God, but by everyone else.

We say, "How could God love me after what I have done?" This voice is not from God, but has become ours from the devil whose main purpose is to bring fear, torment, pain, guilt and anguish. Our thoughts are contrary to God's. Our own wrong doings brought this torment upon ourselves. We live in fear that things are just not right between God and us.

All the time, we are blinded to the fact that it is acknowledging God's love for us that brings peace of mind. Unbelief towards God keeps us in bondage, unstable, and not understanding that God accepts us just the way we are with all our faults. He desires for us to know and experience His great love, peace and acceptance. Faith in the finished work of Jesus is what pleases God. He is not angry at you! Will you believe what He says?



NOT WHAT WE DO

We do not become righteous by going to church or by giving to the poor. In other words, we do not become righteous by our own works. The only way we can become righteous is by the actions of God. His plan makes us righteous, so it comes down to us trusting in God’s plan. This should not only be Good News, but great news! What is God’s plan for us?

His plan is related in the Holy Bible. This is where we get our facts for life. His plan seems too good to be true, but is in fact freeing, loving, kind and generous. The prophet Isaiah asks, “*Who has believed our report?*” (53:1). Believing God’s report causes us to feel right about God and ourselves, because we are made right with God by doing His will. Doing His will always leads to a life of peace and happiness, no matter what situation we face or circumstance we find ourselves in. God’s will is that we believe in His Son (John 6:40).

On the other hand, the enemy has a plan, consisting of the world, the flesh and the devil. The world bases our identity on our performance. We try to live life by our own strength, self-will, in the flesh. The devil is the one who tempts us in every way to do it his way. His voice tells us that we can make it by our own ability, if we will just listen to him.

Our nature tells us that our performance can provide us with everything we need. We are convinced that we are sufficient in ourselves and without a need for God's help. This works-oriented concept expects us to keep the commandments of God to be righteous. In reality, if our righteousness is based on keeping the law of God, we would be lost forever, never obtaining salvation. The fact being that righteousness or right standing with God comes only by the finished work of the cross, not by our fleshly ability.

One translation of Romans 8:5-8 says, *“Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. If your sinful nature controls your mind, there is death. But if the Holy Spirit controls your mind, there is life and peace. For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will. That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God.”* (NLT).

Often, we confuse head knowledge of the Bible for spiritual understanding. By mistake, we base our righteousness on how well we know the doctrines of God. Like the Pharisees, our lives become one big argument with everyone we see, instead of a loving relationship with God and others .

LIVING BY FAITH

In the book of 2 Corinthians, the Apostle Paul encourages us concerning many matters, two being: walking by faith and not by sight (5:7) and judging no one after the flesh (5:16). As Christians, we are to see one another as new creations in Christ. We are left to our own selfish judgments; unless we know Christ.

We are to see one another as God sees us. He sees us through the cleansing blood of Jesus, through the death, burial and resurrection of His Son. He sees us not only cleansed, but risen with His Son and seated beside Him in heaven. He sees us forgiven, made righteous and complete by the work of the cross.

This view of God comes as we see the revelation of Jesus Christ. This revelation [vision, unveiling or disclosure] of Jesus is what He did at Calvary to purchase us from our slavery to the world, the flesh and the devil. This happens when the Holy Spirit awakens us by removing the blindness from our spiritual eyes and giving us the understanding of what Jesus Christ did 2000 years ago.

The Apostle Paul wrote to Titus saying, *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, That being justified [made righteous] by his grace [God's ability], we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life”* (3:5-7, emphasis added).

At this point, we begin to see others as we see ourselves. God did this great thing for us, and He did it for them too. Because God's grace is no respecter of persons, we see others cleansed, forgiven and made righteous as well. We cease to judge after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Compassion comes into our lives with a desire to pray for the needs of others as we see their suffering.

Living by faith is living an abundant life from God's point of view. Seeing everyone and everything as God sees it. As we believe His report, new possibilities come to light. People, places and things are overcome by God's promises. We no longer see things as we once did, but now see things from God's point of view, seated with Him in heaven.

WHO IS GOD?

God is love. The prophet Jeremiah says, "*The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee*" (31:3).

The Apostle John writes, "*See how much our heavenly Father loves us, for he allows us to be called his children, and we really are!*" (1 John 3:1a, NLT). Again, "*God showed us how much he loved us by sending his only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him*" (1 John 4:9, NLT).

God's love brings salvation according to the Apostle Paul, "...*God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners*" (Romans 5:8, NLT). Again, "*But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so very much, that even while we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's special favor that you have been saved!)*" (Ephesians 2:4, 5, NLT).

Truly it is as Jesus says, "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*" (John 3:16).

Righteousness For Our Wrongness

*But we are all as an unclean thing,
and all our righteousness are as filthy rags*

...The Prophet Isaiah

When we come into the world, we are going in the wrong direction. God understands this, because He has seen it from the beginning of time. He knew when He created mankind, that man would go off in the wrong direction trying to live life on his own power and that man would need to be rescued. God had this plan, because He knew that man would need help. God not only set forth a plan for man to become right again, but sent forth the power for him to stay right and produce righteousness in this world. God's plan shows us that we just can't live life depending on our own power and strength, but must depend on Him.

HIS LIGHT BRINGS RIGHTEOUSNESS

It does not take much to see that we need the ability to do things right. We have failed, and we need help. God is our righteousness. He is much more; but for now, we just need to see that He is our righteousness, through whom we get things right and do right.

Righteousness means straightness, which results in, holy and upright living. It is God Who makes us righteous and gives us the ability to live a righteous life. Righteousness is given to us by God.

The Psalmist David praised the LORD concerning this gift, "*And he [God] shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light...*" (37:6); "*Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted*" (89:15, 16); "*Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart*" (97:11); and "*Wealth and riches shall be in his house: and his righteousness endureth for ever. Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness: he is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous*" (112:3, 4).

From the praises of David's heart, we see that God's light brings righteousness. It is the light that straightens us up and causes us to walk upright. The Apostle Paul declares, "*For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God...*" (2 Corinthians 4:6). It is the power of God's light, "*Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son*" (Colossians 1:13).

Isaiah prophesied, "*Arise, shine: for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee*" (60:1, 2).

The prophet Micah says, "*...he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness*" (7:9b).

Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist prophesied of Jesus, saying, “...whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us. To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet in the way of peace” (Luke 1:78, 79). Jesus says, “...I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12).

OUR WRONGNESS BRINGS DEATH

God desired for man to do what is right since creation. He gave us the power to do what was right, but we sinned and turned our back on His help. We escaped our flood of mistakes in an ark with Noah. God scattered us throughout the world, after man tried through his own ability to build a tower called Babel.

Then, the Lord came to Abraham and blessed his generational seed forever. He gave man the law so he could see he was doing wrong. God gave the way for their sins to be covered by coming to the tabernacle. Still, mankind turned against God’s way.

Then God said, He must send His Son to make man right with Him. So He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to complete the work on the cross to make man right with God, our Father. We are unrighteous before Christ, which means crooked and in need of being straightened out. Our righteousness is as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). We are conceived in sin (Psalm 5:1, 5). The Apostle says, we “...were dead in our trespasses and sin” (Ephesians 2:1). “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

Those who don’t believe in Jesus Christ, “...the god of this world has blinded the mind of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them” (2 Corinthians 4:4). The god of this world, Satan, blinds us to think that we can reach God by our own abilities, performance and church membership.

Jesus said to Nicodemus, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). When we are born of the Spirit of grace [ability] through faith, our spiritual eyes are opened to see that only God can put us on the right path, going in the right direction.

REPENTANCE FROM DEAD WORKS

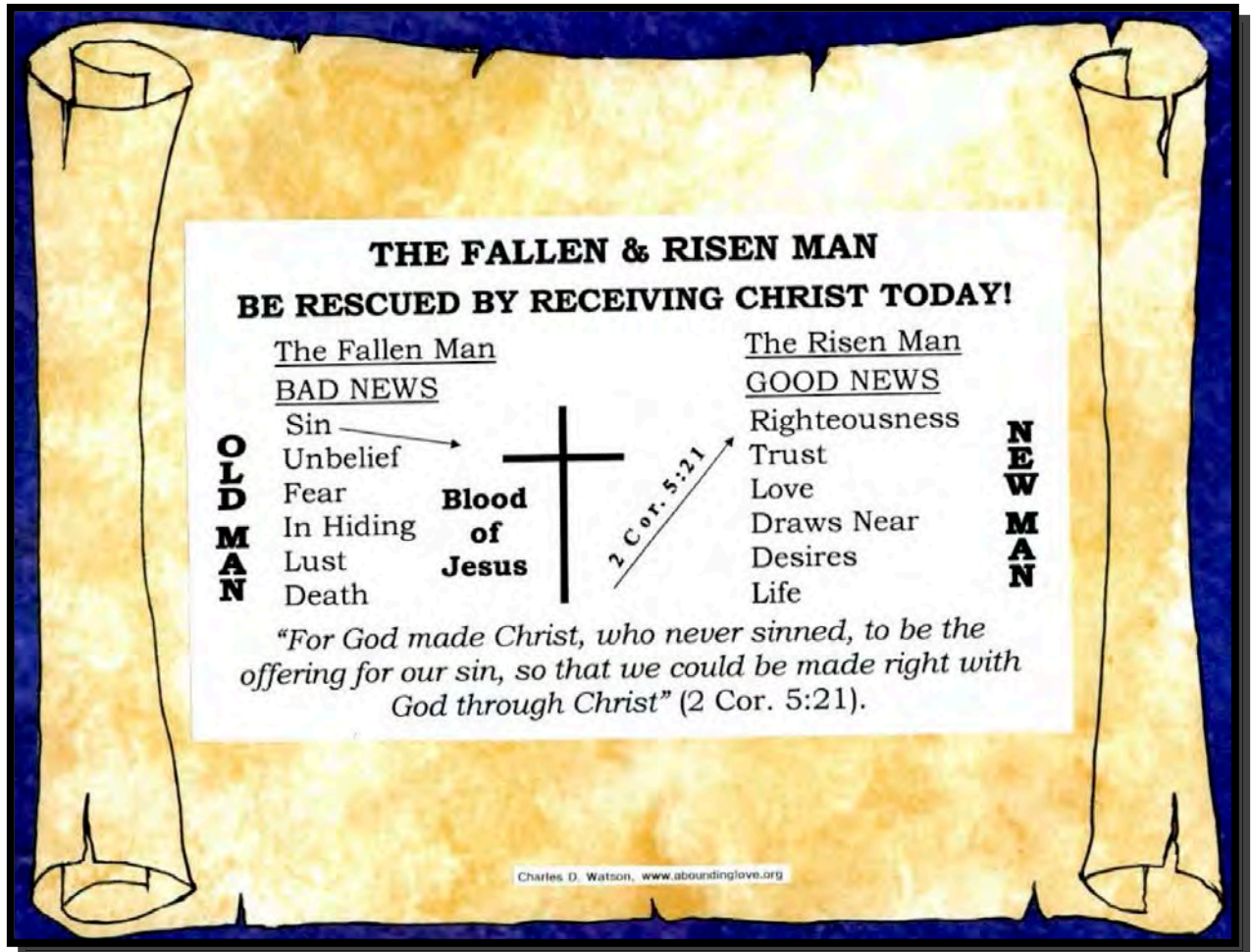
Repentance is a change of mind, turning from our sin and dead works toward a relationship with a holy God. We turn to God by trusting in the blood of Jesus for our righteousness, instead of good deeds. The writer of Hebrews says, “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God” (Hebrews 9:14b). Our works are considered dead works, because they do not provide eternal life and light as only the blood of Jesus can. Determine in your heart that nothing but the blood of Jesus Christ can make you righteous.

Dead works consist of many deeds, but fall under two basic categories: trying to obtain salvation by keeping the law of God, and trying to be good enough by our own ability to gain salvation. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Romans saying, “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God [did by] sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh,

and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (8:3, 4, emphasis added).

Since the Fall in the Garden of Eden, people have been inherently unrighteous (Genesis 3). The root of our unrighteousness became fear and unbelief. Because of man’s inability to keep the Ten Commandments and related laws, his relationship with God was broken, leaving man unable to obtain righteousness. We do not become righteous because of our inherent goodness; God sees us as righteous only due to our identification by faith with His Son.

As we turn to Jesus Christ, we not only obtain righteousness, but peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17). On the other hand, when we trust in the law or in our good works, there is no peace and joy, only condemnation. But knowing that our righteousness comes from God and Him alone, causes us to be thankful and to praise Him for this wonderful gift. Will you turn to God from dead works and receive this free gift?



WHO IS GOD?

God is righteous. He is always right and never wrong. Ezra the priest fell upon his knees, and spread out his hands unto the Lord his God in repentance, praying, "*O LORD God of Israel, thou art righteous...*" he went on to pray saying, "*...we cannot stand before thee because of this [sin]*" (9:15, emphasis added).

The Psalmist David proclaimed, "*...thy right hand is full of righteousness*" (48:10); "*...righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne*" (97:2); "*Righteous art thou, O LORD...*" (119:137); and "*The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works*" (145:17).

Isaiah the prophet saw the Lord sitting on His throne in heaven. Seraphim [angels] cried to one another, "*Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory*" (6:3). His response to seeing the righteousness of the Lord God was to reply: "*Woe is me! for I am undone: because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: For mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts*" (6:5). He could not deny his unrighteousness, when he saw the Lord's righteousness. Isaiah was a prophet before this vision,

used by God. His work as a prophet did not make him righteous. Only God could do that...and God did.

God's character is the definition and source of all righteousness, "*He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he*" (Deuteronomy 32:4).

Faith in Jesus Christ declares the believer to be in a state of righteousness as though he had never been unrighteous. This is only possible because of the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on our behalf.

As children of the light, we are born of His Spirit, His seed, His nature, His character and His righteousness. "*For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the LORD: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth)*" (Ephesians 5:8, 9). "*For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright*" (Psalm 11:7).

Jesus Made Us Right With God

*I will raise unto David a righteous Branch,
and a King shall reign and prosper
...The Prophet Jeremiah*

Doesn't it make sense that becoming a Christian is all about Christ and not about us? Jesus came into the world, born of a virgin girl named Mary and without sin. He is God's first born Son, promised to Abraham long ago, whose birth we celebrate on Christmas day. It is all about the righteous One, Jesus Christ, coming to the earth as a sinless sacrifice to take our place on the cross, to make us right with God and to give us His righteousness.

THE SACRIFICE BRINGS RELATIONSHIP

God's plan has always centered around sacrifice. A sacrifice is the offering of something precious to God so we can find favor. In the Old Testament, the blood of animal sacrifices was offered to obtain favor with God. But these offerings did not make the person completely right with God. Only by Jesus Christ coming to earth to be the perfect sacrifice for the wrongs of mankind, could man become righteous.

The writer of Hebrews says, "*But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle...Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us*" (9:11, 12).

The Lord came looking for Adam and Eve in the garden after they sinned, but they hid themselves from His presence in fear. God desired an intimate relationship, but their sin separated them from Him. Since that day, mankind has been running from a loving relationship with God.

The first sacrifice in Scripture is related to this Fall in the Garden of Eden. Adam's relationship with God was broken, so, "*Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skin, and clothed them*" (Genesis 3:21). The blood of an animal was shed to cover the sins of Adam and his wife. He wanted peace with Adam; but in fear, Adam still felt God would judge him harshly.

The problem is also revealed by John, "*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).

This kind of fear does not come from God, but was passed to us through Adam. The Apostle Paul told Timothy, "*For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline*" (2 Timothy 1:7, NLT). The spirit of fear from the evil one is the root of our unbelief today. We think, "How could God love me? Why would He want a relationship with me?" Regardless of our thoughts, God desires a loving, trusting and personal relationship with each of us.

Fear must be conquered in order to have a relationship with God and others. Fear is the root of deception, negative emotions and actions. The Lord desires our deliverance from sin, fear and unbelief through His power and love. He has made available for each of us a stable life, but our fearful nature must be dealt with by the cross. As fear is removed from our lives, an open and honest relationship with God will follow. The torment will leave as we finally understand that God loves us and desires us to have a trusting relationship with Him.

GOD'S PLAN IS GOOD NEWS

It was Jesus Christ who came to earth, took our inherent sin from Adam upon Himself, and made us right with God. This was God's plan from the beginning of time. We must ask God to reveal His plan to us, so we can trust in His having made us righteous through the work of His Son on Calvary's cross. In other words, we must trust [or have faith] in Jesus Christ.

In the Old Testament, it was God's plan for men to seek the priest at the tabernacle. This made it possible for their sins to be covered by the blood of animals (Hebrews 9:7), so a relationship with God could follow. But there was no relief for willful-deliberate sin, only the penalty of death. *"The message [Law] God delivered through angels has always proved true, and the people were punished for every violation of the law and every act of disobedience."* (Hebrews 2:2, NLT).

Today, it is God's plan that we come directly to God for His forgiveness and righteousness. This is possible because Jesus, our High Priest, has made the way into God's presence through His own blood. *"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace [ability], that we may obtain mercy, and find grace [ability] to help in time of need"* (Hebrews 4:16, emphasis added).

We are not to be afraid of our Heavenly Father. *"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble... Therefore we will not fear"* (Psalm 46:1, 2a). He has provided for our righteousness. We have the ability to stand in God's presence without a sense of sin, fear, guilt or inferiority. This relationship is unattainable through our good works or acts of self-righteousness. This is really Good News to those of us who all our lives tried to obtain acceptance through our performance. We are accepted by God because of the works of Jesus, and *"...we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them"* (Ephesians 2:10).

Many of us today feel that we serve an angry God. This is not true! God is not angry at you, He loves you enough to send His Son to the cross in your place. *"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation [satisfaction] for our sins"* (1 John 4:10, emphasis added). You have healing, deliverance, protection, soundness, safety and all the promises of God because of Jesus satisfying your debt with God. This is the Good News! Is there any question that He loves you?

Jesus came to earth among legalistic Pharisees. Like many of us, they were trying to obtain right standing with God through their rules, laws and good deeds. Jesus proclaimed Good News to people who were loaded down with religious burdens, saying, *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel [Good News] to the poor; he hath sent me*

to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised. To preach the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18, 19, emphasis added). When is “...*the acceptable year of the Lord?*” If this message is speaking to you, it is right now!

The people of Jesus’ day knew that Good News had come to deliver them from the curse of the law. At last, the truth had come to set them free from a debt that they were unable to pay. The truth of this Good News has come now to set you free from the debt you are unable to pay. As the old hymn goes, “What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.”

JESUS IS OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

The Prophet Jeremiah prophesied the coming of the Lord 2,600 years ago, saying, “*Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is the name whereby he shall be called, “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS”* (23:5, 6, emphasis in the original). In Hebrew, He is called our “Jehovah-Tsid-keenu” or “*The-LORD-Is-Our-Righteousness.*” Jesus Christ, our Branch of righteousness, came to be our righteous King.

Jesus Christ came to do the will of His Father. God’s will was for His Son to come and make us righteous as prophesied. Jesus came saying in John, “*My Father worketh hitherto and I work*” (5:17); “...*I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me*” (5:30); and “...*I do nothing of myself...I do always those things that please him*” (8:28, 29). His purpose was to go to the cross and become the righteousness for all who believe.

Jesus came to save a lost world badly in need of righteousness. The Apostle Paul tells of our condition and solution, saying, “*For all have sinned; all fall short of God’s glorious standard. Yet now God in his gracious kindness declares us not guilty. He has done this through Christ Jesus, who has freed us by taking away our sins. For God sent Jesus to take the punishment for our sins and to satisfy God’s anger against us. We are made right with God when we believe that Jesus shed his blood, sacrificing his life for us*” (Romans 3:23-25a, NLT).

We can now enter into the rest that God has provided righteously through Jesus alone. We can cease from our own labor for righteousness, and enter into His rest as the writer of Hebrews reminds us, “*For he that is entered into his rest, he also has ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief*” (Hebrews 4:10, 11).

The Holy Scriptures confirm over and over that we cannot obtain righteousness by our own labor. Jesus Christ came to make us righteous with God 2000 years ago. We are to pray that all unbelief will depart, so that faith may reign in our hearts.

WHO IS GOD?

God is our righteousness. *“Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness”* (Galatians 3:6). Abraham looked ahead and saw his promised seed, Jesus Christ, come to pass by faith. This was credited to him as righteousness.

The Apostle Paul wrote, *“And be found in him [Christ], not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith”* (Philippians 3:9, emphasis added).

In the Apostle Paul’s letter to the Romans, he wrote, *“Therefore, being justified [made righteous] by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ... Much more then, being now justified [made righteous] by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him”* (5:1, 9, emphasis added).

Through an abundance of Scriptures, it is evident that Jesus made us right with God. This is not only Good News, but the greatest news. Therefore, *“...let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name”* (Hebrews 13:15).

Righteousness and The Cross

*For I determined not to know anything
among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified*

...The Apostle Paul

How could the death of Jesus on the cross make us right with God? The answer to this question must be received through the revelation of Christ. God is just and righteous, and as such requires punishment, a payment or penalty, for our wrong doings. Someone had to be punished as a sacrifice, so we could find favor. This person was Jesus. As prophesied, He took God's judgment for our sin upon Himself, so we could become right and not have to be judged. "...Surely he hath born our griefs [pain], and carried our sorrows [sickness]: yet we did esteem [regard] him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted" (Isaiah 53:4, emphasis added).

THE REVELATION OF CHRIST

The blood of Jesus was shed on the cross to cleanse and wash away our sin. This is why we can look back 2000 years ago and be cleansed by His act on the cross. He was not only crucified for us, but buried in a tomb in our place. The penalty for sin is death. Jesus came to identify with us and to take the penalty for our sin in every way.

The revelation of the cross is the central message of the New Testament. The Apostle Paul said, "*For I decided to concentrate only on Jesus Christ and his death on the cross*" (1 Corinthians 2:2, NLT). Paul's vision was solely the redemptive revelation of Christ's payment on the cross for our sins. The basis of his relationship with God consisted of the truth found in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He spent his Christian life, "*Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; 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).

Paul was on a journey, and, "...*As he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven*" (Acts 9:3). Jesus appeared to him. He was blinded by the light, but fasted and prayed for three days until God gave him spiritual sight through the light of Christ. Paul went on to zealously write 14 books of the New Testament where he establishes our new relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote concerning our righteousness because of the cross, "*But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption... That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God*" (1 Corinthians 1:30; 2:5). "*For he [God] hath made him [Jesus] to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*" [Jesus] (2 Corinthians 5:21, emphasis added).

The Psalmist David prophesied about Jesus on the cross, saying, "*I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax... My strength is dried up... my tongue*

cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death... the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet” (22:14-16). But why is such violence required? It is explained in the New Testament, “...without the shedding of blood is no remission [act of forgiving] ...So Christ was offered to bear the sins of many...” (Hebrews 9:22, 28, emphasis added). “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us” (Psalm 103:12).

OVERCOMERS OF THE WORLD

God raised Jesus from the dead, and in so doing, He raised us up from the dead as well. The Holy Spirit, God’s Helper, comes into us and raises us from the dead. We are raised from the dead by the same Spirit (Romans 8:11), and “...*he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit*” (1 Corinthians 6:17). Jesus brings us to life so we can be right with God in every way. He brings us to life so we can live with our Heavenly Father forever, free from the penalty of our wrong doings.

The Apostle John saw Jesus as the resurrected Lamb, “...*clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire...*” (Revelation 1:13b, 14). Jesus overcame sin, the world, the flesh and the devil. We are overcomers because of Him, Who defeated sin and death at the cross. During Jesus’ earthly ministry, He said, “...*in this world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer [courage], I have overcome the world*” (John 16:33, emphasis added). John expounded in his first epistle how we overcome the devil because of the resurrection, and that Jesus is greater in us than the devil is (1 John 4:4). He went on to say that we have the victory and overcome the world by faith in Jesus (1 John 5:4, 5).

Later in John’s Revelation of Jesus Christ, chapters 2 and 3, the resurrected Christ tells of our inheritance in Him. We will eat of the tree of life and partake not in the second death because we are born again. We eat hidden manna, and are given a white stone and a new name. We receive power over the nations, and He gives us the morning star. He clothes us with white clothing and confesses us before His Father and the angels. We are made pillars in the temple, and He writes upon us the name of God and the name of the city of God, which is the New Jerusalem, which comes down from heaven. We are promised to sit with Him on His throne. All these promises are to us as overcomers!

And that’s not all, we “...*overcame him [the devil] by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony: and they loved not their lives unto the death*” (Revelation 12:11, emphasis added). We are to testify concerning what the blood of Christ has provided: righteousness (Romans 3:25; 5:9; Ephesians 1:7); redemption, or having purchased us from sin (Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 6:20; Hebrews 9:12; 1 Peter 1:18, 19; Revelation 5:9); the presence of God in our life (Ephesians 2:13; Hebrews 10:19); grace and peace (Colossians 1:20); a clean conscience (Hebrews 9:14); forgiveness (Hebrews 9:22); sanctification or holiness (Hebrews 13:12; 1 Peter 1:2); cleansing and love (1 John 1:7); and the blood of Jesus Christ has even made us priests (Revelation 1:5, 6). And if that is not enough, we “...*shall inherit all things*” (Revelation 21:7).

THE FINISHED WORK OF THE CROSS

Our life is to always center around the finished work of Jesus Christ at the cross. At the cross, He delivered us from the curse of the law to bless us; He took our punishment to cleanse us; He was bruised to heal us; and He conquered sin to give us His righteousness. All these things are part of the finished work of the cross.

The central theme of Paul's message is the cross. "*Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us... that the blessings of Abraham might come on the Gentiles [us] through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith*" (Galatians 3:13, 14, emphasis added). "*Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it [the law] out of the way, nailing it [the law] to the cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it*" (Colossians 2:14, 15, emphasis added).

The Apostle Paul prayed that we would have spiritual understanding of this finished work. "*...I pray for you constantly, asking God... to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you might grow in your knowledge of God*" (Ephesians 1:16, 17). Paul knew how important it was for us to have the knowledge of the finished work of the cross. He wanted us to realize our wonderful future. He wanted us to realize our rich and glorious inheritance, and that we are now seated with Christ in heavenly places. He desired us to know that we are now complete in Christ (Colossians 2:10).

The Scriptures encourage us to always have Christ on our mind. This is a mind of humility which believes what the Scriptures say about Jesus. In other words, our mind and mouth confess [or says the same thing that God says], about who we are and what we have in Christ, what we can do in Him, and that all we have and are comes from God. Humility is not calling ourselves a filthy sinner, which would be a lie and prideful. God says we are sinners before we receive Christ, and saints after being born again. We are His children, risen with Christ and seated with Him beside our Heavenly Father in heaven as His family. We recognize that by ourselves we are inadequate, but with Him, we have dignity and worth. We believe and confess what the Word says about our death, burial and resurrection with Christ. Jesus Christ is our salvation.

As we identify with the finished work of the cross, our sense of worth begins to rise. We no longer let fear and unbelief rule our heart through negative talk. We accept and believe what God has made us as a result of the cross. We see ourselves completely forgiven, a new creation, and we begin to act that way. We see ourselves as God sees us. Through the blood sacrifice of His Son, we are righteous and true.

WHO IS GOD?

God is our salvation. In the Old Testament book of Exodus, God reveals His Name to Moses at the burning bush. His Name is represented by four Hebrew letters translated into English as Y-H-V-H [or Y-H-W-H] His Name is sometimes written Jehovah or Yahweh, by adding vowels to these letters, although Jewish scholars point out that the actual pronunciation of this name is not to be spoken. In English translations, it is usually written as the "*LORD*" using capital letters.

When read in Hebrew, the speaker will substitute the word “Adonai,” meaning “Lord” or “HaShem,” meaning “the Name.”

What is important about God’s Name as revealed is not how it is said, but what it represents. It means “*I AM THAT I AM*” (Exodus 3:14, emphasis in the original), or it could possibly be translated, “*I will be who I will be.*” Our God burns like a fire with love and righteousness, yet remains the same and never diminishes. God reveals who He is. It is not for us to define Him.

The Name is often combined with other Hebrew words to form new names that speak of God’s attributes. One such name is “Yeshua” or “Joshua.” This name means “The LORD Saves.” It is translated into Greek in the New Testament and then into English to become the name: JESUS.

Our God is the author of life and salvation. His “I AM” expresses that He is infinite, original, personal, behind everything and that nothing defines our God, but He Himself. He is powerful, sovereign, and defines Himself as truth and salvation for His creation.

God revealed Himself to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob by this Name as the One Who protects and blesses, but they did not know Him to the full extent that Moses did. We are fortunate to know God today in a way that even Moses did not. The promised seed of Abraham came to earth as a child. “*And she [Mary] shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS [Yeshua]: for he shall save his people from their sins*” (Matthew 1:21, emphasis added).

Our faith in Jesus Christ [Yeshua HaMoshiach] delivers us out of our violent and destructive lifestyle into one of peace, abundance, salvation and praise. This is seen during the Millennial Kingdom, when Jesus will reign upon the earth and “*violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders, but you shall call thy walls Salvation and thy gates Praise*” (Isaiah 60:18).

Jesus Christ, God manifested in the flesh (1 Timothy 3:16), is our salvation. He is our deliverance from the power of sin and the devil; our payment for sin. We are forgiven for our sins: past, present and future. We have the power of Christ’s resurrection and this allows us a foretaste of our future life as His children. Our experience of salvation will be complete when Christ takes us to His heavenly kingdom to live with Him forever.

Let us pray as the Apostle Paul prayed in his letter to the Philippians, saying, “*That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his suffering, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead*” (3:10, 11).

Righteousness is a Free Gift

*For the law was given by Moses,
but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*

...The Apostle John

Isn't it great to know that Christianity is all about Jesus and what He did for us; and not about what we have done, or can do to find God's acceptance? Jesus Christ made us right and acceptable to God, by what He did on the cross. Righteousness is a free gift. It is not earned or deserved by us. Jesus paid the price for our sin. He rose from the dead in our behalf, giving us the free gift of the Holy Spirit. He enables us to live forever in heaven.

OUR FLESH NULLIFIES GRACE

The flesh is not our physical body, but the example of weakness when we try to change or become righteous by our own efforts or ability. The flesh cannot make us right with God. Everything we try to do to be right with God, only nullifies God's ability. Our sole dependence must be on the finished work of the cross. *"That no flesh should glory in his presence"* (1 Corinthians 1:29).

The law gives us no ability to walk in righteousness. The more we try, the more we frustrate grace. Paul proclaimed, *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives 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. I do not frustrate [nullify] the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain"* (Galatians 2:20, 21, emphasis added).

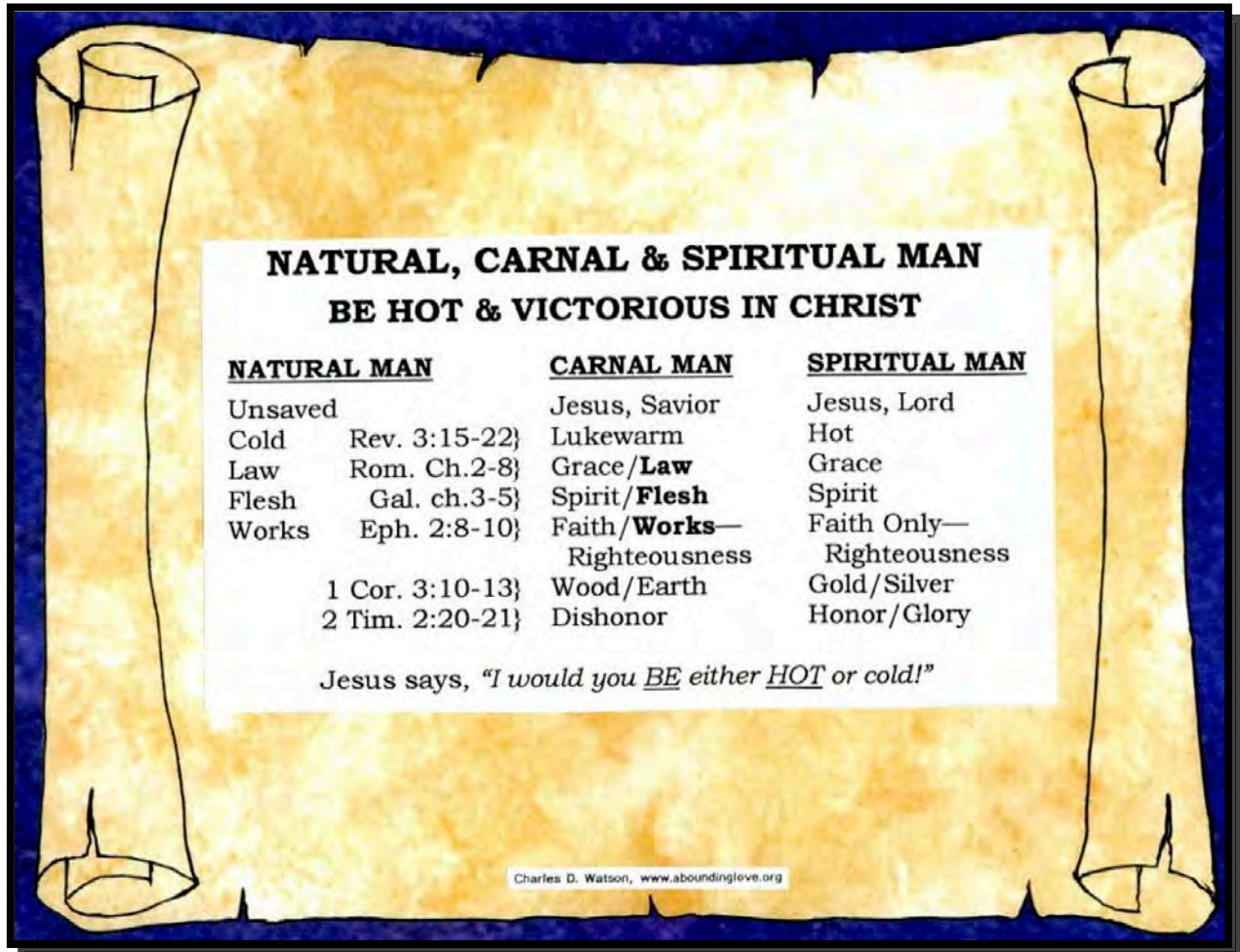
Walking in the flesh [our ability to keep the law] causes a person to always be conscience of his sin. This causes him to sin more as he projects his will on others and judges their hearts by his rules, leading to fear and oppression. Paul says, *"For when we were in the flesh [our ability], the motions [impulses] of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death...when the commandments came, sin revived, and I died"* (Romans 7:5, 9, emphasis added). Such a person says, "There is no free lunch in this life"; but the truth is, we will not conquer sin until we cease from trusting in our own ability and receive the gift of righteousness!

In Paul's letters to the early church, he says that the law is based on works and is incapable of resulting in righteousness. The law makes Christ ineffective, because it is the way of the flesh. It is a curse and was only intended to be a means to an end. The law results in estrangement from Christ and keeps one a slave, in bondage to sin. It depends on human efforts and is motivated by pride.

The Scriptures reveal that the natural man does not believe in Christ. He trusts solely in his ability to keep the law through fleshly works. The carnal [fleshly] man has received Christ, but walks in the flesh, with the residue of the natural man. He trusts in Christ, but still depends on his ability to obtain righteousness by his works, such as keeping the Sabbath, or being baptized in

the “right” way. The spiritual man walks solely by grace [God’s ability], in the Spirit and trusts only in faith righteousness. Our fruits of righteousness reveal whether we are carnal or spiritual, and we will be rewarded by Christ accordingly, “...for whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Romans 14:23).

Paul wrote to the Galatian church saying, “*Knowing that a man is not justified [made righteous] 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 [made righteous] by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified [made righteous]*” (2:16, emphasis added). “*Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified [made righteous] by the law; ye are fallen from grace*” (5:4, emphasis added). These had not lost their salvation, but had fallen back into trusting their obedience to the law for righteousness. Paul went on to say, “*For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith*” (5:5). Paul discusses the carnality problem concerning himself in Romans 7:14-25.



FAITH RIGHTEOUSNESS

Salvation is a gift. "...For by grace [God's ability] are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8, 9, emphasis added). Salvation is strictly a work of God in the heart of man. Do you trust in your good works for your salvation?

The key to being a victorious Christian is to walk solely by faith righteousness. Jesus is the One Who made us righteous, and empowers us to produce fruits of righteousness. As servants of righteousness, we are accepted, secure and have significance in Christ. His promises give us boldness to stand and to trust in Him for our every need. According to the Apostle Paul, as Christians, we have on the breastplate of righteousness and the shield of faith, able to resist all the fiery darts of the evil one (Ephesians 6:10-18). We have "...cast off the works of darkness and... put on the armour of light" (Romans 13:12).

Many Christians try to mix the law and faith after coming to Christ. They started in the Spirit, but succumbed to fleshly works righteousness. The revelation of faith righteousness is a must for being a victorious Christian. Trusting in ourselves or obedience to the law only produces bondage. Paul said that he had to, “...*be found in him [Christ], not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith*” (Philippians 3:9, emphasis added).

Some Christians complain that this message of faith righteousness gives a person a license to sin. Paul got the same complaint, and responded, “*God forbid!*” (Romans 6:2). To the contrary, having God’s ability through grace takes away all excuse for sin. What better way to overcome sin than to be totally dependent upon God working in our lives. Otherwise, we are left to the law, depending upon ourselves. This is walking in the flesh, contrary to the Spirit of faith, grace and righteousness. Paul says, “*If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit*” (Galatians 5:25).

Other Christians deny what the Scriptures teach and instead believe in unrighteous emotions and thoughts that say, “How could you be righteous by the way you are feeling and acting?” This person is “...*ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness... not submitting themselves unto the righteousness of God*” (Romans 10:3). If our imaginations tell us that we are not righteous, we are to be “*Casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge [work] of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*” (2 Corinthians 10:5, emphasis added). We feel and act upon what we think, so we must continually challenge any belief that comes up against the Gospel saying we are not righteous. Instead, we are to establish our heart in righteousness. “...*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth... For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just [righteous] shall live by faith*” (Romans 1:16, 17, emphasis added).

THE GREAT EXCHANGE

The cross is where Christ took everything that was ours, and gave us everything that was His. He took on Himself what we deserve, and we receive what He deserves. A covenant between God and man was established. He took our sin and gave us His righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21). If we do not believe this fact, we are left to our own works of the law [legalism] which has no ability to make us right with God.

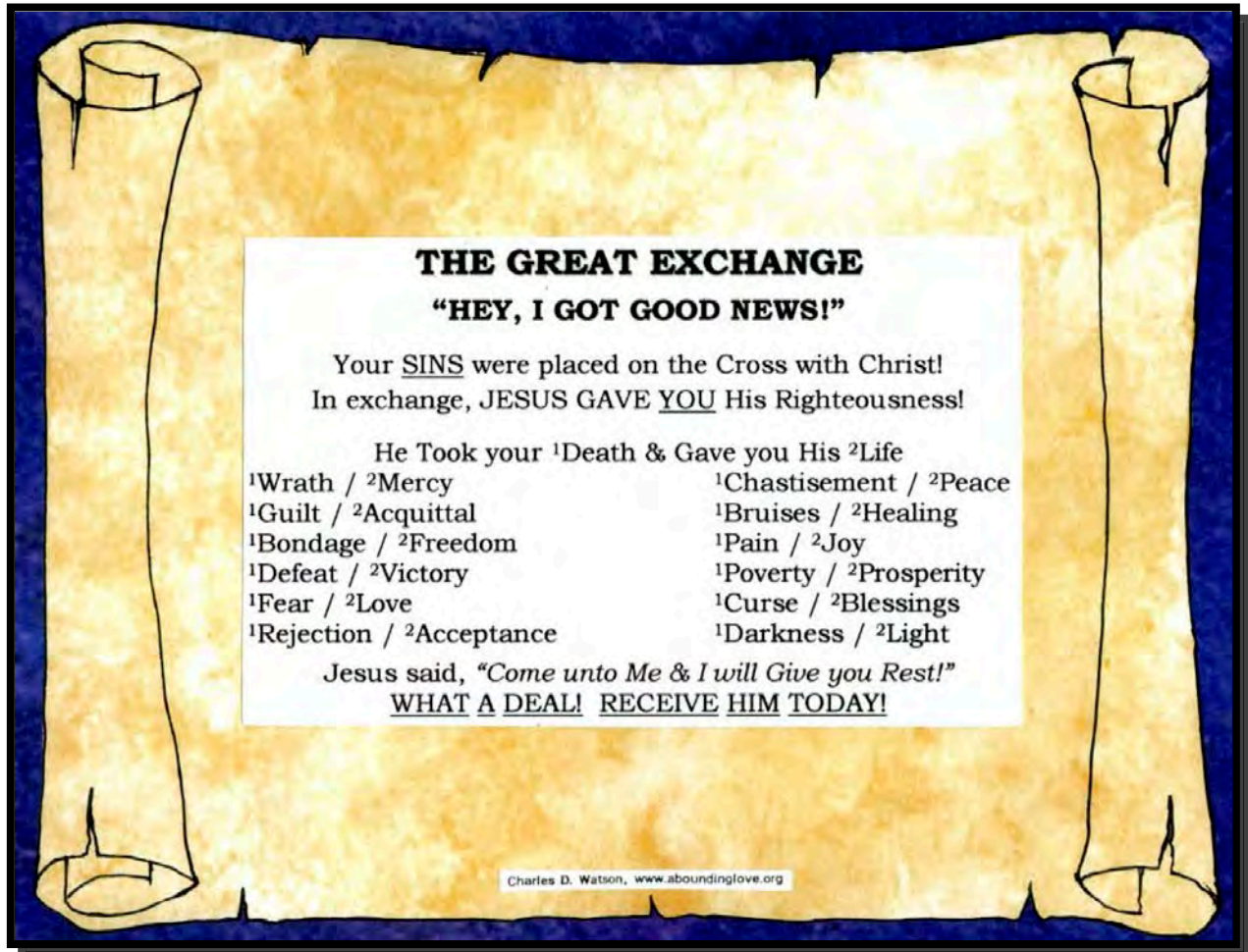
We died to the law when Christ died on the cross (Romans 7:4). We are also raised from the dead to bring forth newness of life and fruit unto God (Romans 6:4, 5). The Spirit of grace that made us righteous and raised us from the dead with Christ also empowers us to live righteously. Paul writes, “*For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law [the flesh], but under grace [God’s ability]*” (Romans 6:14, emphasis added).

Earlier in Romans, Paul put it this way, “*For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled [restored] to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled [restored], we shall be saved by his life*” (5:10, emphasis added). We were spiritually dead, but God saved us by His

light and life. Jesus said, “...*I am the light...he that believeth...shall have the light of life*” (John 8:12). Because of our righteousness in Christ, we truly have the light of life!

Paul says, “...*you hath he quickened [made alive] who were dead in trespasses and sins*” [Ephesians 2:1, emphasis added]. Paul points out it is God “...*Who has delivered us from the power of darkness and has translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son...and having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things to himself...*” (Colossians 1:13, 20). “...*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law... That the blessings of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles*” (Galatians 3:13, 14). Jesus received the maximum curse and wrath that the law required for our sin, and we receive the blessings of His righteousness.

At the cross, He not only exchanged our sin for His righteousness, but our wrath for mercy (Romans 5:9), our guilt for acquittal (Ephesians 1:7), our bondage for freedom (Romans 8:21), our defeat for victory (1 Corinthians 15:57), our fear for love (1 John 4:18), our rejection for acceptance (Ephesians 1:6), our chastisement for peace (Isaiah 53:5), our bruises for healing (Isaiah 53:5, 10), our pain for joy (Hebrews 12:2), our poverty for prosperity (2 Corinthians 8:9), our curse for blessing (Galatians 3:13, 14), our darkness for light (Ephesians 5:8) and our hell for heaven (Revelation 1:18). Oh, what a gift exchange!



WHO IS GOD?

God is our victor, protector, strength and banner. He is our “Jehovah-Nissi.” This term is made by adding the four letters of God’s revealed name, the “YHVH” to the Hebrew word pronounced “nee-see,” which means my banner or my flag. This name means “The-Lord-Is-My-Banner,” as demonstrated in the story of God’s defeat of the Amalekites. The Israelites fought against the Amalekites for hundreds of years, the last Amalekite being Haman, who was hanged during the time of Esther.

The ongoing battle between the Israelites and the Amalekites is a model of the war between the Spirit and the flesh. In Exodus 17:8-16, Joshua defeated the Amalekites in battle. Joshua obeyed what the Spirit was saying to Moses, the man of God. During this battle, Joshua prevailed when Moses’ rod was lifted, but the Amalekites prevailed when the rod was lowered. A rock was placed under Moses, while Aaron and Hur held up his hands. Joshua won the battle because of God’s ability. The Lord promised to wipe the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. An altar was raised up and named Jehovah-Nissi. “*Because the LORD hath sworn that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation*” (Exodus 17:16).

Christians have been fighting the flesh from generation to generation, but as we go into battle with God's ability, seated with our Rock [Jesus Christ], we are victorious. Jesus is the battle flag that promises victory. *"For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us"* (2 Corinthians 1:20).

The Apostle Paul says, *"...I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting"* (1 Timothy 2:8). As we lift up our hands in prayer, thanksgiving, praise and worship ["yadah" in Hebrew, meaning worship with extended hands, done by throwing out the hands and enjoying the presence of God], the battle against the flesh is won. *"Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ..."* (2 Corinthians 2:14a).

We have the grace of God to face and conquer any battle against the flesh. Jesus Christ our Joshua [Yeshua] went into battle for us. He returned shouting, *"I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death"* (Revelation 1:18). He has won the victory for us. We are victorious by faith in Him.

Righteousness Brings Grace

*They which receive abundance of grace
and of the gift of righteousness
shall reign in life by one
Jesus Christ
...The Apostle Paul*

When we are born again, the light of God comes into our hearts to create righteousness. This righteousness gives us the grace [ability] to bring forth the fruit of righteousness from the heart. The Apostle Paul instructs us to, “...*be renewed in the spirit [attitude] of your mind... put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness*” (Ephesians 4:23, 24, emphasis added).

WHAT IS GRACE?

Grace is God’s willingness to use His power and ability on our behalf, making us able to do what we cannot do in our own ability. We walk in the Spirit when we rely on God’s grace, but when we trust in our own ability, we are walking in the flesh. We did nothing to inherit the sin nature, and neither can we do anything to inherit the divine nature, but trust in Christ.

Grace is not solely, “God’s unmerited favor, that which we do not deserve.” This is a definition more in line with the Old Testament, before the Spirit of grace came through Jesus Christ and the finished work of the cross. This definition is true but in the New Testament grace became the ability to reign righteously in life. “...*That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord*” (Romans 5:21).

Paul’s revelation of grace is stated, when he says, “*For if by one man’s [Adam’s] offense death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ*” (Romans 5:17, emphasis added). He knew more than anyone that we must have God’s grace at work in us to live in the Spirit!

In Paul’s letters to the early church, he says that grace is based on faith and makes sinful men righteous. Grace begins and ends with Jesus Christ and is the way of the Spirit. It is a blessing and God’s desired end for His people. Grace results in intimacy with Christ and makes one a son of God and an heir with Christ. It brings liberty and is dependent on the power of the Holy Spirit. Grace is motivated by love and centers on the cross of Christ.

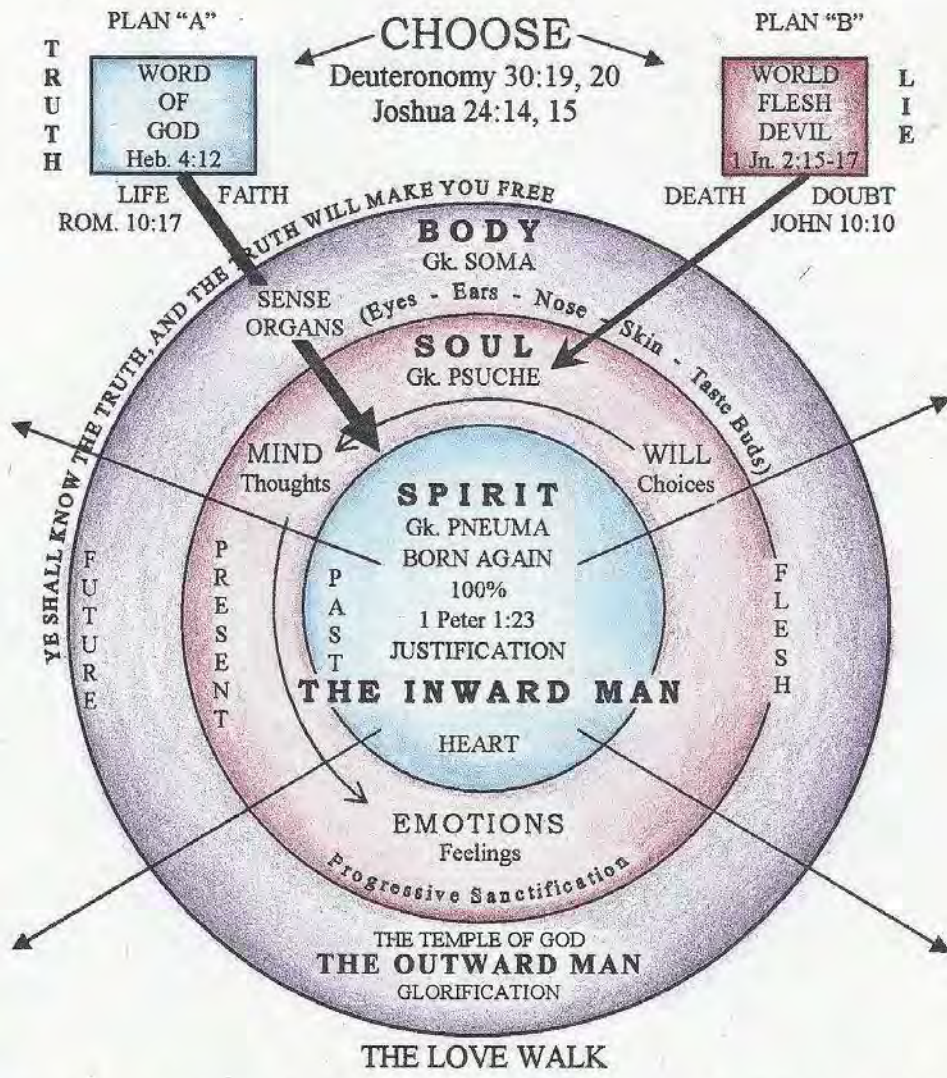
The definition that comes from the acrostic, “GRACE: God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense,” tells us more of what grace means today. At the cross, we received all of God’s riches through the work of Jesus to rule, not only over the devil, but over our thoughts, emotions and actions. The Lord empowers us with an abundance of grace by giving us His righteousness. The

difference in us and the children of Israel is that we have the Holy Spirit living in us, whereas they only had Him upon them, as in an anointing of oil (John 14:17).

Jesus Christ not only provides us with the ability to reign in abundance, but He is our example of a man walking in grace. Jesus depended upon the ability of His Father through the power of the Holy Spirit to carry out His ministry. He was “...*full of grace and truth*” (John 1:14). He was “...*filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him*” (Luke 2:40b). We rely on this same grace to reign in life. “*And of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace*” (John 1:16). Just as Jesus conquered sin by grace, we do the same!

THE SPIRIT OF GRACE

As a new man in Christ, we are a three-part being: spirit, soul and body. Our spirit “...*is created in righteousness and true holiness*” (Ephesians 4:24), when we are born again of an incorruptible seed (1 Peter 1:23). Our soul is made up of the mind, the will and the emotions which are in need of renewal. What we choose to think affects our emotions. The will determines our actions. Our body reaps the benefit of the light and life of God, enjoying strength, health and glory. These three — spirit, soul and body, make us into the temple of God. His light becomes our righteousness.



The foundation of the Christian life is based on faith in the Person and work of Jesus Christ at the cross of Calvary. Our spirit is made alive [born again] when "...joined unto the Lord" (1 Cor. 6:17), through regeneration. Our new Spirit is released through our soul [mind, will and emotions]. This release empowers our walk to be in harmony with the Spirit. Our soul is the gateway which releases the Holy Spirit and brings forth the power and life of God into our actions and relationships. Our bodily conduct comes under control of the Spirit as we choose in our soul to walk in line with God's Word through renewing the mind (Rom. 12:1, 2).

This renewing of the mind is not anything you do in the flesh. It is also a work of grace. We

are renewed in our mind as we grow in the spiritual understanding of our new identity in Christ. The attitude of our mind is renewed as we begin to trust God and to see things as He sees things. He sees us through the finished work of the cross, and we are to see ourselves the same way. We find God's view of us in the Holy Scriptures.

The Spirit of grace, that Jesus promised to send to help us, gives us the ability to reign over sin. Paul says, "...*But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound*" (Romans 5:20). Sin loses its power after we are saved, because we have God's ability [grace] available to overcome. Sin is only conquered by grace. We have God's ability to conquer sin, but sin is so fulfilling to some, that they refuse to walk by grace. James tells us, "...*But he [God] giveth more grace [ability], Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace [ability] unto the humble*" (James 4:6, emphasis added).

Since the day of Pentecost in Acts, Chapter 2, this grace has empowered us to reign over the world, the flesh and the devil. The world will try to weigh us down with heavy burdens, confusion and deception, but "...*the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing*" (Isaiah 10:27). As we stay built up in the most holy faith, praying and keeping in the love of God, He reigns in us (Jude 20, 21). When the enemy comes, we are empowered to cast down his imaginations (2 Corinthians 10:5), and "...*abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul*" (1 Peter 2:11b). The battle is with our flesh, more than with the devil, who is a defeated foe. We have the truth to defeat his every turn. God's ability is stronger than Satan's.

We have the ability to get through pain without yielding to temptation. Instead of medicating our emotional pain with alcohol, sex, drugs and the like, we can humble ourselves before God and find the ability to resist. Yielding to sin only causes more pain in our lives and increases temptation. Remember, sin always brings death, and it is not God causing it. He has given us the ability to live free.

GROWING IN GRACE

The Apostle Peter tells us that we are "...*partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust*" (2 Peter 1:4). This is the nature of God consisting of light, life and love, which not only recreated us in righteousness, but in the image of God when we were born again, bringing forth a lifestyle of righteousness. Peter tells us to "...*grow in grace [ability], and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*" (2 Peter 3:18, emphasis added).

Peter gives us the steps of growth in Christian character, beginning with faith. He says to be diligent in adding to our faith: virtue or excellence, then knowledge, self-control, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity. This is God's kind of love: unconditional. This is the character of God, which comes forth as a result of our righteousness in Christ. We have the ability to walk in charity and unity because we share of the same Spirit. God promises that if these abilities "...*be in you and abound... ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge our Lord Jesus Christ*" (2 Peter 1:5-8).

Our spiritual growth is hindered by the world, the flesh and the devil. Our flesh is our own worst enemy. If we trust in ourselves for righteousness, instead of God's ability; then the works of the flesh; adultery, fornication, lust, idolatry, strife and many more, which are contrary to the Spirit, are at work in us. These are free to work because we trust in the flesh, not allowing the Spirit of grace to reign in our lives.

Jesus says, "*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly of heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light*" (Matthew 11:28-30). We are to cease from our works and rest.

Jesus is our example of total dependency on His Father. He spoke and did the will of His Father, and in His loving relationship, He found rest (John 5:17, 30; 8:28, 29, 38). Jesus is God, but He emptied Himself in humility (Philippians 2:5-8). He is the Son of God, but in His earthly ministry He became a man of flesh and blood, Who acted due to being filled with God's grace and truth, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Growing in Christ consists of humbling ourselves to believe what His Word says and doing it. This is obedience, being a hearer and a doer of God's Word. The children of Israel "...*could not enter in [into rest] because of unbelief*" (Hebrews 3:19, emphasis added). Like us, the children of Israel were reaping what they had sown because of unbelief. As we labor in the presence of God through a life of meditative study, prayer, fellowship and worship, we will find our lives continually filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18), being transformed and filled with God's light.

Righteousness is the ability to stand in the presence of God without the sense of sin, guilt, fear or inferiority. Therefore, with these inabilities removed, we are free to walk in greater ability as the Spirit of grace flows forth from our heart. Remember, the spirit part of our heart is perfect because of righteousness, but the soul [the mind, the will and the emotions] is what's growing in the spiritual knowledge and revelation of the finished work of the cross.

WHO IS GOD?

God is Spirit and Truth. God has no body, no physical or measurable form. Thus, God is invisible. He became visible in human form in the person of Jesus Christ, but His essence is invisible. As Paul wrote to Timothy: "*Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen*" (1 Timothy 1:17).

As such, we are to worship Him in spirit and truth. Jesus said to the woman at the well, "...*God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth*" (John 4:24).

We are the body of Christ. We are His hands and feet. Jesus Christ represented God on earth, and Jesus promised, "*He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do: because I go unto my Father*" (John 14:12). This is hard to imagine, but the Spirit of grace gives us the power to do greater works as the complete body of Christ.

In the Old Testament, the Spirit of God occasionally came upon people to give them power to do God's will or to enable them to serve God in a special way. In the New Testament, our God of Spirit and Truth lives inside of us, making us righteous, pure and holy. He guides and directs us in His greater works here on earth. What a privilege we have to serve the living God.

God's Spirit gave the law (Romans 7:14) and supplied Israel with water and food (1 Corinthians 10:3, 4). Our every blessing is from the Spirit (Ephesians 1:3), as is our understanding of truth (1 Corinthians 2:13-15; Colossians 1:9). Our songs are to be sung in the Spirit (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16), and our ability to understand Scripture correctly is given by the Spirit (John 16:13). We are to be dominated by the Spirit as Jesus was, *"For in him we live, and move, and have our being... for we are also his offspring"* (Acts 17:28).

Truly, as the psalmist sang, *"Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven....Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set us in the way of his steps"* (Psalm 85:10, 11, 13).

Righteousness Brings Peace

*Therefore, since we have been made
right in God's sight by faith,
we have peace with God because
of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us
...The Apostle Paul*

When the Holy Spirit raises us from the dead, He comes to live in us. As His temple, we not only have grace, but we have peace, joy, love, hope and glory. We have peace with God because of Christ's righteousness. God is not angry with us, He loves us. We are not at war with God's ways any longer by our wrong doings, but we're at peace with God, because of grace through faith. He is not only our Father, but our friend.

PEACE WITH GOD

The free gift of righteousness causes our hearts to be at peace. In Paul's epistles, he greets the church with, "*Grace and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*" He gives assurance to them, that they have been made right with God and given peace [complete, whole, and at rest; nothing missing, nothing broken]. After Paul wrote four chapters to the Romans concerning their sinful condition before Christ, he proclaims, "*Therefore, being justified [made righteous] by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*" (Romans 5:1, emphasis added).

This peace came through the blood of Jesus Christ, fulfilling all the Old Testament sacrifices. "*For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell; And having made peace through the blood of the cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself...*" (Colossians 1:19, 20).

Isaiah prophesied of our suffering Servant saying, "*But he was wounded and crushed for our sins. He was beaten that we might have peace. He was whipped, and we were healed*" (53:5, NLT). He took upon Himself everything we deserved, so that we could have the righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, which He deserved.

Paul explained to the Corinthians that our alienation from God has been dealt with at the cross (2 Corinthians 5:19). We have inner tranquility and confidence in our relationship with God because we trust in Christ. This peace is a combination of hope, trust and quiet in mind and soul, brought about by a reconciliation with God. The host of angels praised God at Christ's birth saying, "*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men*" (Luke 2:14).

We are new creations and made righteous in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17, 21). We are seated with Christ in the heavenly places (Ephesians 1:20; 2:6). We are sitting beside our Heavenly Father unashamed, "*So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it*" (Hebrews 4:16, NLT).

PEACE WITH OURSELVES

Paul pinpointed our problem when he wrote the church at Colosse saying they were enemies of God in their minds. It is the mind that is badly in need of renewal, where the enemy attacks our righteousness in Christ, stealing our peace and causing emotional break downs. He assured them because of the finished work of the cross, they were “...*brought into the very presence of God, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault*” (Colossians 1:22, NLT).

Paul says, “*Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. If you do this, you will experience God’s peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ*” (Philippians 4:6, 7, NLT).

It is our mind that is constantly tempted to think wrong thoughts. Paul encourages us to “...*Fix our thoughts on what is true and honorable and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all you learned from me and heard from me and saw me doing, and the God of peace will be with you*” (Philippians 4:8, 9, NLT). As the prophet Isaiah sang, “*You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, whose thoughts are fixed on you!*” (Isaiah 26:3, NLT). Our mind comes into God’s point of view, as we trust His promises to meet our every need.

We also have the ability to know what to do in life. If we don’t have peace about our plans, God will reveal it to us. Peace must be based on the truth of God’s Word, otherwise, deception is easy. We have the Holy Spirit [our Helper] to direct us in all our ways as we live in the presence of God. We have become a house of prayer, talking to God continually about our worries and frustrations. Jesus said, “*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid*” (John 14:27).

Jesus went on to say, “*If you abide [dwell] in me, and my words abide [dwell] in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you*” (John 15:7, emphasis added). As we settle down and make ourselves at home in God’s presence, we find rest. Paul said, “*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord*” (Colossians 3:16). We are blessed to have the Word of God, easily available to us, to guide us and direct us and give us His mind. “*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path*” (Psalm 119:105).

As born-again Christians, we have peace with God, in that He dwells in us. We have peace with ourselves, in that we like to dwell with ourselves — the new person. And, we have peace with others, in that we dwell with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Isaiah says, “*How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!*” (52:7).

When we have peace with God, we have a loving relationship with Him. God loves us, so when the Lord says it is not right to cheat, steal, do drugs or have sex out of wedlock, we listen

because we know He is directing us in love. As a result, we desire to please God and not hurt the One who loves us. Our conscience is cleansed to serve the living God.

PEACE WITH OTHERS

Our heart can now be at peace, not only with God and ourselves, but with others. Broken relationships of the past, can now be restored. We have the ability to go to our parents and siblings to apologize, asking for forgiveness. Paul's counsel to the Colossians was to "*...let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful*" (3:15).

When our heart is at peace with God, we no longer project judgmental attitudes on others, but instead we reflect our new identity of peace. The spirit of fear that once led us to judge is gone and replaced by God's love and self-discipline. Paul comments about this character change, saying, "*...the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us*" (Romans 5:5). We must "*...live in peace with everyone, as much as possible*" (Romans 12:18, NLT).

We are to declare to others, "Our God has triumphed!" Paul, writing from Isaiah, says, "*How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things... For Isaiah said, Lord, who hath believed our report?*" (Romans 10:15, 16). Our mission is to announce the truth, so others will be enabled to believe and receive the gift of righteousness. Jesus said, "*God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God*" (Matthew 5:9, NLT).

When peace between one another is broken, the Scriptures tell us how to solve the problem (Matthew 18:15-20). Paul says, "*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).

Again Paul exhorts us, "*And be ye kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you*" (Ephesians 4:32). In Ephesians, Paul encourages us to walk in unity (4:1-16); holiness (4:17-32); love (4:31-5:2); light (5:3-14); wisdom (5:15-17); praise (5:18-20); and harmony (5:21-6:9).

Peace is an important concept in Judaism. They say the word often: "Shalom." The word comes from the root word "shavat," which can mean "to dwell in a place" It is the same root word for "Shabbot" or "Sabbath." The connection between these words and their meaning is best seen in the current situation in the Middle East. This situation has been present throughout Scripture. If the Palestinian Arabs would agree to "dwell" with the Palestinian Jews (Israelis); there would be "peace" — Shalom (Psalm 133:1). It will take righteousness to bring about such peace. "*And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever*" (Isaiah 32:17).

WHO IS GOD?

He is our Peace. “Jehovah-Shalom,” meaning “The-LORD-Is-Peace.” This is the name Gideon gave the altar that he built in Ophrah. The Lord said to Gideon, “*Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die*” (Judges 6:23, 24).

Isaiah prophesied our coming Prince saying, “*For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulders: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace*” (Isaiah 9:6).

The Lord may have spoken more through Isaiah than any other prophet concerning Jesus, the Prince, coming to bring peace to the earth. He told of His birth, and in Isaiah, Chapter 53, he depicts in graphic details our suffering Servant.

In Chapter 54, he tells of the great exchange, Christ reconciling us to God and bringing forth the covenant of peace. He said, “*For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD my Redeemer*” (vs. 7, 8). God turned His back on Jesus for a moment on the cross. The Lord had to be our redeemer in order to be our peace. God put the penalty for the sins of the world upon Jesus, so we would be free to have peace with Him.

Isaiah continued the prophecy of peace, saying, “*For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee*” (54:9, 10). God’s covenant of peace with us is as sure as His with Noah, and will never depart from us, because of the finished work of the cross. It is unchangeable!

Isaiah says, “*In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee... No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise up against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD*” (54:14, 17).

Truly, God sent our Prince of Peace to conquer for us and to give us the ability to reign in life. As a result, our new life should be filled with “*Giving thanks unto the Father, which has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints of light*” (Colossians 1:12).

Righteousness Brings Joy

*For the kingdom of God is not meat
and drink; but righteousness, and
Peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit
...The Apostle Paul*

Joy is sometimes confused with happiness. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit. As we live in the Spirit, joy comes forth. We may not be happy about a situation, but we can still rise up in joy to carry us through the circumstance and even overcome unhappiness. The Spirit of joy gives us the ability to have a good attitude about something even though things are not going our way. God is sovereign, He's all powerful and in control!

GOD'S PRESENCE IS OUR JOY

There is joy in God's presence. As we stay in the presence of God, joy flows. The Psalmist David sang, *"Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore"* (16:11). When we come up against trials, remember: we sit at God's right hand with Christ. As we trust Him to work through the trial and deliver us, joy comes. God does His greatest work during times of trial, but according to His timing. So sit back, relax in His presence, and let God do His work in restoring your heart.

Satan will try to steal our joy, but he has been kicked out of heaven, where we sit as saints in Christ. We are to sing, *"Arise, O LORD, into thy rest; and the ark of our strength [Jesus]." Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let thy saints shout for joy*" (Psalm 132:8, 9, emphasis added). In the name of Jesus, we sit in God's presence, clothed in righteousness and shouting for joy. The devil can't touch that! We have *"...on the breastplate of righteousness. And our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace"* (Ephesians 6:14b, 15).

Jesus brought us into God's presence. *"The Son reflects God's own glory, and everything about him represents God exactly. He sustains the universe by the mighty power of his command. After he died to cleanse us from the stain of sin, he sat down in the place of honor at the right hand of the majestic God of heaven"* (Hebrews 1:3, NLT).

To live in the kingdom of God is to live in righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. *"For the kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink, but of living a life of goodness [righteousness] and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit"* (Romans 14:17, NLT, emphasis added). The blood of Jesus Christ has made us righteous and brought peace (Colossians 1:20). As a result, we are brought into the presence of the Lord God where joy flows. The blood of Jesus brings us near to God (Ephesians 2:13), and we enter into His throne room by a new and living way beyond the veil (Hebrews 10:19, 20). The countenance of His joy is now upon our face as we reflect the presence of our Father. Surely, we behold Him and are changing from glory to glory (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Our spirit is joined to the Lord in one Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:17). As His temple on earth, He is joined to us as well, having made our spirit righteous in Christ. We will forever have His presence within us, but the battle now lies in the soul. His presence affects our mind, will and emotions. As the goodness of God becomes greater, our hearts turn to His presence, filled with the Spirit. As a result, joy flows throughout our lives.

GOD'S JOY IS OUR STRENGTH

The joy of the Lord is our strength. When we are weak, He is strong. If we try to live through our own strength, we suffer spiritual weakness, but when we trust in His ability working through us, we have great spiritual strength. It is God Who causes us to triumph in Christ Jesus. He is the One Who gives us the power to come out of our madness, and He is the One Who empowers us to rise up out of our weaknesses.

We must recognize the weakness of the flesh. Paul had what he called a “thorn in the flesh.” It’s likened to the children of Israel’s thorn in the side (Judges 2:3). They both had enemies, a “messenger from Satan” always attacking them. Paul had gotten to his wit’s end, asking the Lord three times to take it away, but God replied, “...*My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me*” (2 Corinthians 12:9). In trials, God assures us that His ability is sufficient in times of weakness.

There is power in the blood of Jesus. It is our responsibility to daily “...*overcome him [the devil] by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of our testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them*” (Revelation 12:11, 12a, emphasis added). Jesus defeated the devil, but we are to enforce this defeat in our minds. Satan is a defeated foe, and as we remind ourselves daily of the blood that defeated him, our hearts should rejoice. We are to constantly rejoice in the blood of the Lamb.

The children of Israel were defeated and forced into the Babylonian captivity because they trusted in their flesh. In captivity, Ezra and Nehemiah yearned to return to Jerusalem [City of Peace] and to rebuild the temple, so the presence of the Lord could return. They knew their strength was found only in His presence. Nehemiah said, “...*for the joy of the LORD is your strength*” (8:10c). He knew the joy of the Lord and the rewards found by living in it.

While building the temple, Zerubbabel had come to the end of his strength. The angel of the Lord woke him up and gave him a vision of seven lamps hooked to two olive trees by seven pipes. He asked, “*What are these, my Lord?*” The Lord answered, saying, “...*Not by might nor by power [flesh], but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain [trials]: before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain [leveled]: and he shall bring forth the headstone [completion] thereof with shouting, crying, Grace, grace unto it*” (Zechariah 4:5-7, emphasis added). Today, we are connected to the seven candlesticks in heaven (Revelation 4:5; 5:6). We have God’s ability to overcome all mountains that come up in our lives. We are complete in Christ (Colossians 2:10), and can shout with joy, “Grace, Grace!”

GOD'S STRENGTH IS OUR VICTORY

In Scripture there are several examples of spiritual warfare, but one truth always comes out: in the flesh we always lose; but in God's presence, we always win. Joshua (Numbers 13 & 14), Gideon (Judges 6 & 7), David (1 Samuel 17), Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 20), all these men had one thing in common: they were men of faith, doing that which was right in the sight of the Lord, triumphing in battles through God's strength and, as a result, rejoicing.

We have the choice in battle to fight in our own strength or in the strength of the Lord God. Joshua measured the giants against God's strength. Gideon believed God and let the glory of the Lord shine in his life to be victorious in battle. David believed in his heart he could conquer Goliath with his sling, because he boldly proclaimed to Goliath: "...*Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand: and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee... for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hands*" (1 Samuel 17:45, 46a, 47b). Jehoshaphat sought the Lord, obeyed and praised Him and the Spirit of the Lord spoke, "...*And he said, Harken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not your's, but God's*" (2 Chronicles 20:15). Instead of trusting in their strength, they chose to trust in God's strength.

We are armed for battle, "*By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left*" (2 Corinthians 6:7). The Scriptures tell us that we have the armor of light. The enemy is blinded by the brightness of God's glory in our attack. We are broken vessels, not trusting in ourselves, but in God, Who fights our battles by the sword of His Spirit.

Jesus says, "*These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full*" (John 15:11). Everything Jesus spoke prepared us for battle. He gave us the Holy Spirit, so that we could be empowered to have joy through victory in the battles of life. Jesus prayed to His Father, saying, "...*these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves*" (John 17:13). This is the joy of Jesus that lives in us daily to produce victory. Jesus says, "...*ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full*" (John 16:24). Jesus brings joyful living!

As we live in God's strength, righteousness and peace, we are promised future joy. Paul says, "*Rejoice in the Lord, always... The Lord is at hand... Be careful for nothing; but in everything 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 4:4-7). This is the secret to staying in the presence of the Lord: rejoicing, praying, thanksgiving and keeping our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Paul says, "*For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?*" (1 Thessalonians 2:19). There is a joyful reward awaiting for those who overcome in the Lord!

WHO IS GOD?

God is All-Powerful. God's power is unlimited. He can do anything that is consistent with His nature, character and purpose. "Impossible" is not a word in God's vocabulary. God creates and sustains all things; yet He never grows tired. "...*the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength*" (Isaiah 40:28b, 29).

God is our "Jehovah-Raah." This name, translated "The-LORD-Our-Shepherd," was used in prophecy to describe God, who will feed His flock, gather the lambs in His arms and gently lead those with young. Jesus is our Shepherd, who takes us into His arms and always leads us in triumph (2 Corinthians 2:14).

As we live in the presence of Almighty God, we can sing with David, "*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). We are mighty in battle because our God is Mighty. He has given us His ability, making us able to do what we cannot do in our own ability.

The prophet Jeremiah said, "*Thy words were found and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts*" (15:16). As we digest God's Word, we begin to view things as God views them. This is the secret to walking in faith righteousness. God's mighty power flows through us as we "...*deny [ourselves], and take up his cross daily, and follow [Jesus]*" (Luke 9:23, emphasis added).

As we deny ourselves in these last days, we are to live, "*Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; 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). Heaven is rejoicing as we come into God's presence. Jesus could see the joy in heaven over the saving of one lost sinner. "*I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth...*" (Luke 15:7). Truly, His righteousness brings joy, not only in us, but in heaven where we sit with Him.

Righteousness Brings Love

*I [the LORD] lead in the way of
righteousness...That I may cause those
that love me to inherit substance;
and I will fill their treasures
...King Solomon*

The love of God was shown at the cross of Calvary to deliver us, not only from our wrong doings, but from the power of fear that was brought to the world by Satan. It is God's love at Calvary that destroyed fear and the power of Satan, so we can walk in love towards God and others. His love is the power to live this life free from torment.

The writer of Hebrews says, "*Because God's children are human beings — made of flesh and blood — Jesus also became flesh and blood by being born in human form. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the Devil, who had the power of death. Only in this way could he deliver those who have lived all their lives as slaves to the fear of dying*" (Hebrews 2:14, 15, NLT).

LOVE CONQUERS ALL

God's righteousness arrives on the scene to conquer all! He comes to establish His kingdom of love in our hearts, lives and relationships. The Apostle Paul asks the question, "*...who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*" (Romans 7:24). The answer is in verse 25, "*I thank God though Jesus Christ our Lord...*" We serve a risen Savior, Who sends us forth in the power of His conquering love.

There is a battle going on non-stop for our thoughts, but the love of God never fails to be effective (1 Corinthians 13:8). When thoughts arise that torment us during times of trial, we bring our minds back to God's love at Calvary. His love will always strengthen us to overcome every thought of the enemy. God is love, and He displayed His love so vividly at the cross, where He conquered hell, death and the grave.

Paul proclaims, "*For the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you through Christ Jesus from the power of sin that leads to death*" (Romans 8:2, NLT). Because of Christ's victory at Calvary, "*...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). We are children of God [love], walking in His kingdom of love and overcoming all things because of His love.

As God's children, we no longer have to live in fear. John writes, "*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). Instead of allowing our fear to place people under "The Law" and in our

control, we allow love to reign in our hearts bringing righteousness. The law never changed a heart or made anyone righteous.

Divine love operates in us because of the character of God that lives in us due to Christ's righteousness. If we live by the flesh or by the law, we live life based on our own judgments; but in the Spirit, we love according to our new identity of righteousness. God's love does not place legal conditions on us. His unconditional love removes fear and emotional pain from our lives.

A LOVING GOD

The Spirit of righteousness has empowered us to know God's love and to love Him. John writes, "*Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit*" (1 John 4:13). We have entered into a new realm of living, different from this natural world. It is the kingdom of God, where we experience Him, talk to Him, and walk by a faith, which works by His love (Galatians 5:6). It is a place where we are free from the power of fear, with our emotions ruled by peace because of the confidence we have in the love of God.

Paul asks the question, "*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*" (Romans 8:35). In the next verses, Paul answers saying, "*Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come. Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (8:37, 39).

Is there any question that God loves us and that nothing can separate us from His love? The Apostle John says, "*This is real love. It is not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be a sacrifice to take away our sins*" (1 John 4:10, NLT).

Jesus explained that all the law and the prophets can be summed up in two commandments, "*...Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind... Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*" (Matthew 22:37, 39). But today, we "*...perceive the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren*" (1 John 3:16). As Christians, we love not because we grudgingly obey a commandment, but because we know how much God loves us.

LOVING ONE ANOTHER

As we die to ourselves and take up the cross, we come into a vision of the heavenly throne room. God is sitting on the throne, together with Jesus, and we are sitting beside Him. We are risen with Christ, righteous in Him. We are given the ability to love God and others from our throne room position (Revelation 4 & 5).

The love of God is born in our hearts through the power of the Holy Spirit. We are reborn of God, and of His love. He lives in us and we in Him, for we are overcomers, right with the Father and in unity with Him. Jesus prayed for us, saying, "*...I have declared unto them thy name, and*

will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them” (John 17:26).

Jesus lived facing His Father’s heavenly throne room while on earth, teaching us to pray, “*Our Father, which art in heaven: Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven*” (Matthew 6:9, 10). His will is commanding, “...*That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends*” (John 15:12, 13). From our throne room position, it is no longer just a command to love God and one another, but becomes a divine flow. John says, “*Dear friends, let us continue to love one another for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is born of God and knows God. But anyone who does not love does not know God — for God is love*” (1 John 4:7, 8 NLT).

John went on to say, “*Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us*” (1 John 4:11, 12). This perfected life of love is one lived with an awareness of the heavenly sanctuary of God, where we dwell with Him and His Son. Righteousness has perfected the spirit part of our heart, but there is a battle going on in the soul [mind, will and emotions], which is being changed into agreement with the perfect love of Calvary. As the temple of God, our hearts are to resonate with our Father in heaven. If there are judgments in our heart that are contrary to God and stopping the divine flow; repent and be changed today!

How does the divine flow come forth in us to love as God loves? Peter says, “*Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned [sincere] love of the brethren; see that you love one another with a pure heart fervently [intensely]*” (1 Peter 1:22, emphasis added). Peter also said, “...*charity shall cover a multitude of sins*” (1 Peter 4:8). Maybe it is time to do a love check-up? Are you loving your family as Jesus does? Compare your love for others with God’s love as established in 1 Corinthians, chapter 13. This chapter lists a number of things that love is not, but it begins with two things love always is: “*Love is patient and love is kind...*” When dealing with others, are you patient and kind? This is an excellent place to start.

Is there any question, that righteousness brings the ability to love? It is impossible for us to love one another in the flesh, or by a commandment from the law. Paul closes out his letter to the Romans saying, “*Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law*” (Romans 13:8-10). Paul also says, “*Follow after charity...*” (1 Corinthians 14:1). We must make a daily choice to live in God’s presence and walk in His love.

WHO IS GOD?

God is our loving Heavenly Father. He is our “Jehovah-Shammah.” This phrase expresses the truth that “The-LORD-Is-There,” referring to the city which the prophet Ezekiel saw in his

vision (Ezekiel 48:35). Today, we are to have a view of that same city knowing that God is on the throne (Psalm 102:19).

God in His sanctuary is always there for us, “...for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Hebrews 13:5, 6).

God is everywhere. He is not confined to any part of the universe, but is present in all His power at every point in space and every moment in time (Psalm 139:7-12). He is the God of the whole earth (Genesis 18:25).

Everywhere we go, God is there. He lives in the sanctuary of our heart. He is there to guide, provide and to heal us. We have nothing to fear, “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... The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Romans 8:15, 16).

As we go through life, falling down and getting up, over and over, in some small way we begin to realize that God really does love and forgive us. The Apostle John writes, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God...” (1 John 3:1).

Can we really ever come to fully know the depths of our Father’s love? Paul prays, “...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 fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:17-19).

Remember, regardless if you are now saved or not, God loves and accepts you. He is not angry at you. His love is unconditional and unlike any love you have ever experienced. He loves you just the way you are! What is to stop you from accepting Him?

Righteousness Brings Hope

*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 Spirit
...The Apostle Paul*

Despite their circumstances, Christians have a lot of hope for the future. Hope is the confident expectation of good things. Where there is life, there is hope! The best is yet to come. We have the promise of eternal life. God is on our side, and we are on His. We have a Father like we never had in life. We are in partnership with our Heavenly Father to accomplish His works on this earth.

The writer of Hebrews declares we are “...heirs of promise... who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil: Where the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus made an high priest forever...” (Hebrews 6:17-20).

THE PROMISED SEED, OUR BLESSED HOPE

The Apostle Paul tells us of Abraham, “Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be” (Romans 4:18). God established a covenant with Abraham, a contract based upon the promise of God. “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ” (Galatians 3:16). Because of this promise, which is fulfilled in Jesus Christ for those who believe, we are “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began” (Titus 1:2).

We begin our Christian life as a born again Spirit. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we grow in the knowledge of His Word, His promises for us, taking on His mind in our soul. We hope in the knowledge we gain, that one day we will change into an incorruptible body, “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (1 Corinthians 15:52, 53). This hope began as a promised seed.

We have been “...born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever” (1 Peter 1:23). This incorruptible seed [Jesus] made us righteous and is presently bringing forth His righteousness in us through the power of the Holy Spirit, that we may have hope. Paul prayed, “...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 Spirit” (Romans 15:13). He prayed for the Ephesians, saying, “...that you may know what is the hope of his

calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints” (1:18). This is our one hope (Ephesians 4:4), the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 1:1).

Our hope of heaven is because of grace through faith in the Good News of Jesus Christ. Paul says to the Colossians, “...*be not moved away from the hope of the gospel” (1:23). “To whom God would make known what is...this mystery...which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (1:27). King David understood this mystery: “Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope” (Psalm 16:9).*

Those without Christ have no hope (Ephesians 2:12), but we, who patiently wait for His coming, do (1 Thessalonians 1:3). Paul tells of His coming: “*For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).*

Paul prays, “*Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace” (2 Thessalonians 2:16). Truly, our hope is also due to God’s ability working in us!*

SOWING SEEDS OF HOPE

We are commissioned by Jesus Christ to minister the Good News. As believers, we are liberated to serve in the power of His Spirit. We trust that God is at work in our lives, and have ceased trusting in our own fleshly works to save. As we walk full of the Spirit, the Lord gives us creative works, which are from Him. We receive dreams and visions of work for us that will bring forth our destiny. We learn to listen to His still, small voice.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus promised the believer that, “...*out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water” (John 7:38b). In Luke’s Gospel, Jesus said, “...I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued [clothed] with power from on high” (24:49, emphasis added). In Acts, Luke recorded Jesus saying, “But ye shall receive power [ability] after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me...” (1:8, emphasis added).*

In the Old Testament, we find three positions for which the Lord gives special anointing. The Hebrew word “*navee*” means prophet; “*kohen*” means priest; and “*melekh*” means king. The “*kohen hagadol*” was the High Priest. Usually there is opposition in these positions, especially with the prophets, who speak for God, opposing the unrighteous kings and/or priests. In a few cases, however, we see the unity of these positions in one man. Moses was such a man, as was David and to some extent Solomon. The perfect unity of all three is seen in Jesus Christ. Christians are heirs of this unity in faith.

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit clothed those in the upper room with God’s ability. Like Christ, they went forth in ministry as prophet, priest and king. As a prophet, they preached Jesus: His death, burial and resurrection, and thousands were saved. As a priest, they ministered to God, praying for the sick in the name of Jesus, and people were healed. As kings, they

ministered in God's strength and believers were baptized in the Spirit. These ministries of God's grace continue today through the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Paul says, *"I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase... he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour..."* (1 Corinthians 3:6, 8). Paul wrote of plowing in hope and becoming all things to all people that some might be saved, so that he might gain an incorruptible crown (1 Corinthians, chapter 9). He spoke of another reward, *"For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy"* (1 Thessalonians 2:19, 20). We have one lifetime to bring forth fruits of righteousness, and then the rewards will be passed out (Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 3:13-15). Are you to receive rewards, or are you wasting the ability God has given you?

The prophet Hosea spoke of this work 750 years before Christ, saying, *"Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up the fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you"* (10:12). At Pentecost, righteousness was rained upon the believers as they praised God in the upper room. Our Heavenly Father knew that only His Son and the anointing of the Holy Spirit would break up the soil of mankind's stony hearts. It took the dynamite of God's power for such a miracle. Are there areas in your life where you need to give the flesh a rest and let God's ability take over?

Isaiah prophesied saying, *"To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified"* (61:3). We are the trees of righteousness in Christ, given beauty for ashes, joy for mourning and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. We are planted beside the life-giving waters.

HOPE BRINGS FORTH CLEAN LIVING

God's life-giving sap flows through us as trees of righteousness at all times. As a Christian meditates on the Word of God day and night, *"...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 whatever he doeth shall prosper"* (Psalm 1:3). God has made us His temple by sending the Holy Spirit to dwell in us. Our heart is God's sanctuary, where life flows through our soul: thoughts, choices and feelings. As these are brought into line with God's point of view, His ability to minister flows forth.

We are the body of Christ, a living organism. We pray and worship God day and night before His throne, while awaiting in hope for His soon return. Hope is future, but our righteousness in Christ is now. As we live facing our Father's heavenly throne room *"...we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is... And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure"* (1 John 3:2c, 3). When we identify with our righteousness in Christ, our soul is cleansed so His righteousness may flow forth. John says, *"Dear children, don't let anyone deceive you about this: When people do what is right, it is because they are righteous, even as Christ is*

righteous” (1 John 3:7, NLT). Do you have a desire to be illuminated with the revelation of Jesus Christ?

Our Heavenly Father gave us His ability to live a righteous life before Him when we were born again. Paul says, “*For the grace [ability] of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men. Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar [special] people, zealous of good works*” (Titus 2:11-14, emphasis added).

We have a responsibility to keep a clean temple before the Lord. Paul said to Timothy, “*If a man purge himself from these [sins], he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work... Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart*” (2 Timothy 2:21, 22, emphasis added).

There is a progressive work of sanctification going on in the sanctuary of our hearts. The Apostle Peter says, “*But sanctify [set apart] the Lord God in your hearts*” (1 Peter 3:15a, emphasis added). Paul said it like this, “*...I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice — the kind he will accept. When you think of what he has done for you, is this too much to ask? Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think*” (Romans 12:1, 2, NLT).

This is our daily service as priests. The priestly duties of old consisted of trimming the wicks on the oil lamps so the light burned brightly in the sanctuary. Christ, our Light, searches, exposes, guides, reveals, strengthens and renews our mind. His light in us reflects God’s glory. The priests changed the loaves of bread in the sanctuary to keep them fresh. Christ, our True Bread and Sustainer, gives us the desire through the revelation of His Word to do His will. The priests also burnt incense while offering prayers to God. Christ, our Intercessor, prays for us, as we come to God through Him in prayer, thanksgiving, praise and worship. He lifts our hearts to experience His presence. This is our service unto God, walking in holiness as a living sacrifice.

Christ’s righteousness brings forth grace, peace, joy, love and hope, but we must yield ourselves as servants of righteousness (Romans 6:19). We rejoice in hope of the glory of God, even in our tribulations, being patient, gaining experience and more hope. This process of maturity allows the love of God to flow through our hearts freely (Romans 5:1-5). This hope becomes our helmet of salvation as we watch for the return of Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:8). We shall see Him as He is: “The-LORD-Our-Righteousness,” as we yield our lives to being servants of righteousness.

WHO IS GOD?

God is hope, and the Author of hope. Hope does not come from our desires or wishes, but from God, Who is Himself our hope. “*My hope is in Thee*” (Psalm 39:7).

Our faith is tied to this hope, even though it is invisible. *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”* (Hebrews 11:1). Moses told the children of Israel, *“...because the LORD loved you...Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations”* (Deuteronomy 7:8a, 9).

Genuine hope is not wishful thinking, but a firm assurance from God about things that are unseen and still in the future. *“Now that we are saved, we eagerly look forward to this freedom. For if you already have something, you don’t need to hope for it. But if we look forward to something we don’t have yet, we must wait patiently and confidently”* (Romans 8:24, 25, NLT).

God is changeless. Progress and change may characterize some of His works, but God Himself remains unchanged, *“...thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail”* (Hebrews 1:12b). If God did change; He would not be perfect, and we could not hope in Him. He is the same from one time to another.

God is Holiness. The word “holy” means “to separate.” It refers to God as separated from or exalted above other things (Isaiah 6:1-3). Holiness refers to God’s moral excellence. Being holy, God requires holiness from His children, and supplies us with righteousness to achieve His requirement. Holiness is a gift from God and received by faith through His Son, Jesus Christ: *“And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness”* (Ephesians 4:24).

God is our Sanctifier. He is our “Jehovah-M’Kaddesh,” meaning “The-LORD-Our-Sanctifier.” We are sanctified by God the Father (Jude 1), God the Son (Hebrews 2:11), and God the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:2). We are sanctified in the Spirit when we are born again, but He continues to sanctify our soul and body until His return (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Jesus prayed, *“Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth”* (John 17:17).

God is our Servant. Jesus is identified as our Messiah, and His ministry is on behalf of His children. He is chosen of God. He delights in God and He receives God’s Spirit. Like Wisdom, in Proverbs 8, He is holy, just and righteous. He is our example as servants of righteousness.

Truly, God is our Blessed Hope. We can trust in Him to never change His mind concerning our Lord’s glorious appearing. He has given us the ability to live separate from this world because of Christ’s righteousness. We can now serve him in a new and living way, letting our *“...light so shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven”* (Matthew 5:16).

Righteousness Brings Glory

*And one cried unto another, and
said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts:
the whole earth is full of his glory
...The Prophet Isaiah*

Our Father's plan to fill the earth with His glory, was made before the foundation of the earth. His plan is fulfilled by conforming us to the image of His Son, Jesus Christ. He brought His Son to earth as the express image of His character, as prophet, priest and king, so He could make sinful mankind righteous. Christ's righteousness fills the earth and the hearts of those who believe in Him with His glory.

The writer of Hebrews says, "*Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. But now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son. God promised everything of the Son as an inheritance, and through the Son he made the universe and everything in it. The Son reflects God's own glory, and everything about him represents God exactly. He sustains the universe by the mighty power of his command. After he died to cleanse us from the stain of sin, he sat down in the place of honor at the right hand of the majestic God of heaven*" (Hebrews 1:1-3, NLT).

RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE SPIRIT

Man was created in glory and honor (Psalm 8:5), but the heart of man fell short of God's glory because of his fall into sin in the Garden of Eden. Christ came to recreate us just like we had never sinned. God created the universe perfect, and made up of three heavens. The Apostle Paul was caught up into the third heaven and given his revelation of righteousness (2 Corinthians, chapter 12). We are also caught up into the third heaven, spiritually, through the revelation of righteousness. The Holy Spirit reveals that it is Jesus Christ who became our righteousness.

Just as all creation is made up of three heavenly parts, we are as well. God desires His will to be done on earth in our spirit, soul and body, as it is in heaven. When we are reborn of the Spirit by faith in Christ Jesus, the light of God comes into our hearts. As the Holy Spirit sets up residence in our hearts, we are joined to God and move into heaven with Christ. We set up residence in heaven, as God sets up residence in us. We become His tabernacle [dwelling place] here on earth, a glorious tabernacle, much greater than that of the Old Testament. "...*know ye not that your body is the temple of the 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 God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's*" (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20).

We have the glorious Spirit of God inside of us, instead of a cloud by day and a fire by night leading us (Exodus 16:10). The glory of God is like a devouring fire sanctifying not only the

tabernacle of old, but our tabernacle. Moses asked God to show him His glory, and He proclaimed, saying, “...*The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth*” (Exodus 34:6). The Apostle Paul wrote, “*If the old covenant... was glorious, how much more glorious is the new covenant, which makes us right with God!*” (2 Corinthians 3:9, NLT).

The tabernacle of old was patterned after heaven (Hebrews 8:5). Jesus was patterned after heaven when “...*the Word was made flesh, and dwelt [tabernacled] among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth*” (John 1:14). Now, we are a pattern of heaven. Jesus said, “...*the kingdom of God is within you*” (Luke 17:21b). His kingdom is made up of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. His Spirit has moved into our heart and brought His righteousness. His peace has come to rule our souls (minds, wills and emotions). His joy is the strength of our bodies, bringing victory in battle. The glory of God is reflected throughout His kingdom. Jesus is in dominion in our heart, and we reign with Him as kings.

We have moved spiritually into God’s Holy of Holies. He has set up His sanctuary, the Most Holy Place, in our hearts. If what is in your heart does not belong in heaven, then it should not be in your heart. We are carriers of the ark, the Word written upon our hearts (2 Corinthians 3:3b), as priests clothed in His glory.

His Word freely flows from our hearts in a powerful demonstration of the Holy Spirit. We proclaim the testimony of Jesus Christ to the world as prophets. The living water of God is flowing from His holy temple into the hearts of mankind through our speaking of God’s Word. Stephen’s ministry was a prime example. Stephen “...*being full of the Holy Spirit, looked steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand side of God*” (Acts 7:55). He died looking into the face of Christ, receiving a standing ovation.

The light of God shines into our hearts “...*to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*” (2 Corinthians 4:6). Moses went upon the mountain to meet God, and returned reflecting His glory. God has taken us to His mountain in heaven so we can reflect His glory. We “...*have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us*” (2 Corinthians 4:7). The purpose being “...*that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh [body]*” (2 Corinthians 4:11, emphasis added).

During the Old Tabernacle period, “...*the LORD separated the tribe of Levi to bear the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD to minister to Him and to bless in His name.*” (Deuteronomy 10:8)

In the New Testament, “...*your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.*” (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20).

Who are you? “...*you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.*” (1 Peter 2:9, 10).

SANCTIFICATION OF THE SOUL

The soul of a Christian is progressively being separated from the world of sin. It is being set apart for God's service and dedicated to His purpose. Just as the God-head is triune: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; we are a three-part being: spirit, soul and body. Our souls, too, are made up of three parts: mind, will and emotions. The three are likened to the three areas of the tabernacle's sanctuary [holy place] where the priests served God in the wilderness. As priests, we are ministering to God in the three areas of the heavenly sanctuary: around the lampstand, the True Bread, [Jesus,] and the altar of incense.

The mind is likened to the oil lamps [the church] receiving the Light of the Spiritual revelation [oil] of God's righteousness. This Light is to fill the sanctuary of our hearts. The will is likened to the showbread, which is the sustainer of life, the True Bread being the Word of God, Jesus Christ, our Sustainer. Our will is as wheat ground and baked with fiery trials to come into line with God's Word, His will (1 Peter 1:7-9). The emotions are likened to the altar of incense where Jesus is interceding for us as we pray. In trials, we remind ourselves that we are sitting beside our Father full of His glory. Our Heavenly Father receives us as intimately as He receives His own Son. He answers our prayers, just as He answered His Son's.

In our soul, we are worshippers in intimate relationship with our Heavenly Father. We are carrying out our royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9), overcoming the world, the flesh and the devil by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony (Revelation 12:11). We have God's ability. We realize that humility is the willingness to submit to God's opinions and views about everything and to draw near to Him in purity, so that the power of God to minister may freely flow in us.

In the sanctuary of our soul, we carry out the ministry of the blood of Christ as priests. Along with Jesus, our High Priest, we are "*A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man*" (Hebrews 8:2). As we serve God day and night, "*...we all, with open [unveiled] face beholding [reflecting] as in a glass [mirror] the glory of the Lord, are changed [transfigured] into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord*" (2 Corinthians 3:18, emphasis added).

The Holy Spirit sets us apart for the work of ministry. As we minister to God, He renews our mind to His way of thinking — His view on things. In our spirits, we have God's view, but we are progressively coming into God's view in our souls as our minds are renewed and changed by His Word. We are coming into agreement with God, saying the same things that He says and having the same judgments.

Paul wrote, "*That he [God] might sanctify and cleanse it [the church] with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish*" (Ephesians 5:26, 27, emphasis added).

GLORIFICATION OF THE BODY

“Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits at God’s right hand in the place of honor and power. Let heaven fill your thoughts. Do not think only about things down here on earth. For you died when Christ died, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. And when Christ, who is our real life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory” (Colossians 3:1-4, NLT).

The body reflects God’s glory as we spend time in His presence, carrying out the ministry of the Spirit as kings. Through us, the gifts and the fruit of the Spirit divinely flow to the people. We are maturing in our faith in Christ, from a child to a young man, and approaching fatherhood. We know the testimony of Christ, His blood covenant. We recognize that the Word, the blood and the Spirit all agree as one. We are carrying out the ministry of prophet, priest and king. Truly, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit reign in our lives, in righteousness.

Jesus provides our example of ministry in the Gospels. He spoke the words of His Father as a prophet. He went to pray privately as a priest and because of the resurrection, He reigns as King! He showed Peter, James and John His glory with power at His transfiguration, *“...his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them”* (Mark 9:3). Later Jesus prayed for us, *“...And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one... that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me...”* (John 17:22, 24b). We are now family; one with the Father, and one with the Son. We have been joined together in His Name, seated beside our Father with Him in heaven.

It was the glory of the Father that raised Jesus from the dead (Romans 6:4). He went into heaven as High Priest to present His blood in the heavenly sanctuary for our sins. Then He returned to earth for 40 days in His glorified body. Finally, He ascended to His Father and poured out the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost to empower us to walk in the newness of life. The kingdom of God was established within the hearts of men to anoint them with the glory of God. Our faces shine forth His glory as our souls become more and more immersed in the Holy Spirit. Paul wrote, *“...So everyone can see that our glorious power is from God and is not our own”* (2 Corinthians 4:7b, NLT).

While we patiently wait our complete glorification, we *“...press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 3:14). God is at work in our hearts bringing us to completion. Our desire is to *“...be renewed in the spirit [attitude] of our mind... put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness”* (Ephesians 4:23, 24, emphasis added). This means we have all the power and resources of heaven made available to us through Christ.

One day we will meet the Apostle Paul in our glorified bodies in the presence of the Lord. In Paul’s later epistles, he wrote, *“For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing”* (2 Timothy 4:6-8). Are you ready to meet Jesus and receive your crowns?

Paul says, *“I pray that your love for each other will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in your knowledge and understanding. For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives until Christ returns. May you always be filled with the fruit of righteousness — those good things that are produced in your life by Jesus Christ — for this will bring much glory and praise to God”* (Philippians 1:9-11, NLT).

WHO IS GOD?

God is Glory. His glory is revealed in excellence, beauty, power, mercy, grace, patience, goodness, truth, faithfulness, forgiveness and prosperity. These qualities of God’s character show His greatness and authority.

God is our Glory. His moral beauty and perfection are visibly present in those who trust God. Glory is not a substance, but God reveals His glory in visible ways. His presence is seen as fire and light, such as the pillar of cloud and fire guiding the children of Israel. His glory filled the tabernacle and the Temple after the sacrifice and praise (2 Chronicles 5:11-14).

God’s glory is seen in His creation: *“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork”* (Psalm 19:1). God’s glory is often seen in our lives, by the works He does on our behalf, or the works He has us do, through faith, in His name.

God is our Glorious Image, *“...and we beheld his glory... full of grace and truth”* (John 1:14). We share the divine glory of God with Jesus (John 17:5-6, 22). As believers, His glory is revealed by the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. We are being transformed into the glorious image of God, and one day we will be fully glorified in God’s heavenly presence. There, the glory of God will be seen everywhere (Revelation 21:23). We are promised through the prophet Habakkuk that a day is coming when, *“For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea”* (2:14).

God is our “Jehovah-Tsebaoth,” meaning “The-LORD-of-Hosts.” This name was used in the days of David and the prophets, witnessing the Almighty God of sovereign power Who is surrounded by His heavenly hosts. Before David moved the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, it was at Shiloh; and Elkanah, the father of Samuel, *“...went up out of his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice unto the LORD of hosts in Shiloh”* (1 Samuel 1:3a).

David sang, *“...seek thy face [presence]... 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. Who is the King of glory? The LORD of Hosts, he is the King of glory”* (Psalm 24:6b-8, 10, emphasis added).

We are the gates and everlasting doors that the King of glory desires to come in through. Jesus, the King of Glory says, *“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me”* (Revelation 3:20). Won’t you receive your King today?

Righteousness Brings Blessings

*Salvation belongeth unto the LORD:
thy blessing is upon thy people. Selah
...King David*

Our Heavenly Father brings us spiritually out of the world, so that we can minister as prophets, priests and kings from heaven. John the Baptist said, “A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven” (John 3:27). We are blessed with the righteousness of Christ so that we can speak blessings upon those around us. Paul wrote, “And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ” (Romans 15:29).

GOD OF ALL BLESSINGS

God blesses people by giving them life, riches, fruitfulness and plenty. “And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Genesis 1:28).

After the flood, God confirmed His covenant for all people with Noah (Genesis 9:1-17). Prior to this, the Scriptures establish God’s intent for mankind: “...and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake... neither will I again smite any more everything living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease” (Genesis 8:21b, 22).

The blessings of God come to all men; “...for he [God, the Father] maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:45b, emphasis added). Many unsaved individuals believe they are saved and righteous, due to the temporal blessings of this world they have acquired. King Solomon saw this and was perplexed: “There is a vanity [futility] which is done upon the earth; that there be just men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked; again, there be wicked men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous: I said that this also is vanity” (Ecclesiastes 8:14, emphasis added). Often, the difference between the saved and unsaved is seen in this: Those saved by faith in Jesus realize that all they have is from God, and acknowledge His love with their prayers, alms and tithes (Proverbs 3:5-10). Still, there are special blessings, eternal blessings, promised only to those who believe.

Our Creator appeared to Abraham, saying, “...I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 12:2b, 3).

His greatest blessing is turning believers from evil. The blessings of Jesus came first to the Jewish believers, then spread to everyone who believed, as seen in the Acts of the Apostles. Peter explained to the Jews, “Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant with God

made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away everyone of you from his iniquities” (Acts 3:25, 26). He has forgiven our sins, *“Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin”* (Romans 4:7, 8).

In Psalms, we often read of the blessings associated with righteousness, *“For thou, LORD, wilt bless the righteous; with favour will thou compass him as with a shield”* (5:12). *“He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation”* (24:5). *“...the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth. For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth”* (37:21b, 22a). *“I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed”* (37:25, 26). *“Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times”* (106:3). *“Wealth and riches shall be in his house: and his righteousness endureth for ever”* (112:3).

A blessing is an act of declaring favor and goodness upon others. A Biblical blessing has the power to bring about the reality of good words, from the speaker to the recipient. The giving of a blessing was common in the Old Testament. Jacob called his sons together and blessed them in Genesis 49. Later, *“...the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, ‘The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them’”* (Numbers 6:22-27). Here we see the prophet, priest and king ministry of old, bringing forth God’s blessings of righteousness first upon His priesthood, and then to His people.

ALL BLESSINGS ARE FROM JESUS CHRIST

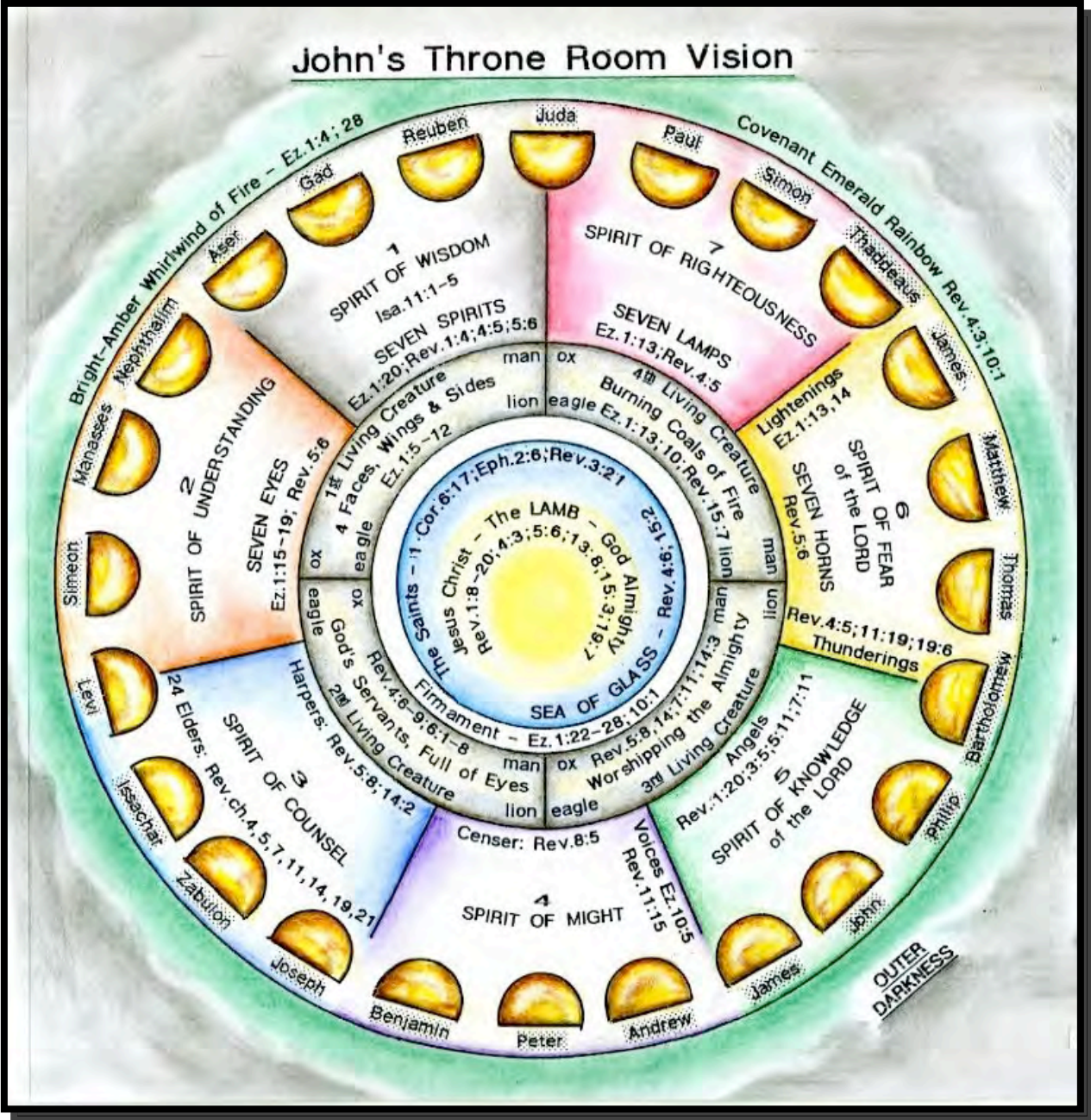
Jesus came from our Heavenly Father to bless us. He took our curse upon Himself to bless us with the blessings of Abraham (Galatians 3:13, 14). He told the Pharisees, *“...Before Abraham was, I am”* (John 8:58). God [Father, Son and Holy Spirit] eternally existed before the foundation of the world. Jesus Christ has interacted with us since the creation as the source of all blessings. The Apostle Paul wrote, *“For by him [Jesus] were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church”* (Colossians 1:16-18a, emphasis added).

Jesus Christ is the *“...high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham... and blessed him... first by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually”* (Hebrews 6:20b-7:3).

Jesus is our High Priest, speaking His blessings upon us. In His Sermon on the Mount, He said, “*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled*” (Matthew 5:6). “*Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake: for their’s is the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 5:10). “*...seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things [blessings] shall be added unto you*” (Matthew 6:33, emphasis added).

In the heavenly throne room where we sit, from God’s perspective, it is all about the blessings of Christ: “*Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, ‘Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever’*” (Revelation 5:12, 13). Again, “*Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen*” (Revelation 7:12).

Our lives are laid prostrate before our King of kings, and Lord of lords. He alone is worthy to receive blessings, honor, glory and power. In our hearts, we gather together around the throne of God rejoicing in the blood of the Lamb. He is our joy and thanksgiving for making us right with the Lord God Almighty. We bless the Lord before the throne, saying, “*Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created*” (Revelation 4:11). We worship without ceasing, blessing God continually, solely because of Who He is! As prophets, priests and kings, we overflow with the Spirit to be a blessing to those around us.



John's Throne Room Vision

This is a limited, indistinct description of the glory of God as described in the apostle John's throne room vision (Revelation, chapter 4). As saints, we are seated in heaven, spiritually with the Lamb. As the Bride of Christ, we reflect God's glory like a sea of glass. There are four living creatures with four faces representing the four Gospels — God's plan for the redemption of all creation, delivered by the saints. The Gospel is moved in all directions by the saints working through the power of the Holy Spirit.

If you place your fingers around the throne center and stretch it upwards, leaving the outer rim in place, the wheel becomes a cone; broad at the bottom and narrow at the top. Envision a lighthouse reaching from heaven to earth, with the top radiating the omnipresence of God's fulness interacting with men. At the base, the emerald rainbow of life turns into a bright amber whirlwind of God's judgment for those outside the rainbow. They are the ones cast into outer darkness, because they did not reflect the Gospel message given by the twenty-four elders. God is the light of life and there is no darkness in Him at all. We are to bring the light, as John the Baptist did (John 1:6-9).

THE CHURCH IS TO BLESS

Jesus Christ came from God with His Gospel [Good News] to build a church [the called out ones]. In the Gospel of Matthew, He told the Apostles, "...*freely ye have received, freely give*" (10:8); "...*upon this rock I [Jesus] will build my church*" (18:18, emphasis added); "...*I will give unto thee the keys [authority] of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven*" (18:19, emphasis added). Then, He commissioned us to "*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen*" (28:19, 20).

He has sent us forth to manifest His name. In His prayer as High Priest, He said to His Father, "*I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world*" (John 17:6). The name of Jesus is the doorway to the blessing of all the names of God. In the Acts of the Apostles, He said, "*But ye shall receive power [ability] after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem... and the uttermost part of the earth*" (1:8, emphasis added). When we lay hands on the sick and pray in the name of Jesus, it is as if Jesus is laying hands on the sick to bring healing. While Peter and John were walking into the temple, they met a lame man asking for alms, and Peter said: "*Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk*" (3:6). Later Peter said to a paralytic, named Aeneas, "*Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and maketh thy bed. And he arose immediately*" (9:34). In these cases, the name of Jesus was manifested as "Jehovah Rapha," meaning, "*the LORD our Healer.*" However, throughout the church age, His disciples have manifested His righteousness, [Tsid-keenu], sanctification [M'kad-desh], peace [Shalom], presence [Shammah], victory [Nissi], guidance [Raah], and provision [Jireh]. Our vision is the redemptive revelation of Jesus Christ. We bless by witnessing the redemptive Names of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul took the church into the Gentile world in the Name of Jesus Christ (Acts 10). He wrote a letter back to the first church he established, saying, "*Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ*" (1 Thessalonians 1:1). Throughout his ministry, he greeted and closed out his letters to the churches with a blessing. In his letters, he taught us about the redemptive Name of Jesus Christ; who we are, what we have and what we can do as a result of the power given in His Name. Paul says, "*This is a faithful saying, and*

worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief” (1 Timothy 1:15).

Our prophetic voice brings forth blessings in the Name of Jesus Christ. As the body of Christ, we are commissioned with a royal priesthood, “...that ye should shew forth the praises [blessings] of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9, emphasis added). The King of kings, YHVH [Yeshua—The Lord of Salvation—Jesus] brings forth His powerful character of salvation. Our voices flow with the blessings in agreement with His Name, which is above every name. We are His vessels of silver and gold bringing forth a ministry of honor in these last days.

We meditate, pray and speak God’s Word over our lives. We speak blessings of salvation upon our family and children, upon the household of faith and upon those who do not yet know Christ. The prophet Isaiah said, “So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands” (Isaiah 55:11, 12). We are His trees of righteousness, rejoicing because of such a great salvation. It is time to break out of our shells. Let us clap our hands and give the Lord God Almighty a standing ovation in the Name of Jesus Christ.

WHO IS GOD?

God is our Provider, “Jehovah-Jireh.” This name means “The-LORD-Will-Provide,” because of the provision of the ram [a male lamb] in place of Isaac for Abraham’s sacrifice (Genesis 22:14). Paul wrote, “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19). God is the source of all blessings. He is the power behind the prophetic voice of priestly blessings, enabling us to minister, anointed by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus Christ is our Passover Lamb (Exodus 12), slain to free us from the bondage of the flesh, and the curse of sin and death, by His blood and the Spirit of life. He took our cup [the curse] of suffering and wrath upon Himself (Matthew 26:39), and He gave us His cup of blessings, so we can bless in His Name as priests. Paul said, “The cup of blessings which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” (1 Corinthians 10:16). As a devout Jew, Paul knew the cup of blessing was the third cup of wine drunk during the Jewish Passover Seder [dinner]. It was used by Paul to describe the Lord’s Supper as depicting the true Passover Lamb slain for the sins of mankind.

Today, you have the privilege of communion with God, a fellowship or partnership with the Father and the Son. The Apostle John said it like this, “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is

light, and in him is no darkness at all... if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:3-5, 7).

As we receive Him, we all sing together with the psalmist, *“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). The love of God has cast out all fear. As believers, we have the blessed hope of His soon appearing.

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore, the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not” (1 John 3:1). You will know Him as He is when He comes! Your lamp will be full of the Holy Spirit when the cry is made, *“Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him”* (Matthew 25:6)!

Our prayer is that you will not be foolish, but receive your bridegroom, before it is too late. His prophetic voice is speaking to you, asking if you will receive the priestly blessing, so you can be anointed as a king in the kingdom of God. This is God’s plan, established before the foundation of the world, *“...who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ”* (Ephesians 1:3b). Be blessed, receive Him today!

Epilogue

The grace of our Lord Jesus

Christ be with you all, Amen

...The Apostle John

I have been a Christian for almost four decades. At the beginning of my walk, I was very legalistic or rule oriented, meaning that I lived in the flesh. I tried to serve God by my own acts of obedience and condemned those around me. This walk never worked and brought few people to faith in Jesus Christ.

It was not until several years later that the light came on in my heart. I was saved and living a good and acceptable life to the Lord, but I was not doing His perfect will. I was still trusting in my own ability, therefore, negating His ability to work in my life. The Bible calls this "quenching the Spirit."

The Holy Spirit was working somewhat in my life. To those around me, I was strong in the Lord, seemingly more committed than they, but what they saw was more my fleshly works than God's.

I was a student of God's Word, a leader in the ministry, and from all appearance, I was a true worshipper of God. I could feel His presence upon me even, and others could see a glow upon my face, but still I was not doing God's perfect will.

Maybe I am describing you today? Is there something missing in your life, and you just can't put your finger on it? Maybe this book has helped you to see that, but if not, I'd suggest you read it again, but seriously seek what the Lord God is saying to you.

This message of righteousness by faith through the grace of God is what really brought me into the presence of God, to solely trust in Him and the finished work of the cross. As I became absorbed in God's ability and not mine, my heart began to change in ways it had not before.

The love of God became real to me as His joy and peace flooded my heart. I knew that God loved me, and not only me, but all those around me. I stopped judging those around me and stopped depending on others for my acceptance. I could finally live my life in total dependence upon my Heavenly Father.

If you have not accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, I plead with you to do so, and to build your foundation upon the truths found in the Bible. I pray this book will help you get started. I suggest that first you say a prayer and let your Heavenly Father know that you believe what you have read in this book, and ask Jesus into your heart.

Those of you who have a relationship with Christ, I pray this book will be an encouragement to you. Hopefully, it will straighten out a few areas of your belief system. Maybe you have seen the truth of the Gospel in an entirely new light.

The Gospel

Eternal life is a gift from God (Romans 6:23) available free for the asking because of a love story written in blood on a wooden cross 2000 years ago. Without this wonderful gift, mankind is eternally separated from God and will suffer everlasting punishment (2 Thessalonians 1:8).

God is holy and righteous (Habakkuk 1:2) and must punish sin (Exodus 34:6, 7). Everyone is conceived in sin, born a sinner and enters the world under the judgment of God (Romans 3:10, 23). The penalty of sin is death (Romans 6:23), and the second death is the eternal lake of fire (Revelation 20:14).

We can be reconciled to God only through His Son, Jesus Christ (John 14:6). Jesus, the second Person of the triune God, lived a perfectly righteous life by obeying (Hebrews 7:26) and fulfilling the law of God (Colossians 2:14). God demands perfect righteousness to enter heaven (Revelation 21:27). Since it is impossible for sinners to become righteous, God offers us the righteousness of His Son as a gift (Romans 5:17) to those who come to Him with empty hands of faith. God justifies [declares righteous] the wicked by their faith in the only righteous One — Jesus Christ (Romans 4:5). Those God justifies, He will glorify (Romans 8:30).

Eternal life is free to all who receive it by faith alone because Jesus paid the ransom for our redemption with His shed blood (Titus 2:13, 14). Jesus, the sinless Savior, took upon Himself the wrath of God, paying the death penalty that God demands for sinners (Romans 5:8).

The gift of eternal life can only be received by repentance (Acts 3:19) and faith (John 3:36). This gift is eternally secure because God's gifts are irrevocable (Romans 11:29).

Salvation can only be received by grace, God's ability through the finished work of Calvary's cross (Ephesians 2:8, 9). It cannot be merited by righteous deeds (Titus 3:5) because anyone who attempts to earn acceptance before God by their own works nullifies the grace of God (Romans 11:6).

Those who receive Jesus Christ by faith are adopted into God's eternal family (John 1:12) and nothing can ever separate them from God's love (Romans 8:28, 29). Jesus Christ loses no one that the Father gives Him (John 6:39).

Have you received God's gift of eternal life? Do you know if all your sins are completely forgiven? Do you know if you have been reconciled to God? If not, why not forsake all attempts to save yourself, repent from your dead works (Hebrews 6:1) and put all your trust and confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ. Believe the promises of God as revealed in His Holy Word. Then find a church that has Biblical integrity so you can worship God in Spirit and Truth (John 4:24). This will help you grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, our wonderful Savior.

PRAYER OF SURRENDER

Father, I surrender my life to Your plan for me. I believe that You sent Your Son Jesus to take my sin, guilt and pain upon Himself, so that I could be made right with You. I believe my sins are completely forgiven because of the precious blood of Jesus. Forgive me for trying to

save myself by my own good works. I turn to You with all my heart, and trust only in the finished work of Calvary. Thank you for this awesome gift of eternal life. Thank you for taking up residence in my heart and for inviting me into your glorious Kingdom. I commit my life to serving before Your throne forever. Amen!

Other Books By Charles

Will You Die For Me? provides an inside view of the Manson madness through the executioner. But Charles' story does not end there. His story goes beyond Helter Skelter and death to a new life in Christ. His final release from his terrifying past stands as a universal source of hope, pointing the way to a new life of joy.

Manson's Right-Hand Man Speaks Out! An interview for everyone, covering 10 intriguing subjects chapter by chapter. For the historian, you'll find factual information. Parents will receive counsel for raising successful children. Students will be assisted with their research. Teenagers will find answers. And for those searching, they'll find the Truth and see at last how to stop the pain.

Our Identity: Spirit, Soul and Body is for both the unbeliever and the believer in Christ. Unbelievers will see what they are missing by not receiving the gift of righteousness. Believers will be encouraged to put on their identity in Christ and to reign in this life with purpose, power and passion.

Glossary

This glossary of terms contains many of the critical words and concepts in this book. They are a combination of definitions from the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, and my own Biblical understanding.

ABILITY - natural man's proficiency to be sufficient in himself; the sufficiency that comes from God, which enables man to live victoriously in the world.

ACCEPTANCE - a need for approval, appreciation; favor with one another; acceptance by the grace, mercy or covenant love of God through faith and repentance.

ALTAR OF INCENSE - where the priests burnt incense every morning, while they trimmed the lamps, and offered prayer to God (Exodus 30:7).

ATTITUDE - a firmly held point of view or way of regarding something.

BELIEF - to place one's trust in God's truth; to take God at His Word and trust in him for salvation.

BELIEVER - a person who through faith in God's plan for salvation, accepts the Good News of Jesus Christ and His work of redemption; a person who is "born again" due to the foregoing; a person who has the Holy Spirit dwelling within his heart [inner man] due to his faith in Jesus Christ.

BLESSING - the act of declaring favor and goodness upon others; God promised to bless all nations through Abraham (Genesis 12:3); the believer is blessed with all spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3).

BONDAGE - to be subject to an owner or master, such as slavery to Satan; the slave market of sin, which Christ paid the price of His blood for us to be freed from; slavery in general; imprisonment.

BORN AGAIN - regeneration of a man spiritually from a sinner to a sanctified, redeemed person. The beginning of the total salvation of a person — spirit, soul and body.

BROKENNESS - emotionally distressed over sorrow, or sin; contrite spirit; softhearted vessel before God (Psalm 31:12).

CHARACTER - maturity that is refined and revealed through life's tests, humiliations and setbacks; what God knows you to be.

CHOICE - free will in the soul to choose; direction we take in life based upon promises, self-will or circumstances.

CHRISTIAN - a believer; a person saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and the Gospel; a person who is one with Christ, who has Christ's mind.

COMMITMENT - the singleness of heart and mind that overcomes every obstacle to fulfill the promise of God; a pledge or promise to do something.

COMPASSION - to suffer with another; sympathetic feeling for one in distress or pain; understanding.

CONDEMNATION - a damnable sentence of judgment; none for a sinner who repents and believes in Jesus (Romans 8:1,3); condemnation is of the devil (1 Timothy 3:6).

CONFESSION - to say the same thing that God says about sin and the solution for sin; declare faith in something to self and others; to admit wrong doing.

CONSCIENCE - that faculty within our heart that determines right and wrong thoughts and actions, and instantly approves or convicts us; the voice of our spirit.

CONTROL - to exercise a decisive role in influencing the actions and conduct of others; to yield control to God's promises; to bring oneself or one's emotions under control.

CONVICTION - different from condemnation, in that it is God shining His light on areas of our heart that need change: such as wrong doings or sin (Acts 2:37; 16:29); strong belief.

CURSE - opposite of a blessing; anyone violating God's covenant is cursed; faith in Christ removes the curse of the law (Galatians 3:13, 14); that which produces an undesirable outcome.

DELIVERANCE - victory or safety; to be set free by God from sin and the power of demonic forces; to be brought out of danger.

"DENY SELF" - to say no to self, to make no room for blame, anger and depression; to humble oneself, forgive and love (Luke 9:23).

DISCIPLINE - to train by instruction and knowledge, or by correction, punishment, reproof or control; a disciple is a disciplined one (John 8:31, 32); to be taught.

EMOTIONS - an intense feeling in the soul; internal response or reaction to the thoughts we choose to think upon or circumstances.

FAITH - is given by God to the believer for him to act on his belief in God's Word; being fully persuaded of things hoped for, the conviction of things promised; trust.

FEAR - the spirit of the world; unpleasant emotions caused by a sense of danger; fear of failure; reverence, awe or respect (2 Timothy 1:7).

FLESH - man's ability to change or become righteous through his own strength, efforts, good works or by keeping the law; the physical aspects of a person.

FORGIVENESS - the act of excusing or pardoning others in spite of their guilt, shortcomings and errors; God's pardon of sins.

FREEDOM - having liberty or independence; the power of acting without compulsion; an attitude of the heart that supersedes the external condition of our lives.

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT - the qualities of God's character flowing forth through the believer; a work of God's grace; love, joy, peace, etc. (Galatians 5:22, 23).

GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT - God's abilities working through the believer as He wills for service to God and ministry to others.

GLORIFICATION - the final work of salvation when the Spirit perfects the believer: spirit, soul and body; where God's beauty and brilliance is fully realized; the final transfiguration of a believer.

GLORY - God's excellence, brightness, beauty, power, mercy, grace, patience, truth, faithfulness and prosperity seen in creation, Jesus Christ and His children; God manifesting Himself in our lives.

GOSPEL - the entire "good news" of God's ability to redeem as seen throughout Scripture and as fulfilled in the ministry of Jesus Christ.

GRACE - God's willingness to use His power and ability on our behalf, making us able to do what we cannot do in our own ability. How God deals with present and future events.

GUILT - bearing responsibility for an offense or wrong doing; remorseful awareness of having done wrong.

HEART - the inner man; that part not seen; the spirit part is reborn at conversion 100%; the soul part (mind, will and emotions) are presently being renewed.

HOLINESS - a separation from the world, the fleshly desires of man, and the devil; to be separated and sanctified.

HOPE - a confident expectation of good; firm assurance in things unseen and still in the future; hope comes from God.

HELPLESSNESS - unable to effect one's purpose, intention, or end; powerlessness; lacking expectation of anything good in the future.

HUMILITY - the willingness to surrender our will, our opinions and our view to the will of God.

ILLUMINATION - the light of the Holy Spirit making clear or enlarging the revelation [an unveiling or disclosing of Who Jesus Christ is and what He did to bring salvation]. [See Revelation and Unveiling].

INFERIORITY - being lower in position, degree, rank, or merit; a state of mind where one belittles themselves; makes oneself feel unimportant or worthless.

INSECURITY - uncertain, unsafe, fearful or jealous; resulting in putting others down to build up oneself; causing harsh judgment of others.

INTEGRITY - quality of being honest or sincere; singleness of purpose; wholeness; completeness; reverence of God; purity of heart and motive; adherence to a code of values.

JOY - a fruit of the Holy Spirit that is experienced in God producing victory through His strength in the battles of life.

JUSTIFICATION - the process by which sinful human beings are made acceptable to a holy God, just as if they had never sinned; righteousness.

KINGDOM OF HEAVEN - God's rule of grace in all three levels of heavens, including earth, present and future; righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17); where God rules.

KING - ruler of a nation or territory, especially one who inherits his position and rules for life; the believer reigns because of the King of kings, Jesus Christ's inheritance being given to us.

LAMPSTAND - a seven-lamp oil-burning vessel of gold, which reflects upon the showbread, lighting the tabernacle (Exodus 25:37; 30:8).

LAW - an orderly system of rules and regulations by which a society is governed; fleshly works some depend on for their salvation and righteousness.

LOVE - God's high esteem for His children and ours for Him and others [Greek: *agape*, divine love]; brotherly love [Greek: *phileo*]; and sexual love [Greek: *eros*].

LUST - desire for what is forbidden; lust of the eye; flesh and world (1 John 2:15-17); an obsessive sexual craving; contrary to God's will; idolatry.

MEDITATION - to "chew on," to say or roll over and over in one's mind; think; ponder; reflect; contemplate; listen quietly.

MERCY - to withhold wrath; forgiveness; to show God's love, kindness or compassion; pity or leniency, divine blessing. How God deals with the consequences of past events, subject to God's will for our lives (Romans 9:15-16; Exodus 33:19).

MIND - that part of the soul where a person thinks and reasons; one becomes what he thinks he is (Proverbs 23:7).

PAIN - an emotion of sorrow, distress or grief, resulting from sin, life's trials or wrong doings; physical hurts; to injure.

PATIENCE - a fruit of the Spirit; forbearance under suffering and endurance in the face of adversity; patience is to possess our soul (Luke 21:19).

PEACE - a combination of hope, trust and inner tranquility in the mind and soul, brought about by reconciliation with God through Christ, the Prince of Peace; lack of war; absence of strife.

PRAISE - the language of our faith; an act of worship or acknowledgment by which virtues or deeds of God are recognized and highly esteemed.

PRAYER - communication with God; adoration, confession, thanksgiving, worship, making requests and dedicating our service, while living in His presence, carrying out our royal priesthood.

PRIEST - one chosen by God to serve Him in the sanctuary of our hearts; a minister communicating to God, walking in the light of God's revelation, applying the blood of Christ.

PRIDE - the basic urge to be a god, master of our lives; desire to command and control the universe; arrogance.

PROMISE - a Word sent forth from God for us to expect the performance of an act; a solemn pledge from God; a commitment.

REBELLION - disobedience against God; resistance or unwillingness to submit to the authority of God and man.

RECONCILIATION - to restore peace in relationships; the process where God and people are brought together again.

REGENERATION - the change of man's sinful nature by the Holy Spirit – being born again.

RELATIONSHIPS - connections between God and others as family, based upon promises, commitment and actions; interactions with others.

RENEWAL - a new creation; reversal; the newness of life; a freshness; a new lifestyle (way of living); putting on the new man (Colossians 3:10), fresh thinking and attitudes.

REPENTANCE - a turning away from sin, disobedience or rebellion and a turning back to God; a change of mind; Godly sorrow or remorse for past conduct.

RESPONSIBILITY - to face the consequences of our choices; fulfilling obligations and duties to God and others.

REVELATION - the unveiling of Jesus Christ; there is no new revelation, only illumination as we grow to see Jesus on the throne of our life; the giving of knowledge.

RIGHTEOUSNESS - the ability to stand in God's presence without the sense of sin, guilt, fear or inferiority; justification.

SALVATION - deliverance from the power of sin; redemption, the price being paid to purchase us from the bondage of sin; being saved from the righteous requirements of the Law.

SANCTIFICATION - the ongoing process of God's grace; being continually separated from sin, being dedicated to God's righteousness and changed into the image of Christ.

SANCTUARY - a holy place set apart for the worship of God; a refuge from danger; the Most Holy Place, or the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle or temple; God's holy habitation in heaven; the heart [spirit and soul] of a believer set apart unto God for worship.

SELF-CONTROL - a fruit of the Spirit; control of actions or emotions by the will; yielding self to God's will.

SELFISHNESS - being self-centered; based on looking good, feeling good, being right and in control in our flesh, idolatry.

SEPARATION - [Positive] to be Holy - separate from the world, the flesh and the devil; [Negative] the quality, state or condition of being excluded from God's family because of sin.

SERVICE - Christ redeemed us, then commissioned us to join His work for the benefit of others; to do for others.

SIN - "original sin" through Adam; lawlessness; rebellion against God's law in thought, word and deed; moral depravity; anything that drives us to be independent from God.

SOUL - that part of the heart made up of mind, will and emotions which must be renewed by the knowledge of the truth.

SPIRIT - that part of the heart that is reborn with the life, light and love of God; the Holy Spirit.

STRONGHOLDS - what one uses to defend a personal belief or idea, especially when you are dead wrong; what keeps one from changing.

SUFFICIENCY - only God Almighty [El Shaddai] is our self-sufficient LORD; He is adequate for all things; as much as is needed or wanted; the One Who can accomplish what He says.

TABLE OF SHOWBREAD - twelve loaves of holy bread, changed weekly, set before the LORD always in the sanctuary of the tabernacle to symbolize God's presence and provision.

"TAKE UP THE CROSS" - embrace the humiliation and rejection before us, putting others first, self last; the example of humility set by Jesus Christ in the crucifixion; to deny the flesh.

TORMENT - to inflict extreme physical pain or severe mental agony, anguish, or harassment; to inflict upon one something hard to endure; to annoy or disturb with hostile intent or injurious effect.

TRANSFIGURE - to change from one state to another; metamorphosis, sudden or drastic change [as of form]; glorify.

TRUST - assured hope and reliance; faith; believing the promises of God.

TRUTH - reality; God's Word; spiritual revelation of the Word; faithfulness to a correct standard.

UNVEILING - revelation; reveal oneself, such as Jesus Christ; disclose; to make mentally and spiritually visible; to make known what has been concealed. [See Illumination and Revelation].

VALUES - guiding principles, such as one's old value system vs. the new one, after receiving Christ.

VICTOR - one who governs himself by his vision and promises regardless of circumstances (John 10:10); the one who wins.

VISION - the redemptive revelation of God; a future of God's provision and relationship with others; the ability to see; understanding.

WILL - that part of the soul where man makes his choices whether or not to think what God thinks or the world thinks.

WILLINGNESS - consisting of or proceeding from, an exercise of free will; readiness, without reluctance; a desire to cooperate.

WISDOM - the ability the believer receives to make choices and reach conclusions and decisions from God's point of view; knowledge; for a believer, Jesus Christ is wisdom from God (1 Corinthians 1:24,30).

WORSHIP - reverent devotion pledged to God, denotes the worthiness of one receiving the special devotion; attributing proper value to God, to his Son, and to His will for your life.

Appendix

Jesus says, “*Search the Scriptures...they...testify of me.*” (John 5:39). Indeed, they do! Jesus portrait is found in every book of the Bible.

- In **Genesis**: Jesus is The Seed of The Woman, a descendant of Abraham, a king in the line of Judah in the order of Melchizedek. The sacrificed Son (as like Isaac, Genesis 22) and a rejected brother (as like Joseph, Genesis 27).
- In **Exodus**: Jesus is The Passover Lamb, the leader and deliverer out of slavery (as like Moses), the manna from heaven, the rock that gave water, the Tabernacle in the camp and every item inside (Brazen Altar, Lampstand, Table of Showbread, Ark of the Covenant, etc.).
- In **Leviticus**: Jesus is The High Priest, personified by the sacrifices and offering, the Jewish festivals (Passover, Atonement, Trumpets, etc.). The scapegoat and what Christ does as our high priest.
- In **Numbers**: Jesus is The Cloud and The Fire, the Messiah that would be King. The healer in the bronze serpent. The Water from the Rock.
- In **Deuteronomy**: Jesus is The Prophet Like Moses, worshipped by angels. He is the cities of refuge.
- In **Joshua**: Jesus is The Captain of Our Salvation, our leader into the promise land (as like Joshua), the commander-in-chief of the Army.
- In **Judges**: Jesus is The Judge And Lawgiver, the true judge for the living and the dead.
- In **Ruth**: Jesus is The Kinsman Redeemer, the descendent of Boaz and Ruth. As personified by Boaz.
- In **1 & 2 Samuel**: Jesus is The Prophet of the LORD, exalted by God with power. A descendent of David, personified by David – the exiled King. The faithful friend (Jonathan).
- In **1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles**: Jesus is The Reigning King, for the Millennial Reign (as like Solomon). Multiplying bread and healing leper (as like Elisha).
- In **Ezra**: Jesus is The Faithful Scribe, the builder of the temple (Zerubbabel).
- In **Nehemiah**: Jesus is The Rebuilder of The Broken Down Walls, the rebuilder of the walls of salvation (as like Nehemiah).
- In **Esther**: Jesus is Mordecai, the personified defeater of evil. The Guardian.
- In **Job**: Jesus is The Dayspring From on High, the sufferings and the subsequent blessings (as like Job).
- In **Psalms**: Jesus is The Lord Who Is Our Shepherd, the resurrected Son of God, that was despised and crucified; Hated without cause, rejected by the Israelites. But now seated on the right hand of God.
- In **Proverbs & Ecclesiastes**: Jesus is The Wisdom of God.
- In **The Song of Solomon**: Jesus is The Lover & Bridegroom.
- In **Isaiah**: Jesus is The Suffering Servant. Born of a virgin, the Immanuel, “God with us”. The God and Man, with 7-fold spirit upon Him. He healed the blind, lame and deaf, preceded by a

forerunner. A light to the Gentiles but despised by the Israelite nation. He was whipped and beaten; and finally died as a guilt offering for sin. But He resurrected and lives forever.

- In **Jeremiah & Lamentations**: Jesus is The Weeping Prophet, the righteous Branch, our righteousness.
- In **Ezekiel**: Jesus is The son of Man, a descendent of David.
- In **Daniel**: Jesus is The Son of Man coming in the clouds of Heaven, giving an everlasting kingdom. He died 483 years after the decree to rebuild Jerusalem. Foretold He would be killed and revealed as the stone that smashed the kingdoms of the world. The fourth Man in the fiery furnace.
- In **Hosea**: Jesus is The Bridegroom Married to The Backslidden Woman, faithful to his adulterous wife.
- In **Joel**: Jesus is Baptized With The Holy Spirit And Fire, offered salvation to all mankind and baptized people with the Holy Spirit.
- In **Amos**: Jesus is The Burden Bearer, that darkens the day at noon during Messiah's death.
- In **Obadiah**: Jesus is The Mighty Savior.
- In **Jonah**: Jesus is The Forgiving God, being 3 days and 3 nights in the belly of a fish.
- In **Micah**: Jesus is The Messenger With Beautiful Feet, born in Bethlehem and from everlasting.
- In **Nahum**: Jesus is The Avenger of God's Elect.
- In **Habakkuk**: Jesus is The Great Evangelist, Crying For Revival, the Messiah that would come from Teman at His return, full of glory. With intercession and prayer for His people (Habakkuk).
- In **Zephaniah**: Jesus is The Restorer of God's Lost Heritage.
- In **Haggai**: Jesus is The Cleansing Fountain, who visited the 2nd temple.
- In **Zechariah**: Jesus is The Pierced Son, a Priest and King who rides into Jerusalem on a donkey. The Messiah who would be God and be pierced.
- In **Malachi**: Jesus is The Son of Righteousness, Rising with Healing in His Wings, the Messiah who would be God who appears at the temple and His forerunner came in the spirit of Elijah.
- In **Matthew**: Jesus is The King, the Son of David, the King of the Jews, the Son of God and the Bridegroom.
- In **Mark**: Jesus is The Wonder Worker, The Holy One of God, the Servant, the King of Israel.
- In **Luke**: Jesus is The Son of Man, the Horn of Salvation and the Consolation of Israel.
- In **John**: Jesus is The Son of God, the Begotten Son, the Lamb of God, the Bread of Life, the Light of the World, the I AM, the Door of the Sheep, the Good Shepherd, the Resurrection and Life, the Way, the Truth and the Life. The True Vine.
- In **Acts**: Jesus is The Ascended Lord, the Prince of Life, the Judge of the living and the dead, the Just One, and the Hope of Israel.

- In **Romans**: Jesus is The Justifier, the Rock of Offense, the Deliverer, the Lord of the Dead and the living. The Root of Jesse.
- In **1 & 2 Corinthians**: Jesus is The Gifts of The Spirit, the First-Fruit and the Last Adam.
- In **Galatians**: Jesus is The One Who Sets Us Free, the Lord Jesus Christ.
- In **Ephesians**: Jesus is The Christ of Riches, the Head of All Things and the Cornerstone.
- In **Philippians**: Jesus is The God Who Meets Our Every Need, the Name Above All Names.
- In **Colossians**: Jesus is The Fullness of The Godhead, the Image of the Invisible God, the Head of the body, the Beginning, the Firstborn of the Dead and the Hope of Glory.
- In **1 & 2 Thessalonians**: Jesus is The Soon Coming King, the Lord of Peace.
- In **1 & 2 Timothy**: Jesus is The Mediator between God and Man, the King of Ages and the Mediator.
- In **Titus**: Jesus is The Faithful Pastor, the Blessed Hope. The Great God and Savior.
- In **Philemon**: Jesus is The Friend That Sticks Closer Than a Brother, the Lord Jesus Christ.
- In **Hebrews**: Jesus is The Blood That Washes Away My Sins, the Heir of All Things, the Faithful High Priest, the Author and Finisher of Our faith.
- In **James**: Jesus is The Great Physician, The Lord of Glory and the Judge at the door.
- In **1 & 2 Peter**: Jesus is The Chief Shepherd, and the Living Stone.
- In **1 & 2 & 3 John**: Jesus is The Everlasting Love, the Eternal Life and the Righteous.
- In **Jude**: Jesus is The Lord Who Came Down with 10,000 Saints, the Only Wise God, Our Savior.
- In **Revelation**: Jesus is The King of Kings and the Lord of Lords! The Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. The Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Word of God, the Bright Morning Star.