



HORIZONS UNLIMITED

Pastor Sarah W. Utterbach
REDEEMING LOVE CHRISTIAN CENTER

Insights For
Each Day

December • January • February 2006-2007

Volume 6, Number 2
December • January • February 2006-2007

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Insights For
Each Day

A ministry of
Sarah W. Utterbach



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All scripture references are taken from *The King James Version*, unless otherwise noted.



The passages in this devotional are drawn from words the Lord has spoken to me in my daily fellowship with Him. I know they are divinely inspired because of what Jesus said in John 10:27: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow me."

More than 20 years ago, I was prompted by this verse to begin to train myself to be able to distinguish the voice of the Lord from all other voices. Since Jesus said that as one of His sheep, I would hear His voice, then I began to expect to hear Him. When He said, "I know them," I concluded that those who know me speak to me. And, the better we know each other, the more often we talk. So I decided to cultivate such togetherness with the Lord by beginning each day with Him, before the clamor of the day had a chance to begin.

Jesus stated that His sheep "follow" Him. To know Him became more than a mere suggestion—it became my desire, resulting in a way of life. I no longer want to walk any other way with anyone else. Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life I pursue.

As you begin this devotional, wherever you may start to read, make Jesus your way, make Him your truth, and make Him your life.

Precious Father, please take these words and seal them in the hearts of each reader desiring to have You reveal Yourself to them. May You, precious Holy Spirit, take each entry and expand it and increase it in the hearts of the hungry ones.

I sow this book into the lives of millions to be encouraged long after I am gone, for them to experience You in a very personal way, on a daily basis.

My desired harvest is that lives will be changed, souls will be saved, and that every victim will become victorious.

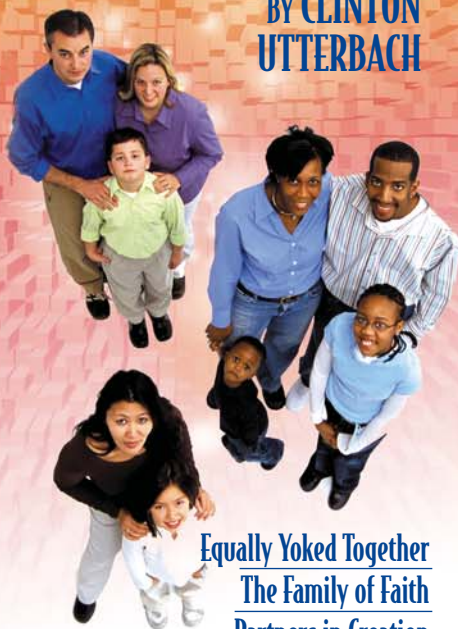
Give them this day as their daily bread Your words, which will make them free. Feed them, dear Lord, as You did me, a daily supply so that they will return for a new daily requirement to keep us both sustained and maintained for Your glory, in Jesus' Name.

His Joint Heir,
Sarah W. Utterbach

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**FROM TAPPAN ZEE BRIDGE
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TRAIN INFORMATION

There is no weekend train service to Nanuet. During the week there is commuter train service only, which travels from Nanuet in the morning and to Nanuet in the afternoon. For more information, call (201) 762-5100.

Schedule of Services

If you are ever in the area of
Redeeming Love Christian Center,
we invite you to attend our
regularly scheduled services.

SUNDAY

Sunday Church School 9:00 a.m.
Worship Service 10:30 a.m.
Communion
(1st Sunday of
each month) 10:30 a.m.
Baptismal Service
(1st Friday of
each month) 7:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY

School of the Bible 7:30 p.m.

FRIDAY

Youth Fellowship 7:30 p.m.
Prayer Service 7:30 p.m.

*Nursery facilities are available for
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How This Devotional Came To Be

Dear Reader,

The devotional you now hold in your hand was 22 years in the making. Or, perhaps, the real fact of the matter is that *I* was in the making for 22 years in order to be able to bring this devotional to you.

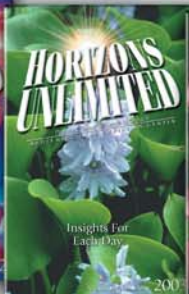
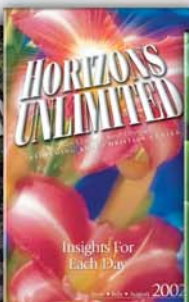
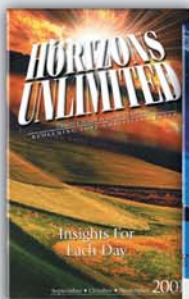
In 1979, I observed in the life of a friend a devotional practice that seemed unusual to me. Every day, my friend would walk into an open field across the parking lot from her office. There she would sit down on a rock to pray and write in what appeared to be a notebook or journal. After several weeks of watching this odd ritual, I wondered, *What is she writing down?* Finally, when the opportunity presented itself, I asked her and she said, "Oh, I'm just writing down what I hear the Spirit of God speak to my heart while I pray."

God speaks to people? I thought.

The concept left me both baffled and intrigued. I determined right then and there that I was going to start taking pen and paper into my times of prayer and devotion. I wanted to know if God would show up and speak to me, too. What I discovered was that not only did God show up to speak to me, but He had been there, *waiting for me* to listen, all along.

Not long after that, I heard a minister make a statement that marked me indelibly. His words forever altered the way I would both approach and present the Word of God from that day forward. Before he delivered his message, this man prayed, "Father, don't let the people just hear what I'm saying. Let them hear what You are saying to them *about* what I'm saying." Instantly, I recognized the distinction.

I realized that although every person present in the room that day would hear the



minister speak the same identical words, the Spirit of God would reveal and emphasize various truths in unique ways to each one of us, based upon our own individual needs and levels of understanding. That realization—coupled with my newly developed practice of writing down what God would speak to my heart by His Spirit and through His Word—transformed my life completely. It also gently propelled me into a degree of fellowship and intimacy with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit that I never dreamed was possible for me to enjoy.

The purpose of this devotional is not only to share the fruit of those times of fellowship with you, but also to let you know that the same intimacy with God is available to you as well. You *can* hear the voice of the Spirit of God. But, first, you must recognize that He does indeed want to speak to you. And He will!

During His earthly ministry, Jesus—the Son of the Living God, the Word of God made flesh—said, “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life” (John 6:63). Jesus also said that the words He spoke were not His own—meaning that they did not originate from His own intellect. Rather, they were inspired words, words given to Him by the Father. That lets us know two things: Whatever the Father speaks to us individually will be consistent with what He has spoken to His people collectively, and whatever words He speaks to our hearts personally will be just as Spirit-born and life-giving as His words written in

the Scriptures.

Furthermore, we find that not only do we experience comfort, correction, and instruction in what God speaks and illuminates to us personally but also we discover key elements of His great and unique design for our individual lives.

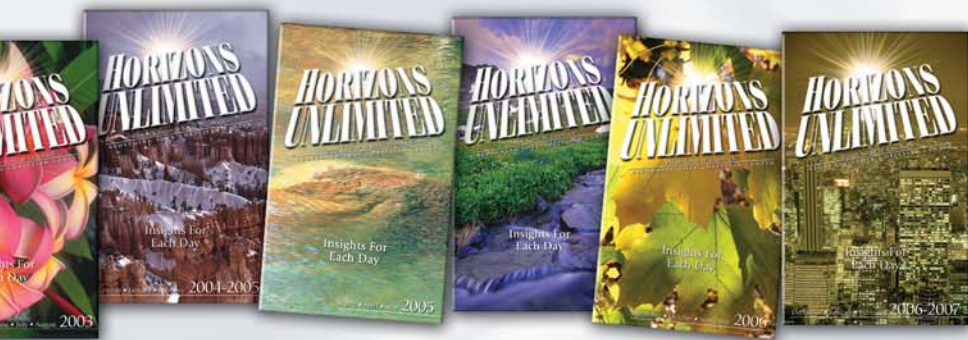
To know one’s individual purpose is the ultimate insight from God. It is divine insight or spiritual revelation which flesh and blood cannot make known to you. Divine insight is beyond the reservoirs of man’s intellect. But it is not difficult to tap. The will and wisdom of God are as near and as available to you as your own breath *if* you will simply acknowledge Him, come to Him, ask with expectancy to hear, and then...listen.

I encourage you to open your heart and allow the Spirit of God to speak to you about your own life and needs. And as you read the following devotional passages and excerpts of what He has spoken to my heart, I pray that you do more than merely read the words I have written on the page. I pray that you hear what He is speaking to you through them, and then embark upon your own journey with Him into the discovery of all the many wonderful and exciting things the Father has planned for your life.

Keep looking up; Jesus is expected!

His Joint Heir,

Sarah W. Utterbach
Sarah W. Utterbach





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God Does Not 'Out-Promise' Himself

1 Kings 8:56 (NLT)—*Praise the Lord who has given rest to his people Israel, just as he has promised. Not one word has failed of all the wonderful promises he gave through his servant Moses.*

The children of Israel received God's never-failing promises through His servant, Moses. Think how much more reliable the promises are to the Church that came through God's Son, Jesus Christ, who shed His precious blood to guarantee their truth. It's like having a pre-nuptial agreement between God and us with Jesus as the "lawyer" who wrote it up on our behalf. God never "out-promises" Himself.

There are several things we should look for to aid us in our confidence concerning what the Lord is saying to us, His Church. Who is the source of the promise? What is the scope of the promise? Is there substance in the promise? Is the promise simple enough for us to understand? Has the promise clearly stipulated what it covers that will benefit us? What about both the surety and the security of the promise? We need to know the dependability of the structure.

When dealing with people, some of these things could cause us concern. However, we are contracting with the Trinity, and God has promised that He would withhold no good thing from those who walk uprightly before Him (Psalm 84:11). Further, it gives Him pleasure to give us, His children, His kingdom (Luke 12:32).

I can rest in that because I know, according to the Word of God, the source of all of His promises to me. I understand the scope and substance of His promises. They are not too complicated for me to comprehend. He speaks clearly, saying what He means and meaning what He says. There is nothing more secure than His written promises.

Humans often declare more than they can provide. They occasionally try to get out of a pre-nup. But God never "out-promises" Himself. We just have to make sure we keep our part of the contract.

The Cause of Death to Some Brings Life to You

Genesis 7:17 (NKJV)—*Now the flood was on the earth forty days. The waters increased and lifted up the ark, and it rose high above the earth.*

This is an awesome scene. Most people and nations fear increased waters, but this righteous man, this obedient man had no concern at all. The increased waters simply lifted him and his family higher and higher above the very waters that killed everything and everyone else.

God knew what He had planned for humanity. But as He spared a mating pair of everything else He created, He spared Noah and his wife and his sons and their wives. God was upset with humanity, but He certainly was not finished with His creation. And because of His love for His creation, He never will be.

One commentator of the Bible suggested that "It was because of the ark's barge-like shape that it made it difficult to capsize." My spirit jumped up in me and said, When are humans going to give God credit for keeping His covenant with His people? Noah never asked to be spared. God initiated the covenant. Genesis 6:18 (NKJV) reads, "But I will establish My covenant with you." When God establishes anything it is done until He says it is over, and with this man it is never over as far as He is concerned. No way could that boat ever capsize. Had the waters increased right up to the sky, the ark would continue to rise high above it. Who knows, Noah, the righteous one, may have been able to step off the boat right into the presence of the Lord.

The point is, God had a plan for His man, and no increased waters, plagues, or anything else were going to interrupt it. Of course, Noah could have prevented it by simply refusing to build the ark since there had never been one before. I strongly suspect things would have had a different outcome.

Where are we in this picture? We look righteous, we say righteous words, but are we following after everything that He has asked us to do? I am certainly trying with all of my heart to please Him. Many years have taught me that nothing pleases Him more than obedience to Him and love towards people. God prepared an ark through Noah's obedience. The ark lifted and rose above the increased waters. Don't you want to rise above what can destroy others?

I Have Your Hand. How Can You Fail or Fall?

Isaiah 41:13 (NLT)—*I am holding you by your right hand—I, the Lord your God. And I say to you 'Do not be afraid. I am here to help you'.*

Whenver I read a promise made to Israel, my faith increases. God made so much available to them as His servants. How much more can He do and will He do for those who are His Son's body. Reflect on what He has already done, and it will help us focus on what He is doing and is willing to do.

Many of our purchases in this life come with a "lifetime guarantee"—that's a joke. Is that our lifetime or the lifetime of the purchased product? We sometimes don't even know where we have placed our lifetime guarantees, and often the manufacturer is out of business after a few years.

Jesus Christ is the only lifetime guarantee that we can expect to be in place when we need Him. Why? His Father promised Him, and He cannot lie. Whenever we need Him, He'll be there for us. The Father is holding us by our right hand, which means His right hand is free to perform whatever we need.

Just as a bug cannot exhaust our supply of food at a picnic, we can never exhaust God's unlimited provisions purchased for His children. God promised to help. What is it that we are in need of that could ever deplete God's supply?

Just think about it. Were we to need more than God has, He would speak it into existence for us. Since God completed all His work and rested on the seventh day, He, being God, took care of every past, present, and future need of His people in Christ Jesus. Jesus' death, burial, resurrection, and ascension were the last pieces needed for us to live in victory. We cannot fail or fall. Our Father is holding our hand.

**We cannot fail or fall.
Our Father is
holding our hand.**

God's Word Is My Comfort

Psalm 119:50 (KJV)—*This is my comfort in my affliction:
for thy word hath quicken me.*

Just being alive pretty much guarantees that you will experience some form of test, trial, or attack from the wicked one.

Since we are instructed to stop murmuring and complaining (Philippians 2:14), then what do we do?

My question is this: Has murmuring, complaining, or repeated discussion corrected anything you are challenged by? I already know the answer is no. What then are we to do in the midst of “stuff”?

The psalmist has given us the answer in Psalm 119:50 (NLT):
“Your promise revives me; it comforts me in all my troubles.”

A light went on in my spirit when I discovered that my purpose in life was to possess what God had promised. No comfort can compare to finding out the Word of God that applies to my situation. Once we find out what God has to say about a situation, it is almost as if a cloud or blanket descends and envelops us. Then, that which sought to interrupt our tranquility no longer looms large over us. Once we learn that nothing in life takes God by surprise and that He and His words are more than equal to every situation—His Word surpasses all we could ever face—we will stop calling on our pastor, our friends, and anyone else to comfort and console us.

One of the greatest lessons we can ever learn is to pursue no one but the Holy Spirit to bring relief into our lives. God may, however, at times use individuals to come unsolicited and share just what we need. It is reassuring to know that we do not have to look for humans, but when they come to us by inspiration of the Spirit of God, they are already anointed of God with the message for the hour.

It is important to keep God's precepts ever before us, “for with them thou hast quickened me” (Psalm 119:943).

When you want to feel safe and secure, remember what God has said. Why? Because “thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me” (Psalm 119:98).

Something or someone will always attempt to rob you of your God-given peace, but when you are wise according to God's Word, you will not be moved with concern. You don't have to beat the devil at his game. Simply be wise in the Word of God. You'll defeat him every time.

Harmony of Our Trinity

Confessing and receiving Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord causes the Father God to make our spirit new. We do the confessing and receiving; God does the re-creating since He did the creating in the first place.

However, because we are three-part beings, our minds must be renewed and our bodies managed. Once we are born again, we have supernatural help from the Holy Ghost to assist us with the renewing of our minds as well as the controlling of our bodies, which always want to do their thing, totally contrary to what our re-created spirits want.

An unrenewed mind and a re-created spirit have no harmony. Their disharmony will negatively affect the body. However, with a re-created spirit and a renewed mind, the body will come in line. A body with an unrenewed mind will war with a re-created spirit. One day it will do one thing; the next day it does just the opposite. This explains why many born-again Christians have such a struggle in their walk with the Lord.

Our spirit must be recreated. Our mind must be renewed. Our body must line up before there is harmony.

Just as the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost function as one because of the harmony that exists among them, we must bring our 'trinity' into harmony. Our spirit must be recreated. Our mind must be renewed. Our body must line up before there is harmony.

My new nature can help teach my new mind, and together they will train my old body so that it will be able to act like it is also new. The body will not change until Jesus appears, but the re-created spirit and the renewed mind can dominate it and make it subject to them. The body has to obey a spirit that has the nature of God and the mind of Christ.

You can stop the struggle today. Confess Jesus as Savior and commit to give up just the milk of the Word and begin chewing on the meat of the Word.

No harmony means no peace. So what are you waiting for?

Mistaken and Uninformed

Mark 12:24 (NKJV)—*Jesus answered and said to them, "Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the scriptures nor the power of God?"*

Without the truth and knowledge of God's power, we are a mistake going somewhere to happen.

Many people in the body of Christ are always talking about what the devil is doing in their lives as if they believe suffering is some special badge of spirituality. However, we need to know that if the devil is doing anything in our lives, either one of two things is happening: (1) We are permitting it, or (2) he has become an agent of God to cause us to rise up to the level of the Word of God already decreed in heaven.

A dear brother or sister in the Lord may do some ungodly, unscriptural things to hurt others in the body. He or she may not believe the deed is wrong and of God. The person may even quote scripture to support his or her actions. However, if we in the body are knowledgeable of the scriptures, we will realize that such a person has become an agent of the enemy. We will not be fooled by the scriptures this person uses when we can observe that his or her actions are contrary to scripture.

You may wonder how a believer could become an agent of the enemy. Jesus answered that question in John 8:31-32, in which He said, "...If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

If we believers do not continue in the Word, we will not walk in truth. While we can know about the scripture, we may not truly know the scripture and the power of God. If this is the case—if we do not know the truth—then we will cause hurt rather than deliver freedom.

However, when we continue in the Word, our speech and our deeds are pleasing in God's sight.

Father, I thank You for Your mercy, which is another form of Your power. May each of us who have ears to hear respond to what the scripture is saying so that Your power is truly manifested in us, in Jesus' name.

Look at the Whole Picture

Psalm 73:2 (NKJV)—*But as for me my, feet had almost stumbled; My steps had nearly slipped.*

How often we do not see the tragedy of the wicked because we fail to focus on the blessedness of trusting in the Lord. We allow ourselves to envy the braggers because our natural eyes focus on their earthly prosperity. They are fat with abundance and their riches increase. They speak evil of what is good, and flaunt their wicked behavior. They seem to increase in strength, exempt from the challenges of the saints.

All of these things can cause us to doubt the point of living pure lives. We question the reason for staying innocent. We see only our troubles and the daily attacks.

I did not know how to deal with the discomfort of trying to understand what I experienced until I found my way to the house of God. There I could clearly see the whole picture and understand the entire story.

Verses 18-20 show us how quickly God works against all wickedness. My heart was grieved and my mind was pierced for being so dull in godly, spiritual things. How foolish and uninformed we are when we allow ourselves to focus on what the heathen have. The devil creates negative influences to appeal to our lower nature, which camouflage us from seeing what God has in store for us, His people. Though, at times, our hearts and our flesh fail, God is still our strength forever. Verse 28 says, "...it is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord God, That I may declare all Your works."

God has a plan and a purpose for His people that cannot be prevented. Repent today for doubting God's purpose for your life. Ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes and help you finish the journey that you once so joyfully began in Jesus. It's not too late.

**Ask the Holy Spirit to open
your eyes and help you
finish the journey that you
once so joyfully began in
Jesus. It's not too late.**

SONG POEM

IT'S MUSIC TO ME

by Clinton H. Utterbach

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I've been singing a song that the angels can't sing
And all the day long I can hear joybells ring
Since I came from the fountain, my soul filled with love
I've been feasting on manna from above.

It's a melody grand, echoes from a far place
A celestial land bountiful with God's grace
Those orchestral strains which seem faint to me now
I will hear, pure and clear, some sweet day.

It's music to me, it's music to me
I've been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb
It's music to me, it's music to me
It's just like beautiful music,
heavenly music, to me.

When the pressures of life
make me sometimes despair
Deep in my spirit Christ is waiting
right there
I open my heart, He joins me in song
And His voice gives me courage
to go on.





God Is Not Restrained

1 Samuel 14:6 (KJV)—*And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the Lord will work for us: for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few.*

When we accept the truth that salvation, deliverance, and total victory in life always come from the Lord, it is easy not to focus on human size, quantity, and might. When we are impressed to attack the enemy in his own territory, we can know that God has placed that desire in our hearts so that He can be glorified by working His plan through us.

We are expected to resist the enemy and watch him flee from us. However, occasionally, for the good of many, we may be asked to take an aggressive position against the enemy. When this happens, we need to accept the challenge and the anointing to accomplish the task and move out with confidence that God will work with us and that He has no limitations or restraints. His salvation and deliverance for others through us is not measured in numbers large or small.

Each one of us must go in obedience so that God will never regret selecting us to head up His battle. Think back to who you were when God selected you. You were little in your own eyes. Yet He made you the leader and anointed you for the job. Therefore, go on your Spirit-led mission.

We must never see Jesus' being crucified as a type of defeat. On the contrary, it became the greatest victory humankind enjoyed since the fall of man. God, not Jesus' persecutors, delivered Jesus up so that you and I could walk in liberty (Romans 8:32). God could have sent legions of angelic forces to do the job, but He chose one sinless Man to save the world.

God is not restrained by anything. He could have saved the world by many, but He saved by One.

Dear Father in heaven, help me today to see that Your anointing on even one person is more than sufficient to perform supernaturally any assignment You give. My job with You is to reach others with the message. I accept Your Word to me to move on and move out as Your Spirit directs my steps. Thank You for choosing me to work with You. May I never cause You to regret Your selection, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Make No Mistake About the Age We Live In

Romans 13:11 (KJV)—*And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.*

Either we are Christians (little Christ) or we are not. The world should not be bolder with what they believe than we who are called believers. You and I cannot in the natural stop sinners from their works of darkness, but we do not have to join them.

When we acknowledged Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord, the bondage of darkness that once held us was broken. It was as though we, by choice, got excommunicated from the clutches of the devil. The devil did

not throw us out, but when we put on Christ, we did not fit into his organization any more.

Putting on Christ is putting on the armor of light. This armor is not just a shield of protection. It is our instrument of offense.

The armor of light is better than having a laser beam to penetrate what seems to be impenetrable. Make no mistake about the times we are living in. It's not enough for us to be translated out of darkness. We have a spiritual obligation to assist in the rescue of others who are held in the devil's fortress. But, we can't help them if we continue to act like them. We are to walk in decency as in the open light of day and quit the revelry and drunkenness, lewdness and lust, strife and envy. When we truly put on Jesus Christ, we make no preparation to gratify our carnal nature. This means we are to do nothing to foster sensual desires and appetites.

Wake up out of your sleep to the reality that our final deliverance is nearer than when we first believed. The night is nearly over, and God's day is about to dawn. Can you handle the light? Are you one of God's examples?

**Putting on Christ is
putting on the armor of light.
This armor is not just a
shield of protection. It is
our instrument of offense.**

Have You Prevailed?

Genesis 32:28 (NLT)—*Your name will no longer be Jacob," the man told him. "It is now Israel, because you have struggled with both God and men and have won."*

Proverbs 3:1-4 is a pattern for us to follow which will ultimately bring us into favor with God and man. However, that occurs when we have been in a struggle with both God and man, and won.

Of course, we know that God is greater and superior to us and could eliminate us like a bug in a split second. But He would never do that because He loves us and we are what He will use to fulfill His plan for humankind. But the older I become, the more I realize that the favor I now enjoy came by way of a struggle. The struggle with God was not because He wanted to overthrow me. It was because I needed to discover that I was not going to be overthrown by anything or anyone in getting in line to be blessed by God.

Jacob endured twenty years of abuse by Laban, an uncle become father-in-law. He had faced Esau, a brother become enemy, become friend. He sent ahead his wives' children and possessions and was left alone in the camp before a man, actually an angel, wrestled with him, and could not win the match (Genesis 32:22-26). Jacob already had God's word concerning what he was to do, which included returning to the land and family he had run from long ago.

Though he had become prosperous and fruitful away from his family, Jacob was willing to leave behind all that he possessed to have a blessing or favor with God. It took wrestling. It was a struggle. But he wanted God's favor.

When you seek first God's favor, man's favor will follow. The focus here is not the struggle or the wrestling match. It is not even to receive the favor. It is that whatever you and I need to do to have more of God, we will prevail when we refuse to let go.

In order to have favor with God and people, be prepared to experience struggle with God and people.

Has God ever asked you to do something that you would have preferred not to do? That is the extent of your struggle with Him. I want my new name and my reward; therefore, I will do what it takes to win His favor.

My Teaching Has Purpose

John 15:11 (TM)—*I've told you these things for a purpose; that my joy might be your joy, and your joy wholly mature.*

Obedience must be taught and learned before there is joy in your life. Joy generates strength. The absence of joy causes weakness. So disobedience results in weakness.

When a Christian does not have a developed spiritual life, sin and the works of darkness become more attractive to the carnal nature. Begin each day making a choice to do your part. Do not put off rejoicing for another day. God's joy is for each day. Tomorrow may be too late. Make it your will to be glad in spite of circumstances.

The history of my past must never be mentioned again unless God ordains it for His glory. As long as I keep talking about my past, I'm remembering what God has decided to forget. My history was bleak and dark. Meditating on your history will hold you in the sense realm.

Do not put off rejoicing for another day. God's joy is for each day. Tomorrow may be too late. Make it your will to be glad in spite of circumstances.

Paul said, "Forget those things that are behind and reach with your spiritual eyes for what the Lord has in front of you." God has an even better plan for your future than what you've yet experienced. Once I met Jesus, the life and light of humankind, I was introduced to eternal life. Eternity is bright before me. Success is based on being pleasing in the sight of the Lord as I walk out the fruit of my re-created spirit.

The same as everyone else, I have DNA from my human parents. However, when I made the choice to accept Jesus as Savior and Lord, I received His LNA. When we cease to breathe here in the earth, our DNA has little significance; it's part of our history. But our new LNA—His Life, His Nature, and His Ability—will accompany us throughout eternity. This brings me joy. And that joy contributes to my strength.

Then God Remembered

Genesis 8:1 (NKJV)—*Then God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the animals that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters subsided.*

One of my favorite songs is “Little is much when God is in it.” Imagine enough water to cover every mountain on the earth. Then God simply recognized the mark on the man He was in covenant with and made a wind to pass over the earth and the waters subsided.

At this writing I am sitting on the deck outside my suite looking at the mountains of St. Croix, Virgin Islands. There are a few homes on the tops of some of these mountains. I thought, They think they are safe up there. In the natural, they are safe from hurricanes and the storms that often devastate property in the Caribbean. Hopefully they know Jesus and have their confidence, not in where they built their physical house, but in their relationship with Him.

God remembered that He established His covenant with Noah and recognized His mark on His man out there in the middle of all that water. Everything but Noah and his family were gone in the flood. Noah’s family was the only remainder of God’s creation. This righteous man had not lost faith in God in the midst of some unusual conditions. When God saw that Noah was unaffected by what was all around him, God knew he could trust this man.

God does not need to do cartwheels or disrupt all of heaven and dispatch legions of angels to change what seems monumental to us. He appears to enjoy taking the foolish things of this world to confound the wise and the mighty. You and I probably would have caused a large hole to form in the earth so all the water could drain out. That is so “natural thinking.” I like to think that God simply blew His breath or exhaled and dried up the whole earth.

What is needed in your life today? Have you been marked by God as one of His own? Never forget that as with Noah, He will remember His covenant with you and do something simple yet supernatural to keep you afloat or dry up the circumstances.

Praise the Lord

Psalm 135:1 (NKJV)—*Praise the Lord! Praise the name of the Lord; Praise Him, O you servants of the Lord!*

Psalm 135 begins and ends with the same three words. There is power in praise.

While we still teach the Word of God uncompromisingly at RLCC, our desire to praise the Lord has increased tremendously. In fact, much of our Sunday service is now worship to the Most High God. Our praise and worship is not due to how well everyone can sing or play musical instruments to excite people's emotions, it is speaking those things out of full hearts. Without any musical abilities whatsoever, anyone can praise the Lord.

As servants of God, Israel was expected to praise Him. How much more should we, as sons and daughters, praise Him? The prophecy has been fulfilled concerning the birth of His sinless Son and the power to witness that accompanies His Holy Spirit.

This one verse tells us three times to praise. Could it be once for each person of the Trinity?

Praise the Father, praise the Son, and praise the Holy Ghost. We readily acknowledge the Father and the Son, but I sense that we sometimes neglect the

Person of the Holy Ghost in our walk with the Lord. The Holy Ghost is as much God as the Father and the Son. They are one, each with a function to make us victorious in our Christian walk.

My executive assistant shared that the Lord told her many years ago that "the Spirit will always burn up the flesh." Once we have accepted Christ, our walk in the Spirit does away with condemnation and makes us free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:1-2). The Holy Spirit really living in us operates the same power that raised Christ from the dead. Because of that, we are in debt to Him to live like Him, thereby telling the world that we are the sons and daughters of God.

So praise the Lord, praise the Lord, praise the Lord!

**Without any musical abilities
whatsoever, everyone
can praise the Lord.**

Clear View or Disguise?

Romans 12:2 (KJV)—*And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

Though God determined before that we would conform to the image of His Son, and nothing can change what He has put in motion, the reality of its manifestation is not left up to God. It's what we do with what has been provided that determines whether we will manifest His plan.

Our minds must be transformed. They must be changed from the old way of thinking. Our life-changing experience of conforming to the image of Jesus Christ will be determined by the renewing of our minds.

A mind that centers on the old way of thinking cannot follow after God. It will go the way of the world and the flesh every time.

Keep in mind, though, that all transformation is not of God. For example, 2 Corinthians 11:14-15 says, "...Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness...."

Does this mean the ministers spoken of are changed as a part of God's will and pleasure? Decidedly not! The devil may *appear* as an angel of light, but we *are* children of the light. The devil's ministers may *appear* as ministers of righteousness, but we *are* the righteousness of God in Christ and ministers of reconciliation.

Our transformation took what was in order to make it what it should be. It was a complete change into the image of the light of Christ, which is clearly viewed and transmitted as the real thing. Satan's transformation is nothing more than a mask or a disguise. It is superficial with no depth or root.

As believers, we have become a whole new species of being; we're new creatures in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17). On the other hand, the evil one is the same monster he always was. He simply has given himself a lousy makeover, while we have received from God a total and complete changeover.

Father, help us to see the importance of a renewed mind so that others will ask what caused the change. Then infuse us with the spirit of boldness to proclaim Jesus to them so that the Holy Spirit can do His work to attract them to Him. Thank You, in Jesus' name.

Prepared to Partake and Produce

Acts 1:8 (KJV)—But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.

Jesus spoke these words to help His people get ready for the third Person of the Godhead who would come permanently to work with them in preparing to receive a new nature. This nature would enable them to conform to the image of the Son of God and help them influence others also to produce more like them.

The Holy Spirit is not a personality of God; He is God. He does not just proceed from God; He is God. He is not just divine energy and influence; He is God providing what is sufficient for all those whom He has brooded over in the new birth. When He came to change our nature, He stayed to influence that nature to be and act like God. He is equal to the Father and the Son, with a clear understanding of what His part is to be in restoring mankind to his place of power and position. He is subordinate to the Father and the Son, not superior or inferior. He has come to live on the inside of us in an attempt to get that same message to us.

**The Holy Spirit is not a
personality of God;
He is God. He does not just
proceed from God, He is God.**

Jesus stated our role in John 15:16, that He selected us and not us Him. He ordained us for the purpose of going forth to bear fruit that would remain and that whatever we ask the Father in His name, the Father would give us.

When we ignore, reject, and blaspheme the Holy Ghost, we are ignoring, rejecting, and blaspheming God Himself. The Holy Ghost came to prepare us to partake and to produce. Jesus said we would receive the power to accomplish our task in places we may never have wanted to go. What are we waiting for?

Refusing Doubt Brings Satan's Attractions

Matthew 4:9 (NKJV)—*And he said to Him, "All these things I will give to you if you fall down and worship me."*

The devil had tried everything to get Jesus to worship him instead of God, the Almighty. The lesson for us in this is: When the devil cannot cause you to doubt your relationship with God, he will offer you things to cause you to become attracted to him. There is no question in Satan's mind that you, a believer, cannot be defeated by him, so he tries to present you with things that will allow your flesh to become excited. Trust me, they are all toys with no lasting appeal.

Look around you at all that God has created and see for yourself what is truly valuable and important and lasting. All of it is yours and mine because it is in Christ Jesus and all that belongs to Him belongs to us.

Nathan the prophet said to David according to the words of God, "I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your keeping and gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if that had been too little, I also would have given you much more!" (2 Samuel 12:8, NKJV). In other words, we need never be attracted to what the devil offers us, at times in the most subtle of ways. There is nothing that we need or desire which lines up with God's plan for our lives that He would withhold from His children whose hearts and lives are diligently seeking after Him. Doubt and deception are more deadly than any disease known to humanity. Adam and Eve can certainly testify to that.

I am fully aware of how attractive things can be in the natural. I am also aware of how fleeting the attractions are. It took a long time for me to recognize that the things of this world that I longed for were void of any real substance. What I really wanted and needed could only come from God through Jesus His Son. So I simply made a decision to stop pursuing the world's attractions and adjust my sights to see what is really valuable and important. One of the highlights of my week is to see souls come to the Kingdom of God to be born again. Stop doubting who you are in Christ and begin your new walk in the Spirit in Him.

Preserved and Reserved

2 Peter 3:7 (NJV)—*But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.*

Christians have heard much about God's abundance and His blessings. But they ignore the fact that the same God that has preserved the heavens and earth shall one day judge the earth using fire to destroy it. He has reserved it though He once preserved it.

Never think that what the Lord has spoken will not be fulfilled. Because of His mercy and His desire for all to repent and be saved, He has a temporary hold on the destruction that will occur.

Some have questioned the Lord's coming and made light of His delay. But He is going to come, and I sense sooner than we think. The world is making preparations for their future here in

**Never think that what the Lord
has spoken will not be fulfilled.**

the earth, but it is a waste of time. Earth and the heavens, as we know them, have been preserved for people to get it together and believe on His Son, Jesus. Those refusing will experience the reservation of fire that is the reward for the wicked who willfully chose to ignore God.

He has plans and a promise of a new heaven and a new earth. He said He won't use water the next time He destroys the earth; it will be fire. God does do things differently at times. He made the old covenant first; but when He was ready, He made a new one. Thank God He did. It is because of the new covenant that we, His people, do not have to fear the future. We get to spend eternity with Him and Jesus.

Revelation 21:2 says, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth passed away." Since the first one passed away, ask yourself why would you plan your future in or on it? The believer should be focusing on the new thing God is about to do.

Safe In Mind, Body, and Estate

Proverbs 25:21-22 (KJV)—*If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee.*

I believe the Lord is saying, “My children, according to the world’s way of thinking, it is not normal or natural for you to give bread and water to those who are hateful toward you. The flesh would say when one’s enemies are famished or suffering, ‘Let them thirst. Leave them as they are and rejoice over their predicament.’ But that is not My way.

“My children, You are children of love. You are containers and vessels of My love. Therefore, I charge you to dispense that love—especially to the unlovely. Particularly, I charge you to give My love to those who cause you grief, for only then will they see that you are different. Then, because they know that they would not respond in the same manner if they saw you in their predicament, they become curious as to why you are not against them. They become open to a love that defies what they know to be natural. Remember, as my co-laborers, you are called to attract sinners to Me by being attractive with My love and light reflecting through you.

“I give you this requirement not only for you to draw the lost to Me, I also give it to you to show you that if I expect you to provide basic needs for even your enemy’s survival (bread and water), you can rejoice knowing that I will also provide not only your basic need, but that which no human can give.

“When I promised to reward you for your efforts to obey My Word concerning your enemy, I was saying to you that because you obey Me to walk in love and be a light to others, I will make you safe in mind, body, and estate. You will have peace, health, and protection for your property.

“Listen, My child, with the ears of your spirit. For I will speak things that sound strange to your fleshly ears, but your spirit will bear witness to what I say. Never allow yourself to be concerned about what I speak to you to do, for I have unique and unusual ways of establishing you in this life and the life to come.”

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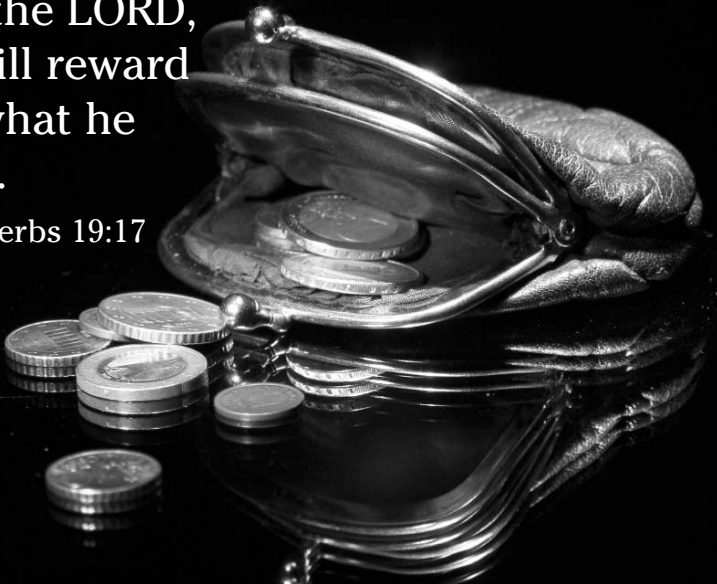
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He who is kind to the poor
lends to the LORD,
and he will reward
him for what he
has done.

—Proverbs 19:17



Basis for Our Devotion

John 14:15 (NIV)—*"If you love me, you will obey what I command."*

In John 14:15, Jesus was simply saying to those professing to be His disciples, "Do it My way, and I'll see that as an indication of your love for Me." In John 21:16, Jesus told Peter that loving Him required him to feed His sheep. In John 13:14, Jesus declared that the only way His disciples can be identified is by the love they demonstrate to others.

No amount of service for the Lord will excuse us from walking in His love. We demonstrate our love to Him when we show His love to others.

The Spirit spoke to me once when I was zealous to take the Word to others whom I saw were in need. He said, "A need is not a call." He reminded me of what my call was.

I thought He meant that my call was to my town or the people in my church, but He corrected me. He reminded me that my call was to obey His every word and that I could only do this if I loved Him. My call was to do His will, what was pleasing in His sight, out of love for Him.

When I demonstrate my love for God through obedience, He will allow me to serve His people and feed His sheep. If He is not assured of my total devotion to Him, He won't be able to trust me with His sheep. Loving Him allows the fruit of His Spirit to be manifested towards His sheep. If I don't love Him, I have no power to care for the sheep, because sheep often mess up and appear unworthy of one's efforts.

Love for the Shepherd will empower you to feed His sheep when you'd rather walk away.

Lord, thank You for teaching me that devotion and commitment to You must be the foundation and basis for all my deeds and efforts. I declare my love for You, and I commit to show You my love by obeying You, feeding Your sheep, and demonstrating Your love to others. You make all the difference in my life. Thank You for loving me first, in Jesus' name.

A black and white photograph of a forest stream. On the right side, a large, thick tree trunk stands prominently, its roots spreading out over the rocky stream bed. To the left, a small waterfall cascades over rocks, creating a soft, white mist. The background is filled with numerous thin, bare tree trunks, suggesting a late autumn or winter setting. The overall atmosphere is serene and natural.

Surely
goodness
and mercy shall
follow me all the
days of my life: and
I will dwell in the house
of the LORD for ever.

—Psalm 23: 6

Foretold Words Always Come to Pass

Psalm 105:19 (NIV)—*Till what he [Joseph] foretold came to pass, till the word of the Lord proved him true.*

Like Jesus, Joseph surely wondered if the plan of God could not be done another way. He was sent by God for a purpose, but to accomplish that purpose of God, Joseph had to be sold first as a slave.

Being sold or treated as a slave does not make a person a slave. What makes a person a slave is one's mentality and lack of knowledge of one's purpose in fulfilling the plan of God. What makes a person a prince or princess is continuing to serve God, worship Him, and stay faithful to integrity, regardless of the pit, the prison, or the palace.

You will find that everything that God has spoken to you and through you will come to pass. The Word of the Lord will always come true. It will cause leaders in high places to send for you, release you, set you free, make you master of their house and ruler over their possessions.

Never be disappointed with being in charge of what belongs to another. Watch out for the spirit of "I want my own." There is more responsibility to being the owner than some are able to handle. Do what is best with another's things, as though they were your own. Then watch God reward you (Luke 16:12).

The enemy is on call to throw you and me out if he can, but we can refuse to get in his game in the first place. We are not playing games. Our call is serious, our mission is possible, and our final destiny is in sight. We win!

Father, I want to thank You for helping me learn that the conditions may change but You never do. I would have intentionally avoided the pits and prisons, but when I have gotten there I have found You there with me also. Wherever I am, there You will be also. So instead of grumbling and complaining, I have learned to sing a new song. When I pray, occasionally the enemy's voice tries to break through. But my praise emanates from my heart, which sings only what You have spoken to me in our times together. It shall be done.

Refer Them to Your Source

Proverbs 5:17 (TM)—*Your spring water is for you and you only, not to be passed around among strangers.*

While this verse is referring to faithfulness in marriage, the principle can be applied to almost anything and anyone.

I came from a financially poor background to abundance. Then the Lord asked for it all back in order to obey Him to go to Bible school at age forty-two. Clinton and I found ourselves with fifty-eight cents two weeks before school started. However, this was one of the most exciting times of my Christian life. We were never without food, shelter, or clothing, though we, in the natural, were financially depleted.

The greatest lesson I personally learned in this was not to change from believing in Him when the wealth and increase began to be restored. I still delight in using my faith to obtain what He has for me. The

other lesson I learned, which was not an easy one, was to be led by the same Spirit, and not my emotions, when it came to sharing what I have with others.

It is very hard to see people struggling, especially your loved ones. But struggling is what makes a caterpillar into a butterfly. I have been without luxuries and have had to count my coins at various times in my life, but I've never seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread (Psalm 37:25).

What an injustice we do to our friends and families when we use our supply from God to meet their need. We owe it to them to refer them to our Source and not give them our supply unless God tells us to do so. Many people want the blessings of the Lord without His discipline and a life of obedience to Him.

When you have nothing you can depend on but God, and you are determined to find out that He is who He said He is, and will do for you what He has promised, you are in for quite an adventure.

Many people want the blessings of the Lord without His discipline and a life of obedience to Him.

If He Promised It, He Remembers It

Psalm 111:5 (KJV)—*He hath given meat unto them that fear him: he will ever be mindful of his covenant.*

God's Word charges us to give to the poor. What are we to give them? For one thing, we can give them a meal. However, only the Word contains enough revenue to change the status of the poor. Like Jesus, we are to preach the Gospel to the poor (Luke 4:18). We should give them the message of Psalm 111:5, which says God gives food to those who fear Him; He remembers to keep His ancient promises.

We should ask the poor, "Who is God to you? Do you have a personal relationship with His Son?" If a person answers the second question with a "no" or indecision, then the person does not yet fear God. But if the person reverences Him, he or she receives and accepts Him, and announces it to all.

Charities all over the world try to feed and care for the poor. That is good, but it can only cause long-term benefits if the recipients learn to reverence God and accept His Son. As long as people will worship idols, animals, statues, and trees, there will be poor among us.

Jesus told Peter that if he loved Him, he would feed His sheep. I certainly believe that Jesus had more than a fish dinner in mind. Unless and until we prepare spiritual meals to take to the destitute of the world, we will continue to have burn-outs and breakdowns among the troops. Give them Jesus, and all the provisions of Calvary, and they will be eligible for the Living Bread.

The Father remembers to keep His Word, but His promises are only to His children. We can see this principle at work in the natural. I am not required to take care of the neighbor's children, though I may offer them an occasional meal. However, I am responsible for providing for my offspring. Would our heavenly Father do less for us?

Father, enlighten our eyes to see that giving must be according to Your prescribed teaching. We'll do whatever You ask us to do, for then we can look to You for the necessary resources to perform the task. You are our wisdom and understanding in all things. We will work with You to accomplish what pleases You, in Jesus' name.

Refined as Silver and Tested as Gold

Zechariah 13:7-9—Kill the shepherd and the sheep will scatter, but one third will be left. I will bring the one third that are left through the fire; I will refine them as silver is refined and test them as gold is tested.

Though this was a prophecy for the remnant of Israel, I saw it come to pass in our church when Clinton fell asleep in Jesus. Because I thought that I was as loved by the people as Clinton appeared to be, it never occurred to me that his passing would allow for such an exodus of the RLCC membership.

It took my being refined as silver and tested as gold to face the truth. The Lord allowed me to see what really happened.

Clinton was not confrontational. His attitude was that a person would stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ and give an account for his or her conduct as a believer. In the meantime, he could be the fair-haired pastor. My approach was different. I wanted you to see what you were doing while you could make corrections and help ensure that you get to stand before Jesus one day. If you liked me, fine. If you didn't, you and the Lord would work it out.

Following Clinton's departure, I experienced every test mentally, emotionally, and spiritually that could occur. Thanks be to God that in Christ Jesus, and with the help of the Holy Ghost, I was still standing when the tests were over. Every promise God has ever made to me was being fulfilled.

I was not exempt from the negatives in the world. What determined victory or defeat was my faith in God and His Word. I believed Him and continued to act like He is the God that cannot lie. My pain, loneliness, and fear were not from God; therefore, they could not remain in my life. I only sign for and accept His good and perfect gifts.

The remnant that remained lifted up my arms in serious prayer and support. Now, they, too, are rejoicing in the victory with me. Halleluiah, we did not quit!

My pain, loneliness, and fear were not of my God; therefore, they could not remain in my life.

Spirit-Controlled Energies

Romans 8:9 (NLT)—*But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you.*

As believers, we are not to be driven by our human emotions, desires, and energies. We are to allow the Holy Spirit in us to control them.

Had I known and been taught the meaning of this verse as a child, I could have avoided a lot of garbage in my life. For me, accepting Jesus as a seven-year-old simply meant that I would go to heaven when I died. I had no immediate plans to die, so I thought I didn't need to be concerned about my new experience for some time to come.

No one told me that the new birth provided me with the power to resist temptation or to handle the challenges that life brings to the saved and the unsaved alike.

I'm not saying that anyone gave me a license to sin or do wrong. What happened was worse, in my opinion. The spiritual leaders I looked to for direction either did not know for themselves or were unable to put into practice the principles of being controlled by the Spirit.

Energy out of control is destructive. Credit card abuse, substance abuse, lingering lust, anger, fear, and even human love are all energies that must be submitted to the control of the Holy Spirit. No one can earn, inherit, or illegally gain enough money to pay for credit card abuse. Substance abusers can become murderers without ever intending to be so. Allowing lust to linger in your thoughts will result in action leading to death, unwanted pregnancy, or dissolved marital relationships. Anger out of control is like a speeding car with no brakes, driven by a blind person. Fear will cause you to hurt innocent people, as well as yourself. Love without limitation will create idol worship and stifling relationships; this kind of love turns people against God when the object of their affection is suddenly absent or removed in death.

My Father and my God, keep me mindful of Your Holy Spirit in me to help me stay balanced in the energies that each of us is presented with. You alone can be trusted with controlling my emotions. I release my unrestrained love only for You at all times, in Jesus' name.

The LORD liveth;
and blessed be my
rock; and exalted
be the rock of
my salvation.

—2 Samuel 22:47



Are You Married to God's Choice?

1 Samuel 18:19-20 (NKJV)—*But it happened at the time when Merab, Saul's daughter, should have been given to David, that she was given to Adriel the Meholathite as a wife. Now Michal, Saul's daughter, loved David....*

David was married to the wrong woman. Merab, not Michal, was God's choice for David. Though Michal loved him, she did not respect his love for his God, and she despised his devotion to God.

God may get involved in marriages that are not absolutely ideal. For example, God allowed Judah to be born to Leah and Jacob even though Jacob never even wanted to be married to Leah.

Even though God can work with a less-than-ideal marriage, it sure is easier for all concerned for a person to marry God's choice in the first place. For some, that could mean getting married in youth. For others, it may mean waiting until mid-life. A wise friend once said, "I'd rather marry once at age forty than be divorced five times at the same age." Here's the most important question to ask before you get married: "Is this person God's choice for me?"

I believe God wants "first time, final" marriages for all of His children. But more than that, I believe He wants His perfect will to be done; He wants His plan for humankind to be fulfilled.

**Divorce is not the
unpardonable sin,
but it is not God's plan
for His children.**

I believe that if we blow it by being impatient about marriage, then God will continue to work all things together for our good until

we are in line with His original plan for us. Divorce is not the unpardonable sin, but it is not God's plan for His children.

Father, thank You for Your Spirit of patience which helps and aids us in waiting for Your choice, which is always what is best for us. You provided patience to assist us in properly selecting what and whom You have been preparing for us. I release Your fruit of patience as I wait on You for everything that concerns me, in Jesus' name.

Submit or Surrender?

All of my life, we in the church have sung "I Surrender All." I have searched the Scriptures, and I have yet to find anywhere where the Lord required His body to surrender to Him or anyone else. However, I find several scriptures telling us to submit.

Wives are to submit to husbands. Ephesians 5:22 says to submit ourselves one to another. We are to submit to God (James 4:7), every ordinance (1 Peter 2:13), and elders (1 Peter 5:5).

When the Lord first dealt with me about this, He said, "Sarah, we're on the same team. We are not against one another. Only opposing people or teams that are trying to gain the mastery over the other side surrender." That led me to change the words of that song. We have sung it for years, saying, "I Submit My All."

This is scriptural. To surrender is to give over to an enemy what belongs to you. The devil would like nothing better than for us to surrender to him, because he is powerless to gain what belongs to us as children of God without our agreement. The word surrender goes against everything that is godly in me. I gladly submit everything I have to the Lord for His use and service. When I do, I have the ability to resist the devil, and he will run away. Why? Because I willingly submitted to the Lord.

The devil knows that a believer submitted to the Lord is someone he wants to avoid. We have yielded many of our rights to satan because, instead of resisting him,

we have entertained him, which allowed him to get close enough to probe for any weak links in our chain.

Do we really understand what being born again means? Eternal life was what we received from Jesus when we were born the second time. This new life means that we need never surrender to anything or anyone again. Just stay submitted to your Lord, Jesus, the Son of God, and defeat will be a thing of the past. Hallelujah!

The devil would like nothing better than for us to surrender to him because he is powerless to gain what belongs to us as children of God without our agreement.

Don't Exalt Human Love Above Truth

Proverbs 15:12 (NIV)—*A mocker resents correction; he will not consult the wise.*

Have you ever heard someone scoff even at his teachers and take on a know-it-all or superior attitude? In many instances, that person thinks that popularity and prosperity are all he needs to make it in life.

The Bible calls such mockers foolish because they will not seek the counsel of the wise. Wisdom is still the principal thing. These people need understanding to prevent Satan from stealing the very words that were once sown in their hearts (Matthew 13:19).

My mother used to tell my brother and me, "Be very cautious how you treat people on your way up because you may meet those same people on your way down."

I agree that listening to a human opinion about what you are saying or doing is of little value. However, we should listen to someone sharing scripture with us, because all scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness, that we may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

We can't just accept the inspirational, encouraging and exciting scriptures and avoid the ones that reprove, correct, and instruct us in righteousness. Wise people love correction. They receive it as another profitable tool for them to live by. On the other hand, scorners or mockers will not like you if you offer scriptural correction. They will not call on the wise for advice.

If we turn from the right way, we will be punished. If we refuse correction, we will die. God inspires correction to put us back on the right track. When we reject it, we face deadly consequences.

Father of grace and mercy, help us not be concerned about who loves us. When we exalt human love above truth, we cross a very dangerous line. If what we share with each other only tickles the ear and fails to move us on to the next level with You, perfection is still just a word for us. Help us understand that receiving Your Word is for our benefit. It will help keep us on the path of right thoughts, words, and deeds. This kind of wisdom protects us from being vulnerable to the destroying forces of this world's influences.

Train Yourself to Say No at the Right Time

Daniel 1:8 (NLT)—*But Daniel made up his mind not to defile himself by eating the food and wine given to them by the king. He asked the chief official for permission to eat other things instead.*

Just because what is offered to us appears to be better than what we have, does not mean that it is God's best for us.

Train yourself to hear the voice of the Lord regarding when to say no as well as when to say yes. Settle it in your heart and mind to abstain from that which could become an idol in your life, whether it is food, clothing, money, or shelter. God does not provide for you anything that could defile you.

For Daniel, refusing food that was contrary to God's dietary laws for His people was a test. Thank God he passed it with flying colors. Daniel did not just reject what was offered to him because he was rebellious and wanted to make a point. Once he settled to remain innocent in the eyes of the Lord, he showed respect for the king's servant who was simply doing his job. Daniel asked permission to eat food other than what the king provided. When he did that, the wisdom of God and the excellent Spirit in him knew what to ask for. Once we train ourselves to do only what is pleasing in the sight of the Lord, He, God, will provide wisdom to not offend others.

Mother used to say to my brother and me, "Everything that glitters is not gold." Why settle for what is pretty without

knowing its value. What appeals to our five physical senses does not guarantee that it is a provision from God. Learn to discern what is and is not for you even though others may be able to go with the flow.

I've learned that numbers and volume do not impress God. He often permits decrease so that He and He alone will get the credit for what He will do in the midst of a right-minded people.

**God does not provide for you
anything that could defile you.**



RLCC
REDEEMING
LOVE
CHRISTIAN
CENTER

AT THE VILLAGE



Schedule of Services:

WORSHIP SERVICES:
Every Sunday evening at 6:00 p.m.

HEALING SERVICES: Every second Sunday

COMMUNION SERVICES:
Every first Sunday

BAPTISM SERVICES:
Every fourth Sunday

SUNDAY CHURCH SCHOOL:
Every Sunday at 4:30 p.m.

For more information, please call the church office at
(570) 424-2300
or Redeeming Love Christian Center
in Nanuet, New York: (845) 623-9300.

We invite you to join us for Sunday evening services at our facility in the Poconos!

Directions to REDEEMING LOVE CHRISTIAN CENTER at the VILLAGE

Take Route 80 West across the Delaware Water Gap (\$.75 toll) into Pennsylvania. Exit at 302 (Bartonsville). After exiting, proceed to the traffic light and turn right onto Route 611. Passing the Howard Johnson Hotel, proceed to the second street on the left, which is Wigwam Park Road. Turn left onto Wigwam Park Road. In a short distance you will come to a stop sign. Make a left turn (you are still on Wigwam Park Road). Continue on Wigwam Park Road for approximately 2 miles until you see the sign "Redeeming Love Christian Village." Turn left onto Cranberry Road. Proceed several yards to the entrance of the Village on the right. The Village is at the intersection of Wigwam Park and Cranberry Roads.

FROM GEORGE WASHINGTON BRIDGE

Take Route 80 West. (Follow the directions above from Route 80 West to RLCV.)

FROM THE TAPPAN ZEE BRIDGE — WESTCHESTER COUNTY

Take the New York State Thruway North to 287 South. Take 287 South to Route 80 West. (Follow the directions above from Route 80 West to RLCV.)

FROM SOUTH NEW JERSEY

Take the Garden State Parkway North to Route 80 West. (Follow the directions above from Route 80 West to RLCV.)

FROM NORTH NEW JERSEY

Take the Garden State Parkway South to Route 80 West. (Follow the directions above from Route 80 West to RLCV.)

FROM UPSTATE NEW YORK

Take the New York Thruway South to 287 South. Proceed to Route 80 West. (Follow the directions above from Route 80 West to RLCV.)



*Bless the LORD,
O my soul...*



. . .and all that is within me, bless his holy name.
Bless the LORD, O my soul,
 and forget not all his benefits:
Who forgiveth all thine iniquities;
 who healeth all thy diseases;
Who redeemeth thy life from destruction;
 who crowneth thee with lovingkindness
 and tender mercies;
Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things;
 so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.

—Psalm 103

Restore, Give, and Walk

Ezekiel 33:15 (KJV)—*If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die.*

Certainly the grace of God is sufficient for us to represent Jesus Christ here in the earth. I cannot argue against the truth that a believer can live holy.

I have lived carnally as a Christian, and I have lived consecrated as a Christian. The latter is better. I firmly believe that God requires more of me now than He did when I was carnal, but I have His Word, the fruit of His Spirit, and His gifts to keep me moving forward in His grace.

The wicked man, according to the verse above, was on the verge of losing his life, but a change and a commitment made the difference. How much more are we, the children of the Highest, in danger when we claim the name but live as though we never heard of Jesus?

I know beyond a shadow of doubt that Jesus loves us and forgives our weaknesses, but I also believe He requires us to restore what we have pledged and return, or give, what we have stolen. I'm sure He wants us to walk in His statutes and cease from iniquity. I have also learned that living is more than breathing. How sad it is to see those who once had the joy of the Lord in them and were on fire for the things of Christ now almost acting like zombies. That is not living; that is barely existing.

Father, You know all that I have done, both pleasing and offensive. I know You have forgiven me, and to the best of my knowledge, I have returned and restored all things gained without Your consent. I desire to walk with You in all things and worship You with my whole heart. I have no desire to live here in the earth just to be physically alive. You know I look forward to heaven and to beholding the face of my Savior. But there is a purpose for my being created, and I ask that You keep me alert and alive until I complete Your plan for my life. Help me to live as restoring, giving, and walking in Your life before others. I thank You for this, in Jesus' name.

Who Do You Need to Throw Out of Your House?

Mark 5:40 (KJV)—And they laughed him to scorn. But when he put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him and entereth in where the damsel was lying.

Just because the young girl was lying was not an indication that she was dying. Jesus' works never become powerless because of what is going on around Him. On the contrary, it is His words that cause the power necessary to change things.

When Jesus arrived with His disciples to the home of the sick child, the commotion from the crowd was an indication that the place was filled with unbelief. He had to put the crowd out allowing only the parents; the disciples Peter, James, and John; the child; and Himself. Even after the child was on her feet, the Bible says, "...They were astonished with a great astonishment" (Mark 5:42).

Whose report are you going to believe? The day must come when we, His body, stop being astonished at His work among us. It is time we expect it and trust Him in spite of the negative circumstance surrounding us.

I am through trying to "get" the victory. I fight the good fight of faith from an already victorious position. The victory that overcomes the world is my faith (1 John 5:4). I finally got smart enough to cast all my cares, anxieties, and burdens on Jesus Christ. The barrage of demons that had been assigned to me had to report back to their leader that they had failed in their assignment because I was still standing and still believing in Jesus and His name.

You will find that your trust in the Lord will often diminish the number of those around you. That's okay, especially since all they seem to want to do is cry and mourn. Criers and mourners never improve the situation. Put them out before they cause you to lose the little faith you have. Jesus threw them out—so can you.

The Day Will Declare It

Jeremiah 32:18-19 (NIV)—...O great and powerful God, whose name is the Lord Almighty, great are your purposes and mighty are your deeds. Your eyes are open to all the ways of men; you reward everyone according to his conduct and as his deeds deserve.

I recently had to repent for allowing my mouth to utter words concerning someone else's deeds. What I said was not wrong. What was wrong was that I said it. The Lord reminded me that He would give me power and authority in the earth over everything but another human being. He also reminded me that I did not qualify to judge anyone except myself.

Paul says in Romans 14:10-12, "You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. "It is written: As surely as I live," says the Lord, "every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God." So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God."

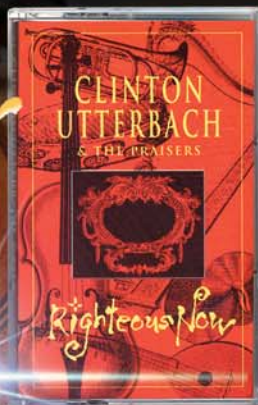
One of the great temptations in being a parent or a shepherd is to take on the role of the protector of the children or sheep assigned to us. We forget that the Lord's eyes are open to all the ways of human beings, and He rewards everyone according to one's conduct and as one's deeds deserve.

"Each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is" (1 Corinthians 3:13 NKJV). If anyone's work survives, that person shall receive one's reward. If anyone's works are burned, that person shall suffer—but he or she shall be saved.

Lord, You are the only righteous Judge. Forgive me for wanting You to punish others for their conduct and as their deeds deserve. Your Word here does not mention punishment but reward. Who but You knows what that means? And, furthermore, what is that to me (John 21:22)? My responsibility is to follow You, not to judge my brother or my sister. Because of Your words written in our hearts, our consciences will bear witness and our thoughts will accuse or excuse one another (Romans 2:15). But You, O God, will judge the secrets of humankind by Jesus Christ in that Day. Help me to mind my own business until that time.

CLINTON UTTERBACH
& THE PRAISERS

Righteous Now



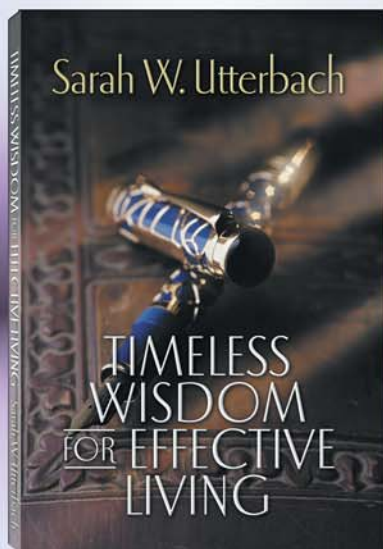
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Chronic Disobedience Can Precede Destruction

Proverbs 29:1 (KJV)—*He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.*

The Holy Spirit of God, which is the Spirit of Christ, repeatedly tells us what we need to do to live pleasing lives unto the Father and to be effective witnesses. If we fail to heed the message, at some point our consciences will become seared. This process leads to a path of total destruction.

I used to get upset when I observed others going the wrong way. I'd get downright mad when they seemed to profit in the midst of their wrongdoing. Then one day, I heard this little voice within me say, "You have an obligation to pray for them and a responsibility to live your life being led by My Spirit." I had to make some mental and emotional adjustments in response to that statement, because I had been under the impression that I could make a difference in others' lives. The Spirit was saying to me, "Your hands are full just staying on the track of obedience to My plan for your life."

The Holy Spirit is on assignment to lead and guide us into all truth. Anyone who does not listen to Him will only listen to me or you on a temporary basis.

Total submission to God's will, His plan, and His purpose is the way to go. It is the only way to go.

Dear God, how many times have I failed to heed Your Spirit, who was trying to keep me from the immoral and foolish things I thought I would enjoy? How grateful I am that, at some point, You got through to me before my neck became permanently stiff and my heart completely hardened. As I look back over my life, I can recall clearly Your love working to bring me into a relationship with You, in which there is life and not destruction. I pray today that every person who has confessed Jesus Christ of Nazareth as Lord and Savior will wake up before it is too late, for the time is short. May your probing, penetrating Holy Spirit perform laser surgery on Your people in such a way that they will cry out, "I yield; I can't hold out any longer!" in Jesus' name.

You Can't Out-Give God

Exodus 36:6-7 (TM)—So Moses sent out orders through the camp; "Men! Women! No more offerings for the building of the sanctuary." The people were ordered to stop bringing offerings! There was plenty of material for all the work to be done. Enough and more than enough.

This is the dream of every pastor, or shepherd. But, unfortunately, they have not trained their people how to give to the work of the Lord, or they haven't been willing to wait to hear from the Lord as to when and what to build.

Here is a group of people who came out of 400 years of slavery and poverty to find themselves in a position where they could give daily (Exodus 36:3). The exciting part of this story is that the people were willing to give.

How does one become willing to give? First, remember where you came from. When the reality of what God has

brought you from sets in, the Holy Ghost moves you to do your part to meet the need as God has commanded. Second, know that material blessings are for here. I have never seen an armored truck following a hearse.

What we do with what God has blessed us with here will become treasure stored up for us in heaven. Often, saints of God leave their wealth to relatives who may not be living for the Lord. They neglect their church, which taught them the principles of seedtime and harvest according to the Lord. Where would you and I be today were it not for the goodness of the Lord to provide all that we'll ever need? Some are casting their pearls before swine. Others forget where they got the treasure to purchase the field in the first place.

We cannot beat God's giving. I charge you with remembering that you and all you have belong to the Lord. Pray for a willing heart to be led by His Spirit regarding what you are to do with His provision to you.

**Where would you and I be
today were it not for the
goodness of the Lord to provide
all that we'll ever need?**



Gregory Carr

Edward Pfundstein



If I was not exposed to and taught by the teaching here at RLCC, I probably would not be alive today. I don't have a personal vision for the years to come. I am in agreement with Habakkuk 2:3 — For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Therefore, my prayer is that I will always hear clearly what God wants me to do at Redeeming Love Christian Center, and then be obedient.

"I have accepted this calling to the pastorate by faith because I desire to please the Lord. I bring no natural qualifications to speak of for this appointment, but the spiritual qualification I bring is faithfulness to God, His Word, and His Spirit, Pastor Sarah, the leadership and sheep of RLCC. I trust the Father of glory to give me a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him to feed His sheep. To God be the glory for all the things He will do through me."

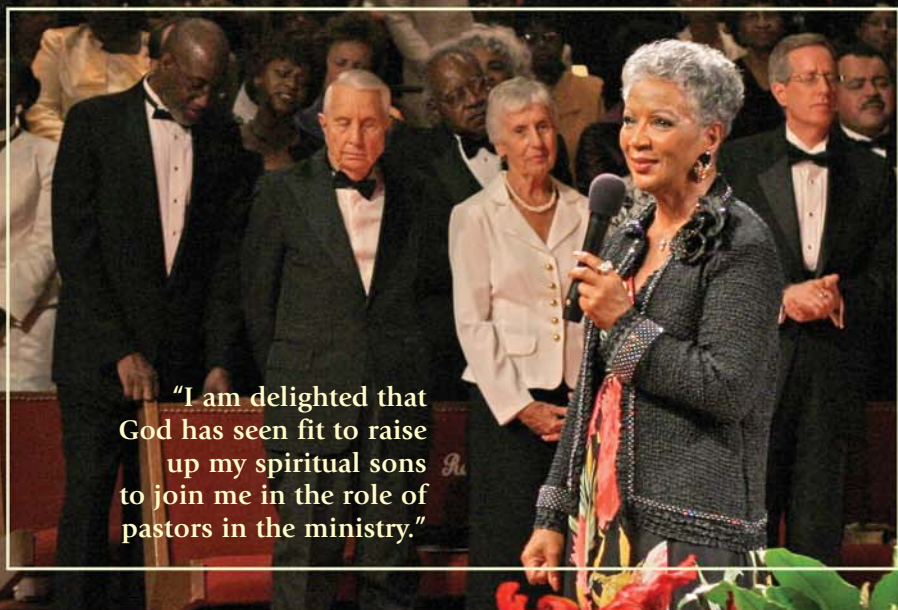
A distinctively different and important era emerged, as members and friends of Redeeming Love Christian Center joined **Pastor Sarah W. Utterbach** on September 10, 2006 to celebrate the 26th anniversary of the church and ministry, and to witness the ordination of RLCC's additional pastors.

Before the anniversary program commenced, however, the congregation was ministered to by a selection of songs recorded by founding Pastor Clinton H. Utterbach, who fell asleep in Jesus

26TH ANNIVERSARY
ORDINATION CELEBRATION
AND SALUTE
TO THE 9/11 SURVIVORS
SUN SEPT 10 3:00PM

RLCC
REDEEMING LOVE
CHRISTIAN CENTER

RLCC Celebrates Its 26th Anniversary:



**"I am delighted that
God has seen fit to raise
up my spiritual sons
to join me in the role of
pastors in the ministry."**

in 2005. It was a fitting acknowledgment of his role in laying the foundation of RLCC, and deeply moving. The words of Pastor Clinton's songs, "Lord We Invite You Here," "Where Would We Be," "Come Lord Jesus," and "Your Armor On" offered defining closure to commemorate the end of one era and the joyful launch of a new era in ministry.

The celebratory program opened with prayer offered by Miss Dolores Fludd. Guest psalmist Morris Chapman ministered in music at various intervals throughout the program. Poignant tributes were presented by long-time ministry friends, Dr. Stanley Seat, Attorney Dennis G. Brewer, Sr., RLCC member William Tomford, and Deacon Phyliss Carr, wife of ordination candidate Gregory Carr.

Pastor Sarah delivered the anniversary address and then gave her charge to the ordination candidates, Edward Pfundstein and Gregory Carr, who were not only ordained into the ministry but

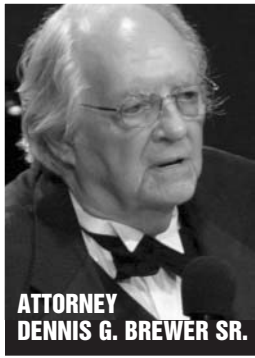
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A New Era Begins

also appointed as pastors of RLCC. This was indeed a noteworthy moment as, for the first time in Redeeming Love's history, someone other than an Utterbach held the title Pastor of RLCC. After Morris Chapman, Pastor Naomi Hopkins, and the Praisers led a patriotic salute in song dedicated to survivors of the 9/11 terrorist attack, Pastor Ed Pfundstein then gave the altar call and Pastor Greg Carr delivered the concluding benediction.

During the ordination portion of the service, Pastor Sarah



shared how only days before, the Lord had instructed her to ordain Ed Pfundstein and Greg Carr and appoint the two candidates as full pastors of RLCC with her. Pastor Sarah shared, "The Lord said to me, 'Don't ordain them as ministers. Ordain them as pastors. Don't ask them. Tell them.' I knew at that point that I was to speak to them from my spiritual office, which is a higher place than simply me deciding to do this. Their appointment as pastors was definitely God's idea."

Pastor Pfundstein and Pastor Carr serve alongside Pastor Sarah on the Board of Directors for RLCC. Both men have been active, faithful members and employees of the ministry for many years. Pastor Pfundstein has attended RLCC for 24 years and served in various capacities for 22 years. Pastor Carr, in turn, has attended RLCC for 21 years and served in numerous roles for 13 years. Each not only has proven himself to be a man of the Spirit and a man of the Word, but also has devoted himself to feed the flock of God.

"I am delighted that God has seen fit to raise up my spiritual sons to join me in the role of pastors in the ministry," Pastor Sarah said. "It causes me to feel very secure about the future of RLCC."

Ready for a Change

Romans 6:19 (NKJV)—...just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.

Aren't you glad that Jesus came to empower us to walk in the light of His liberty? Before we had His Word to light our path, we had no liberty.

As glorious as the old covenant was, it brought with it condemnation (2 Corinthians 3:6). The new covenant has a greater glory because it makes us right with God. That is quite a change.

People who read only the writings of Moses have veiled eyes and minds so that they cannot understand the truth. But when they receive Jesus Christ, this veil is taken away (verse 14).

If you are ready for a change, don't keep returning to the things that bound you in the first place. A desired change should cause you to search for a new thing. The truth is that our new change will come only when we believe in God's beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

The opposite of bondage is liberty, freedom, and restoration. What does His liberty mean to those who believe on Jesus? It means freedom from restraints; it does not mean lack of discipline. Liberty means citizenship instead of slavery. Liberty gives us a purpose, which is to be a mirror that brightly reflects the glory of the Lord as the Spirit of the Lord works in us to make us more and more like Him and to reflect His glory even more (verse 18).

Dear Father God, I want to thank You that You continued to nudge me by Your Spirit until I realized that I needed a change. I had church: I had the socially respectable part of religion. I even had a relationship with You, but it was ever so limited. Your truth demanded a change, and I was ready to make one with Your help. I honor You today for showing me the purpose and plan You had for me from the very beginning. Help me convey this to the world both with Your words and by my actions. Since I am Your reflection, Lord Jesus, my desire is to show You in all of Your glory as I am led by the Spirit, who causes the glory in the first place. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

IMPACTO DE DIOS

Vision Fulfilled

In June, ten Hispanic pastors approached the pastors of Redeeming Love Christian Center in order to rent the facility for the purpose of conducting a meeting. "Never having done this," Pastor Sarah stated, "we prayed. The Lord said, 'Don't rent it. Allow them full use for their campaign.' To God be all the glory for the souls saved, the bodies healed, and the lives changed for good by the impact of this campaign."

On August 28 through 30, 2006, more than 6,000 persons gathered at Redeeming Love Christian Center in Nanuet, New York to receive from the Holy Spirit under the ministry of Jose Joaquin Avila, better known as Yiye Avila, one of the most famous and respected evangelists in Latin America. The music and Gospel preaching during this powerful event were conducted entirely in the Spanish language. Over the course of three nights, a total of 402 conversions to Christ were recorded. Hundreds also reported being healed by the power of God.

The deeper significance of this event, however, was in its fulfillment of the prophecy delivered through founding Pastor Clinton H. Utterbach twenty years ago. In that prophecy, Pastor Clinton declared that the aisles of RLCC would swell with people coming forward to receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. He described the image of the circle-shaped auditorium as resembling the hub of a wheel, with each aisle filled and flowing to the central area in front.

It was indeed a landmark moment, which fulfilled the word of the Lord on many levels. "When Clinton spoke the words of that prophecy in 1985," Pastor Sarah said, "we thought we knew how that would transpire. But God didn't say the people filling the aisles to receive salvation would be members of RLCC, He simply said He would send the people. And, they did indeed come. I've learned not to add my interpretation to any word of the Lord, just simply wait and see how He will choose to bring it to pass. It will always be as He



**Above:
As Captured on Video**

said, not necessarily how we interpreted it to be."

Additionally, this event occurred as the 25th year of RLCC was drawing to a close and the 26th anniversary of the church and ministry would be

celebrated only days afterwards. That, too, was significant in that it demonstrated the change in seasons—the endings and beginnings—and the timing of God's purposes for RLCC being made manifest.

Be as Smart as a Dove

Genesis 8:8 (KJV)—*Also he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground.*

In recent times I have wondered, “How did Noah know to send out a dove to help him determine the water level following the flood?” Doves have represented the presence of God and His Holy Spirit. We know that because we have the Bible. But Noah had no written directions in front of him.

Mom and Dad cripple their offspring by not training them to depend on the Lord.

Doves and turtledoves were the only clean birds used for sacrifice. When Noah used one, he was cutting into his supply for sacrifice. This dove was smart. It returned the first time because it could find

no rest for the sole of its foot (Genesis 8:9). It was smart enough to come home. After seven days, it went out again scouting the territory. This time it returned with an olive leaf, which indicated to Noah that things were beginning to grow. I’d like to think that was its way of showing appreciation for the care Noah had provided.

After seven more days, it left again, never to return because it was now able to provide for itself. No longer did it have to depend on others. Noah neither mourned that his prize dove was gone, nor criticized it for not returning after it delivered its message through the olive leaf.

Humans have difficulty handling death and an empty nest. Everything else God created helps prepare their young to survive without them. Mom and Dad cripple their offspring by not training them to depend on the Lord. Then, when Mom and Dad are no longer around, their children settle for anything or anyone that appears to do for them what their parents did, only to find that that gets “tired” after a while.

Doves may be harmless, but they are not helpless or hopeless. We must train our young to be as smart as a bird to know when to hold them and when to let them go.

What You Do Can Alter Your History

1 Chronicles 5:1 (NLT)—*The oldest son of Israel was Reuben. But since he dishonored his father by sleeping with one of his father's concubines, his birthright was given to the sons of his brother Joseph. For this reason, Reuben is not listed in the genealogy as the firstborn son.*

Times change, but human nature does not. Many men in the Bible appeared to have zipper problems, just as some men do today.

As the firstborn son of Jacob from the unloved wife, Leah, Reuben was designated to enjoy the privilege and the responsibilities his unique position provided. He was to receive a double portion of father's estate. Yet Reuben lost it all because he—like David, Samson, and David's son who raped his half-sister Tamar—did not control his carnal appetites, because he failed to understand his destiny.

It's a guarantee that covered sins will be exposed.

What will history books write about you and me? Most history books will never record our names. But there is one book that will record our life and times and it is the Lamb's Book of Life. What will it record concerning you?

Though Rachel was the loved wife of Jacob, her first born Joseph was not entitled to the birthright until Reuben forfeited it by failing to control his physical appetites due to his own deluded thoughts about what was rightfully his. As a result, Joseph received the double portion of Jacob's estate when Joseph's own sons were later adopted by his father, Jacob (Genesis 48:20-22).

Have you set in motion negative circumstances because of dumb decision you've made? You and I cannot unscramble the eggs of our past. But as believers we are now complete in Christ. Therefore, we have a responsibility to make wise choices since God has honored us by choosing us to glorify His name.

Are you putting your future at risk by a choice that you are about to make? Quickly confess your sins and turn as far away from them as you can, and run after God and His righteousness. That choice will alter your history in a way you will not regret!

Courage— Take Heart!

Isaiah 35:3-4 (TM)—*Energize the limp hands, strengthen the rubbery knees. Tell fearful souls, "Courage! Take heart! God is here, right here, on his way to put things right and redress all wrongs. He's on his way! He'll save you!"*

Instead of using the power of our words to change things, we have come to tolerate what happens to us. That has weakened our resolve to speak to the mountains in our lives (Mark 11: 23-24). We seldom call things which be not as though they were (Romans 4:17). Too often, we talk about the things that are, when God tells us to take what does not exist in the natural realm

and, using the name of Jesus, bring it from the spiritual into the natural.

God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, of love, and of a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7).

We have been guilty, at times, of ignoring those whose strength appears to be wavering. We are not to criticize, but say to those who appear to be

fearful, "Be strong. Do not fear." Show them the scripture, "God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7). No believer wants to be afraid. Something or someone is binding him or her. Those of us who understand the power in the name of Jesus can change things for them.

While we believers do not have to use our carnal weapons anymore to win any wars against the enemy, we still have to engage in what is often spiritual warfare. So much money has been wasted and too many lives have been lost fighting the war in the Middle East. We, God's people, neglect to enlist in spiritual combat. We forget to get before the Lord and contend with satan for what is the will of the Lord in this battle. There is nothing like over-confidence to weaken one's faith in the Lord to perform that which He has promised, which is always His will.

Look around you. There are brothers and sisters waiting to hear you say, "Be of good courage. Take heart." Wait no longer.

Tennille Coba BECOMES THE BRIDE OF *Bill Rudolph*

Several hundred family and friends gathered to witness Tennille Coba and Bill Rudolph become husband and wife on August 26, 2006.

The bride, daughter of William and Denise Coba, Sr., was led to the Lord at age four by her mother and then joined Pastor Sarah at the altar for prayer.

The elegant wedding ceremony was conducted in the RLCC Nanuet sanctuary, with Pastor Sarah W. Utterbach officiating their exchange of covenant vows.



God Is Not Hiding

2 Chronicles 15:4 (KJV)—*But when they in their trouble did turn unto the Lord God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them.*

It's wonderful to know that in the midst of every trouble we can find God when we look for Him. To me it's even more exciting to know that the One who delivers can also keep or prevent me from trouble if I elect to confer with Him first.

The Hebrew word translated "trouble" here means a tight place. We've all been in a few of those, but notice that any turn toward God to search out His presence in prayer or worship will allow

Him to appear. You may not see Him with your physical eyes when you turn to Him, but your eyes of faith will know that He is present.

**You may not see God
with your physical eyes
when you turn to Him,
but your eyes of faith
will know that
He is present.**

Trouble may still be where you are today. This verse does not say, "They turned from their trouble." It says that they turned to God and sought Him. Picture this: In the middle of a major attack from the enemy, you start to pray and worship God. You

have just now turned to Him, and you are searching out His presence in the middle of this tight spot. No place is ever so tight that we cannot search for God in it.

Precious heavenly Father, forgive us for waiting until we are in the middle of our tight places to seek You. Help us to learn that praying and worshipping You as a way of life will decrease the number of tight places we find ourselves in. During these times of prayer and worship, You come forth to show us what to avoid and what to adjust in order to walk in the victory that Calvary provided for us. I thank You for caring enough to manifest Yourself to me as I seek You, not just what You can and will do for me. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Failing to Recognize the True Treasure

Acts 19:19 (NKJV)—Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver.

Isn't it sad that Judas had as his friend Jesus, who performed the greatest miracles ever simply because He did what He saw His Father do. Jesus did not resort to magic, and there was no book that could teach what He gave freely to all in need. With no respect for Jesus, he (Judas) betrayed Him for only thirty pieces of silver.

Things have not changed much today. Christians are spending "big" money for counterfeits, and "nickel and diming" God. We are failing to recognize the true treasure we have in Jesus Christ. You would not believe how some who say they love the Lord rob Him, and still expect Him to bless them.

There is not one Christian who goes on vacation that expects the landlord or the mortgage company to do without their payment while they are away. But many Christians choose not to mail in their support of the church when they are not in attendance. Yet they want to retain their church membership. Many Christians do not understand that a dime of every dollar they get belongs to Him, and they wonder why their finances and their lives are in such disarray.

**We are failing to
recognize the true
treasure we have
in Jesus Christ.**

Acts 19:20 reads, "So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed." When Jesus, the true Word, is revered, He will grow mightily and prevail in us. Are we allowing Him to grow big within us to match every situation we encounter? Or do we have to locate His whereabouts when we need Him? No, He's always there even when we've denied Him. What value do we place on the living Word—Jesus?

The day will come when magic will not suit your situation. You'll need a miracle. Do you want Jesus to treat you as you have treated Him?

Turn Your Life Around...

A silhouette of a person jumping with arms raised in triumph against a sunset background. The person is in the center, with their arms raised high and legs spread wide. The background is a warm, orange and yellow sunset over a body of water, with a large, dark rock formation visible on the horizon.

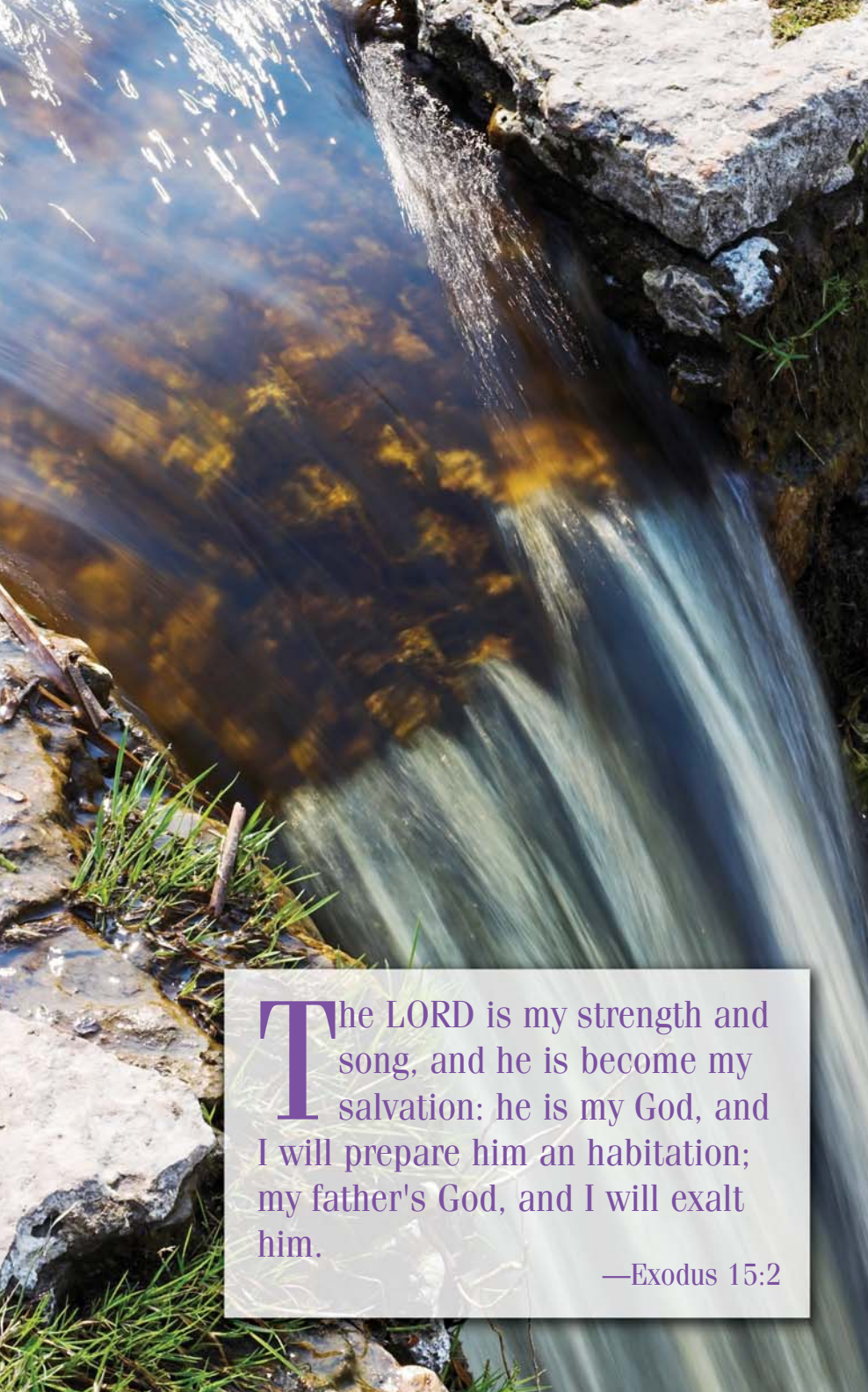
... by submitting your life to Jesus Christ. If you do not recall making a confession of Jesus as your Savior and Lord, we invite you to say the following prayer.

Confessing the prayer marks the beginning of a new life or being “born again” as Jesus explains in John 3:3-6.

Father in Heaven,

I believe that You are God and that Jesus is Your Son. I believe that Jesus died for my sins and that after three days, He arose from the dead. Today I make a quality choice to turn from my past ways. Jesus, I ask You to please forgive me of my sins and I invite you to come into my heart to be Savior and Lord of my life. Make something new of me. Create in me a hunger for Your Word. By Your Spirit lead me to a church where I may gather together with other believers and be taught Your promises and principles accurately and uncompromisingly. I want to fully understand my responsibility and authority as Your child. Thank You for salvation and for the promise of abundant life—spiritually, physically, economically, and socially. Father, I purpose to give Your name the praise, honor, and glory with my words and with my life, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Amen.

Note: If you prayed the preceding prayer, welcome to the family of God! We invite you to contact us so that we can mail you a memento of this important step. We're waiting to hear from you!



The LORD is my strength and
song, and he is become my
salvation: he is my God, and
I will prepare him an habitation;
my father's God, and I will exalt
him.

—Exodus 15:2

No Masterpiece Is Incomplete

Philippians 1:6 (NLT)—*And I am sure that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on that day when Christ Jesus comes back again.*

During my travels throughout Europe and many other countries, I have seen what the world calls “masterpieces”—sculptures, paintings, and edifices. They are truly amazing works of art, but the greatest masterpiece I have ever observed is the Lord’s work in my own life.

Most creative people have one work they consider their masterpiece, and they are best known for that work. God, however, is not limited to just one special work. We can each be His masterpiece by accepting His Son, Jesus Christ, as Lord, Savior, and soon-coming King.

When I think of the goodness of the Lord and His wonders to perform—clothing Himself in flesh, living a sinless life in the earth, dying on Calvary’s tree, going into hell with all the sins and sickness of humankind, rising up from the dead by the power of the Spirit, ascending to the throne of God to take His rightful place, and awaiting the command to return to earth for you and me—I then understand what a true masterpiece is.

How dare we consider quitting our God-given assignments? Sure, it isn’t always easy to lead others and live holy lives, but we don’t have to do it in our own strength.

Paul’s petition for the people he ministered to was that the Father God and the Lord Jesus Christ would give them grace and peace (verse 2). He was always thanking God for them with a full heart because they partnered with him in spreading the Good News about Christ from the first day they heard it. Paul then declared that the One who began this work in them would continue and complete it on the day of Jesus’ return.

You can’t quit today, tomorrow, or ever. You have become a partner with Jesus in spreading the Gospel, and God is not through with you. You are a part of His masterpiece for humankind. God needs you, Jesus needs you, I need you, and so does the rest of the world.

Stand against the spirit of discouragement, in the name of Jesus. Decree and declare that you will allow the Lord to continue and complete in you what He has already begun.

All Do Contrary

Acts 17:7 (KJV)—*Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus.*

There are those who will get upset that we Christians declare that there is One who is the real King and Ruler over all things. He is Jesus Christ. This is contrary to the decrees and laws of the land. When something is contrary, it means it is *opposed* to or *against*.

I thank God that we have a President who is a believer. I thoroughly respect and support the office he occupies, and I'm not against him because he first recognizes his responsibility as a Christian, then his duty as the Chief Executive of this country. However, if he ever abused his office and opposed the teachings of the Bible and became contrary in his choice relative to what I believe according to the Word of God, then I would find myself contrary to the decrees to which he agreed.

**Let's tell the whole world
that there is one King
and He is Jesus Christ.**

The thing which disturbs me is that others, like these people in the lesson, can get so worked up about Christians speaking and acting contrary to what they believe. But we believers stand by and ignore, afraid to proclaim, our faith in spite of the contrary conditions. Know this, everything we believe is contrary to what the world is trying to promote; And, if we are going to follow Jesus, the majority will oppose us.

That's a good thing. If no one is opposing what you're doing as a Christian, you're not doing very much for Christ. It is time we wake up and stand up to be counted as believers. That, my friend, will cause you to be seen as a controversial person. So what! Since the devil and his followers speak out and act out what they believe, why are we holding back from acting out what we believe? They are spreading death. We offer life. So let's tell the whole world that there is one King, and He is Jesus Christ!

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We invite you to visit our website www.redeeminglovecc.org for more information about this exciting broadcast and to learn the times you can listen and, if you like, to call in. A number will be provided for you to call in and speak with Sarah live on the air and to have your own question answered and your need specifically addressed. Or, if you do not wish to be on the air, you will be directed to speak with a prayer partner who will agree with you in prayer according to the Word of God concerning your need.

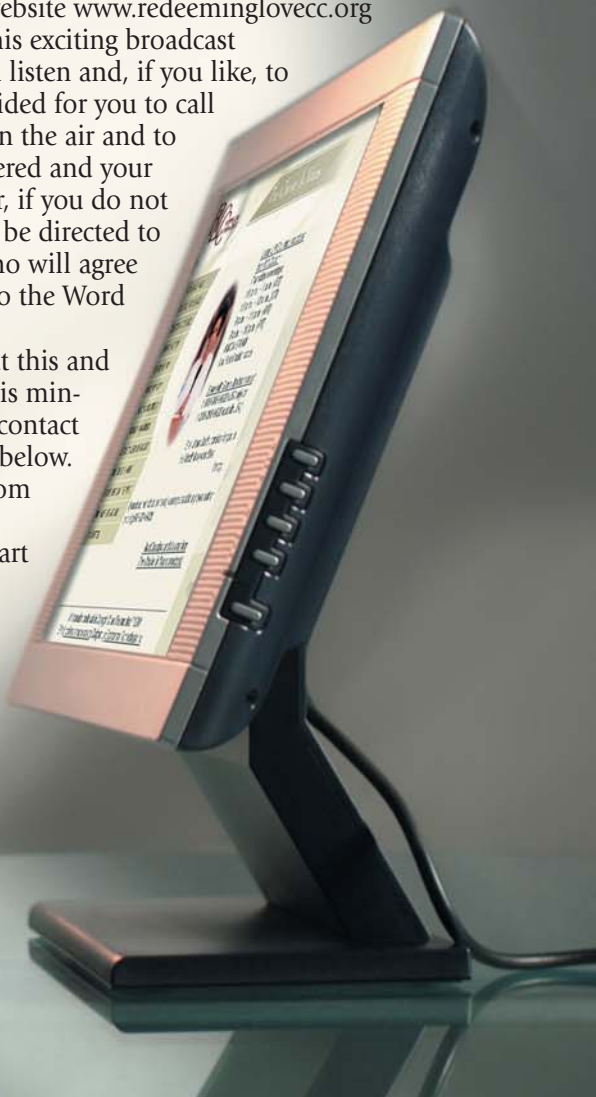
For more information about this and other exciting outreaches of this ministry, log on to our website or contact us at the address and number below. We look forward to hearing from you and to the opportunity to become a vital and uplifting part of your week!

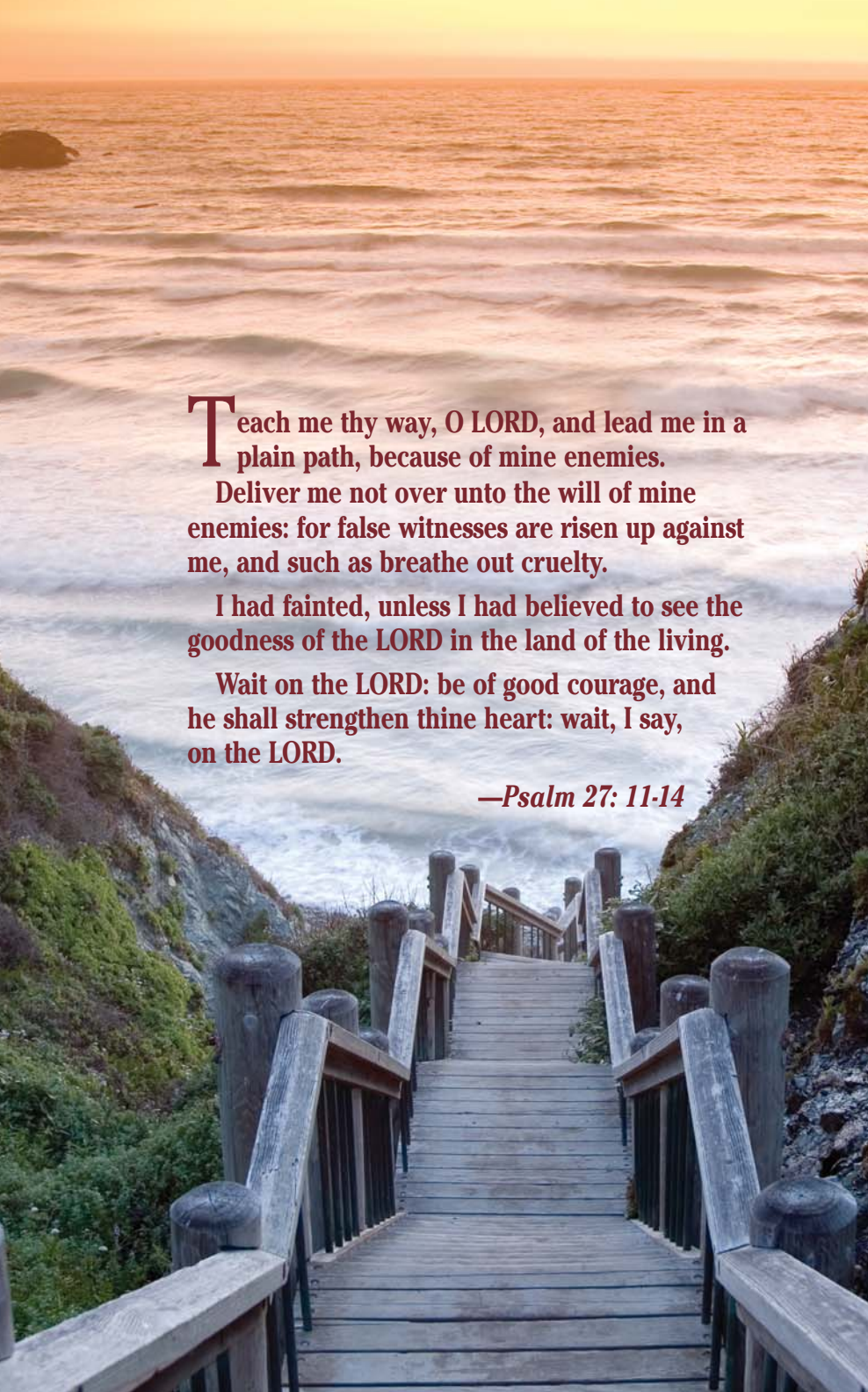
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A wooden staircase with railings leads down a grassy cliff towards the ocean. The sky is a warm orange and yellow, suggesting sunset or sunrise. The water is calm with gentle ripples.

Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies.

Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty.

I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.

Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.

—*Psalm 27: 11-14*

Please Hurry

Psalm 141:1 (NLT)—*O Lord, I am calling to you. Please hurry! Listen when I cry to you for help!*

Imagine asking the One who created everything in six days, the One who has the whole picture concerning everything and everyone, to “speed it up.”

There are times when I wonder how God reacts to some of our prayers. People praying to God to “please hurry” are not praying in faith. They are observing what is clearly visible to their natural eyes and making their request known unto God accordingly.

I am the first one to admit that I don’t enjoy waiting. Like you, I would rather get it now, have it in my past, and move on as rapidly as possible. Looking back on each time I disagreed with God’s delay, I have come to realize that my anxiety and unwillingness to relax did nothing to move the hand of God any faster.

His seeming delay is not a denial; it is His way of cultivating some of the Spirit’s fruit in us so that His power to demonstrate His gifts will be greater in quantity and in quality.

“Please hurry” is no longer a part of my vocabulary with God. Aside from it not working, I have learned that I need the extra time that it takes to finish certain things. Besides, for God to be late according to His plan and His schedule, He would have to disqualify Himself as God.

Do not throw out “please hurry.” You can say it to humans: We often need to hear it because we either don’t see the entire picture or one person’s priority is not our priority.

Have you ever noticed that our prayers of worship, agreement, and thanksgiving never include “please hurry”? We don’t say, “Father, please hurry up and receive our worship, our agreement, and our thanksgiving, in Jesus’ name.”

No, it is only our cry to Him for help that we want expedited. We may not say it, but we’re thinking, “Not only now, Lord, but yesterday would have been even better.”

The next time you pray, make sure your request lines up with His will, His Word to you, and His schedule. Take your eyes off the problem and focus them on the prize. You’ll discover that “please hurry” will not be in your petition.

Refuse to Be Intimidated

Philippians 1:28 (NLT)—*Don't be intimidated by your enemies. This will be a sign to them that they are going to be destroyed, but that you are going to be saved, even by God himself.*

The devil is a bully. Most bullies deceive others into thinking they are more than they are. But all we have to do is refuse to be intimidated by their blustery words, and then they look for other prey.

I was a tiny person growing up and, though I never started a fight, I refused to run from one when tempted to do so. At a very young age, I discovered one of the best ways not to have to fight the whole neighborhood was to beat the boots off the bully or the so-called tough one in the presence of their cronies. Then I could rest until another bully surfaced.

I did not know when I was a child that refusing to be intimidated was a sign to the bullies that they were destroyed and I would be saved. They were not destroyed physically, but their power to bully me was destroyed, which was the same as their being destroyed.

My brother was always my champion growing up. He was the one who taught me this bully-defeating principle. One day, four or five girls surrounded me to fight me. Though I stood my ground, I was scared. My brother suddenly appeared, and I knew he was going to help me—only he didn't (Mother would have "killed" him for hitting a girl). Instead, he said, "You can all fight her—one at a time."

I wanted to tackle him! But I decided I could later at home. At that moment I heard inside of me, "Start with the leader." I obeyed, and, interestingly enough, the others had no heart to fight me once I whipped the leader.

Years later, I realized that my brother was used of God to teach me a principle and to show his confidence in me to win over all, doing it one at a time. I don't have to quote the entire Bible. I only need to quote the Word that is written for that event, occurrence, or attack.

Don't concern yourself with the devil's bullies. You can defeat every bully, too, one at a time. Refuse to be intimidated. Your confidence in your God is a sign to them of their defeat and your victory.

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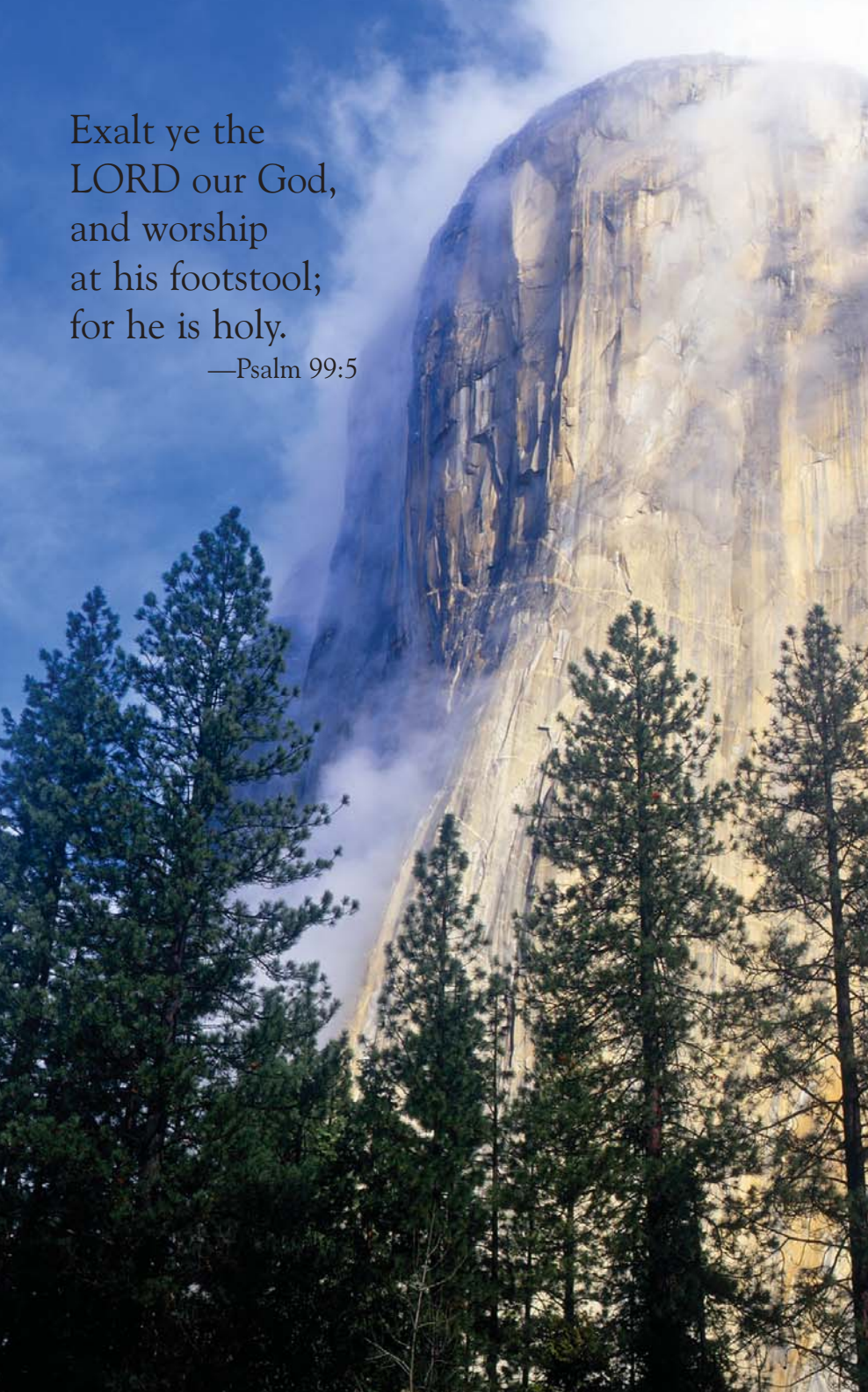
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Exalt ye the
LORD our God,
and worship
at his footstool;
for he is holy.

—Psalm 99:5



God Needs No Defending

Isaiah 37:6 (NLT)—*The prophet replied, “Say to your master, ‘This is what the Lord says: Do not be disturbed by this blasphemous speech against me from the Assyrian king’s messengers.’”*

Hezekiah had received an evil report. Isaiah 37:3 says he was troubled, insulted, and disgraced by the Assyrian king’s words about the limitation of his God. This boastful king had said, “What god of any nation has ever been able to save its people from my power? Name just one! So what makes you think that the Lord can rescue Jerusalem?”

Heathens, sinners, and unsaved people can say anything about your God. So what? Their words do not change who He is and what He has planned for His people. Our God never fails, and He never changes. God does not want us disturbed or reacting to blasphemous words against Him. He is not moved at all by those words. However, He is moved by the words of His children when we speak forth what is already written about Him in His Word.

Never forget your history with the one, true, living God. He loves you, He is for you, and nothing can separate you from Him. There will always be people around you attempting to get you to doubt your God. That is because they don’t know and experience Him in all of His fullness. But you do—and that is enough to sustain you.

What does it matter what others say about your God? They are comparing Him with their gods, who have been defeated. Our God has never been, nor will He ever be, defeated. He was challenged for position by the master of other gods, the devil himself, who found himself falling like lightning from the glory he once enjoyed.

Our God needs no defending. What He is looking for is His people’s continual praise for who He is. So ignore the blasphemous words uninformed and limited humans speak about Him.

In case you have forgotten, He is the One who defends us. He provides for us and shuts the mockers’ mouths.

We often need defending. He never does. Please don’t attempt to reverse the roles. We can’t defend Him. He is unaffected by insults, criticism, and trouble. In fact, He delights to see His people continue in His plan for them, unimpressed with the presence of enemy forces.

Don’t be distracted. God has it all under control.

No One Knows Automatically

Psalm 143:10 (NLT)—*Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God. May Your gracious Spirit lead me forward on a firm footing.*

A great deal of emphasis and money is given annually toward educating children. Some parents sacrifice for years to store up funds for their children's college education. People politic, maneuver, and manipulate to be next in line for their children to attend the most prestigious kindergarten. Somehow, they think that the right school ensures their little one's success.

Oh, they may make the right contacts and network with and become connected with the "who's whos" in this world, but look at their lives. The best words to truly describe some of them are shallow, insecure, and morally bankrupt.

Many think that wealth and the right address somehow represent power. Then, when they're faced with adversity—sickness, substance abuse, tragedy, a turn in the world's economy or their children, whose weddings were society's events of the year, waking up married to a pervert or a psychologically challenged person—it makes their lives a living hell, and they have no answers and nowhere to turn.

What do we believers do when this happens? We should thank God for an opportunity to demonstrate that the wealth of the righteous is laid up for the sinner. What is our wealth? Love, joy, peace, patience, longsuffering, meekness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, the name of Jesus, the gift of salvation, and ...so on.

There is nothing wrong with material wealth, as long as we do not worship or depend on it. It is good to have it and act as channels to let God use it where it is most needed for the good of humankind.

Father, we do not automatically know Your will. After being born again, we must be taught by the Holy Spirit and Your Word what pleases You. The only way to avoid stumbling and pitfalls is to be led by Your Spirit. This is Your desire for us.

We, too, desire to have a firm footing first, so that we can share with others that You are not just a sure "thing": You are the sure One, and a life of real success means moving forward on the foundation of Your Word. Your Word is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our paths, and we thank You.

God's Promises Never Die With People

Joshua 23:14 (KJV)—And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one good thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof.

What a way to go! What could be more satisfying to a leader of people and a servant of God than to know that those whom you loved and taught have received every promise God has made to them?

Occasionally, all of us come under attack and are at risk in one form or another. This is the reason we must hold fast to the profession of our faith without wavering, for He is faithful that promised (Hebrews 10:23). We tell the congregation we pastor that God—not the pastor—is their source. Despite man's best intentions, man's promises may fail.

I recall one time when I promised to teach for a friend who had just begun a new Bible class. Although I had been faithful to teach two previous classes, I completely forgot about my promise and never thought of it until the next day. My point is that I did not keep my promise, though I truly believe God used my unintentional oversight to move me out of the way so my friend could obey what God had told him to do. He would not have if I had shown up. Since then, he has taught, getting people born again on a regular basis.

Unlike people, God will never disappoint us or fail to come through. Good things all come from God. He has promised us only good things. When something other than good tries to come into our lives, we should reject it because we "don't accept packages from strangers"—at least, that's what my mother taught me—and the devil should be a "stranger" to every believer.

Father God is not capable of lying to us. Therefore, every word He promised is already established in the spirit realm. Simply use your faith to draw what you need from the spirit into the natural realm.

Love and enjoy all of the saints of God. But place no confidence in the flesh of men. Turn your face toward Jesus and receive from Him all of your inspiration to achieve your aspirations. People you love may pass on with their promises unfulfilled, but all God's promises are fulfilled in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Worthless and the Wicked

Proverbs 6:14 (NKJV)—*Perversity is in his heart, He devises evil continually, He sows discord.*

Psalm 6:12-14 says that anyone who sows discord is worthless and wicked. A divider's mouth is perverse, for he is a pervert. His calamity shall come suddenly. And just as suddenly, he shall be broken beyond repair (verse 15).

When we hear members of the body of Christ sowing discord in the body, we need to stop and pray for them at once. Why? It is because they have yielded to a spirit that will lead them on a path of destruction from which there is no return. For that reason, we must have compassion on them and pray for them.

We also must examine ourselves daily to make sure that the words we speak about others are not causing division or disharmony. Though we may not have even intended to cause such problems, we must take responsibility for our words and deeds.

We must examine ourselves daily to make sure that the words we speak about others are not causing division or disharmony.

As believers, we are not to conduct ourselves as worthless and wicked people. However, we are to love the dividers, for Jesus shed His blood for them also. We are to ask God to use us to help them become worthy and righteous.

Furthermore, when observing others, we must never give in to an attitude of hopelessness or helplessness. It is infectious. We must remember that our hope is in the Lord and that our help comes from Him.

Heavenly Father, inspire us each day as we come to You for guidance, for when we fail to be led by Your Spirit, we will be controlled by others who may not even know You. We are determined and committed to do what is right. Help us say and do in love what needs to be said and done so our tongues neither divide nor destroy those Jesus died to deliver. We thank You, in Jesus' name. Amen.

He's the One

Deuteronomy 31:8 (NLT)—*Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord is the one who goes before you. He will be with you; he will neither fail you nor forsake you.*

What a promise we find in this verse! Moses knew that his time of service was over. He understood that he was no longer able to lead. Instead of feeling that he was being cast aside or abandoned after many years of obedience to the Lord and service to the Israelites, he accepted the fact that his season had come to an end.

At this transitional stage in his life, Moses was even willing to encourage the hearts of others about the days to come. He spoke for God because he had heard from Him. He shared what the Lord would do concerning the land and also what God expected them to do in order to possess it.

God laid out a specific list of “if yous” to be followed before He said, “I will.” We can relate this to a will. An heir does not automatically gain an inheritance upon a person’s death. Rather, the heir must check out the “if yous” before spending or borrowing against the inheritance. Too often, uninformed people think it is just a matter of someone writing out a check free and clear to them and off they go to the mall, Las Vegas, or Atlantic City. Unfortunately, they forget about inheritance taxes and satisfying debts and liens against the property of the deceased.

Moses clarified to Joshua what God said to expect in His “will.” Then Moses encouraged him to stay with it and hang in there because the Lord was going before him. God was Joshua’s constant companion; He was the victor; and He was totally committed to His people.

You may be facing a lot right now. God did not design your calling and your specific path to overwhelm you or defeat you. God’s gifts carry no grief with them. You are who you are and can be what God had in mind for you to be before you were born. However, He will not address fear in you; neither will He eliminate the spirit of discouragement that seeks to torment you. You are a winner, an overcomer, and a victor in His Word, which abides in you. Now get up and go to possess what He has promised you, because He’s the One on your side.

It Is 'Wise,' Not Size, That Counts

Proverbs 30:24-25 (NIV)—*Four things on earth are small, yet they are extremely wise: Ants are creatures of little strength, yet they store up their food in the summer.*

I have mixed emotions about ants. I am not thrilled to have them as my houseguests, and I would prefer a picnic without their company. However, because I have watched them plan for their future with such commitment and diligence, I don't like killing them. I always feel that I have destroyed a little bit of wisdom when I have eliminated one of these little ones. I can only justify their death by saying, "If I let them live and establish their provisions for the winter, I will have more ant visitors next summer."

The Bible says that ants are small yet extremely wise. They are creatures of little strength, yet they store up their food in the summer.

The message for me in these verses is never to be concerned about my size but to consistently and systematically work at storing up what I need to sustain myself.

Some may say, "That is not trusting God to provide."

I beg to differ. I believe it is, because I am trusting in God, not in my own strength. When I trust Him for what I need, He then gives me the wisdom and the power to stick with the task when others may give up and quit. Although these tasks sometimes appear to be like heaving a loaded car, I have learned to attempt them anyway. And many times, the strength comes once I've put my hands to the task.

Dear Father God, I don't lean to my own understanding, but I acknowledge that You provide me with the wisdom about where the necessary provisions are so that I can find and store them. "Keep falsehood and lies from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the Lord?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God" (Proverbs 30:7-9).

I refuse to consider my size when I think of my future, but I never forget Your size and Your might to meet every need. You, My Father, are wise. I thank You for revealing to me that it is "wise," not size, that counts.

Trust Acquaints You With Him

Nahum 1:7 (NIV)—*The Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him.*

It is difficult to work with people we can't trust. Have you ever stopped to wonder if perhaps God feels the same way about us? Nahum 1:7 says that He does: "...He cares for those who trust in him."

How much of what we expect of God, how much of what we want Him to do for us, is hampered by His being unable to depend on us to trust in Him?

**God's power
is only present
when we totally
submit to Him.**

The Bible says the Lord is good. It says He is a refuge in the day of trouble. It says He is a fortified place of defense on any day of trouble. Adversity, affliction, and distress happen. And there is little, if anything, you and I can do about it. However, knowing that our Lord, our Father, is a fortified place of defense for us during those times of testing should certainly make our atti-

tude about them different.

God knows when we trust Him, and He responds with power. His power is only present when we totally submit to Him. He knows what is best for us, and He wants us to trust Him with our lives. I am convinced that He will move heaven and earth at His pleasure; He will enlist all of the forces of the heavenly realm to perform those things He has promised in His Word to do for us.

Dear Father God, You are awesome, and You have done awesome things in my life. I have never been able to charge You with doing less than good on my behalf. When trouble rears its ugly head to discourage or destroy me, You become my place of refuge, which no force of the enemy is able to penetrate. My desire is to mature in such a way that You can trust me to trust You. This must happen so that I can confidently declare that You really do know me. You introduced me to trust many years ago. Now I know that it was so You would become acquainted with me also. To know You is to both love and trust You; I want You to be able to know—to love and trust—me too.

Truth Is the Language of Love

Ephesians 4:15 (NIV)—*Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.*

The role and responsibility of the pastor-teacher is to prepare God's people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up. Compromise is not a consideration for those called to help the sheep mature to attain the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

I feel sorry for leaders of any kind who are more concerned with popularity and praise than with speaking the truth in love. To tell you what you want to hear instead of what you need to know is inhumane, to say the least.

The winds and waves of false teaching toss us about and blow us in directions we never intended to go. But we're not to remain mere infants; we are to become strong men and women of God who hear and speak truth. And it's the language of love that causes us to grow up.

Ephesians 4:15 says that we are to grow up into Christ. In other words, we are to become like Him. I believe this means that the truth taught in love causes us to develop so much so that the world can't tell the difference between us and Christ.

Jesus always spoke the truth, and He always did it in love. Love does not protect us from truth. Love imparts truth to us, regardless of our feelings, failures, fads, or friends. Why? It's because love knows that truth is the only thing that will make us free. It's the only thing that puts us in control of the winds and waves that toss and blow.

Dear Father God, I thank You for Jesus and His teachings, which have shown me how to adjust my sails when the contrary winds of the enemy's lies blow at me. Your words to me about loving my enemies—doing good to them, blessing them, and praying for them—in order to be identified as Your child, have helped me grow up into Christ. My life is hidden in Christ. He is the Head, and I am His body. His reflection is to be my life to others. His truth is the language of love that I speak and live.

What Follows Have Suffered?

1 Peter 5:10 (KJV)—*But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.*

I am so grateful that one day I read this verse for myself because, until that day, I had only heard ministers address the suffering part. In fact, they hadn't even said that the suffering was for a while. They had implied that the life of a Christian was a guaranteed life of suffering.

I'd had enough of suffering while living for the devil. I needed a change. I needed something better than suffering.

Praise God, I saw a light at the end of my already dark tunnel. I saw that for a while I would suffer, but one day soon it would be over—hallelujah! Then, bless God, He was going to establish me. In other words, He was going to turn me in a direction that would steadfastly set, fix, and confirm me. He was going to strengthen me, not just in my physical body, but in my spirit. He was going to confirm my spiritual knowledge of power. Finally, He was going to settle me. That means He was going to lay a foundation and a substructure to erect within me His holy dwelling place. He was going to lay a basis for my existence. He was going to settle fully my reason for being.

When I discovered this, the suffering—the little painful vexation I had been experiencing—was already over. Although it was actually still present, it was over because my attitude about it had changed. My new attitude of focusing on what God was going to make of me caused me to become numb to the discomfort.

Do you know that when God makes something, it's always good? Just wait and see.

Father, You know exactly where to direct my devotions to discover Your Word for me each day. Your lovingkindness is better than life. With my whole heart, I do praise You. I know this earthly life will include suffering; however, that is not the end of the story. Life according to Your promises anesthetizes me to the pain. And each day, I am more perfect, established, strengthened, and settled as Your child with Your knowledge and Your power. Thank You for teaching me what I need to know, in Jesus' name.

Truth Makes You Prey

Isaiah 59:15 (NIV)—*Truth is nowhere to be found, and whoever shuns evil becomes a prey. The Lord looked and was displeased that there was no justice.*

I know that dishonesty is not new in the earth. However, I grew up hearing and believing the philosophy that “honesty is the best policy.”

Therefore, I am amazed at the ease with which people lie, often without any “good” reason. It almost seems as though people take classes on how best to cheat and lie. The popular thing seems to be to do as much evil as you can get away with.

I can understand why people in the world would do this: They don’t know any better, and they can’t help themselves. However, I can’t understand why Christians often seem to be challenged with the same sin. We do know better. And with Christ in us, we can control ourselves.

Something happens when you and I make a decision to be honest, to tell the truth, and to do what not only is right but beneficial to others.

We need to understand that when we do these things, lovers of evil and darkness see us as prey to devour at will. However, they are sadly mistaken.

When we opt to do what is pleasing to God, truth will be found and justice will take off her blindfold to come to the aid of God’s people. When we conduct ourselves as His disciples in deed, we will know the truth and the truth will make us free (John 8:32).

A truthful person is a free person, and a free person is never at the mercy of the wicked. When we shun evil, evil finds nothing in us to cling to. Truth repels evil. Evil and ugliness cannot get close enough to affect us when we walk in truth.

However, the opposite is true of those who simply do what the crowd is doing. Eagles soar alone, while mere birds travel in flocks.

Father, I’d rather risk becoming prey than to refuse to shun evil. You are not pleased when justice cannot be found. Justice can never be found where truth is conveniently cloaked. Help me pursue truth and shun evil, for without Your help I will be defenseless prey to Your enemy. For Your name’s sake, neither You nor I will allow that to happen.

Boast About This

Jeremiah 9:23-24 (NIV)—*This is what the Lord says: "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the Lord.*

I've seen the wise who take glory in their knowledge do stupid things. I've seen the strong made weak in the presence of their personal passion. I've seen the wealthy lose their money so quickly that it appeared to have wings. Solomon called all of it vanity and vexation of spirit.

It was not until I found myself standing on the balcony of a high-rise apartment building, about to jump off, that I became acquainted with the true value of life.

I used to think poverty was a curse, so I set out to be as rich as I could be. Poverty was not the curse in my life; a lack of peace was the curse. I believed that exchanging an outhouse for a marble bathroom, a ghetto dwelling for a penthouse apartment with a river view, was the way to peace. I had money, furs, diamonds, and luxury transportation—yet I found no inward peace.

I set out to find wisdom. Unfortunately, though, I didn't understand that wisdom is about whom you know, not how much you know. Therefore, with all my seeking, I was still left feeling empty.

The devil took advantage of my ignorance and told me that since nothing was going to make me happy, I should just end it all.

But the God of all comfort intervened: He sent an angel on assignment to ring the doorbell as I was about to take the plunge. That little distraction saved my life. I made a vow to God that I'd never get to that state again, and I didn't.

Father, the only wise God, I thank You for introducing me to the true values of life. I was so busy collecting and accomplishing things that I didn't realize all of it was subject to change. Without understanding who You are and what You provide, I can have no peace. Today I can boast about You in my life because I am no longer ignorant of your truth.

Help me, dear Lord, help others to establish priorities that are pleasing in Your sight. You delight in my finding Your peace, whether in poverty or prosperity.

According to the Will of God

1 Peter 4:19 (NIV)—*So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.*

Suffering is not a choice anyone in a right frame of mind would make. I know I am not making any appointments to suffer for so many days or hours. In fact, I plan to avoid as much suffering as I possibly can.

However, life has taught me that suffering is going to visit me whether I invite it or not. The difference between the way I handle it now and the way I handled it in the past is my attitude. Now I establish my attitude on my relationship with God.

If suffering occurs in the midst of my doing good, my attitude says, "Father, I commit myself to You, and I will not react or respond to the suffering that has surfaced to throw me." When I have committed no criminal offense and I have abstained from meddling in the affairs of others, then I accept that what I am experiencing pertains to God's purpose or decree.

I am no longer surprised when these usually painful experiences and feelings occur in my daily life. When I have examined myself to ensure that I have not contributed to, or given place to, the suffering and the attacks that come just because I am a Christian, the force of joy comes on me. Instead of crying or complaining, I consider myself blessed. First Peter 4:14 says, "If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you."

When I know it is God's pleasure for me to suffer in this manner, pain and anxiety never accompany the suffering. Instead, so much peace and power infuse me that it has to confuse the enemy forces arrayed against me.

Father God, You know how to bring glory to Your name through me, and You know how much I can handle. I would make life as easy and as comfortable as I could, but then Your grace and mighty power would have no opportunity to manifest in my life. When I am mistreated, misunderstood, and abused and I choose to continue to do good, I invite Your presence. Then You bring me relief, even if the circumstances haven't changed.

Who's at the Controls?

Romans 8:9 (NIV)—*You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.*

One of the reasons we need to become Spirit-filled is so that we are constantly controlled by the Spirit of God, who, by the way, is not renting a portion of space in us—He has come to live in us. When I used to rent an apartment, I did not have full use of the entire building. When I live in a house, though, I expect to occupy every inch of it. That's how the Spirit intends to live in us.

However, our flesh does not want to relinquish control of us. As long as we allow it to live, it is in control. When Christ lives in us, though, our bodies—our carnal nature—die to sin. Yet at the same time, our spirits live because of Christ's Spirit in us.

But that's not all. If the Spirit of God is in us, God also gives life to our mortal bodies, just as He raised Christ's body from the dead. Sin is the only thing that must die because of God's Spirit in us. In fact, every atom, every cell, every capillary, every tissue in our bodies is expected to live once Christ enters.

Sickness and disease are everywhere, and they are real—especially to a body that is out of control because of a sinful nature. However, sickness and disease are not of God, and since they are not good and perfect gifts that come down from the Father above (James 1:17), who changes not, I am going to resist them, as well as all mental, financial, and social attacks.

With the help of the Holy Spirit in me, I expect to oppose and render ineffective all evil. Sickness and disease are evil in nature, and I will continually remind my Father that Jesus prayed that He would keep me from the evil one (John 17:15).

God is the only One who can do it. And since He can't change, He *will* do it—and in a timely fashion.

Father, I thank You that Your Spirit in me keeps me alive and functioning when the devil tries to change my course. He cannot move me, for Your Spirit is the only One I allow at the controls.

To Him That Believeth

Romans 4:5 (KJV)—*But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*

Righteousness is one thing that we don't have to work for. If salvation came by works and not by faith, then only the strong in body could be saved.

However, God made it equitable for all—the mighty, the fragile, the old and tried, the juvenile and innocent—to obtain righteousness. Believing is the one and only way to get to the Father, to have the life of Christ, and to be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.

So many religions and denominations teach that you can have this special life with far-away, unique, supernatural being by doing or giving so much of this or that. But that is not so. I choose to believe that the messengers of this fallacy are uninformed rather than deliberately perpetrating a hoax on their fellow humans.

False teachers and false prophets are certainly in the world today deliberately spreading lies. However, some people are simply teaching the untruths they have been taught themselves. And the sad part is that they believe them.

My husband and I decided early on to keep open dialogue with others who do not share their faith exactly the way we did, because to shut them out was to eliminate the possibility of helping them know the truth. We have taken on the Spirit of Jesus, which is to be exposed to all so that others can hear, but at the same time to be convinced that our anchor holds on to the truth that has brought us this far.

Father God, according to Your Word, You require us to be perfect as You are perfect. This includes loving the ungodly as You love them. You have not required us to imitate them or to accept what they have to say. You just want us to love them and trust Your Holy Spirit to lead us, guide us, and work with us as we continue in Your call on our lives. We are to tell everyone that they cannot earn what they need with their works and their gifts. Salvation and righteousness are Your gifts to them when they simply believe that You alone can and will do the job.

Who Is Your Supplier?

Philippians 4:19 (KJV)—...*My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*

One of the first things people need to know is who their resource, or their supplier, is. Babies quickly discover that their fingers and fists don't satisfy them when they are hungry; only milk will do the job. Likewise, a person in business knows where to get the products to sell. A substance-abuser even knows where to get the next fix. How much more should I as a Christian know where my supply of whatever I need comes from?

Notice the first words of Philippians 4:19 are "my God." Since He is my God, then surely He shall supply all I need. The likelihood of the Father ignoring His own child is nil.

God is my supplier in everything.

God is willing and able to make all grace abound toward you and me, but His grace has a purpose. It is so that you and I will always have all sufficiency in all things; it is so that we may have abundance for every good work.

God is my supplier in everything, but His supply is not just for personal profit. It's for me to be able to get involved in every good work. "Every good work" is whatever God impresses me to do at any time.

One of the advantages of being a debt-free ministry is that when floods, famines, and acts of the devil occur, God can and will speak to His people to step in to ease the pain and suffering of His hurting children. This world may give to organizations in times of disaster, but usually the bulk of what is given never gets to the people who need it the most.

Despite what happens in the world around us, though, we the people of God must trust in Him for every need to be met—not only for our own benefit but also for the purpose of abounding in every good work for His glory.

Father, thank You for providing for us wisdom to know what to do with what You have made available so that Your name will be praised among the people. You are a good God, and we love You. We praise You and say that the Most High God has performed these great things for us, His people.

Ye Are They Which Have Continued

Luke 22:28 (KJV)—*Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations.*

Many of the people who were in the first membership class at our church are still with us today. They know what it means to “continue.”

Today many people are “interested,” but the number of people who want to “continue” seems to be declining. “Continue” means *to stay constantly in being or relation; to remain.*

At times God requires change, and when He speaks, His children should obey. But I’ve found that each time God has asked my husband and me to make a change, He has also prepared others involved to recognize it. Sometimes these people understood only later.

For example, two of our former pastors would have preferred that we remain at their church, but they both recognized God’s call and now honor what God is doing through our ministry.

One of these pastors fell asleep in Jesus this year, but to the very end, our relationship was intact. We would have done anything for each other because what was really valuable to us remained.

Our other former pastor has allowed us to share from his pulpit on a couple of occasions. We also have been used of God to bless him with something that, had we not obeyed God, we would not have been able to give him and our former church family. Our relationship is very much intact. In fact, it may be better than it ever was.

In Luke 22:28, Jesus was commending His disciples for continuing with Him even in His temptations. All of us are used to having the crowds and the well-wishers hang around us when things are going well for us. But where are the crowds and the well-wishers when temptation and hard times come?

In times like these, it is really easy to distinguish between the groups of which you can either say, “Ye are they which continued,” or, “I’ll see you around sometime.”

Precious Father, we thank You for giving us a heart to continue in whatever You call us to do. Our desire is to be counted always with those who are pleasing in Your sight. Our reward for continuing will be to know the truth that shall make us and keep us free. You, Lord Jesus, are our example.

Body Armor

1 Thessalonians 5:8 (NLT)—*But let us who live in the light think clearly, protected by the body armor of faith and love, and wearing as our helmet the confidence of our salvation.*

Biochemical and nuclear weapons, heat-activated missiles, and stealth bombers—these are no more than names to me. “The Lord protects me from danger—so why should I tremble?” (Psalm 27:1, NLT). “For I will not trust in my bow, nor shall my sword save me. But You have saved us from our enemies, and have put to shame those who hated us” (Psalm 44:6-7, NKJV). “But I am trusting you, O Lord, saying, ‘You are my God!’ My future is in your hands...” (Psalm 31:14-15).

Someone may ask, “Aren’t you aware of what’s going on around you? People are dying from this or from that, from chemicals that are invisible to the naked eye.” Dying people are not news. Every day that I have lived, people have died around me. Every person born in this world will someday, and in some way, die and depart from this same world.

Since I have accepted death as a conclusion for living, I don’t even think about my departure. Though my days here on earth are numbered, I will live forever, according to 1 John 2:17, (NKJV): “...he who does the will of God abides forever.”

One thing I am confident of is that I am doing the portion of God’s will assigned to me. It does not really matter when my departure season will be; it just matters that I know where I am going—and that excites me.

The world is looking for tranquility and security here. “For when they say, ‘Peace and safety!’ then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief” (1 Thessalonians 5:3-4, NKJV).

God promises those of us living in the light clear thoughts and bodies armored in faith and love to protect us and give us hope of salvation.

Join me today in refusing to fear bad news, and decide to confidently trust the Lord Jesus Christ to care for you. It matters not that you will die. All of us will. What’s important is that you live now and forever with your hope in God.

The Gift of Victory

1 Corinthians 15:57 (KJV)—*But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Victory is a gift. It is not what we achieve or acquire because of what we display as skill, talent, and ability. What is this victory that Paul says we have through our Lord Jesus Christ? It is mostly our attitude about life.

Many who surround us will express their opinions about what we should say, think, and feel in any given situation. They are entitled to their opinions, but what they think or believe should in no way affect us or our choices.

People are so programmed to follow traditional, popular, and comfortable routes that they seldom question what they are doing. We shouldn't think of ourselves as rebellious when we refuse to go along with what the crowd is doing if they have no good, biblically sound reason for it.

Here is just one natural example of a rule that many people have chosen to follow based on man-made traditions. In certain parts of the South, when a funeral procession is passing by, the cars coming toward the procession are expected to stop and remain still until the last car in the procession has passed. Though such a rule may intrude on an individual's daily schedule, tradition mandates compliance.

Whether we acknowledge them or not, we all have reasons for the choices we make. Ask yourself why you do what you do. Are you serving the Lord or the church because of your commitment to Christ, or are you following in the tradition of your family and friends?

God did everything with a purpose and a plan. Idle, unimportant things were not the priority of the day to God. He made us to be productive and useful to His kingdom.

God not only wants us to receive His gifts, He also wants us to give them away. I am grateful to receive His blessings of health, wealth, and peace of mind. However, the joy of being used by God to bless others with His gifts is indescribable.

Now that we have received the gift of victory, let us go forth in the liberty wherein we are made free. Others are watching how and what we are doing with it. They, too, want that gift. Let's show them the way to the Giver.

Strength and Peace Are Gifts

Psalm 29:11 (NLT)—*The Lord gives his people strength.
The Lord blesses them with peace.*

Strength and peace are gifts from the Lord to us, but they do not come wrapped in pretty paper and bows. They are intangible.

Where did they originate, and how do we receive them? Several verses in Psalm 29 tell of the Lord's spoken words; they tell us that God's words carry power, majesty, wisdom, and might. Therefore, I perceive that strength and peace come to God's children when they hear His voice and decide to act on what He says. This, of course, begins with accepting His Son, the Prince of Peace.

Temptation, attacks, tragedy, and potential lack are all common to man. Everyone is on the devil's hit list, but God is faithful. He will not allow His people to suffer beyond what they are able to bear, but He will show them a way of escape while they go through the middle of those things (1 Corinthians 10:13).

How do we remain strong and peaceful in the middle of life's shipwrecks? We listen for and obey the voice of God.

You may say, "But I don't know the voice of God." If that's the case, get into what He has already spoken. It's in your Bible. Don't try to hear His still, small voice until you train yourself to follow His written voice.

There is nothing quite like standing on the promises of God and living by faith in His written Word. It will require you to reevaluate some things in your life. For example, do you have controlling family and friends who require you to give more and do more than you're comfortable with? When you find yourself regretting and resenting people in your life, it is usually a sign that their demands are more than God requires.

Are you neglecting things and people God made you responsible for so that you can do for others who have chosen to take on responsibilities God has not assigned to them? God supports and provides for what He requires of us.

Strength and peace are gifts to all of God's children. We can only enjoy them, though, when God's voice is louder and clearer than the other voices around us. Choose today whom you will listen to.

Your Next Meal Comes From God

Psalm 136:25 (NLT)—*He gives food to every living thing.
His faithful love endures forever.*

Because God provides His creation with food, we can comfortably say that starvation is not from God.

Before I sold out completely to the Spirit of Christ in my life, my finances were depleted several times. But I cannot remember a day in my life when I have gone hungry. Why? It is because He gives food to every living thing.

As long as I am alive, I expect to be fed and provided for by God. His Word says that anyone who does not care for his own family is worse than an infidel (1 Timothy 5:8). Our Father must do for His own what He has required of others.

God may use your boss, your family, and your friends to bless you. However, they are not your source. God is.

"Give us this day, Lord, our daily bread." We need to stop trying to get our grocery lists filled all at once. After all, we can only consume one meal at a time, and God has promised us our next meal.

We serve a God who has promised us food as long as we live. We need to thank Him for that abundant supply. As we choose to believe it, we will have it with thanksgiving.

Your next meal may not be steak, lobster, or pheasant under glass. Your stomach does not care. It just wants to be fed. Since you shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4), make sure your palate is not dominating you. Ask God to create in you a hunger for His Word; then feast on it until all other appetites seem mundane in comparison.

Now, remember, you don't eat if you don't work (2 Thessalonians 3:10). Some people ask God to provide natural food and ignore the need to be gainfully employed. Believe God for a job, then for the wisdom to manage the 90 percent of the money remaining after the tithe. Never allow government subsidies to rob you of your initiative to work. You'll be surprised how much better God provides when you are willing to work.

Trust God, do His Word, and your stomach will be filled.

Vote for Man—Trust in God

Hosea 10:3-4 (NIV)—“...But even if we had a king, what could he do for us? They make many promises, take false oaths and make agreements....”

I have lived through the administration of ten United States presidents, and I believe it is the civic duty of every Christian to vote according to one's conscience. However, as I reflect on who has made a difference in my life, I realize that God alone has worked one miracle after another for my good.

Titus 1:2 (NKJV) says, “...God, who cannot lie, promised....” Trusting and depending on Him and His promises is the only way to walk in wisdom and victory.

Humans make promises and fail to keep them. They take false oaths and make agreements they have no intention of keeping.

The office of the president is considered the most powerful, coveted position a man or woman can have. However, regrettably, I have lived long enough to hear comments and jokes made about the leaders of our nation that could not have been imagined in the not-too-distant past.

That has not been all bad, because it has forced the people of God to revisit some things and make quality decisions to return to the motto “In God We Trust.” What we are left with is reverence for God, respect for the faithfulness of His Son, and total dependence on the Holy Spirit to aid in time of need.

After Hurricane Floyd hit our area in 1999, my husband and I spent several hours one day working nonstop to keep the water from entering our garage. Left unchecked, the water would have caused serious damage to the carpet and furniture in our basement. When we physically could do no more, the power went out, and we could no longer pump water electrically. We committed the rest to the Lord—not to the government, the police, or the fire department—and walked away. Not another drop of water came under our garage door, though the rains continued into the night.

Father God, You are the one and only. You are faithful to Your children, and You provide for and protect those who call on Your name in peacetime, so that challenges and crises present them with no concern. You set up and depose kings. You give wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning. I thank and praise You, my God and Father.

Stay Away From Them

Romans 16:17 (NLT)—*And now I make one more appeal, my dear brothers and sisters. Watch out for people who cause divisions and upset people's faith by teaching things that are contrary to what you have been taught....*

The church has been so busy overlooking things in an effort to walk in love that Christians have forgotten to obey scriptures like this one, which requires them to watch out for and avoid certain people.

For example, Paul said in Titus 3:10 to avoid a heretic. Instead, we as believers have often listened to their divisive words, entertained them, allowed them in our homes, and maintained close relationships with them—because “after all, they are in the family of God.” However, the Bible says such people have forsaken the truth. They are not only sinning, but they condemn themselves and “...shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:21, KJV).

Division is the work of the flesh. Divisive heretics are unproductive and unfruitful. Heretics usually are not out in the open with what they do. They put on a façade so they can prey on unsuspecting individuals and small groups.

Paul said, “...there must be divisions among you so that those who are right will be recognized!” (1 Corinthians 11:19).

How can we distinguish between the approved ones and the dividers? Our job is to listen to what people say. Anyone who is not speaking words to bring the church together in unity and harmony—anyone who is always prompting others to quit or leave a fellowship—is a heretic to be avoided.

If it is time for you to make a change, you don't need a disgruntled, critical so-called saint to advise you. The Holy Spirit is the only One qualified to tell you when and where to go.

According to Paul's teaching, this is how we are to approach dividers: After warning them twice, leave them to themselves (Titus 3:10). Decide to tell the dividers in your midst that if they continue after two warnings, you will do what you have to do. You probably won't have to do much, because if they won't receive the warning, they will probably avoid you. You'll be no fun to play with anymore.

You Do Well to Heed

2 Peter 1:19 (NKJV)—*And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.*

Though Peter heard God's voice from heaven validating Jesus as God's beloved Son, and though he was privileged to see Jesus transfigured, nothing was as sure as the inspired Word of God that the prophets had already proclaimed and recorded for our future benefit.

Peter says that when we find ourselves in dark places, the preached and written Word is a light to show us the way through and out. This light will continue until the day when Christ appears and His brilliant light shines in our hearts.

In other words, when we pay attention to and seriously receive the spoken and written Word of God as our way of life, we will never find ourselves without illumination in moments of darkness. Notice, the darkness will occur, but its effect will be diminished by the light we receive from God's Word. We do well to heed.

Friend, we are in the last days. The darkness is increasing all around us, and some continue to walk according to ungodly lust. First Timothy 4:1 says that there will be days when even those who were once enlightened will depart from the faith and listen to deceiving spirits and doctrines of devils.

But this is not so for us when we choose to accept that God's Word is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. We cannot prevent the darkness from coming, but the darkness cannot put out our lamp lit by our preaching and practicing His Word.

The apostle Paul taught us to put on the armor of God with all of its pieces. Some of us have failed to see that the armor does more than just cover us; it is the light for us in all dark places (Romans 13:12).

However, we must cast off the works of darkness. The light of the armor does not shine for those of us who still want to do our little dirt in the flesh. No, the night is far spent. The day is at hand for those who follow the dictates of the Spirit and heed the prophetic words of God and the teaching of His truth in order to keep our lights turned on.

What Happened?

Jeremiah 2:21 (KJV)—*Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?*

Can God recognize us as His children? When the world observes us, do they see us or Him?

In the verse above, we see that God was pretty upset with Israel and He was not biting His tongue. In verse 2 (NIV), He said to Jerusalem, "...I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the desert, through a land not sown."

When did the "honey" leave the honeymoon? God did not miss it when He made a covenant with Abraham and the nation of Israel. Neither did He make a mistake when, by His divine intelligence, He wooed you to Jesus.

Years ago a woman said to me, "I hope that three years from now, you are still as excited and hungry for the Lord as you are today." I couldn't imagine myself or anyone else not loving the Lord and being excited about being saved.

Since then, however, I have watched many become indifferent. What happened? I don't believe that it was any one thing, and it certainly did not happen all at once.

It was most likely what I refer to as the "lobster boil." Occasionally, I would visit our local fish market and bring home two live lobsters. I'd put them in my largest pot filled with cold water, which they were thrilled about, and placed it on the stove. Then I put the top on and turned the flame up full blast. The water gradually heated up, which the lobsters enjoyed. And by the time they realized it was too hot, they were too weak to even thrash about. Shortly thereafter, my husband and I would enjoy a scrumptious meal.

When did we Christians get in the pot of discontentment and apathy? When did we stop being excited about the songs of heaven, the Cross, and His blood? God planted us as a noble vine. We are seed of highest quality.

Don't despair; it is not too late. Come as a little child would, humble before the mighty hand of God. He still wants to exalt you. He loves you, and His plan for you has never changed. It has only been delayed. Let me be the first to welcome you home.

Because

Galatians 4:6 (NLT)—*And because you Gentiles have become his children, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, and now you can call God your dear Father.*

Before we received Jesus Christ as our Savior, the thought of calling God “Father” never entered our minds. Without Jesus in our hearts, it wasn’t even an option for us. It took an “act of God” to provide us with that privilege.

Because God sent the Spirit of Christ into your heart, you can confidently do and say many things that you were reluctant to before. Therefore, if shyness is still plaguing you, remember that the same Spirit of Christ that is in you to cause you to boldly say, “God is my dear Father,” is there to aid you in whatever else you need to say or do.

Shyness did not come from God. It is not your personality or nature. If it were from God, if it were a part of your nature, you would be content with it and you wouldn’t long to be like someone else.

No, what you call “shyness” is really a spirit of timidity, and its author is the devil. It is designed to make you shrink back from responsibility and to limit your ability to receive God’s blessings.

I am not implying that you have to act like a bull in a china shop. However, I am strongly suggesting that because the Spirit of God’s Son is in you, you should ask for the Holy Spirit’s help in claiming and walking in all that His presence in you has provided. He will back you, but you have to initiate what you want to say or do. It’s another step of faith.

Don’t be concerned if you have a dry mouth, a constricted throat, or heart palpitations. These often occur when you are about to be blessed abundantly in ways that are unfamiliar to you.

Because you have the Spirit of God’s Son in you, you are no longer limited to or lacking in confidence and boldness. He gave you salvation. Why would He withhold anything else from you (Romans 8:32)? He wouldn’t!

I challenge you to go for the gold today. Take back all that satan has stolen from you, because you have the Spirit of God’s Son dwelling in you. That makes you His child, a sure victor in every situation.

A Confirmed Covenant

Isaiah 49:10 (NIV)—*"They will neither hunger nor thirst, nor will the desert heat or the sun beat upon them. He who has compassion on them will guide them and lead them beside springs of water."*

A recent drought and record heat wave occurring all over the United States caused meteorologists and those lacking understanding of their covenant some serious concern. In the midst of it, I was delighted to be reminded of promises like Isaiah 49:10 and Philippians 4:19, which hold me very steady when things in the natural are challenging. I never concern myself with having enough food or water, because God provides both to sustain me while I continue to be faithful and fruitful.

In the midst of this recent drought, I scheduled a family vacation for the following month in Palm Desert, California. Some said I should have my head examined for scheduling our vacation then, but I knew that the One who has compassion on me had guided me to schedule the vacation for that place and for that time. Therefore, I did not expect me or my family to be affected negatively by the heat or the sun while we were in the desert.

The lack of rain does not concern me. Confidence in my confirmed covenant is what I must stay focused on at all times. I am never sure where the food, the water, or the shade will come from, but I know beyond a shadow of doubt who provides and directs me to the provisions.

Father, today I acknowledge that all my help comes from You, and You are always timely. I thank You that I can boldly say I have never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread (Psalm 37:25).

Famines, droughts, and disasters of all types come, but they shall not come near me. When I was seven years old, You promised to supply my daily bread, and You have for these many years. I am grateful. Considering Your track record with me, to not trust You would be to insult You and to see You as an infidel who fails to provide for his household. But I know I can trust You, for I have a covenant with You. And that covenant is firm because You have repeatedly confirmed every promise You have made to me personally. Thank You again, in Jesus' name. Amen.

You Just Don't Know

Mark 13:32-33 (NKJV)—*"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is."*

On July 22, 1999, people all over the world—especially in the United States—observed the memorial service scheduled for John F. Kennedy Jr.; his wife, Carolyn; and her sister Lauren Bessette. How could they, or anyone else, have known a week before that they would be killed in a plane crash? People know that everyone is going to die. But few, if any, prepare for a thirty-

eight-year-old, a thirty-three-year-old, and a thirty-four-year-old dying. Yet it happens, and not always tragically.

**Since death comes
to all, who am I
to ignore it
as though it can't
come near me?**

My youngest son was turning thirty-six when this tragic event occurred, and for the first time, I seriously thought about the possibility of something tragic happening to him. Since death comes to all, who am I to ignore it as though it can't come near me?

The whole tragic matter of the Kennedy plane crash made me aware of a stronger desire and commitment not only to show my love to those dear to me but also to tell everyone I meet about Jesus. God has not revealed to the angels or His Son the time of the end; neither do we know when our ends will occur. We just don't know.

I don't believe God causes tragic things to happen to cause us to fall asleep in Christ. Nevertheless, tragic things happen to sinners and saints alike. The key is where we report to when they occur.

Forgive others, ask others for forgiveness, and clean up loose ends—because you just don't know.

Dear Father, You do not curse Your children, and You do not create catastrophes that cause their deaths. But You have allowed Your beloved Son to be crucified to provide access again to You for all people who will believe. Now You are leading by Your Spirit all of us who are called Your children to live victoriously here in the earth and to avoid pitfalls when we follow that leading. Since today could be the final day for any one of us, remind us to contact those we love and tell them we love them.

Awaken Me, O Lord

Awaken me, O Lord, for I will not step beyond Your call to me to the deep recesses of my heart. I must begin to start.

There is much to be done, and I know it is true that You are searching for those whose commitment to You exceeds the comfort and care that this world often provides. Under Your wings and in Your love I do hide, not from evil, for it is everywhere, but for the strength and hope of knowing that You are there to give me direction and guidance unknown by those who have not yet had a glimpse of Your throne.

I believe the Lord is saying, "Rest sometimes is needed, but it should not be overdone. There are souls out there still needing to be won to Christ, who willingly gave His life.

"Tell one, tell all, they need to be saved from the clutches of satan before their day in the grave. The enemy does not want them to know they are already made free. But, you, go tell them now of Calvary's tree. I give you the gift of an evangelist's tongue. Speak that which you know. Leave out not even one. Your path will cross many whom I have sent to hear My message of life. That message is meant to make corrections and changes they thought could never be. It's not about them; it's all about Me.

"So go forth in boldness, go forth in My power, go forth in faith, for this is the hour. I have called you to say what I have taught you and spoken to you each day.

"There has always been a purpose. There has always been a plan for My holy words to be shared with each and every man. The women and children, too, need to hear that the day of My coming is soon; it is near. Hesitate no longer in what you must do. Go proclaim everywhere Jesus' reflection in you. I charge you: Now go. Wait for no one to agree, and let it be that because you heard, you must obey and see. I'm depending on you, so begin now. Today."

Yield Your Instruments

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

Are you shocked to know that neither God nor the devil is in control of your life? You are in control of your life, and I am in control of mine. When I discovered that God wasn't going to make me live righteous and that the devil could not make me sin, I had to assume responsibility for what was going on in my life.

Yes, my body is most certainly the temple of the Holy Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 3:16), but it is my choice—and it is your choice with your body—either to respect that temple or to desecrate it.

God woos us by His Spirit and His Word to act as if resurrection is a reality in our lives. However, we can choose instead to act as if we are still dead.

Yet to choose the latter is really sad. To be dead is pitiful, but to be alive yet still functioning as a dead person is tragic.

And no one can take the credit or the blame for either choice except the one who makes that choice.

Each of my body parts is a tool, a utensil, or an instrument that I can use to cooperate with God's plan for my life. However, I can choose to use each of those same instruments to cooperate with satan's plan for my life.

God's plan for my life is good. His thoughts toward me are good, but He needs my cooperation to pull them off. Satan, the thief, plans to steal, kill, and destroy all that God has provided for me through Calvary. But the enemy cannot pull his plan off without my cooperation.

Therefore, as the song says, "I went to the enemy's camp and took back what he stole from me. He is under my feet!" I choose God's way!

Heavenly Father, I thank You today that Your Spirit and Your Word have revealed to me that the choice is mine to either live an immoral life full of iniquity or a life that reflects Your character. I want to do the deeds that are pleasing in Your sight. Therefore, I choose this day to act alive and not dead, in Jesus' name. Amen.

The Anointed Shepherd

Proverbs 27:23-24 (KJV)—*Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds. For riches are not for ever: and doth the crown endure to every generation?*

God directed me to these verses when He first called my husband and me to be pastors. Through them, He showed us our great responsibility to care for, tend to, and look out for our congregation.

Travel is necessary at times, and everyone should take vacations, but shepherds should be with their sheep as much as possible. Regardless how good the supporting employees and volunteers are with which God has blessed a shepherd, they are still hirelings. The anointing to shepherd and stay with the sheep when danger is near is not the hirelings'; it is the shepherd's.

Shepherds are called; they are not just paid. Shepherds, like everyone else, need to be paid a decent salary. But I have found that as a shepherd, I have to trust the Lord because my paycheck may not always exist, but my call remains.

A shepherd is like a parent; a hireling is like a nanny. Having a nanny for one's children is a tolerable situation, but no nanny should take the place of Mommy or Daddy. The desire and need for money seems to be redirecting the energies of the shepherds, like parents, more and more. Thus, it seems that some shepherds are continually going to the sheep of other shepherds while at the same time neglecting their own. In fact, many traveling ministers cannot find sufficient numbers of pulpits to minister in because the shepherds are occupying others' pulpits instead of their own.

Father, this is a serious matter for us to pray about. If, in fact, Your Word in Proverbs 27:23-24 is an admonishment for all shepherds and not just for me, would You quicken these verses to their hearts so that we can all function in the office, the role, to which You have called us?

The sheep are hungry to be fed by their shepherd's hand, for it is that hand that You have anointed to feed, care for, and protect them. It is that heart and those thoughts that You have anointed to comfort them with the wisdom they need for their particular situations. Thank You for reminding us, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Strengthened for a Purpose

Colossians 1:11 (KJV)—*Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness.*

Of course, we know that the Bible tells us that the joy of the Lord is our strength (Nehemiah 8:10). However, we need to understand why we need His strength. His strength is not to conquer the devil. Jesus took care of that. The devil is no longer my concern. I know his future.

The strength of the Lord is needed in my life to overcome the things which challenge daily. Patience is not something that any of us have too much of. Not only does longsuffering need to be further developed in me, but doing it with joyfulness is surely lacking at times.

In fact, I have had to learn to differentiate between the suffering allowed by the Lord and the suffering inflicted by mean people or people that are too lazy and irresponsible to carry their own share of the load. In fact, that is my yardstick to measure when I am being tested for righteousness sake and when others are imposing on me as directed by the devil and not by God.

Every time that I have experienced something that I would have chosen to avoid and I find that I am joyful in the midst of it, I recognize that my Father is allowing it because, with it, He has given me the strength and grace to patiently endure—and, at the same time, keep a happy face and a happy heart.

Stop confessing that you have no patience for certain things, and begin to say, “I have been given the strength of Almighty God according to His glorious power so that I will demonstrate all the patience and endurance needed for every challenging situation.”

Your flesh and mine will never lead us into an attitude of patience and long-suffering. Flesh never wants to endure anything. It only craves immediate gratification and self-indulgence. God knows what is knocking at your door this very moment. He also knows that as His child, you have His strength to be joyful in the middle of the “mess.”

We must simply distinguish between what is from the Lord (for, He will give joy to endure it) and adverse situations that require us to use our faith and authority to resist and release them.

Hardheads

Numbers 14:44-45 (KJV)—*But they presumed to go up unto the hill top: nevertheless the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and Moses, departed not out of the camp. Then the Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill, and smote them, and discomfited them, even unto Hormah.*

Faith in God's promises will take you wherever you need to go, including the hilltops. However, presumption will cause you to be smitten and discomfited.

Why are God's children so hardheaded sometimes? In the passage above, we see that Moses warned the Israelites not to go to the hilltop. Furthermore, in verse 41, he told them that their trip without God's presence would not prosper.

That is true for us today. God has given us minds to think with. He has imparted His very Being into us so that we can walk in victory even under attack. But He never intended for us to exclude Him from our decisions. Too often we confuse presumption with perception.

**God never intended for us to
exclude Him from our decisions.**

Mother always said, "A hard head makes a soft backside." This dear lady believed in practical application. Sometimes I think she invented it. Perhaps one of the reasons I now try so hard to do what is right is that I used to be a hardhead. I thought, "It's my life, and I can do what I want with it." I was in for a rude awakening!

Thankfully, God was tolerant with me. Finally, one day I simply decided to get so close to Him that I would never do anything without conferring first with Him. It should not take a person several bumps to make the necessary adjustments to live a pain-free life. Does it make any sense to keep making moves and decisions without first talking with God?

Let's not presume to do things when God has no plans to go with us. Let's follow the Holy Spirit's lead; let's not be driven by another spirit and hope that God will join us.

What or Who Is Hindering Your Moving On?

Numbers 12:15 (KJV)—*And Miriam was shut out from the camp seven days: and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again.*

When Aaron and Miriam criticized Moses, God Himself called them out to let them know of His pleasure with Moses, who was not just another prophet. I suspect that the only reason Aaron was not made leprous was that he quickly repented and asked Moses to forgive them (verse 11).

Today God does not give leprosy to those who criticize His servants, but where would He take us if we were not so involved with others who are not on His scheduled journey with us? Birds fly in flocks. Eagles soar high and often alone.

Because of the cliques already established in churches, it is a near miracle when new people are included in times of fellowship. I have no problem with friendships, but it takes God Himself to keep lines of communication open for others to get in.

When you get it straight that God wants to get involved in your selection of friends, companions, spouses, and even where you worship, all will be well.

When I do the altar call at RLCC, I make it clear that my responsibility ends with inviting them to become a part of God's family. It is between the new convert and God where he or she will be fed spiritually.

Could it be that those hindered from moving on with God because of Miriam's mouth might have shut her up had they known she would slow them down? Has your progress been slowed somewhat because you are allowing those around you to express their opinions that God has not authorized?

It is your responsibility to keep words spoken around you pleasing to God's ear. You may never stop a gossip or a critic, but you can admonish such a person by saying how you feel about what he or she is saying or doing. Sometimes silence is a form of consent. I don't know about you, but I don't want my walk hampered by those around me whom I have tolerated or even celebrated.

Do you feel as though you are on a treadmill and you don't know why? Check to see if you have a Miriam or an Aaron in your circle of friends. You cannot afford relationships that God has not ordained.

Reserved and Preserved

2 Timothy 4:18 (NKJV)—*And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!*

Circumstances around you are not scheduled to improve. However, you can work and walk through all of them when you are equipped with Bible truth.

Evil work is a given, but according to my Bible, I have a reservation with God to be delivered from it. Not only that, but I am promised that He will preserve me. When something is preserved, it is protected from the destruction and decay of this world.

Jesus, the Good Shepherd, knows that His sheep are unable to protect themselves, just as a parent knows her baby cannot protect himself. Many years ago, when my children were babies and toddlers, I never expected them to be wise enough to protect themselves from danger. So I put up the necessary gates and restraints to limit their activity—to guard them from hazardous objects and situations. That is what our Shepherd can do for us.

Do you have a reservation of assured preservation?

Even today, the tragedy of 9/11 gets blamed for almost everything that is negatively oriented. That is so sad because 9/11 is not responsible for all of the world's evil works. The devil is, and he just uses 9/11 as a distraction to keep us from the truth that Bible prophecy is being fulfilled in our day and age.

The U.S.A. has been so very blessed. We who are citizens are very fortunate to be able to call America "land of the free." We should also call it "land of the blessed," for that is what we are.

I believe that God is calling together a core of men and women who understand where we are according to the Bible: leaders who are not looking to exclude anyone, but want to get together in one accord to hear from God as to what His next move is for us individually and collectively; men and women who understand that they cannot prevent the evil of the world, but are wise enough to comprehend that they can live unaffected by it.

The power over evil is not to prevent it, but to prevent it from taking you and yours over. Make your reservation for preservation by accepting Jesus, God's Son, now. Don't wait.

We Have No Light Outside of Him

John 1:4 (KJV)—*In him was life; and the life was the light of men.*

Either you have life, or you have death. Either you have light, or you have darkness. It is the light in Christ Jesus that provides us with life and, conversely, it is the life in Christ Jesus that gives light to everyone who receives Him. The light and the life are interchangeable.

Most people are learning to merely exist. The time has come for the dead to hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live. Those who refuse to hear the voice of Jesus will not live. The season is here when all people will hear the Son's voice, which is why we will not have any excuse when it is time for God to judge humankind. The last trumpet shall blow, and the dead in Christ will rise. (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

I do not believe that sound will be from a musical instrument. I believe the Father will speak something to Jesus and He will repeat it with such power and authority that it will sound like the shofar

that is used to call together the people of God for the festival at hand. Jesus will not be sending angels to get us. He is coming to person-

We do not have to wait until the Rapture to hear from Jesus.

ally escort us home, and His voice will be heard by both the dead and the living who, together, will be caught up to meet Him in the air.

We do not have to wait until the Rapture to hear from Him. He, the light and the life, is speaking today and can be heard by all so that we can receive Him to experience more abundant life. Those who have ears to hear, hear what the Spirit is saying.

Many unfruitful words are being shared around the world even as I write this. The Bible said there would be false teachers and prophets in our very own midst. Therefore, it is a waste of time to try to prevent them. But we the believers are not to be tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine and the cunning of men. That means we choose whether to listen to His words, which bring life, or to lies, which lead to death. The choice is ours.

Whose Pleasure Are You?

1 John 3:22 (KJV)—*And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.*

There are things that are pleasing in God's sight and things that are displeasing. This means God observes all that we do as the family of God, the body of Christ. He certainly hears all that we say—the good and the bad. If that weren't true, then why would we receive whatsoever we ask? Since He hears the asking part, He has to be listening to all that we speak. Otherwise, He could not distinguish the asking from the swearing and cursing.

What are some of the things that please our ever-seeing God? Without faith, it is impossible to please Him (Hebrews 11:6), so faith is a gift we can offer. Furthermore, Psalm 149:4 says, "For the Lord taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation." In order to please the Father, we must become part of His family. This requires being meek enough to receive Jesus and become born again. Proud people usually don't get saved because they think all that they are or need is in themselves.

The Bible speaks of several things that are commendable to God. Presenting our bodies a living sacrifice, not "as" a living sacrifice, is acceptable to Him. God does not want our bodies "as" a living sacrifice any more than He wants oxen, bulls, and heifers. What He does delight in is our praise of who He is. He enjoys it when we magnify Him with thanksgiving (Psalm 69:30-31).

Let us examine ourselves individually. Let us look at our lifestyles to see to whom we are bringing pleasure. Most of the time, we want to please those who will profit us. However, I discovered that when I simply please God for who He is, not what He can do for me, I somehow end up with all of my needs met. My desires that line up with His Word are satisfied, and my heart seems so full of joy that at times I think it will explode.

It is all right to be pleased, but it is more blessed to bring pleasure to our Lord. If Jesus is not your Lord, God cannot be your Father. Fix that today, and begin a life of pleasure anew. Whose pleasure are you?

When Will You Get It?

Numbers 24:1 (KJV)—*And when Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, he went not, as at other times, to seek for enchantments, but he set his face toward the wilderness.*

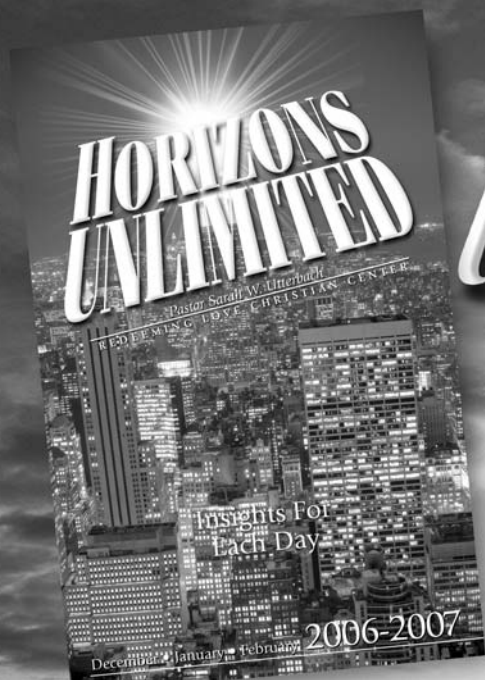
Balaam tried three times to curse Israel, as Balak wanted him to, before realizing it pleased the Lord to bless Israel. God listens to our feeble expectations; then He tells us what is His pleasure. How many times must God say what pleases Him, not man, before we get it? Smart people decide quickly to stop asking God for what He hasn't authorized. He will only support His plan for His people.

Balak became angry because he wanted Balaam to curse God's people. However, no one can curse what God has blessed. This is why we cringe when preachers preach about generational curses. We are the temple of God's Holy Spirit, bought by the blood of Jesus Christ. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth" (Romans 8:33). Since God is for us, who can be against us (verse 31)? A former pastor of ours used to say, "It makes no difference if they are against us once God is for us."

Please stop telling people about generational curses in this dispensation of grace. Calvary covered it all for us. There are no more sacrifices. Jesus was, is, and shall be the one and only. Since His Spirit, which raised Christ from the dead, dwells in us (Romans 8:11), we cannot still be cursed.

Balak said to Balaam in Numbers 24:11, "Flee thou to thy place: I thought to promote thee unto great honour; but, lo, the Lord hath kept thee back from honour." However, God, who would spare not His Son and would withhold nothing else along with Him, will not keep His servant from honor. The greatest honor we will experience is to obey the voice of God and to bless His people. True promotion comes from God, though He occasionally uses man as a channel to work through. When man promotes, he can also demote. When God promotes and honors you, man cannot hinder you.

Your future and success are not in the hand of a human. "Look to Jesus and believe. Look to Jesus and receive. For whatever you need, you shall receive." These words from a song my husband wrote are God's words for you today. Hear nothing else, and be honored.



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Redeem the Time!

Look carefully then how you walk! Live purposefully and worthily and accurately, not as the unwise and witless, but as wise (sensible, intelligent people),

Making the very most of the time [buying up each opportunity], because the days are evil.

Therefore do not be vague and thoughtless and foolish, but understanding and firmly grasping what the will of the Lord is.

—Ephesians 5:15-17,
The Amplified Bible



Good Wealth and Good Health Are God's Gifts

Ecclesiastes 5:19 (NLT)—And it is a good thing to receive wealth from God and the good health to enjoy it.

To enjoy your work and accept your lot in life is indeed a gift from God. Since wealth and good health are both God's gifts, we Christians need to take a closer look at why we are concerned about what we do or do not have.

I am often asked why I am never ill and why I have everything I want and need. I usually avoid answering those questions because I suspect my response would be so far off. I make every honest attempt to obey the Bible. However, because I miss it once in a while, I know I do not enjoy wealth and good health because I am perfect. There has to be another reason for it, and I don't want to appear to have some new revelation or formula that can be marketed.

Jesus did say in John 12:26, "If any man serve me, let him follow me, and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour (KJV)." I do serve the Lord Jesus with all my heart and every activity of my life and limbs. I follow Him in His Word and by the leading of His Spirit. I know that qualifies me to be where He is. And since He is never sick, I don't plan to entertain sickness in my

When we understand true wealth and true health, then are we considered rich.

life. I have been sick and I have been well, and well is better! Furthermore, Jesus never had a financial need. He commanded His taxes to be paid by causing a coin to appear in a fish's mouth, and He fed thousands with no more than a child's lunch. In fact, He was made poor so that we who serve Him could be made rich.

The wealth and the good health we are to enjoy must never be measured by natural standards. When we understand true wealth and true health, then are we considered rich. Happiness has no price tag, yet far too few experience it for more than a fleeting moment. Likewise, peace is priceless. Yet it is a free gift from God that few have tapped into. Forget the formulas and serve the Son. Follow Him. Be with Him, where He is.

Your Abundance Is for Good Works

2 Corinthians 9:8 (NKJV)—*And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, have an abundance for every good work.*

Though the saints in Greece had made a vow to send a gift to the saints at Macedonia and Paul had boasted of it, he did not want anyone to give who was unwilling or felt pressured. He wanted them to understand that their harvest would not be determined by God or anyone else.

Paul used the example of a farmer planting. A small crop results from a small seed sown; a bountiful crop indicates a generous seed sown. We know that the tithe belongs to God. Then 2 Corinthians 9:7 states, "...let each one give as he purposes in his heart...." When you sow accordingly, remember at harvest time, you alone are responsible for what you receive.

No one should ever give grudgingly or under pressure from others, because then neither faith nor love is mixed with the gift. Both are needed to produce a fruitful harvest. God loves a happy, willing-to-give person. That person attracts God's grace, which says, "God will provide all you need" (verse 8). Not only will generous, willing givers have their needs met, but they will attract so much of God's favor that they'll have plenty left over to share with others.

According to the Word, there is a purpose in this. "Godly people give generously to the poor. Their good deeds will never be forgotten" (2 Corinthians 9:9, NLT). A cycle is set in motion. God gives the farmer both the seed to plant and the bread to eat from the planted seed. Seed has no life to benefit anyone until it is sown. God's purpose is that you and I have more to sow. Then the ones who receive break out in thanksgiving to God for you. Thus, a two-fold reaction occurs: The needs of the poor are met, and they joyfully express to God how grateful they are.

Generous and willing givers glorify God by proving they believe and obey the words of Jesus Christ. When you give to the poor saints, God is not extracting from you. Rather, when you do this, it causes others to sow what they have: sincere, genuine prayers of gratitude for you and your generous spirit. What can you say? "Thank God for Jesus, His priceless gift."

How Are You Saying Thanks to God?

Genesis 8:20 (NKJV)—*Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.*

I find it interesting that with no prior instructions Noah sent out a dove along with a raven, but only the dove returned to the ark when it found nowhere to rest on the earth. The raven kept going to and fro until the waters had dried up. Noah repeatedly sent out the dove until it returned with a freshly plucked olive leaf in her mouth.

Noah built an altar to God on his own to say thank you. He was wise enough not to use the unclean birds or sacrifice. Perhaps

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he remembered that God had killed the innocent animals to cover Adam and Eve, and that God was pleased with Abel's sacrifice and not Cain's. It would appear that God was pleased with blood being shed in our sacrifice to Him. Of course, we believers in Jesus Christ understand that He is the

final sacrifice to God for humanity because there is nothing greater than His blood and once was enough.

Since that is so, and God is still doing tremendous things in our lives, are we presenting ourselves to Him living sacrifices, wholly and acceptable unto Him? Are we crucifying our flesh so that His Holy Spirit emerges large in us? Are we worshipping Him in Spirit and in truth? Or are we worshipping our toys and giving to God our "chump change"?

Never forget that God is looking for willing gifts and sacrifices. Abraham willingly gave to Melchizedek. Noah willingly built a thank-you altar. The question is, what are we doing to acknowledge that we are grateful to Almighty God, and what are we thanking Him for? Stop where you are this moment to ponder God's willing gifts to us even when we were His enemies and then willingly offer Him a sacrificial thanksgiving.

Wholly Following the Lord Guarantees the Promise

Joshua 14:14 (KJV)—Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenazite unto this day, because that he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel.

What does it matter how long it takes to possess God's promise to you? Moses promised Caleb he would inherit the Promised Land, because with his heart completely after the Lord, he gave a good report of Canaan (Joshua 14:9). Caleb was convinced that God kept him alive and strong for an additional forty-five years so he could possess the promise.

This is an awesome picture. For some things that God has spoken to me, I have nothing to do to make them happen but to wholeheartedly follow Him. I never concern myself with clocks and calendars when God speaks a promise to me. I refuse to question when and why. All I know is that one day, He will produce that which He has promised and it will not be one second late according to His timetable.

From Caleb, I have learned that the way to the inheritance is to continue serving the Lord. Caleb did not serve the Lord and follow after Him to receive. He received because he followed willingly, obediently, and with faith and trust.

God called Clinton and me into ministry when I was forty-two years old and he was forty-seven. He spoke a promise to me at sixty-five. I am not concerned when the promises will come to pass. I choose wholeheartedly to follow after the Lord, and He will bring them to pass. When I was first called, I suppose God knew that He could not tell me what He is saying now. I was not yet proven. I had to decrease so that He could increase.

You may not realize it, but you, too, are on a mission for the Master. What kind of report will you return with? Will you believe God and encourage His people, or will you conclude that your mission is impossible? If the mission were impossible, your heavenly Father wouldn't have asked you to spy out the territory. You may see giants. You may observe barriers all around you. The key is to remember who sent you. He will not waste your time. Go and return in faith.

Safe From All Alarm

Psalm 31:21 (NLT)—*Praise the Lord, for he has shown me his unfailing love. He kept me safe when my city was under attack.*

What can mere mortals do unto me? The only time you have to be concerned about being harmed by other humans is when you have allowed them to become your source, your supply, and your savior. The key to being safe from all alarm is keeping people in their proper place in life by boldly and confidently saying, "The Lord is my helper, so I will not be afraid of what man can do unto me" (Hebrews 13:6).

As the events of 9/11 unfolded before us on television, instead of being frightened, my husband and I checked on the inside of us and knew this evil would not come near us because He would keep us safe when our city was under attack. God would never have allowed us to move to New York City in midtown Manhattan nine months earlier to have our new residence reduced to rubble.

Do bad things happen to Christians? Absolutely. But not having all the facts about each Christian in question, I reserve my comments to the Word of Truth. That is the only way I maintain my sanity and enjoy a peaceful heart. Psalm 31:24 says, "So be strong and take courage, all you who put your hope in the Lord!" Is your hope in the Lord? Then He commanded you to be strong and take courage. Notice, it does not say, "Have courage." It says, "Take courage." Courage is illusive and will try to run away. It has to be taken at times by force.

We had a two-year-old child escape from the nursery when we were in the smaller church building. He knew where his dad sat, and he plotted a way out of the nursery and made a beeline to his father. Except for a very fast usher, who caught him, he would have succeeded in his quest to get to his dad.

Hope in our Father causes us to continually take courage by force in order to plot our escape from the fear trying to attach itself to us. Then we are to run as hard as we can to Him by His Word. Repeat the process as often as needed, and after a while, your hope will turn to faith and your faith to sight.

Stun the Enemy Until You Can Kill Him

1 Samuel 17:51 (NLT)—*He ran over and pulled Goliath's sword from its sheath. David used it to kill the giant and cut off his head. When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they turned and ran.*

Everyone says David killed Goliath with a stone. That's not true. David used what he had to stun his enemy. Then he used what the enemy had to finish the job.

One reason some Christians are discouraged and want to quit is that they're trying to kill the giants with a stone or a rock. The rock is to stun your enemy, but don't think because he is down that he is dead. Many a stunned giant has been raised up to try again. Once you have stunned the devil in your life, take what he would have used against you to kill him once and for all.

You may not have learned yet how to kill a giant all at once. I assure you, though, if you will use what you have to stun or slow him down, God will show you how to kill him with his own weapons. The object is to get him off balance in your life so that he falls down. Never be content with a downed devil. You have been qualified to destroy every demonic force that dares to challenge you and yours.

After many years of practicing some very bad habits and attitudes, you may have to learn how to kill them once and for all. However, being a child of the King, you come equipped to destroy every demon on assignment to destroy you. Since the Father God has inspired you to go after the giant in your life—because to attack you is to attack His Son—He has equipped you to at least stun him, then to knock him to his knees so that your size now equals his.

God has given us all power and authority in Jesus to finish off our giant once He has given us the wisdom to bring him to his knees. Would you as a parent want the same monster to return to torment your child? Of course not. Well, neither does God. He equips His children and leaves it up to them to complete the task.

Make your decision today to kill and destroy everything that has generated fear and not faith in your life. Use what you have until you can use what he had to defeat you. You turn the table.

The Strength of Israel

1 Samuel 15:29 (KJV)—*And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man that he should repent.*

Many things have happened and will continue to happen concerning the nation of Israel, but they will never be destroyed. It's not that they've done anything to deserve this security, but they have a clear covenant with God because of their relationship with Him through His promises to Abraham.

As we observe and listen to the various reports concerning Israel and the Palestinians, what we hear is Bible prophecy being fulfilled before our eyes and in our ears. The natural fighting that we read and hear about is not all that is going on. There is so much more.

Do not become anxious or overly concerned about the happenings of the Middle East. The Strength of Israel is in control, and we haven't seen anything yet.

What excites me about the events of each day is that God is not a man; therefore, He will not lie or repent. Since what He has promised Abraham and his seed must come to pass, what He has promised you and me through Jesus Christ, too, must be so. The Strength of Israel is also my strength. I am a part of His holy nation in covenant to praise Him.

It is true that the more you serve the Lord and follow His dictates and His commandments, the more attacks of the enemy come your way. What helped to bring me peace in the middle of life's "mess" was to learn to rest in my covenant with my Creator. How did I get to be in covenant with God? I received Jesus Christ of Nazareth as my Savior and Lord, and I remain committed to His cause.

Psalms 20:6 reads, "Now know I that the Lord saveth his anointed; he will hear him from his holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand." "His anointed" obviously is speaking of Jesus. Since I am a part of His body, this promise has to apply to me also.

The world seems more immoral and confused than ever before, but I am excited about what is going on around me because I sense the presence of the Lord in the midst of it all bringing to me a peace that can be explained: He is coming soon.

Watch What and Whom You Bring Home

Deuteronomy 7:26 (KJV)—*Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it; but thou shalt utterly detest it and thou shalt utterly abhor it; for it is a cursed thing.*

When Clinton and I first married, we purchased a zodiac wall hanging that was six feet in diameter. Paul tells us, "Do not touch what is unclean" (2 Corinthians 6:17). And as we drew closer to God, we realized it had to go regardless of how much it cost. We did not want to risk anyone (including the refuse workers) taking it home, so we borrowed our neighbors pick ax and chopped it into little pieces.

We did not know this scripture in Deuteronomy 7:26 when we made that decision. What we did know in our spirits was that God was not pleased with our having that hanging in the home that He had provided for us. He never told us to get rid of it. It was our choice to purchase it. It had to be our decision to get rid of it. Our flesh liked it, but our spirits were appalled by it. We were learning to be led by the Spirit of God and at the same time learning to subdue our flesh. It can be learned if you want to please God.

A young man whom I once considered my best friend was a practicing homosexual. I genuinely saw nothing wrong with allowing him to spend the night at our home. He was my friend. He never brought his sexual partners around me, so I looked the other way concerning his lifestyle.

Years later, I discovered that he violated our trust by seducing a family member who is still struggling with his identity today. It never occurred to me not to allow that person to stay at our home, because he was "my friend."

Boy, was I ever wrong! I can't unscramble those eggs, but I have discovered truth. I will have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness except to lead their victims to Jesus by exposing them. Why? Because I have found what is acceptable to the Lord. If God calls something an abomination, that's what it is, and no amount of legislation will make it right.

Ask the Lord to show you who and what you have allowed into your home that is not pleasing in His sight. Clean it out and sever any relationship that could hinder your walk with the Lord. Remember: You can't unscramble eggs.

What Has God Spoken to You?

1 Chronicles 22:8 (KJV)—*But the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight.*

David was the apple of God's eye. God was with David in battle and protected him from all of his enemies. Yet it appears that God was expecting more from David.

But this verse raises a question: Although God is for me and with me, providing wealth and health in abundance and wisdom liberally, could it mean nothing on God's scale of justice if my actions contradict His concern for humankind?

You may ask, "Should we defend ourselves?" My question to you is "What would God have you to do?" I suspect that David believed what he was doing was right. I don't get the impression that he just went around deliberately killing people. I'm sure David thought he was justified. However, when it came time to do the one thing he had on his heart to do in appreciation for God's protection, God said, "No, you are not the one."

Imagine how it felt to have God reject the desire of David's heart concerning Him. Why did God say no to David? To answer that, you have to look at what He was looking for in the one to build a house for Him.

Verse 9 said, "Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest...." In other words, God is not looking for those with skills and abilities in natural war. He is looking for people who will rest in Him and allow Him to fight their battles while He gives them rest from all their enemies.

As leaders, we must ask ourselves: Are we struggling in our attempts to build for God, because God Himself is rejecting our efforts since we are guilty of promoting bloodshed?

I know that there is evil in the world, and so does God. It will not be stomped out until the Prince of Peace takes His place here in the earth. But God's kind of love is the greatest weapon we have going for us. It takes a decision to ask Him on a daily basis for more of that love and the wisdom needed to dispense it so that we will be found pleasing in His sight.

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

—Colossians 3: 1-2



I Have What They Want

Psalm 16:11 (KJV)—*Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore.*

Pleasures forevermore" sounds to me like endless bliss. Since the Father has offered to show you a path that leads only to life, why not follow it? Paths of our choosing can never lead us to anything comparable to what God has promised for our good.

The cost of carnal pursuits at being happy is not only sad but fleeting when each of us could experience joy in full measure by simply choosing to fellowship with the Father. He shows up when anyone wants to spend time with Him.

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The guarantee of endless pleasure is found at the right hand of God Himself. It is not unusual or impossible. Who is at the right hand of

God? Of course, you know the answer to that: Jesus! The secret that has been revealed in this is that all we need to do is receive Him as Lord and Savior, continue in His Word, and experience pleasure without conclusion.

Everyone claims to want to be happy. I put it that way because when asked to make changes, adjustments, and sacrifices in their lives that will bring happiness, suddenly, many are reluctant to do so. Some absolutely refuse and renounce wisdom. For them, I say they *claim* to want to be happy, because they will not adjust their sails according to the wind that is blowing at that time. It took me years to learn that happiness was not found in accumulating more things.

I spent many years and many dollars looking for happiness in all the wrong places. The day I recognized and admitted that Jesus had everything I wanted or needed was my day of liberation. I am more excited about pursuing Jesus today than I have ever been, because nothing matters without Him. Furthermore, everything is mine because of Him.