

HORIZONS UNLIMITED

Pastor Sarah W. Utterbach
REDEEMING LOVE CHRISTIAN CENTER

Insights For
Each Day

June • July • August 2007



In 1979, I observed in the life of a friend a devotional practice that seemed unusual to me. Every day, she would walk into an open field across the parking lot from her office, then 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.

In John 10:27, Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow me." Prompted by this verse, I began to train myself to be able to distinguish the voice of the Lord from all other voices. 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.

The passages in this devotional are drawn from words the Lord has spoken to me in times of daily fellowship with Him. As you begin this devotional, wherever you may start to read, make Jesus your way, your truth, and 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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A ministry of
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All scripture references are taken from *The King James Version*, unless otherwise noted.

Turn Your Life Around

...by submitting your life to Jesus Christ. If you do not recall making a confession of Jesus as your Lord and Savior, 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!

Don't Concern Yourself

Matthew 6:33—*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

Don't concern yourself with the things of this world. God has abundantly provided for your every need. He has even made available to you the very desires of your heart. When your heart is divided by the cares of this life, anxiety, and concern for other things, it is a stench in His nostrils. God desires that you trust Him with your whole heart. You are no longer your own. He paid a high price for you with the blood of Jesus. Come to Him often, for His wisdom is at your beck and call. God knows the beginning from the end. Why waste time trying to comprehend and to solve dilemmas in your life that God has already resolved?

Seek Him early. Seek Him late. Seek Him often. God's promises to you are always "yes and amen." Inquire of Him before you make any move. You are His beloved. He will never become weary of your inquiring. That is your old nature trying to limit your accomplishments by telling you to not bother the Lord with your requests. But going to Him frequently will further develop your ability to recognize His voice.

**'Keep looking up.
I am coming—soon.'**

Commit to completing those things He has assigned you to do. I believe the Lord is saying: "Do not doubt My will for your life. You may lack education, but never wisdom, for you have My supply. I have work for you that you know not of. I have thoughts for you that come only from above. So do not hesitate to go forth. Never wait unless I say, "Halt." The time is too short to ponder the next move. I am coming so quickly, and there is still much to be done. Seek Me early and often, and do not concern yourself with things that have no place in My master plan for your life.

"You are loved. You are blessed. You are set apart from all the rest to do that which I have called you to do. Give Me the glory and the praise for all things, and together we will soon accomplish the task and rejoice together. Keep looking up. I am coming—soon."

Mental Blindness Is Worse Than Physical Blindness

John 9:39—*And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.*

Not only was Jesus born to heal the physically blind people, but He came also to correct the spiritually blind people—those who were inflated with self-conceit, those who were high-minded, and those who were lifted up with pride. The Pharisees had their physical eyesight, but when they asked Jesus if they were blind also (verse 40), He said, “If ye were blind [without vision], ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth” (verse 41). They did not understand that their sin was not of flesh, or physical. It was of the heart, or spiritual.

Only Jesus can heal the physically blind, but that is also true of the spiritually blind.

It is one thing to say and do something with confidence because it is truth, it is right, and the Spirit has inspired you to boldly declare or do it. It is a

wholly different thing to allow your confidence in what you know or have cause you to think it is all *you*. It is very important to remain teachable and open to be reproved, corrected, and chastened of the Lord.

Only Jesus can heal the physically blind, but that is also true of the spiritually blind. Anyone refusing to receive correction is being deceived by the devil and is in the very throes of sin itself. Receive God’s reproving, correcting, chastening, and healing Word—and receive your spiritual sight.

Dear Father, help me to see the necessity of accepting from You, sometimes through others, the value of being as one who is physically blind, dependent on You for each and every step, tuned in to the things around me, not by what is visible but by what I sense in my heart.

Increase the spirit of discernment in me so that I am always conscious of Your plans, pursuits, and purpose for humanity, in Jesus’ name. Amen.

God Helps Those Crying Out to Him

2 Chronicles 18:31—*And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, It is the king of Israel. Therefore they compassed about him to fight: but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the Lord helped him; and God moved them to depart from him.*

Aren't you glad we have favor with God and man? The king of Syria was so determined to get Ahab, the king of Israel, that he had commanded his army not to pursue anyone else, large or small (verse 30). Though Jehoshaphat had asked for a word from the Lord, when the prophet shared it with him, Jehoshaphat did not respond because he had aligned himself with Israel's wicked king. King Ahab asked Jehoshaphat to disguise himself as the king, and this placed Jehoshaphat in a potentially fatal position.

It does us no good to love the Lord and seek His face if we are going to cooperate with others who are not committed. Do not lose your life or your peace because of wrong associates who want to do what they

want to do. They may be reacting to the influence of a lying spirit (verses 21-22). Do not allow a human association to put you in contact with a lying spirit. Thank God that He is still merciful to protect us in the midst of our foolishness, but learn to surround yourself only with those who cooperate with the Spirit of Truth.

Dear Father God, forgive me for the many times I failed to adhere to Your direction for my life. Thank You for giving me the presence of mind to call on You when I am under attack and about to be destroyed. You always help when I call You, and You alone divert the attackers from me. I am truly grateful.

Help me to remember, O God, the value of godly relationships and the priceless treasure of obeying Your leading regardless of who else wants to go another way.

Remind me constantly of the fact that, although the devil wants me destroyed, he can only defeat me when I fail to follow You. I thank You for this lesson, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Do not allow a human association to put you in contact with a lying spirit.

Love—Period

1 Timothy 1:5—*Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.*

Romans 6:1—*...ye are not under the law, but under grace.*

Many of us fail to comprehend the liberty that grace has provided as a result of the shed blood of Jesus the Christ. The law says, "Kill him." Grace says, "Forgive him." The law says, "Condemn him." Grace says, "Love him." When the law came out of Horeb, three thousand men were destroyed (Exodus 32:28). At Pentecost, under grace, three thousand people received salvation (Acts 2:41). Under the law, God used Moses to punish Pharaoh by

**... do deeds that will
cause our conscience
to be clear.**

turning the water into blood (Exodus 7:20). Under grace, God sent Jesus to bless the people by turning the water into wine (John 2:8-10). Under the law, Moses was required to take off his shoes at the burning bush

(Exodus 3:5). Under grace, the prodigal son was forgiven and provided shoes for his feet (Luke 15:22).

When I see the law next to grace, I believe grace is a better deal from God. And the end of His commandment is His love—and our opportunity to demonstrate it to others out of a pure heart, to do deeds that will cause our conscience to be clear, and to operate in faith that is sincere and without hypocrisy.

Heavenly Father, I bless You again today for Your love and Your example before me. I desire to express appreciation for Your grace that has freed me from rituals and secured me in a relationship with You.

While Your commandments have not changed, the punctuation mark at the end of each of them is Your love. I desire Your help and the Holy Spirit's direction in all my effort, and may the trust I have in You never be questioned. Though it may be challenged, it will always remain steadfast in You. In Jesus' name, I pray and thank You for Your love. Amen.

Remembering the Benefits

Psalm 103:1-2—*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.*

It is so important for us to remember God's benefits and not our accomplishments. His provisions are superior, and they are eternal. Not only are His benefits the best provisions available in the universe, but they aid us in living victorious lives right here in the earth.

God's benefit package includes forgiveness; that is primary. However, He gives us so much more. Psalm 103:3-5 says, "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." He heals us, redeems us, crowns us, and satisfies us.

Isn't it interesting that healing is listed before redemption? This explains why so many sinners receive healing. Furthermore, through the shed blood of Jesus at Calvary, He provided forgiveness and healing. Our choice then to be redeemed places us in a position for Him to exalt us and crown us.

Surely we know by now that nothing and no one satisfies us apart from Jesus. However, the moment we make a choice to be redeemed is the moment God moves to exalt us. At that moment, all the things that we have pursued in our quest for satisfaction fade in the light of His provision. God gave us all of this knowing that all we had to offer in exchange were iniquities, disease, destruction, and decay. If you need help remembering His benefits, consider what you had without them. His benefit package sounds like a good deal to me. I believe I will just accept it. What will you do?

Dear Father God, in Jesus' name, I thank You today for inspiring me to focus on what is truly important. Your love and Your faithfulness often reduce me to tears—tears of joy at the thought that I could be so important to You. Please continue to correct me, rebuke me, and strengthen me when and where necessary, for I truly desire to be a vessel fit for the Master's use.

Relief Is Not Always Provided Locally

Romans 15:26—*For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.*

Too often we are guilty of predetermining where and how God will meet our need. In addition, too often people teach that a Christian in the will of God will never be poor. However, Jesus said, “Ye have the poor always with you” (Matthew 26:11).

We have never had fewer financial resources than when we were in Bible school, yet God met every need—through strangers, family members, our instructors, new acquaintances, and old friends in faraway places. Not one time did we write, call, or tell anyone of our unique situation. We never concerned ourselves with whom or what God would use to meet our need. We were obeying God’s word in us. He told us where to go to school, so we left Him the responsibility to tell others where we were and what part He wanted them to play in His plan for our lives.

Likewise, the saints in Jerusalem trusted the living God who was in covenant with them. Though they were having a hard time financially, they did not send out newsletters to Macedonia for help, though there were few miles between them. However, the Christians in Greece were so grateful for the spiritual blessings they received from the Jewish Christians that they eagerly received an offering for those in Jerusalem (Romans 15:26-31).

I want to hear from God on to whom and where to I am to send His seed. There is a much better return on it when I do that. Too much of the seed ministries get is used for personal pleasure and comfort. Neither God nor the IRS is pleased with that. However, often people bombard us with requests for money, though they have done nothing to help feed us spiritually. One thing I have learned is that there are con artists both in and out of the ministry, and God will tell me where there is a genuine need or just reveal to me His plan to bless someone through me.

It has been exciting to be debt-free for more than 15 years and to be in a position to obey God to voluntarily assist others as the Spirit speaks. Blessings may come from near or far, but they should always be by God.

With Your Help, I Will Do It

Psalm 119:32 (NKJV)—*I will run the course of Your commandments, for You shall enlarge my heart.*

Quitting is not an option for a believer. Of course, you are tired: the journey has been long and hard. However, God has never expected you to perform in your own strength, though He does expect you to endure to the end. The psalmist wrote, “I will run the course of Your commandments.”

God will never ask you to run a course He has commanded without providing you with the grace to accomplish the task. The psalmist’s next words “for You shall enlarge my heart” simply mean that God will expand you to stay with it, to continue to run the race that He has placed before you. This is what God will do for you as you run the course of His commandments.

God did not bring you this far to allow you to fail.

The greatest help to overcome any obstacle that I face is

to be aware that I am not running the course alone. He is with me to help me, to encourage me, and to strengthen me. Do not look at the circumstances or conditions before you; they will overwhelm you. Remind yourself of who God is and that He has ordered these steps you are presently taking. He did not bring you this far to allow you to fail. Do what you can do—and that is always to praise Him.

It thrills the heart of God when His children run with His promises. He runs with you, and with His help you will do all that He has called you to do.

Dear Father God, You are my Father and I love You. Although the natural situation does not look good, yet will I praise You because You are worthy to be praised. I do not praise You because of what You do. I praise You for who You are, and that is so reassuring to me. There is no variability or shadow of turning with You. You have no need to change. You cannot get any better than You are, and You cannot fail. Trusting You based on Your Word and our experience together gets easier all the time. I thank You, in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Time To Change Clothes

Romans 13:12—*The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.*

This scripture in Romans 13:12 is what I call a “responsibility scripture.” It identifies clearly where we are. It is telling us that the attire and season for nighttime clothing is just about over

There are some things that God does for us by His Spirit. For example, He gives us truth, He gives us light, and He reveals to us His plan for us.

for some of us, and we no longer have to stay in the darkness that we once thought we enjoyed. The season for truth and revelation of God’s Word and His plan for His people is upon us to free us, but we have something that we must do.

Any deeds of darkness or acts contrary to the Word of God must not only be put off, they must be cast far from us, as a fisherman casts a rod and reel when he is out for a catch. “The catch” for those of us who are already in the day must be to throw off the former way of life as we would a piece of clothing contaminated by a skunk’s odor. Then we must robe ourselves in more than just a garment to cover us. We are to clothe ourselves with armor—the armor of light. The light of God’s Word concerning right-living becomes our protection and our defense.

There are some things that God does for us by His Spirit. For example, He gives us truth, He gives us light, and He reveals to us His plan for us. However, He does not force any of these things on us. God presents us with opportunities, and the world presents us with options. Without discerning spirits, we can occasionally select the wrong option. God gives us no options. He diagrams His perfect plan for us, presents it to us, and waits to see if we as His children will truly be led by His Spirit.

The night is far spent, the day is at hand: Let’s cast off the works of darkness, and let’s put on the armor of light!

Reverencing Him Eliminates Your Need

Psalm 34:9—*O fear the Lord, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him.*

Have you received an evil report? Is your natural situation not good? Certainly, there is no guarantee that the situation will improve if you follow the advice of those who hope they can help you. So what will you do? Psalm 34:8 says, “O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.”

I am not telling you what to do; I am telling you what is available. Your faith in what God has said is what will make the difference for you! Your reverence for God and His promises will take you to the next level. God will not abandon you. He will meet you where you are—and even that is a good place. But if you desire to see the manifested glory of God’s power transform your situation, there will come a time when you will have to jump, leaving your parachute behind.

Your faith in what God has said is what will make the difference for you!

In my life in the past, there were not a lot of people whom I could trust to follow through on their promises. I needed to know that God would follow through, and so I deliberately chose to trust Him. If I had used an alternative plan to seek my answer, I never would have known that God would come through for me. But at age seventy, I can declare that not one time has God ever failed me. Every time I have trusted Him for His perfect will in my life, He has come through. Sometimes He has moved in strange ways, but He always made Himself known to me. I have no choice now but to continue reverencing Him!

Psalm 31:23 says, “O love the Lord, all ye his saints: for the Lord preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.” Since we always expect God to be faithful, doesn’t He have the right to expect the same of us?

I sense that this crossroad you are facing is new and scary, but if you are going to fear, let your fear be in the form of reverence to the Almighty. Trust the Lord, and discover that His saints can truly have no want.

Tried by Fire: Separated for Service

The trial of your faith, not your faith, is more precious than gold. I allow the test and trials to come, My child, to cause that which interferes with your purity, your true reflection, to be separated from you. Some things must fall away, for in the service that I have called you to, there must not be one ounce of foreign substance present hindering you from being the golden vessel fit for My use.

Never resist the pressures and obstacles that come your way. They are there to train you in endurance. Did I not say you are to run with patience? I did not ask you to sit and stare. The reward will not be to the swift but to those who endure—yet the winners must participate in the race.

Gold and silver are corruptible and cankerous. They will rust and lose their luster. But you, My child, are born again by the precious blood of Jesus, affected by neither change nor chance. So go forth in the service to which I have called you. Because I know that you will not always be greeted with hospitality, I am preparing you to endure and continue in the call, ignoring the circumstances surrounding you.

In order to endure, you must count it all joy. Count it all joy that the alloy of your nature is being removed and burned away by My Spirit amidst the fire of adversity; when the temperature is lowered again, you will discover that not one bit of your real value has been lost or affected. Do not shrink at the tests, trials, and challenges of life. Rejoice, for they come to develop you to stand in the ultimate position that I have for you.

You are a winner because of your acceptance of Jesus Christ, My Son, and His substitution for and identification with you. You are kept by My power. You are cared for, watched over, and protected by Me. Think it not strange when your faith is tried. It is part of your preparation for service. I am with you now; I will be with you in the fire; and I will be with you when you come out of the fire in manifested victory.

Obeying the Law Does Not Get You Saved

Galatians 2:16 (NKJV)—Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

When I found out that salvation was because of faith in Jesus Christ, I got excited about sharing that truth with others. People are participating in so many activities and outreaches in the assembly that they are there several nights a week trying to “work out their own salvation.” If we could work out our salvation, then Jesus endured some very unnecessary suffering on Golgotha.

Paul had to publicly oppose Peter because of hypocrisy and the influence he was having on other Jewish Christians. Peter had no problem eating with Gentile Christians who were not circumcised until some Jewish friends of James visited who were legalists. No one really wants to challenge other brothers and sisters, but we have to when their words and actions negatively influence others.

My late husband was reared in a “oneness church.” When I met him, he had no clue of the Godhead. He thought the Holy Ghost was an “it” and that the entire function of the Father stopped with creation and dealing with Adam. Though he had heard of the Red Sea miracle, the fiery furnace, and Daniel in the den with lions, he was programmed to think that apart from Jesus, nothing else mattered. The one beautiful thing about “Jesus only” teaching is that your faith in Him becomes so developed, it almost always leads to people’s salvation. If you can just get them to understand Romans 10:9-10, they are in.

If the works of the flesh counted for anything, people know to do that. They have been sadly informed, because none of this teaching has anything to do with becoming a child of God and being a joint-heir with Jesus. We are grateful for the truth these ministers did share. However, they did not have the revelation of salvation coming by faith in Jesus Christ alone and not by works. I am not criticizing them; I simply oppose what they teach, because it is a system of laws that cannot save or set free.

God's Mandates Are Not To Be Forgotten

Psalm 119:93—*I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me.*

Can you remember what it was like before you became fully acquainted with the Word of God? I can, and two memories come to mind.

First, I remember wondering what planet I had been on! I had, for the most part, been in or around church most of my life, yet I had been so spiritually deficient. Where had I been when so many people on Earth had heard the good news that “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16)?

Second, I remember catching a glimpse of God’s love for me and His mercy toward me. I realized that only a merciful and loving God could have spared my life amid all the things I had done that were so contrary to all that He stood for.

With His precepts, God has revived, nourished, preserved, and restored me to a life that is far beyond what I had experienced or was worthy to receive. These precepts are His mandates for His children to live and conduct themselves by. It becomes our choice to remember them always, not occasionally or when it is convenient for us to do so. When we follow these precepts in His Word, we become everything God intended us to be.

His Word has made me whole, not fragmented and dysfunctional. Therefore, I choose to remember it. Forgetting it is not an option for me. Why am I so adamant about keeping His Word in my heart and on my mind? I was once dead but, because of His Word, I am now alive—and alive is far better!

Not only am I alive in this life because I have elected never to forget His mandates, but I will never experience death again. My next adjustment is to pass from this limited world to one without limits. I am assured of this because He mandates it for me.

Father, I thank You that You have provided clear direction for my present and my future, in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Say No at the Right Time

Daniel 1:8—But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

Every spiritual battle is either won or lost in the heart. Our conviction determines our choices. Every day we are all presented with choices that we can make, and either fear or faith will dominate the dictate of our hearts.

Like us, Daniel was presented with a choice, and his heart it established it for him. When he was offered the food from the king's table, not wanting to desecrate, pollute, or stain himself by eating it, he chose to ask for something else. He chose the honor of God over the honor of man.

Resist the devil, and refuse to entertain his lies.

Most of us would have considered it an honor to be fed by the king. How quickly we forget that it is the enemy, or the one who has put us in fear or bondage, who may now want to feed us. By the Spirit, we must know when to say "no" to seemingly good offers. We must purpose in our hearts what is right for us according to the Word of God and our valued relationship with Him.

Never be afraid to request what you want, even though you are not in a favorable setting. If your heart is right to do what is pleasing to God, He then will bring you into favor and with the one who has the power to give you permission.

The devil will try to convince you that you have to court the enemy to obtain favor. He tries to keep you from understanding that you, as a believer, always have options—and you always have good ones. Resist the devil, and refuse to entertain his lies. The best way to do that is to humble yourself before God's mighty hand, because the battle is not yours but the choice of weapons always is. Remember: Sometimes the best weapon to use is to say "no" at the right time.

To Dwell, Behold, and Inquire

Psalm 27:4—*One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple.*

A closer look at our priorities and passion is very much in order. We as believers cannot focus on what others say or do to evaluate what is important in our lives. David said, “One thing have I desired....” In other words, “The first on my list of desires I will seek from the Lord is that I will dwell in His house all of my life, I will behold His beauty, I will inquire of Him.”

The time has come and now is when we must personalize our priorities as the Spirit of God directs us. So much energy is generated and often lost in trying to get others to obey God. Stop it now. That is the Holy Spirit’s responsibility. It’s His job to convince, convict, and convert. Our responsibility is to live the

Word as a witness to others, lift up Jesus, and trust the Holy Spirit—who was able to raise Jesus from the dead—to raise up our friends and loved ones also.

The time has come and now is when we must personalize our priorities as the Spirit of God directs us.

So many times, others are slow in coming to Christ because they are observing that we’re not as single-minded about this as we should be. Our desire and pursuit must be to sit down in quietness (dwell) in the court of God’s family (house); to contemplate with pleasure (behold) His splendor, His grace, His delight, and His agreeableness (beauty); to inspect, care for, and consider (inquire) in His place, His temple (me). These—not individuals—must become our passions, our personalized priorities. God will draw the individuals.

Father, in the past, I have allowed so many things and people to distract me. Please forgive me for not understanding that Jesus promised to make me a fisher of men, and what He came to do is already complete.

I am a fisher of men. Your Word is bait, and the Holy Spirit is the line that holds the bait. Father, I commit to desire, seek, dwell, behold, and inquire of You all the days of my life.

He Is Positioning and Securing Us

Hebrews 13:5-6 (NIV)—*Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"*

The reason God speaks to us through His Word and by His Spirit is so that we will declare and decree His position in our lives. He talks to us to position us and to secure us. When we say anything based on what He has said, confidence will surface every time. Our hearts will not fail us, though doubt may come to try and shake our minds loose from what our hearts already believe.

You must allow every word that proceeds from your mouth to find its foundation in what God has already spoken in a promise to you. Speaking with confidence and patiently waiting will result in the manifestation of your desired request or petition. The choice never to quit always guarantees victory for those who patiently endure to the end. You do not win because you enter the race. You do not even win because the finish line is in view. In this race of the Spirit, you win because you finally cross over the line, even if you are not the first.

Too often we cease running because it appears that another has crossed the finish line first. We throw in the towel because others were first to win the award we thought we deserved. We stop praising and serving God because a loved one has died. We sit down, refusing to go on because another person seems better prepared and equipped for the task.

Instead of looking around at the others in the race, we need to be looking at the One who re-created and equipped us for it. What did God say? Follow His lead and say who He is to you according to the Word. When you base your sayings on His promise to you, you can pick up the prize because it is yours.

Precious Father, I thank You for Your promises. I can go to bat with them. When my weakness is leaning on Your strength, I can hit a home run every time. Together we win, and that is the truth.

The World Detests Us

1 John 3:13—*Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.*

Some of us Christians seem so surprised when we are misunderstood, mistreated, persecuted, and lied to. Our usual mental response is “I wonder why this happened to me.” Read the Bible. The world hates us, which means they detest us. “But I didn’t do anything to them,” you may be thinking. Oh, yes, you did. You made Jesus the Lord of your life, and they are scared of you.

Jesus said in John 15:19, “If ye were of the world, the world would love his own.” Jesus implied that the world has the ability to love, but it’s a limited love. They know how to *phileo*; in other words, they know how to have friendships, and to be fond of, have affection toward, and have a personal attachment to someone. They have sentimental feelings, but you must be one of *them*—their own kind—to receive even this.

Jesus further told us that we are to do good to the world, to bless them, and to pray for them (Matthew 5:44). We are to speak well of them, thank God for them, and invoke a benediction on them. Why should we not be able to do this? What we have in the form of love is so superior to what they have. We have the kind of love that God is made of. We have *agape*. The world’s love is based on “What’s in it for me?” Ours is based on “What’s in it for you?” It’s a moral love.

Do not be like Cain, who was of the wicked one and slew his brother. Do you realize why Cain did this? It was because his own works were evil and his brother’s were righteous.

Our righteousness causes the world to react to the nature of its father, the devil. This same righteousness causes us to react to the nature of our Father God—to do good to those of the world, to bless them, and to pray for them.

Father God, in Jesus’ name, I pray that You will help me stay mindful of Calvary and its purpose. The world hated Jesus before it hated us. But thank You for providing for us the same gift of love for which You had Him endure the cross.

Unbelief and Uncertainty: Twin Strongholds

Galatians 1:9—As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

Nothing is new under the sun, and an old attitude or trend concerning money has resurfaced. Some in the body of Christ appear to be trying to make a doctrine out of accumulating money in abundance.

It's not wrong to have money in large quantities, as long as it is attained is according to God's will. The way to tell if extreme wealth is from the Lord is to check out your attitude if suddenly the Lord asks you to give it up and follow Him.

The Bible mentions money many times. The New Testament has several Greek words for money, each meaning something slightly different. Furthermore, the Bible mentions abundance and prosperity in a positive light concerning God's children. However, such scriptures are not the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ for humankind. Any preaching that does not keep Jesus and His love for humankind in focus is not the gospel. Any gospel other than that of Jesus is accursed.

Satan wants to lock believers into twin strongholds in their mental approach toward money. The first stronghold is to doubt God's love and care for His people. His second is to operate in uncertainty regarding the future.

Plans for the future, apart from trusting in God's plan, will fail. Money, wealth, prosperity, abundance, and success are all wonderful when coupled with trusting God. However, all who fail to trust God completely will never have enough money, wealth, prosperity, abundance, or success to sustain and maintain them and keep them happy.

Today, dear Father God, I ask You to give me Your wisdom regarding finances and how You would have me handle great resources. I thank You for Your precious holy Word concerning Your children having all sufficiency in all things to abound in all good works because of Your grace (2 Corinthians 9:8).

Help the leaders of Your people to remember to practice and to preach that all things will be added to those who seek first Your kingdom and Your righteousness (Matthew 6:33).

Whose Scale Are You Using?

Proverbs 16:2—*All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the Lord weigheth the spirits.*

The Lord said to Samuel, “Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7). The operative phrase here is “because I have refused him.” I fully understand that we are to forgive others, but I have never found in

We must measure everything by God’s Word, not our ways.

the Bible that we are to ignore what a person is doing.

The rebellious spirit that a person yields to will be released in the life and ministry of those he associates with. In fact, I believe that when we involve ourselves with rebellious people, the spirit that is motivating them is already at work to destroy us.

Too many pastors and Christian leaders ignore God’s Word in order to benefit from some person’s talent and gift. How often do we question people’s character before we allow them to sing in the choir, teach in Sunday school, or share with our youth?

When we invite guest ministers into our church, though we may even love and respect them as our friends, we tell them the standards of God for this ministry, ask them if they are in violation of any of these things, and wait for them to respond. We accept their word, while explaining that if they are not telling the truth, they are not lying to us but to the Holy Ghost. We never allow our emotions or needs to blind us to a rebellious spirit.

Pastors and Christian leaders, how much more are we to operate in line with God’s Word when we know a person active in our church or ministry is not? Never allow a need or desire in your life or ministry to cause you to distort God’s Word, corrupt the resources God entrusts to your stewardship, or compromise the standards God has established for all of us. We must measure everything by God’s Word, not our ways. We look at the outside of a person; God looks at the spirit, the heart.

Go to Thy Grave at a Full Age

Job 5:26—Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in his season.

Job's friends said many things to him that were wrong, but Eliphaz spoke this into Job's life, and it came to pass according to Job 42:17: "So Job died, being old and full of days."

Maybe one of the reasons I don't fear death or concern myself with storing up for the future is that the One who plans to keep me here still has a plan for me. He doesn't need me to have one. I told the Lord many years ago that Psalm 39:4 is my request of Him. It says, "Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is: that I may know how frail I am." When I acknowledge my weakness, He is made strong in me.

I don't know the exact day of my departure or how it will occur, but I do believe I will know the season. In the meantime, I attempt to live every day in such a way that if this is the day, I will not need to correct or change anything, nor will I leave behind that which is undone. I wish that I could convey just how much that understanding leaves me at peace.

We can't rush anything that we have planted. It has a season. Well, God, through Jesus, has planted us, and we can't borrow from tomorrow for today's life. There is so much living to do today that we need only to get on with it.

Imagine the Creator of the universe asking His children to do something today without giving them His grace and abundance to accomplish it. Would you as a loving parent do that to your children?

If you want to teach and preach consistently, then do it where there is no light, hope, or Word going forth. Go to the nursing homes, hospitals, prisons, shelters, and streets if necessary. Too many want to teach the flock of another shepherd, even in their homes. Don't do that, please. You will be shortening your days, and your untimely death will cause others to stumble, because they did not realize that you were out of the will of God. If you want to go to the grave at a full age, do what you are called to do. Just make sure you are reaching the people assigned to you.

Qualification for Petitions Granted

Esther 8:5 (NKJV)—“...If it pleases the king, and if I have found favor in his sight and the thing seems right to the king and I am pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to annihilate the Jews who are in all the king’s provinces.”

We need to recognize that people in positions of authority are not to grant petitions just because they have the power to do so. Rather, the petition and the petitioner are to qualify by pleasing the one granting the request. Furthermore, the request must also be right.

We do not have to struggle to bring God pleasure. He is pleased when we do the right thing.

Often, doing what is right is pleasing to people in authority. When we do what is pleasing in the sight of our leaders, we obtain their favor.

However, our goal should not be just to bring them pleasure. Our goal should simply be to

do the right thing. We do not have to struggle to bring God pleasure. He is pleased when we do the right thing. He is pleased when we live according to the righteousness that we are because of His Son. Then we will obtain His favor and His blessing.

Dear Father God, I am aware that You never slumber nor sleep and that Your eyes are everywhere looking to see whom You can favor and bless. I don't want to do what is right just to acquire Your blessing. I want to do the right thing because it pleases You. Every fiber of my being desires to please You.

I do not do what is right or pleasing to You just for Your favor. Favor is just a byproduct of my devotion to you. I am grateful for the truth that when I was Your enemy, You still loved me so much and I was so important to You that You sent Jesus to ensure our unity for all eternity. I am blessed and, I believe, pleasing in Your sight.

Put Aside Your Prison Clothes

Jeremiah 52:33 (NIV)—*So Jehoiachin put aside his prison clothes and for the rest of his life ate regularly at the king's table.*

Like this king of Judah, who had been in exile and imprisoned for thirty-seven years, Nelson Mandela was put away for a very long period of time because of what he believed and because others in power disagreed with him.

I often wonder how well I would stand such tests of life. I would like to think I would fare well, but because I have seen so many fail the test of life, I have chosen to ask the Lord daily for His grace to trust Him more.

All that is needed is a new power in charge and, like Jehoiachin, we can find our circumstances changed in a moment. We who were once in the bondage of sin, with pitch darkness all around us, have found ourselves freed from our prison. King Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, always speaks kindly to us, and we can't be seated in a more honorable seat than with Him in heavenly places. We have the responsibility and power to put aside our prison clothes. Jesus will not do that for us, but when we do, we will spend the rest of our lives feasting daily at His banquet table.

We can't eat at the King's table improperly attired. We have to put off fear, anger, and bitterness. We have to put off the old man, with its passions and desires. We have to renew our minds, with the Word of God. We have to crucify our flesh, discard the works of our old nature, and begin a new journey with the fruit of the Spirit growing in our lives.

If the new king of Babylon, day by day, gave to Jehoiachin regular allowances as long as he lived, imagine how much more we can expect the King, who changes not, to provide for us!

Precious Father, I praise You for teaching me how to remove the prison garb and to dress up in Your righteousness and a garment of praise. You give the provision of heaven to me, and I regularly feast at Your table of life. You have given to me Your best offering as well as the treasures of heaven.

Righteousness Keeps— Sin Kills

Proverbs 13:6—*Righteousness keepeth him that is upright in the way: but wickedness overthroweth the sinner.*

We often think that righteousness is something we have which distinguishes us from the sinner. That is true to a point, but righteousness is much more than that. Righteousness is a force—a power to preserve, protect, guard, guide, and govern each child of God. Among all that Calvary provided, righteousness was also made available to keep believers on the right track, traveling the right road.

We who are saved are just that—saved. Saved from the influence and effects of sin and wickedness of every sort. Those who have not yet acknowledged Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior face defeat and death as their lot in life. Regardless of what appears to be the reward of wickedness, it offers only destruction, defeat, and death packaged in a very attractive wrapping. Its contents are lethal. The Word of God is very clear that the devil comes to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10), and wickedness has one conclusion—death.

Sin may start out as a subtle temptation that excites and stimulates you at first. But it's designed to cause you to stumble and then entice and seduce you into an addictive relationship solely to rob you of your identity and willpower. Whatever it takes, in whatever form needed, sin will ultimately stop your walk toward the things of God. Wickedness and sin are a path that swallows its victims. For your welfare, you must find the detour around this road, and avoid it at all costs! Anyone who walks this path of wickedness will be overthrown at some point—there's no way around it.

Proverbs 13:6 is clear: "Righteousness keepeth him that is upright in the way." It sounds to me like there are rewards and benefits in being a Christian. And since this is true, why not make the choice to be the best Christian possible? After all, you and I are aware that we lack the power to be anything of value on our own. But we can rejoice knowing that we have help—a keeper whose name is Righteousness. Decide today to cooperate with Him.

Losing Your Life for Failure to Listen

2 Chronicles 35:21 (NLT)—*“What do you want with me, king of Judah? I have no quarrel with you today! I only want to fight the nation with which I am at war. And God has told me to hurry! Do not interfere with God, who is with me, or he will destroy you.”*

These words were uttered by Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to Josiah, a covenant king who had been pleasing in God’s sight since the age of eight. Yet, Josiah failed to heed the voice of God speaking through this non-covenant Egyptian, and it cost him his life.

Never become so sure that God would do or not do a particular thing a particular way. It was not the norm for God to deal with an Egyptian in this way, but since He is God, He can do whatever He wants to do.

Josiah made the mistake that many of us do. He focused on the messenger to the neglect of the message. He assumed King Neco was the enemy. Therefore, Josiah ignored his words stating that he was on assignment from God, and that God was with him to ensure the job would be done to God’s satisfaction. Had Josiah not been so impulsive in this matter, he would have lived. Had he conferred with God concerning King Neco’s words, Josiah would have been spared.

Never assume anything where God is concerned. Ask Him about everything and listen for what He has to say about the matter.

This is one of the most exciting lessons for me in the whole Bible. Imagine a person who was well-pleasing to God all of his life, losing his life unnecessarily.

You might ask, “Why would God allow this to happen to His servant?” It happened because King Josiah refused to accept the truth from God simply because it did not come through the vessel he thought God should use.

Please stop leaning to your own understanding. God is not obligated to move according to what we think, say, or do.

The lesson in this account of Josiah is that no matter what God may have done in the past, God will not always move in a predictable manner. Josiah formed an inaccurate opinion because he had not pulled aside to communicate with the Creator. That was a mistake.

Understand that God is doing new things in new ways, but the Holy Ghost was given to show you things to come. Be sensitive enough to listen to His leadings and His warnings.

What Does It Take to Change Your Heart?

Genesis 8:21 (NKJV)—...*Then the Lord said in His heart, "I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done."*

Let us focus on the last part of that promise. Not only does God admit that He alone is responsible for the former destruction of everything except righteous Noah and his family, He assured us that He was not going that way again. Because of His established covenant with Abraham, God spared righteous Abraham's seed at the Red Sea. He no longer just spared a man and his immediate family. He spared an entire nation because of one man.

Did either of their offspring learn anything? Very little if anything at all. The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth. That is why we must cast down every vain imagination that tries to exalt itself against God's Word for our life. When we fail to cast down the vain imaginations that are birthed in our hearts, we leave no room for God's gift of wisdom. His wisdom teaches us the imagination in *God's* heart, which brings us witty inventions and all things that prove beneficial to humanity.

Here we are not just the offspring of one individual, or the nation from the seed of one man. We are the Body of Christ corporately destined to do great and mighty things in the earth. Have we learned anything from history, especially history as it relates to God's people? Do we, the Body of Christ, have more going for us than Noah's family or Abraham's nation? We have the Holy Spirit who has given to us Jesus' wisdom, His righteousness, His sanctification, and His redemption. Is there more to be had than that? The answer is no.

It does not have to be that our hearts remain evil from our youth. Every event in the Bible is there for our learning. I believe with all my heart that we have eyes to see and ears to hear what the Spirit is saying to us. Please pay attention, God is depending on us. We are the last of His creation except for His original covenant people, we as Christians are God's chosen in the earth today. What does it take to change your heart?

Do You Comprehend This?

Genesis 9:2 (NKJV)—*“And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, and on every bird of the air, on all that move on the earth, and on all the fish of the sea. They are given into your hand.”*

This was a promise made to Noah and his sons when they were commanded to replenish the whole earth. I dared to believe this one day when we lived in the “burbs.” I was walking down our driveway toward a main road when suddenly a dog appeared on the path before me who seemed to challenge me for the space we both were to occupy. Remembering this verse, I continued to walk toward him with my heart pounding, knees knocking, and fear trying to attach itself to me. As I neared him, with only this verse on my side, he dashed off into the woods as though he saw something that frightened him. Was I relieved? You know it! The level of my faith took a giant step that day concerning the authority God has given to humanity, me included.

Look at this verse and ask the Holy One to illuminate to you what He is saying to the Church today about their authority in Christ Jesus. I believe that the only way for us to do what still needs to be done in the earth is for us to receive the illumination of this revelation. Then we can complete our assignment and be pleasing in the sight of the Lord. And the Church will be delivered out of the earth as we know it.

Based on my understanding of the Bible, we have so little time left to reach so many for Jesus. It is not impossible, but it will not occur among the fearful and among those who are hesitant to walk in the Word and power of the one true, living God.

The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof, but He has given it to the children of mankind. To the best of my knowledge, God never recanted this promise to Noah and his sons. You may feel as fearful as I did the day I was challenged by a stray dog on my property. But Jesus came to ensure that we keep walking toward anything with nerve enough to challenge us. When we do, our challenger will flee as in terror (James 4:7).

There Will Be a Reckoning

Genesis 9:6 (NKJV)—*“Whoever sheds man’s blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man.”*

I know God said this along with verse five which reads, “Surely for your lifeblood I will demand a reckoning; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of every man. From the hand of every man’s brother I will require the life of man.” What I am not clear on is how and where do we factor in the love of Jesus and God’s grace in this dispensation in which we live?

I asked the Holy Spirit to help me with this, because my desire is to share truth, not my opinion. I want everything that I write or teach to be filled with the accuracy of both His Word and His Spirit. One thing I know is that the Word and the Spirit are to agree when the heart of God is expressed. Therefore, we must learn the difference between the Word and the law and the Word and the Spirit.

God is looking for mercy and justice to operate both in and through His people. Jesus made a few awesome statements as recorded in Luke 6. He said, “If you are willing to listen, I say love your enemies.” He further stated that obedience to certain requirements would be an indication that we are children of the Most High, for He is kind to the unthankful and the wicked. Verse 36 reads that we must be compassionate just as our Father is compassionate. Of course, we know Jesus said, “I only say what I hear My Father say” (John 12:50), and, “You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one” (John 8:15).

Regard for human life is seemingly a rare thing these days. Abortions are performed at an amazing rate. The unborn fetus does not have as much right to life as a dog or cat. Something is drastically wrong in the world’s thinking, with some so-called Christians not too far behind!

I do not profess to know all the right answers, but I know the One who does, and I am expecting Him to tell me what I need to know or do while I represent Him in the earth. I trust Him to direct my steps and fill my mouth with what is right when I need to make choices. This is “walking by faith.” In the meantime, I’ll stay close to the Ten Commandments and add John 13:34 to it for good measure. In the end, there will be a reckoning.

People or Demons— Be Not Afraid

Psalm 3:6 (NKJV)—*I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around.*

In addition to the above numbers of people, I added in my Bible "and demons also." Thank God for allowing me to see that people are not ever my problem unless they have yielded to a force or spirit other than God's Holy Spirit.

Once I learned that every demonic spirit would bow to the name of Jesus and that human flesh apart from God never would in this life, life became so much easier for me. With demon spirits, I walk in my authority to use the name of Jesus. With human spirits, I believe God for His grace to operate in the fruit of His Spirit at all times in every way, never reacting or responding to what another person says or does. That's not easy but it's possible.

Such self-control is not easy. But when you make the choice to keep your focus on Jesus, you will remember that you are on assignment to represent His Spirit—not your flesh in the earth. The way to be unaffected by people while at the same time positioning yourself to be used of the Lord to minister to them is to believe for grace to walk in the Spirit at all times.

Can you locate where you are today spiritually? Does the devil have you thinking that everyone is against you with an elaborate plan to stop you at every turn? The first thing you need to know is that God's plan for your life cannot be stopped by anyone except you. Understanding who you are with God through Jesus Christ is essential to experience a victorious walk among the masses who are ill-informed.

Don't quit now—your change is around the next bend in the road. The path you are on is new to you, but not to your Creator. He loves you so much that He planned your steps (and stops) long before you learned to even walk.

Never forget that God sent His Son because of His love for all of humanity. He paid an awesome price to guarantee you so much. Remember to develop appreciation for who you are while at the same time seeing your connection to God and to humanity.

Never React in Anger

Psalm 4:4 (NKJV)—*Be angry, and do not sin. Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still.*

This should become the motto for every anger management class, everywhere.

It seems that controlled ire is allowed and can cause you to stand for what you believe so you won't fall for the devil's foolishness. That, to me, is healthy anger. However, violent passions that excite the mind to say or do things which will result in your countenance falling or indignation to the point of vengeance is not

only unhealthy, but dangerous to the point of becoming lethal to some. It is important to retire at night with a quiet heart

that stills you in a bed of peace and does not incite you to sin.

I usually add as a part of the New Year's eve altar call that "some were with us last year this time who did not make it through to its conclusion because none of us knows the day or the hour of our departure." If you have a breach in fellowship with someone else, get it fixed with friends, loved ones, and the Lord now before it is too late.

Anything that agitates us to anger must be addressed at once. We do not want to remember or be remembered with our last words to another as being harsh, stubborn, unkind, selfish.

All of us have "hot buttons." The devil has observed us from our youth, and he noticed that for some of us, accepting Jesus as our Savior, but not the Lord over certain areas of our life, has left us open still to his suggestions and thoughts. Those thoughts are certainly not God's best for our lives and will prove to be of no possible benefit for humanity to find their path to the Lord.

Are you surprised to know that a large portion of today's society is watching you to see how you handle life's adversities? Do you still make choices that you wish you could do over? How much of your life are you going to surrender to anger? You don't need anger management classes. You need Holy-Ghost, Bible-believing classes among people who simply choose to stop reacting in anger to their circumstances.

Tools to Locate Favor

Proverbs 3:3-4 (NKJV)—*Let not mercy and truth forsake you; Bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart, And so find favor and high esteem in the sight of God and man.*

All of us want and need the favor of God and, at times, man. But both can seem so elusive because the very tools we need to dig for His as well as human treasure often elude us. We need both mercy and truth in our lives as we incur God's favor as well as the favor of others. Yet they both often escape our grasp because the devil understands the power of mercy in the life of a believer.

Mercy is loving-kindness or the same kindness God's love displayed towards us on Calvary. Truth is stability, certainty, and trustworthiness. Truth and mercy are measured by God as He observes us in our response to Him, others, and situations that try to catch us off-balance.

This is simply another form of the seedtime and harvest principle. If we expect to have favor (kindness) from God and people, then we must show it to others. If we want a solid foundation that is stable to build trust, then we must refrain from lying to others. We will at some point reap what we sow.

Do you have a court case pending? Are you in need of a miracle in what appears to be a hopeless situation? What are your desires today of both God and others?

If you have not given mercy when it was needed, or if falsehood has been the foundation of your life, repent, ask God to forgive you, and straighten out some things with the people you have wronged. Receive your forgiveness and go on in trust from there.

I don't know when or if you will pay for wrong doing, but I am very familiar with God's favor when I have come to Him with a sincere heart of genuine repentance. He is not a respecter of persons. He loves you and regardless of what is taking place around you, He is working all things together for your good. Believe that. It is the truth.

**Ask God to forgive you,
and straighten out some
things with the humans
you have wronged.**

Impulsive and Ignorant Comment Versus Willful Rejection

Matthew 12:32 (NKJV)—*Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.*

Callers to my live call-in talk show “The Choice Is Yours” often ask me, “What is blasphemy against the Holy Ghost?” My usual response is “Giving credit to the devil for the supernatural things done in your life by God.” Because they have heard so much erroneous teaching, they are confused. Their quest for truth is a good sign that they are not guilty.

In ignorance, most of us have made impulsive comments we did not intend. Since God reads hearts, He knows when we are just ill informed as opposed to willfully rejecting truth.

Willful rejection of the truth is when you have not only read and heard the Scriptures, but you have been privileged to experience the power of God in your personal life. To fail to credit the Holy One with this, but to deliberately say that this is of the devil, is too dangerous to think about.

Many people are concerned because their church teaches that speaking in tongues is of the devil. Jesus said, “When the blind lead the blind, they both fall in the ditch,” which is why it is written to try every spirit to see if it is of God (1 John 4:1).

Years ago, my church taught the same thing. But one day after hearing additional truth from the Scriptures and reading for ourselves, my late husband and I both said, “We believe this speaking in tongues is of God and we want all of Him.” Six months later the Holy Ghost completed in us what Jesus had begun years earlier. We were born of Jesus’ Spirit when we acknowledged Him as Savior. We were baptized with His Spirit when we spoke in tongues as the evidence of His equipping us with power.

I know this is of God, because I have all the additional parts with the tongues. I operate more in the fruit of the Spirit along with the gifts of His Spirit, contributing to my spiritual growth as well as benefiting others. Trust me, only God could have pulled this off, and I will not give credit to the devil for it.

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Recycled Revelation

John 20:25—*The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he [Thomas] said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.*

Like Thomas, you and I should not have to settle for recycled revelation. It is wonderful to hear of what God is doing in the lives of others. I rejoice when I observe lives changed from struggle and defeat to victory. My attitude is this: If God reveals Himself in you through Jesus, I expect to know Him in the same

way. I want to be able to say, "I have seen the Lord also." And I can say that I have seen the Lord, for, though my physical eyes have yet to behold Him, His love is evident in so much of my life that I could hardly

I rejoice when I observe lives changed from struggle and defeat to victory.

love Him more if He appeared to me.

The difference between Thomas and me is that he refused to believe without seeing physical proof. I have physical proof because I choose to believe. I believe that literature about others' experiences, and crusades, conferences, and meetings are provided to whet our appetites for our own personal experiences with God. I don't know about you, but I will not settle for less than knowing by seeing what He is doing in my life personally.

I suggest that you re-assess your time—the same 24 hours that each of us has each day—and prioritize it to include as much personal time with the Lord as you spend in various Word meetings.

Dear Father God, You did not give us Jesus to conceal Him from us. You sent Him as a revelation of You in Your fullness so that we could quickly discover our inadequacies and our need for His sufficiency. Our desire is to one day see You. But until that day, we believe that You alone are the One who rewards those who diligently seek after You and Your words to live by. I praise You, God, that my revelation of You does not have to be the recycled kind of revelation. I can have an "original" revelation and the best of the best in my experience with You. Amen and Amen.

The Excitement of Thy Treasured Word

Psalm 119:162—*I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil.*

The Word of God is more exciting than discovering a trunk full of silver and gold. There have been times when the Spirit illumined truth to me, and I was more excited about it than any financial blessing I could receive.

My late husband, Clinton Utterbach, wrote the now world-famous song "Blessed Be the Name of the Lord." For whatever reason, God decided to take this song all over the world. It has been recorded by the famous and the not-so-famous. A while back, I picked up the mail just before rushing in to do the live show I do every Thursday night, so I did not open the mail until after 1:00 AM.

In the mail was a royalty check that represented more than either of us earned before we accepted the call to the ministry. This followed an income tax return check by just a few days that was also larger than our former salary. The only thing these two checks represented to us was focusing on hearing from the Lord as to who He wanted us to bless or what He wanted us to do with it. We had no need or desire that God through Jesus had not taken care of. The point is that our rejoicing did not come with receiving the money. It has and still does come from discovering new truth in God's Word that has made us free.

Twenty-five years ago, when we first began to hear what the Spirit was saying to us about what was written, we made a decision to continue in it. As I reflect on how far He has brought me, I am more excited about Bible truth today because I am now operating in both the faith to trust it and the experience it has provided.

May I always speak as one having had the privilege of discovering that there is no treasure in this life that compares with knowing and continually learning God's Word. If you cannot be excited about the Word of God revealed to you, and you are still pursuing "stuff and things," you need to ask the Lord to help you with your value systems. Then you can rejoice at His Word as one who has found great treasure.

Wisdom and a Wife

Proverbs 8:35; 18:22—*For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord.... Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord.*

Both wisdom and a wife are important and should be found in this order. Without having found wisdom, you will not recognize the right wife when you find her. All of us need favor from the Lord, and He delights in rewarding His sons with both life and a wife.

Men, failure to find wisdom (who by the way, is not lost, just unavailable to those unwilling to seek after her) will hinder you from finding the life God intended that you experience. Surely by now you know that life is more than breathing. It is not what you eat, where you live, or what you wear or have. Life is maturing in the things of Christ by the Word of God in actions—wherever you are, whatever you are doing, and especially with whom you do things.

Life without God's wisdom is existing; it is not living. Wisdom allows you to make godly choices. Wisdom helps you to recognize truth from fiction. Wisdom shows you paths to walk on and paths to avoid. Wisdom speaks of excellent things, and the opening of its lips shall be right things (Proverbs 8:6). Wisdom loves those who love her and those that seek her early and diligently shall find her (Proverbs 8:17). Wisdom, like a good woman, has to be pursued and shown that you love, respect, and care for her. Wisdom, like any fine lady, does not want to be taken for granted or abused. Wisdom will abandon anyone who fails to appreciate her value. She, wisdom, will work with you, help you build a life together, and require little more than love to stay with you through whatever life presents.

The best book in the world to study on "how to" where a woman is concerned is Proverbs, because it points so much toward the wisdom of God. If you will do what wisdom wants and apply it naturally to the woman in your life, you will never fail in your relationship. The bonus for obtaining wisdom and a wife is that you also obtain favor from the Lord. There are no favors anywhere like God's favor! Choose today the grace of God to learn how to obtain His wisdom. Once you have her, you are ready for a wife. Even if you already have a spouse. I suspect that wisdom will teach you how to enjoy her God's way.

If You Can't Beat Them, Join Them

Esther 8:15—And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple: and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad.

One way for us to attract those who have yet to receive Jesus Christ is to be happy in what we have in Him. Light, gladness, joy, and honor came to the Jews because one of theirs was in leadership (8:16). As Christians, we have every right to rejoice when a godly man or woman is elected or appointed to office. "And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them" (8:17). We never want people to be afraid of us, but we should never downplay the positions God puts us in. God places us in positions so the world will want to incur our favor because we are in charge. They don't know that we are committed to walk in love toward them.

Not only is what we as Christians have different and powerful, it is also profitable to those who join us. We stress in our church the importance of making the newcomers feel welcome and valuable. There are too many cliques and private clubs in church at times in competition with one another to be more or better. No one can have more of Jesus than anyone else. It does not get better than being saved and filled with God's Holy Spirit. Church, stop blocking out the newcomers! Remember, you were once one of them. I believe that when we cease having favorites, we will find greater unity in the church. That will cause improved harmony and result in more power released for the benefit of the masses.

God never intended for us to hoard anything. It is sometimes challenging to get some people loose from their finances. Fear makes people hoard money. I am not talking about giving everything away to the point of becoming a statistic yourself. I believe giving, the same as receiving, should be divinely inspired. I believe God observes and looks at a few checks and balances before He opens the windows of heaven on your behalf. But some would rather give their loot than their love. God wants you to share both freely as directed by His Spirit in line with His Word. Do you hear?

Backsliding Starts in the Heart

Proverbs 14:14 (NKJV)—*The backslider in heart will be filled with his own ways, But a good man will be satisfied from above.*

Turning away from the teaching of the Lord does not begin in the flesh. Backsliding starts in the heart.

Without immediate correction, the heart becomes full of “I’ll do it my way,” or “I’m impressed to go another way even though I know what is written in the Bible.” Any Christian who makes the choice to “do my own thing my own way” is a backslider, because his heart is no longer in agreement to follow after the things of God.

The title ‘good man’ or ‘good woman’ is to be prized.

Anyone who makes the choice to go with God regardless and chooses to be satisfied with what the Word says will be successful,

triumphant, and victorious in his or her Christian walk. They may not understand the Word or even agree, but they recognize that because it is written in the Word, it is from above.

It would seem that some people confuse being transformed by the Word with conforming to the world (Romans 12:12). They say they no longer want anyone to tell them what to do, but they want to do their own thing. That is what the world says. Anyone can look around at what is taking place with people in the world today and conclude that they don’t have a clue. The problem with following your own ways is that your ways are faulty. They are defective and can never produce the perfecting power required to meet needs and get the job done.

The title “good man” or “good woman” is to be prized. For me, it is a badge of honor. It strongly suggests that my actions and words are of God, because I only hear and say what God says. I am reluctant to follow some so-called Christians because it appears that what they are doing is not Bible based. If it is not Bible based, it will not support anyone in these last and evil days. Guard your heart so that it conforms to God’s Word and not your way.

You!

Deuteronomy 5:33 (NKJV)—*“You shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God has commanded you, that you may live and that it may be well with you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which you shall possess.”*

The subject here is pretty obvious. God is speaking directly to each one of us. Why is it that we still look over our shoulder to see who is following? What does it matter who goes with you? You must follow the voice of the Good Shepherd and the leading of His Holy Spirit.

One of the best reasons that I know to listen to and follow His voice is so you may live and testify to God’s goodness. One

way I do this is by taking care of what the Lord has given me. I am very cautious and concerned about what I eat, how it is prepared, and generally what I can do to prolong my days here on the earth.

**Follow God’s plan for you.
It will prolong your days and
cause things to go well for you.**

Reread Deuteronomy 5:33. It says each of us is due an inheritance; some of us will be given physical land. Are we possessing the portion allotted to us? We can if we walk in His ways and do that which He has commanded of us.

I love these “you” scriptures. Not only do they challenge me, they clearly state what my part is in the matter. They eliminate the wonder or the worry.

I have never found God to obscure what He wanted me to do. Moses reiterated the Lord’s instruction to the children of Israel that they should not turn aside to the left or to the right. That could only mean they were in a forward march because retreat and reverse were never His plan for His children.

It should excite you to know that God’s love for you is such that He would specify for you what His expectations are so that you are not trying to walk in another’s shoes. Follow God’s plan for *you*. It will prolong your days and cause things to go well for you.

Wisdom Is Born Out of Some Strange Things

Proverbs 29:15 (NKJV)—*The rod and rebuke give wisdom.
But a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.*

A rod can be used as a weapon or a tool. One punishes, the other corrects depending on whose hands it is in. Rebuke or reproof also can correct, but it also chastises.

From an early age, I knew that my mother thought her two children were special.

**Parents, do not allow your
offspring self-expression with you
that will not be tolerated by others.**

She worked hard to have my brother and me behave and look as though we were special.

I am grateful. Most of my memories of my mother are fond. Although some of her choices were painful, yet they contributed to the wisdom I enjoy today.

Mother at times inflicted pain, but never abuse, in correction. With a child like me, she did not have a lot of choices. I thank God that I was not left to myself. We never brought Mother shame because she did not leave our training to ourselves or to each other.

We didn't get a lot of spankings. But when they were administered, she always said, "This hurts me as much as it hurts you." I thought, *Then why do it?*

One valuable lesson at age five was that you never hit "Mama." After spanking me with a rubber ironing cord, Mother threw the cord on the bed beside me and turned away. A voice inside me said, *Whack her across her backside.* I did, and that was the only time I ever did that! Shortly after that incident, I began my quest to distinguish the voices speaking to me, because *that* voice was trying to get me killed! Years later, I paid attention when Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice and will not follow another" (John 10:4-5) and "I came to give you life abundantly and the thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy" (John 10:10).

Parents, do not allow your offspring self-expression with you that will not be tolerated by others. Stop listening to society, heed Scripture concerning your child, and you will avoid shame for both of you.

Who Assigned You?

Galatians 1:1 (NKJV)—*Paul, an apostle (not from men, nor through man but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead).*

We used to sing the chorus, “The world didn’t give it and the world can’t take it away.” It is good to first know where your assignment came from and remember that that is where your source and resource will be found.

Whatever a human can do for you, a human can remove from you. When you understand that your calling, your location, and your future steps are ordered by God, no obstacle will ever hinder you. When a human appoints or assigns you to perform a task, they can reward or remove you as it pleases them. But when you know, doubting nothing, that God through the Lord Jesus has given you your title and the accompanying authority, you listen only for His voice to receive your direction. Teaching tapes are good, but there is nothing quite like sitting in the presence of the Lord and reading His Word to increase in illumination and revelation provided by His Spirit.

Good nuggets can be gleaned from the mouth of God’s anointed servants. But why just receive truth secondhand when as an child of God, you can also receive revelation by His Spirit firsthand? Firsthand revelation remains with you forever.

Your commission to preach, teach, or witness does not come through human channels. Not only does God commission you, He foreordained you to be conformed to the image of His Son Jesus. Your speech, your walk, and your attitude should be viewed by all as that of one belonging to the Lord.

When surroundings or circumstances determine your choices, it is a signal that maybe you are trying to please people more than the Lord. Watch it—such choices may make you popular in the eyes of men, but a stench in the nostrils of God!

Any man or woman leaving this life having pleased God is successful. Take a moment to assess where you are and how you got there. You will find that the source of your commission is where you will obtain your resources for future success.

What Is the Gospel?

Galatians 1:12 (NKJV)—*For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

Unless by the grace of God Jesus Christ is first revealed *in* you, He will not be revealed *to* you in order to teach others.

There is nothing wrong with attending Bible school if God told you to do so. Paul said, "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood"

(Galatians 1:15-16).

**Hopefully you and others
who knew you when,
can see Jesus now
revealed in you.**

There is nothing quite like knowing to whom you are to preach. Paul was to preach to the Gentiles, not the Jews. I am learning who I am to preach Jesus to by basically staying at RLCC. The Spirit will bring the people there

to hear what He gives me to say, because RLCC in Nanuet, NY, is where I am called to be.

Paul was an apostle, and he had to go to a number of places. I am a shepherd, and shepherds are to remain with their flock. I go to other places occasionally, but only as the Spirit directs. And it is only for a brief time and never to the neglect of the sheep in my own flock only to confirm what their shepherd is telling them.

God arranged for us to attend Bible school to separate us from family and secular work. Then through our obedience, He could prove to us that the just could live by faith. When you look back over what you used to be, hopefully you and others who knew you when, can see Jesus now revealed in you. People are more willing to listen to revelation about Jesus when they observe in you who He is and what He has done in and with you.

I don't remember every detail of every subject that I learned in Bible school, nor have I tried to teach them all. But I do know who I have become because of the revelation of Jesus in me. I can preach that, because I can support it from the Word of God. Jesus revealed in me and you is the Gospel.

Trust God in Everything

Daniel 3:18 (KJV)—*But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.*

The day is quickly approaching when we will be tested so that what is in our hearts will be known. Now is the time to settle in our hearts how we will respond during that test. We should daily rehearse our response and call on the Holy Spirit to assist us with everything so that approaching Him in the midst of disaster will not be foreign to us. God our Father is concerned about everything that concerns us, so we can cease from trying to figure anything out in our own heads.

Stop waiting for what you consider the “major stuff” to happen; it’s all minor to God. However, He considers it a major thing when His children bring everything to Him in prayer.

Aren’t you pleased when your children love and trust you enough to talk to you about whatever is on their hearts and minds? Sometimes we parents are able to do it, and sometimes we’re not. Yet our children keep on believing in us; their love does not wane. How much more should we be able to believe in and love our Father, who is able and willing to respond to our faith in Him? He is the good God.

Dear Father God, I know You are able. I also believe that You are willing to keep me from the evil in this world (John 17:15). Therefore, if You decide that deliverance is not the order of the day, then know, my Father, that I love You and will love You and will never bow down to worship or serve any god except You, the one true and living God.

I sow the seeds of these words this day because I have within me the Greater One to cause it to be so. The Hebrew boys had a measure of Your Spirit on them, and You did not fail them. I have You in me; I am Your body. Since “no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it” (Ephesians 5:29), how much more will You love Your Son’s body, the Church? Thank You, Father, for Your love and faithfulness to me. In Jesus’ name I say and pray it. Amen and amen.

Easy and Possible

Deuteronomy 30:11 (NKJV)—*“For this commandment which I command you today, it is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off.”*

Requirements never bother me as long as I know upfront what they are, and that they are realistic and make sense.

God does not hide His requirements from us, nor does He make them so difficult that to attain them is impossible. Jesus said, “My yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:30).

To be yoked with someone requires that both people be heading in the same direction at the same time. I believe that is why the Lord said in Deuteronomy 22:10, “Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together.” Both are burden-bearers.

God does not hide His requirements from us . . .

However, one will continue on with the task because he is a castrated bull, and a female cow in the field no longer entices him. But the ass will sit down when you least want him to. One is yielded and resigned, the other is stubborn, and, therefore, they should not be yoked together.

The burden Jesus discussed in Matthew can be described as “an invoice as with freight.” I did not understand that, but the One who teaches me the truth made it real to me.

The Lord once asked me, “Have you ever received any freight?” My response was, “Yes.” He asked, “What usually accompanies freight?” I said, “An invoice.” He said, “My children keep trying to give Me the invoice while they try to carry the freight, and it should be reversed. They are not burden-bearers. They should hold the invoice (the Bible) and give Me the freight (the burden) to hold for them until they are ready to handle it. By then, I will have changed the freight, or the burden, into a blessing, because they have closely reviewed the invoice.

“I am the God who makes the heavy light, the dark bright, the weak strong, and the meek bold. All things are possible with Me, and all things are possible to you when you believe the invoice, which contains every blessing and promise you will ever need.”

Just Make Sure You Have Shared

Deuteronomy 31:27 (NKJV)—*“For I know your rebellion and your stiff neck. If today, while I am yet alive with you, you have been rebellious against the Lord, then how much more after my death?”*

What a blessing it would be to leave a legacy that all who have been taught by you would walk in the understanding of the truth. Some will, and others will choose not to. You still get credit for having shared.

Moses said in verse 29, “For I know that after my death you will become utterly corrupt, and turn aside from the way which I commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days, because you will do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger through the work of your hands.”

Those were Moses’ words spoken over the children of Israel. Paul speaks a better word over us. “But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul” (Hebrews 10:39).

What is the difference? A man named Jesus.

Paul said, “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” He then answered his own question:

“I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh, the law of sin” (Romans 7:24-25).

Pastors and teachers, make sure your expectations of people are according to what God requires and not your pet doctrine. Every spiritual leader has personal preferences. You will be less discouraged when you preach and teach the requirements of the Lord from His Word.

Are you like Moses, highlighting the people’s negatives? Or do you find yourself like Paul, believing for God’s best to influence them to be and do better?

Remember, pastors and teachers, make sure you have shared the truth of God’s Word. You will have whatever you say. Harness your loose tongue to line up with God’s desire for your sheep, and stop agreeing with the way they are now. You make the difference.

A Sincere Call Gets God's Attention

Psalm 145:18 (NLT)—*The Lord is close to all who call on him, yes, to all who call on him sincerely.*

It is very reassuring to know how close God is to me when I need to call on Him. I have no concern about static on the line or the signal fading out in the middle of a sentence when I'm conversing with God. I know with certainty that I have His full and undivided attention when I "call on Him sincerely."

What does calling on Him sincerely mean? Instead of using the word "sincerely," the *King James Version* uses the word "truth," which is another way of saying "trustworthiness." When we call on God using His written and spoken promises, He hears Himself speaking. And we know He always listens to what He has to say, because everything that He has spoken has or will come to pass.

When we refuse to consider what's going on in the natural in order to consider what is in the spirit, we allow our faith to speak. God's attention will then not only be focused on what we speak, but He will call together all of heaven to bring it to pass in the earth.

Don't just "chitchat" with God. Say what you want based on what He has spoken to you from His Holy Word and from His personal words to you that can be supported in His Word.

Today, stop for a moment to recognize that God is near. He is so close to you and to me. He does not distance Himself based on our situation. We do not have to beg, squall, or grovel in the dirt to get God's attention. Failure to gain God's attention is the result of our failing to speak forth His truth. But when we do, God is aware that we are truly trusting in Him to bring a thing to pass.

Nothing moves God quite like our trusting Him. Quit holding back. Quit holding on to the little stuff you don't want to bother God with. To Him, it is all "little stuff." Get smart and roll the whole of your care on Him—That means all of it (1 Peter 5:7 Ampl.).

Why try to handle your own cares when God can and is willing to take care of everything that concerns you? God never *tries* anything. He *does* it—period.

Some Things Best Left Unsaid

Proverbs 29:11 (NKJV)—*A fool vents all his feelings, But a wise man holds them back.*

Words contain tremendous power for both good and evil. Therefore, wisdom dictates that it is far better to zip your lips for the moment than to vent or express your emotions.

Failure to restrain your tongue and withhold certain comments could and often does result in strained, damaged relationships, sometimes permanently.

**It is necessary
to control the tongue.**

When you want to give someone a piece of your mind, first make sure you have the mind of Christ. If you cannot say it the way Jesus would say it, then tell it to Him before you speak it to another person. Not only will He understand, He will not be offended. Furthermore, He will not repeat the matter to anyone. As a matter of fact, He will help you to understand why you feel what you feel and will assist you with the necessary control over your mouth.

Believe me, it is necessary to control the tongue. If not properly controlled, the tongue will create challenges for you that you never even considered.

I still confront things that need to be addressed in order to put guidelines in place that will work good for all involved. However, with the Holy Ghost's help, I have learned not to attack anyone with my tongue for the sole purpose of devastating them. Every once in a while, I yield to the flesh and have to repent. Since I know my flesh is not yet redeemed, I try to avoid letting people get too close to me who do not bring out the best in me. I cannot afford the luxury of venting all of what I feel.

God does not anoint and use fools. He uses foolish things often to confound the world. But He requires His people to be wise. Stop right now and ask the Holy Ghost to help you with your tone, your temper, and your tongue. He has known for a long time that you need help with your mouth, so ask His assistance before it is too late to make corrections.

Why Try To Hide?

Genesis 3:8-10 (NLT)—*The Lord God called to Adam, "Where are you?" He replied, "I heard you, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked.*

It's silly even to contemplate such a thought as being able to hide yourself from the Omniscient, Omnipotent One. How do you hide from the One who sees all things, everywhere, including into the very hearts of men? Adam soon discovered that God did not ask, "Where are you?" because He was unaware of Adam's whereabouts. God asked Adam that question to allow Adam to locate himself in his relationship with God. God was allowing Adam to practice a principle that man would need from that moment on, which is to confess our sins to the righteous God.

God does not learn of your sins when you confess them. He is looking at you the

very moment you involve yourself in them. No force or person can cause you to sin. God lives in you by His Spirit, which is why He knows when

you make the choice to sin. But do not feel condemned. Feel sad that you allowed yourself to choose less for yourself than what He would have chosen for you.

God's heart desire toward you is for good only. Every good and perfect gift is released from His hands to yours because He loves you. Obviously, He does not love you *because* you sin, but He loves you *in spite of* the fact that you chose less than His best for your life. When you comprehend God's great love for you, the little foxes will not spoil your vine, and anxiety and worry will fall by the wayside.

Today, make the choice to praise God with your whole heart. As you do, He will cause you to enter into his rest—a special place reserved just for you. Keep your mind focused on Him, and He will keep you in perfect peace. Do not try to hide from Him, because nothing can separate you from the love of God.

God does not learn of your sins when you confess them. He is looking at you the very moment you involve yourself in them.

The Ultimate Church Growth

Acts 9:31 (NKJV)—*Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.*

Church growth conferences all over the world are trying to teach pastors and church leaders how to attract folk to their flock. Forget the gimmicks, gadgets, and games trying to attract people. If people come to your church for any reason other than the Word of God and the preaching of Jesus, they will not remain.

We do not find many peaceful assemblies today. Pastors and church leaders are often uptight because of great debt or operating expenses in excess of their income. Church is almost the last place anyone looks to be edified and encouraged, because the saints are not taught the foundation for trusting the Lord.

I am personally convinced that there is an urgent need to quit the “how-to’s” and the “steps to church growth.” It is time to teach the people the love of God as well as how to love God and how to respond to the ministry and the person of the Holy Spirit.

When the world observes the peaceful spirit of the saints who spend more time encouraging others rather than criticizing them, people will come to the churches out of curiosity, hear the message of Christ, and choose to stay. Do we have what it really takes to attract the heathen, or can they see little or no difference between them and us?

I believe we have all that is needed to evangelize the world to Jesus. I am just not sure we have learned to trust God enough to pull it off without a “Madison Avenue” approach. Pastor, why not talk to Him about it today?

Forget the gimmicks, gadgets, and games trying to attract people. If people come to your church for any reason other than the Word of God and the preaching of Jesus, they will not remain.

Your Attitude Affects Your Health

Proverbs 14:30—*A sound heart is the life of the flesh; but envy the rottenness of the bones.*

Jealousy and envy are as bad for the body as consuming acid. They are deadly. They can become the breeding ground for cancer by allowing the disease to take root. Envy and jealousy are not in themselves a disease, but their negative effect is the same.

All of us have to cast down envy or jealousy at one time or another, regardless of the gifts and blessings of the Lord in our lives. We have to work at not comparing ourselves with others. Some are jealous of fame. For others, it may be looks or wealth that cause envy. For many, it is relationships. Whatever it is, rid yourself of jealousy, and do it quickly.

Jealousy and envy are as bad for the body as consuming acid. They are deadly. They can become the breeding ground for cancer by allowing the disease to take root.

ly. Never give life to jealousy by speaking to anyone but God about it. He is the only One who can deliver you.

To envy or be jealous of another is to say to God, "You don't love me the same as You do him or her." It also says to the devil that your sufficiency is not in Christ, and you want more. The devil will accommodate you temporarily until he has you hooked, then he will withdraw and gloat over your confusion.

Does someone have something you want, or live where you'd like to live? Are your friends married while you seem to be all alone? How do you respond to negative information? Can you rejoice in the blessing of God in someone else's life? A sound heart is one that says, "I may not have all that you have, but I have all that I need or desire." There is a saying, "We may not have it all together. But together we have it all." Get rid of the attitude of envy and ask God to give you an attitude of gratitude instead. Anchor your heart in whatever will produce life to your flesh in order to walk in divine health.

Do what you do as unto the Lord and wait on Him for both your reward and your recognition. He has not forgotten.

Never Eat Your Last Seed

Luke 21:3—...*Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all.*

A quick way to get God involved in your life, which includes your finances, is to give Him your all, your best, and your last. While we were attending Bible school, preparing to follow God's directions for us to attend and not take on secular jobs, we discovered one evening at offering time, we were down to two dollars and the mortgage in New Jersey, the rent in Oklahoma, along with other bills, were soon due. We understood that what we had would not put a dent in what was due, so we agreed to sow our last, our best, and our all.

This simply meant God would have to come on the scene two dollars sooner. He did it, and we haven't looked back in the area of finances since. Those who trust in the Lord will never be ashamed.

A debtor who is a Christian once made this excuse for failing to pay his debt: "The law of survival did not provide extra after my needs and responsibilities were taken care of." The Spirit spoke to me and said, "That person missed it because, for the believer, the only law of survival is to trust the Lord with all your heart and lean not to your own understanding; in all your ways (debts and vows included), acknowledge Him, and He will direct your path." God knows where all the money we need is, but He is not taking His children down that path when they fail to trust Him and fail to pay their vows to others.

The people giving into the offering at the time of the poor widow's giving did not impress Jesus, because they gave out of their abundance. She gave out of her poverty, putting in all the livelihood she had. She understood that the One who provided seed to the sower would multiply the seed sown (not the seed eaten).

She was not sowing to get rich or to get a new husband. She was sowing to please God. Little did she know that He was physically present in the form of Jesus to observe, judge, and decree the value of her giving.

Father, help us to discern what You see. Teach us that the true law of survival is to trust You with our all—most of all, with ourselves. Nothing is impossible to those who believe.

Irritating and Unproductive

Proverbs 10:26—*As vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to those who send him.*

There is no purpose for brushing your teeth with vinegar, nor is there any purpose for entering a smoke-filled room to read your Bible. While vinegar will not enhance tooth decay or smoke cause blindness, neither are they useful or productive. In fact, they irritate you.

Every good Christian employee is to be both productive and non-irritating.

The people now on our staff are some of the most productive we have ever had. We praise God for them and at the same time we show our appreciation

to them financially. We love to be a blessing to our employees. Why? Because they believe God for the grace to be productive without anyone standing over them with a club or a threat.

One of the few things in my Christian walk that threaten the fruit of the Spirit in me are nonproductive people. They irritate me. They irritated Jesus also.

Luke 13:6-9 tells of the man who came to examine the fruit on his fig tree. When he found none, he wanted to cut the tree down because it was using the ground without providing a return. The keeper interceded for it for a specified period of time with the understanding that failure to produce at some point would result in the tree being reduced to firewood.

A Christian employer should never have to terminate another Christian due to lack of productivity. If you, the employee, are not willing to do the job or even assume additional tasks, volunteer to quit to make room for one willing to do more.

How did you do on your last evaluation? How often does your supervisor speak to you about the quantity or quality of your work? Are you abusing phone privileges? Did you not know that sick leave or recovery time is to give your body an opportunity to repair and mend itself? It is not for shopping or visiting or celebrating your birthday. It certainly is not for your overtaxed social life because you stayed up too late. Every good Christian employee is to be both productive and non-irritating.

My Spirit Will Sustain Me

Proverbs 18:14 (NLT)—*The human spirit can endure a sick body, but who can bear it if the spirit is crushed?*

One of the most important lessons I have learned is to guard my spirit and to protect it from injurious words spoken by others, even when it was not their intention to wound me. I have trained my spirit to reject anything done against me and refuse to internalize the actions of others.

When attacks knock on my door, a merry heart answers it every time. Proverbs 15:13 says, “A glad heart makes a happy face; a broken heart crushes the spirit.” Promote gladness of heart in your life. Read or watch something every day that will make you laugh.

One of the operators where I get my nails done had a new puppy that resembled a snow-white fur ball. The floors at the salon were highly shellacked, and the puppy was trying to run but could only skid in place. After laughing so hard at those tiny legs trying to run, I realized how much better I felt for laughing.

Pursuing laughter is cheaper than purchasing prescriptions. Laughter keeps your bones moist. I do not concern myself with threats of osteoporosis. I read Proverbs 17:22, which says, “A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones.” Let nothing or no one break your spirit.

When I do something that borders on retardation, I never try to conceal it. I laugh at myself first, then I laugh with others about it so the devil cannot convince me they are laughing at me. Believe me, it works.

I can be a very serious person, particularly about spiritual matters, but I enjoy being around things and people that make me laugh. Sometimes I am reading along in my Bible, and the promises of God’s provisions cause my heart to skip a beat. His truth is so simple, it makes you laugh at how complicated you can make things.

If you want a merry heart, you have to search for it. Go to a zoo or to the circus, or visit a pet shop and watch the puppies and kittens. Jesus died so that you could experience His joy to make you strong. Go ahead and laugh—it will do you good.

A Long Time Can Elapse Between Protection and Possession

Joshua 24:7—And when they cried unto the Lord, he put darkness between you and the Egyptians, and brought the sea upon them, and covered them; and your eyes have seen what I have done in Egypt: and ye dwelt in the wilderness a long season.

How many times has God demonstrated His protection for us as we watched that which threatened us dissipate before our very eyes. We must learn to say “Thank You” for His protection as long as is necessary. When He is ready, He will make the possession available for us, but in the meantime, He will provide.

God does not deny one promise He has made to His children. But He may have to delay it. Some of us are not ready to possess His promises. A long journey through the wilderness may be necessary to prepare us so we do not destroy the promised possession. We need to be mature enough to handle it so others can benefit and God gets the glory.

We have arrived in our relationship with Him when we receive His Son Jesus. However, as long as we remain carnal in our behavior and thinking, we will not experience the full benefit package that accompanies the relationship.

From birth, I was my mother’s daughter. That relationship never changed. As I matured, fellowship developed out of our relationship because I grew to understand some of her choices as a mother. I was not always in agreement with them when I was still a child and wanted to do childish things, but I built a bridge and got over it.

God is waiting for us to set aside the envying that indicates to Him we are yet carnal and still walking after the manner of mere humans. From the beginning, He predestined us to conform to the image and likeness of His Son Jesus.

Folks, let the baby talk go and line up with the language of love, which is understood by God all the time. If you don’t, you might as well get used to a long walk in the wilderness. But know this: Time is getting short.

Watch Your Choice of Role Models

Proverbs 3:31 (NKJV)—*Do not envy the oppressor, And choose none of his ways.*

The Bible tells us if anyone is oppressing another, he is an abomination to God. That person is perverse in what he is doing, therefore we should in no way want anything that resembles him to attach itself to us.

Godliness guarantees you will be privy to God's secret counsel. The *New Living Translation* reads, "But he offers his friendship to the godly" (Proverbs 3:31). Friends tell friends their most intimate secrets. We can and should be considered a friend of the Lord.

In these last days, God wants His people to know all that looms on the horizon and what to do about it.

I am thrilled to have the privilege of knowing God's revealed words. Imagine, God wants to share His secrets with you as He did with Abraham. I suspect that in these last days, God wants His people to know all that looms on the horizon and what to do about it. Unlike the world, we are to be informed before, during, and after certain events occur so we can make righteous choices in the midst of it all. This is the will of God for all His children.

Worry is misdirected energy and not the will of God for His people. If your life aligns with God's Word, all will be well with you. You have no need to fear or be anxious about the future. God knows exactly what you need. He knows His plan for our lives—both individually and collectively, and He has no shortage of wisdom or provision concerning our needs or circumstances. Nothing and no one is powerful enough to thwart God's purpose for the world and His people.

It matters not what exists in the lives of others, particularly those we would esteem as role models. The time has come for the people of God to decide individually and once and for all to stop doubt, selfishness, immorality, and idolatry in their lives in any form.

Who Are You Following?

God gave me ten challenges to set before the Church today. Each one pertains to our own personal consecration before Him as well as the qualities we ought to seek in those who would be role models for our lives and conduct:

1. Always be transparent.
2. Develop an uncompromised love for the Lord.
3. Diligently hunger after God's Word.
4. Commit to obey God's Word regardless of the power or popularity of those who disobey.
5. Acquire an understanding of both the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit—one produces stiff consequences, the other rich rewards.
6. Cultivate sensitivity to the voice of the Lord and a desire for what pleases Him.
7. Never touch the gold or the glory.
8. Observe what you dislike in others and choose to refrain from that in your own life.
9. Acknowledge that you are predestined to be conformed to the image of God's Son.
10. Avoid anything or anyone that does not support your commitment to the other nine.

Who are you following? Who has become a role model for your life and pursuits? Be certain that man or woman is lined up with the Word of God and not living contrary to God's Word or His ways. Although God will indeed set mentors and models before us, Jesus is the standard to which we are to be conformed. Follow Him.

Growth in Affliction

Exodus 1:12 (NKJV)—*But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were in dread of the children of Israel.*

Multiplied growth was not what the Egyptians had in mind when they afflicted the children of Israel. That was because they did not understand the way God operates.

All of us prefer not to experience pain, suffering, and discomfort in any form. However, there are children of God rising to the battle cry in greater numbers than ever before. The reason, I believe, is they are increasingly aware that they (the Christian church) cannot be destroyed. They don't allow what is thrown in their path to cause them to doubt God's love for them. Anyone in doubt of God's love on their behalf will begin to hesitate before following the voice of God. That is never a good thing. Believe that God loves you in spite of surmounting evidence to the contrary.

Today, look for God in every area of your life.

My mother birthed two living children, and she dearly loved us both. However, from the day I was born until the day she died, I was aware that my older brother was very special to her. But I never doubted her love for me during those 45 years of my life.

Instead of fretting over my mother's love for my brother, I began to see that we were different. He was easier to become attached to than I was. Once I accepted that she was not deliberately making a difference between us—it was simply that she responded to me differently. I went on with my life, multiplying and growing in my walk with the Lord. I was no longer affected by what anyone said or did, for my pursuit of the Kingdom and His righteousness inspired and sustained me.

Today, look for God in every area of your life. I assure you that He is there with you, loving, caring, and sheltering you. Afflictions are uncomfortable to your flesh, but they cannot touch your spirit man. Ignore your flesh and promote your spirit. You will experience both the peace and love of the Almighty.

Perfected, Proven, and Protected

Psalm 18:30 (NKJV)—*As for God, His way is perfect; The word of the Lord is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him.*

I think it is so exciting and reassuring that the Creator of the universe could inspire 66 books to be written which would cover any challenge, concern, or condition that might confront me in life. God has never made a mistake. His Word is more stable than the Rock of Gibraltar and has never failed anyone using it as a guide.

The government cannot guarantee our protection; only God, our shield, can.

Our trust in God is what activates Him as our shield of protection from enemy forces. God does not use a shield to protect us. He becomes our shield when we trust Him.

In this dispensation of grace, the morality of a nation is not dependent on the leader of the nation. Presidents, kings, premieres, and rulers cannot legislate morality. Even dictators fail to make people what they don't want to be. If dictators truly controlled people, no one would ever risk death to attempt to escape the countries they ruled.

No, we must understand that a nation is made up of people, all of whom need Jesus Christ in their hearts. For without Him in their hearts, morals and morality are just words one group uses against another.

Commit to pursue what is perfect, what is proven, and the One who can protect you. Presidents, politics, and policies never change humans. The Word of God taught by pastors, lived by parents, and practiced by individuals produces change. When people change, the nation is affected. For we cannot obey the laws of the land until we first obey the laws of God. The government cannot guarantee our protection; only God, our shield, can.

Dear Father God, thank You for helping us realize that we must rely on You and Your Word for safety and stability in life. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Are You Sure You Want to Speak?

Proverbs 29:20 (NKJV)—*Do you see a man hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.*

It is not wise to speak without first thinking. When we take the time to think, often we will conclude that it is not a good time to speak.

My live broadcast has positively affected many people's lives during the 14-plus years since *The Choice Is Yours* first aired.

Because of time restraints, it is not always easy to spend valuable airtime pondering an answer to a question, but I don't want to speak off the

top of my head. Someone's life or marriage could be negatively affected forever. However, I have discovered that first having prepared myself during the day in my conversations with the Lord, speaking off the top of my heart is helpful and on target.

Some of my callers are so excited to have gotten through or to be on the radio, that they begin to talk and never hear a word that the Holy Ghost is trying to speak to them through me. I have to be pretty blunt to get them to be quiet enough to hear. Either they called for help, which means they need to listen to what is being said, or they just want to hear themselves on the air. Why call a show like mine if you already think you know more than the person trying to assist you?

God gave us the ability to use words to communicate with each other as well as to call into the natural things that have as yet existed in the spirit realm. Words were never meant to be used to abuse or attack, but to impart wisdom from above as well as practical application for the here and now.

Your words reveal whether you are a wise man full of faith or a fool void of hope. Mutter and ponder the Scripture all the time so that when the abundance of your heart speaks, everyone will know that you are one who has sat with Jesus.

**Your words reveal whether
you are a wise man full of faith
or a fool void of hope.**

A Winner Every Time

Acts 6:10 (NKJV)—*And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke.*

You may not convince those who desire to challenge what you preach and teach, but speaking in the wisdom and the Spirit of the Lord will have an effect on them.

Education is good, but it is not everything. I have met a few educated idiots. Anyone who says there is no God is a fool regardless of academic accomplishments. Speaking with the wisdom of God (James 1:5) and by His Spirit (Romans 8:14) can penetrate the heart and, eventually, the head. But rebellion, stubbornness, and a callous heart are not easy to penetrate.

Nothing compares to being led by the Spirit of God.

Philip the evangelist went to Samaria preaching only the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus, and he reached the hearts of the people who had been heavily involved in Eastern science, or sorcery (Acts 8:13). Wisdom and the Spirit of Christ spoken are a powerful force used in reaching those in need of the Lord. They are a winning duo every time.

God never promises to confirm the gimmicks and games of incompetent, ignorant people who lack understanding of the real supernatural. Believe me, the wisdom of God and the Spirit of God are the true supernatural way of doing things. Everything else is make-believe or deceptive. Why settle for a pretender when you can have the real thing?

Wisdom is greater than any treasure you could ever find. With wisdom, you can resolve issues that no amount of money could ever solve. Without wisdom, your riches will take wings and fly away. Ask the many athletes, artists, and performers who once raked in money by the barrels but today are nearly destitute.

Nothing compares to being led by the Spirit of God. He provides answers to questions yet unasked. He gives you tomorrow's headlines today, and He directs your steps into truth where no lie can ever enter to cause you to stumble. Seek His wisdom, be led by His Spirit, and you'll be a winner every time, all the time.

Where Much Is Given, Much Is Required

Philippians 4:13 (NLT)—*For I can do everything with the help of Christ who gives me the strength I need.*

I have found that God can never be accused of being unfair, but I have also learned that His plan for each of us is custom designed. An additional lesson is that the help of Jesus Christ is given to strengthen me when I am on assignment for Him and not in hot pursuit of a personal agenda.

**God asks more of those
to whom He has given more.**

One of the most energy-draining experiences is to observe what is going on around you through others and then conclude that you must join in or be left out. First of all, if you have accepted Jesus, you cannot be left out of anything that is valuable to God. The drumbeat you must march to may never have been sounded before; neither will another marcher hear it. You are not weird; you just are not called to march in anyone's band except the one to which God has assigned you.

He has a perfect plan for your life, and it does not include anxiety, worry, frustration, or fear. If God has ever come through for you, He will again. That last victory was not a teaser to taunt you. The next time you need to trust Him—He won't make plans to go on vacation.

Every victory you have enjoyed was another building block in your castle of faith. The gifts and callings of God for you are sufficient to sustain you in every situation. Though His requirement of you is greater than before, rejoice and don't faint. The latest thing you are to do is a sign of His confidence in you because of past performances in Him. Don't you get it? He asks more of those to whom He has given more. But we, too, can ask more of Him to whom we have committed all things.

Accept the fact that you can do "all things" if they are things you have been instructed by Him to do. Know for a certainty that doing anything apart from Him will be tiresome and short-lived.

By This I Know

Psalm 41:11 (NKJV)—*By this I know that You are well pleased with me, Because my enemy does not triumph over me.*

It is important to note that this verse does not say your enemy won't get a lick in, or that you would walk your Christian walk without an occasional bruise from a battle. It does not say you will complete your journey enemy-free.

How can He unite those that are His, without first dividing us from others who are not only not like us, but have no desire to change?

Jesus said, "A man's foes will be of his own household" (Matthew 10:36). For most of us, that is the last place we expect opposition. We

keep praying for peace, but the Prince of Peace said that He would bring division. Read Matthew 10:34-39. How can He unite those that are His without first separating us from others who are not only not like us, but who also have no desire to change?

I have a certain relative whom I love dearly; however, he has no clue about spiritual things. From a teenager, he pursued scientific and mathematical facts that helped him become successful by the world's standards.

I am genetically attached to some people as relatives. However, the different nations whom the Spirit has joined together with God in Christ Jesus are my true family and, being united to Christ is eternal success.

How do I know that I am a winner? Because as much as the devil throws my way, he cannot, has not, nor will he ever be able to defeat me, because I am victorious in Christ. Read John 16:33, Romans 12:21, 1 John 2:14-15, and 1 John 5:4. Every triumph over the devil is an indication that God is well-pleased with you. Why shouldn't He be? When we survive the enemy's fiery darts and continue in our race, God sees faith in His Word operating in us.

When God sees faith in His children, it brings a smile to His face. Imagine how God feels when His children go through life defeated to the point of turning from Him. Every triumph for me tells me my Father's pleasure is in me. That makes me happy.

God Knows You by Name

Exodus 33:17—*And the Lord said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name.*

I discovered years ago by the Spirit of God that people respond more positively when they are addressed by their name.

Therefore, I began to make it a point to learn the names of the people who serve me, travel with me, or are involved with me in a business or personal capacity.

Years ago on a trip to Israel, I was standing with the group accompanying me as we checked in at JFK Airport. I made a point of

thanking them, calling each of them by name. Afterward, the reservation clerk asked me, "Do you know everybody's name? You just called each of the ninety-eight people traveling with you by name as they checked in!"

I hadn't done this to impress either her or them. I simply enjoy making people feel more comfortable because I know them by name. As a result, they can see that I genuinely care because I acknowledged them individually.

How much more secure do I feel knowing that my Father God knows me by name, even though He has millions of other children besides me!

You can be encouraged today, for your heavenly Father knows you by name too. Be comforted in knowing that you can trust Him to answer your prayers when you want to say and do only what is pleasing in His sight. As His child, you have conditions to fulfill, but the rewards and benefits of being in that position of sonship far exceed any other concerns or considerations!

How much more secure I feel knowing that my Father God knows me by my name, even though He has millions of other children besides me!

The Music of My Life

Psalm 119:54 (NLT)—*Your principles have been the music of my life throughout the years of my pilgrimage.*

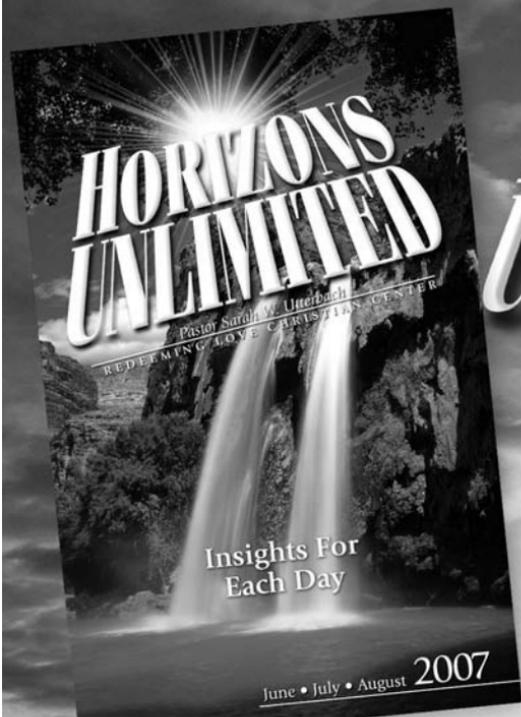
Many years ago, before I completely sold out to the things of God and to His ways, I was considered a good dancer. I enjoyed dancing and I did it well. But through the years, I have discovered that no musical sound is as stirring to me as the sound of the principles and the promises of God's Word.

The Psalmist said, "Your promise revives me; it comforts me in all my troubles" (Psalm 119:50). It is so foolish to expect to avoid troubles. What a waste of time. The more you serve God and the closer you draw to Him, the more inclined you are to attract trouble because we have an enemy who is out to prevent or at least to impede our progress. But for God's children who know and understand His Word, trouble is no more than an annoyance.

It seems that God's people have no problems dancing to His promises when all is going well in their lives. But at the first sign of what could be considered a negative change, they suddenly no longer hear the music of His promises. Their dance ceases and their words speak of what appears to be for the moment. No amount of reading the Bible, confessing the scriptures, or making melody in your heart to the Lord during times of peace matter if His principles are not the music of your life throughout the years of your pilgrimage.

Someone once said, "I only dance with the one that 'brung' me." What about you? Were you dancing with God, singing the praises of His faithfulness in your life until that recent report—but now you're dancing with the wrong partner, moving to the enemy's negative tune? Are you staring at the statistics before your eyes, or are you looking beyond the facts to behold the truth of what God has spoken?

Throughout the years of your pilgrimage, keep the principles of God's promises as the music of your life. When you do, you'll defeat the enemy's strategy against you while you dance all the way home.



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Reversal of Fate

2 Corinthians 5:18—*All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.*

When God reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, a full reversal of the fate of mankind occurred. The original sin of Adam and Eve took mankind in the complete opposite direction of God's intended plan for His creation.

Though it looked hopeless and bleak, as things sometimes do in the natural, God decided that He would make an exchange. That exchange would adjust what existed as a hopeless condition in the natural so that restoration to His divine favor could occur. God first provided atonement through the Law, which was merely a temporary reversal of man's condition. Atonement through the Law only *covered* man's sin; it could not *cleanse* sin. Therefore, God Himself produced remission or removal of sin at a price that He alone could pay.

God so earnestly desired to bring us back to a complete relationship with Him that He personally did all that was necessary to bridge the gap that existed between Him and us. Through the sacrifice of Himself, Jesus Christ reversed the course of separation, departure, and death that Adam carved out for us to follow. By His own blood, Jesus reversed and removed the curse of sin and its consequences for all who would believe and receive the gift of His reconciliation.

We now have the ministry of reconciliation, which simply means that we are privileged to declare God's gift to others. We are the Father's representatives here in the earth, offering to others on His behalf what He has freely given to us: Jesus Christ and His shed blood for the removal of our sin, and our reconciliation with God.

Heavenly Father, Your love and care are more evident and more awesome to me each day. The more I follow the prompting of Your Spirit to study, the more I discover the magnitude of Your love for Your creation. Thank You for enabling me to understand that I must seek Your kind of love to flow in and through me. You see the same ugly, evil, unlovely things that we see, yet You remain unaffected by them. You keep following Your purpose. Help me be as steady in my ministry of reconciliation toward others as You have been toward me.

Got Fruit?

Galatians 5:22-23—*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*

Friends, family, and even complete strangers can place a strong demand on the fruit of the Spirit in your life. With every selfish attitude you encounter from others, you are faced with a test: Will you retaliate or release the fruit of the Spirit?

Every day I pray and ask the Father to develop and release all the fruit of the Spirit in my life—not for my benefit only but for the benefit of others and for His glory. When others see you being pushed, pressed, and potentially stressed in a situation, yet refusing to respond negatively—as they would under the same circumstances—you glorify God in that situation. You are reflecting Him to the world as you demonstrate a power that the world does not possess. The ungodly may act tolerant for a time, but push them hard and far enough and you'll soon see that they know nothing of longsuffering, patience, and gentleness from a pure heart. But the fruit of the Spirit, especially the fruit of love, are what you and I are all about.

We aren't told to walk in the fruit of the Spirit simply to improve our personalities or make life pleasant for those around us. The fruit of the Spirit in our life release the force of God in and through us to master any situation. Walking in the fruit of the Spirit makes you dangerous to the devil. When you walk in love, you cannot fail. When you walk in patience, you cannot be stopped until you reach your determined destination. When you walk in temperance, your own flesh can't hinder you and the ship of your life will stay afloat while others around you sink into oblivion.

When life deals you a blow, rejoice that you've been counted worthy to be tested. When the world gives you a lemon (the only fruit it can offer), don't get sour. Let them taste your fruit. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you turn their lemons into cool lemonade or rich lemon pie. Then when others see you remain unaffected by the negatives that happen to all, they will want a drink from your glass and a slice of your pie!

Stay Alert— He Is So Near

Matthew 24:33 (NLT)—*Just so, when you see the events I've described beginning to happen, you can know his return is very near, right at the door.*

A glance at the news on any day, whether via television or newspaper, brings reports of war and rumors of war in diverse places. Jesus told us that the end of the age will be marked by wars close at hand and far away, but we are not to panic because, although these things must happen, the end is not immediate.

Knowing that persecution awaits those who pledge to be known as followers of Christ, what is your level of commitment? Will you be one of those who turn from Him and betray and hate other believers? We know that the world will do this, but Jesus said that so will Christians who fail to remain faithful to Him. In the end times, false prophets will lead astray as many as they can. Sin will be loosed in full force, and those who used to be warm and even on fire for the things of God will grow cold. However, the enduring ones will be saved and preach the Good News of the kingdom everywhere there is a person to hear it. Then, finally, the end will come.

Don't allow yourself to become distracted, either by blessings or lack, by prosperity or persecution.

I have observed that for many, the more prosperity they enjoy, the less they seek the Lord. The people of this country, even believers, are in the most vulnerable position human beings have been in since the days of Noah. We are so busy enjoying our abundance that many of us are not even aware of how close we are to the end.

Don't allow yourself to become distracted, either by blessings or lack or by prosperity or persecution. Stay alert. Keep your attention and your affection focused on Jesus Christ because He is soon to return.

Father, I pray that You awaken Your people to recognize that the culmination of time is so close at hand. Open our spiritual eyes to see the need to draw closer to You now more than ever before, in Jesus' name.

Behold the Beauty

I believe the Lord is saying, "Take the time to observe Mother Nature. She has given birth to beauty beyond mortal description, yet none of her offspring is identical. Look—each tree is different in shape, color, and size; yet they grow together to effect total beauty. Without their blending in harmony, something would be missing. Though they change from season to season, there is unity among them.

"Study, My dearest, the boulders and the rocks. They are not bright and colorful as are the trees, yet their beauty is found in their strength and steadfastness. Though the boulders and the rocks change not with the seasons, each one is so different that only I, the God of the universe, could fashion something so magnificent.

"Every ridge, every crack, every crevice is a stroke of the Master's touch. See them standing strong in the midst of the comparatively fragile trees. They are not there to detract from the trees; they enhance and add yet another dimension of beauty to the whole.

"Oh, but what would all this be like without the consistency of the evergreen's rich and true color?

"Though all of nature is different, true beauty appears in their harmony, which I created. Differences are acceptable and good, but disharmony is not.

"My child, you must always remember that all things were created for My pleasure, though you may find enjoyment in them also.

"I, the Creator of the universe, comprehend better than anyone what pleases Me. My understanding of beauty surpasses any master artist's conception of the word. What you see around you was not captured with the stroke of a brush but by the word of My power.

"It is written in My Word that all will not be hands or feet or eyes or ears, for each is needed for a complete body. I am not confused, My child. I made variety, and therein lies true splendor. Never allow the differences among you to pervert My original purpose for you. Continue to observe Mother Nature and her offspring as you learn to live with each other in the same way. Then I will experience pleasure the likes of which I have yet to know.

"Do it for Me, dear one."

Wisdom Is Seeking You and Me

Proverbs 8:4 (NLT)—*“I call to you, to all of you! I am raising my voice to all people.”*

People often say “I am seeking after wisdom.” James 1:5 tells us what to do if we need wisdom: Ask God! If we want to know what God wants us to do, we can ask Him and He will gladly tell us. The reason He responds to our asking, yet ignores our seeking is that He knows Wisdom is already seeking us. She is not seeking a chosen few, but everyone.

In Proverbs 8:6, Wisdom says, “Listen to me! For I have excellent things to tell you. Everything I say is right.” Since Wisdom is pursuing us to share with us these excellent things that are right for us to know, then we just need to simplify the whole thing by asking to receive the One who is in hot pursuit of us.

Why do we need Wisdom? Proverbs 8:12,15-16 says, “I, Wisdom, live together with good judgment. I know where to discover knowledge and discernment.... Because of me, kings reign, and rulers make just laws. Rulers lead with my help, and nobles make righteous judgments.” That might not sound important or practical for your daily life, but what would it be like to have leaders making unwise rules for us to live by?

It is comforting to know that Wisdom is on the prowl for us, because she owns good advice and success. Those searching for Wisdom by simply asking the Father for her will find her. She is the possessor and distributor of unending riches, honor, health, and justice. Those who love Wisdom inherit wealth, for she fills their treasuries.

It is time for us to lay aside human gimmicks, games, and strategies with their limitations. Let us, instead, request to be united with Wisdom, who was formed before the creation of any other thing. Not only was she the architect at God’s side, but she was God’s delight and was happy with all that He created.

We are the greatest of God’s creation; we need only Wisdom’s daily counsel to complete His masterpiece. Wisdom desires to be yours, as she is His. Ask for the Wisdom who seeks after you, and receive her. You’ll be glad that you did.

Show Me Now Your Way

Exodus 33:13 (NKJV)—*“Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight. And consider that this nation is Your people.”*

I am grateful to Moses for taking this position concerning the assignment God gave him. It has helped in my approach to God concerning what He has required of me. I won't attempt a thing without reminding God that His grace is sufficient for me, and that in my weakness He is made strong. I must have His grace and His wisdom to pursue and overtake my portion of His plan for people.

Jesus revealed the Father and His ways to us as a “right-now God.” We must know Him now if we're going to grab the baton in this next leg of the Christian race. We must know Him, because in knowing Him we obtain His grace.

One of the many things we need to know and understand is that there is no room in the life of a believer for prejudice, favoritism, or membership in a “special interest group.” Blacks cannot be only for other blacks; whites cannot hire other whites when an Hispanic or Asian may be more qualified for the position. I always say to God, “This nation is Your people. Therefore, You must show me Your way now.” He does, and I am grateful.

**Jesus revealed the Father
and His ways to us as a
‘right-now God.’**

God responded to Moses and said, “My presence shall go with you and I will give you rest.” What a promise! God Himself promised that His presence would accompany us. Moses said to the Lord, “If Your presence does not go with us, then leave me here, because I would not be able to trust You.” Moses wanted a specified and guaranteed word from the Lord.

The object of this lesson is to do things God's way, which brings us into a true knowledge of Him. That keeps us steady while He continues to work all things together for our good.

Our Eyes Are Upon You

2 Chronicles 20:12 (NIV)—*O our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you.*

When I was a young girl growing into adulthood, I stood up to meet every threat and challenge that surfaced. As I matured, however, I found that a great deal of my energy and thoughts were being used to figure out how to win and how not to be taken advantage of. Somehow that didn't seem like divine life or God's best for me.

Then I discovered in the Bible that God had a plan for my life. It was a plan for good and not for evil. I learned that He was committed to protecting and providing for me. Gradually, I began to release my life totally into God's care and keeping.

What a comfort it is for me today to know that while I may not be able on my own to stop the enemy from attacking, I can control

where I focus my attention and where I place my affection. When I focus my eyes on the Lord instead of on the attacks, God always causes things to work together for my good.

You have no reason to be afraid of any real or threatened danger.

Learning about the relationship between the sheep and their shepherd also helped me place myself into the hand of God. You see, when sheep are grazing and they hear the sound of a predator approaching, they neither run nor fight. Instead, they look to see where their shepherd is. Once they locate him, they resume their grazing; for sheep understand it is the shepherd's responsibility to protect them.

How much more is the Holy Spirit responsible for you as one of His sheep? You have no reason to be afraid of any real or threatened danger. Always remember that the key to your victory is not in fighting or fleeing every battle, but in keeping your eyes on Jesus at all times. And you can be assured, that just as His eyes behold even the tiniest sparrow when it falls to the ground, His eyes are fastened upon you because He knows and cares for His own.

Your Space of Time to Obey

Hebrews 3:15 (NKJV)—“...*Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.*”

I believe God is saying: “My child, it is written, ‘The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life’ [John 6:63]. Therefore, if you will receive the glorious truth that I will personally speak to you and believe and act on it appropriately, then the words ‘life’ and ‘living’ will take on whole new meanings for you. For it is My delight and My desire to lead My children by My Spirit into My perfect plan for their lives.

“For in My perfect plan you will have peace in the cacophony around you. You need not be confused or dismayed; life is only a puzzle to those who refuse to be led by My Spirit. He will always lead you into life, light,

and truth. Once you have heard My voice, do not render your heart to be stubborn and rebellious. I will consider it as witchcraft and withdraw My anointing from you, as

I did from Saul. My Son died so that you and I could commune together as He and I did. But remember that He said: ‘I only do that which is pleasing to My Father’ and ‘I came not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.’ Make My message to you a priority. For when you do, you communicate to Me how much you value Me and My words.

**‘Never withdraw or hold back
on what I speak to you.
I may take you a new way,
but it will be the right way.’**

“Never withdraw or hold back on what I speak to you. I may take you a new way, but it will be the right way. I may introduce you to some new things; that is how inventions are born. I may require you to alter relationships. Don’t be afraid to let go. It may be that the very ones you have depended upon have hindered you from moving on and out with Me. Listen, for I am speaking. This is your space of time to obey.”

Talk Long Enough and Sin Will Surface

Proverbs 10:19 (NKJV)—*In the multitude of words sin is not lacking. But he who restrains his lips is wise.*

James 3:6 reads, “And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.” What does that mean? Like a tiny match that can burn down a forest, never underestimate the value or harm that can be caused by your “tiny tongue.” It can pollute your whole body and the direction of your existence and become an agent of hell itself.

When we started pastoring, one of our best messages was “Kick the Hell Out of Your Tongue.” God is not controlling our words; He gives us the grace to do that. Failure to say only what pleases God invites the devil to ignite the tongue in our mouth. It will be as though the fires of hell have fueled the tongue to consume everything in its path.

Quiet times and limited communication help keep sin from surfacing. Talking too much almost guarantees that we sin due to the multitude of our words. The fast talkers, the loud talkers, and the long talkers try to impress others with what they say. They don’t know and sometimes don’t care how you feel or think as long as you listen to them. Sooner or later, they lapse into exaggeration or even “bald-faced lying.” Sometimes it is good to calmly stop them before they dig themselves in too deep.

If you provide transportation to others, you have the right to protect your ears and your heart by establishing guidelines for what is discussed in your vehicle. People put up “No Smoking” signs. Put up a “No Evil Speaking” sign unless the owner initiates the conversation.

If you ride with a vocal driver, believe God for a new driver or other transportation. There are always earplugs and headsets—even if you aren’t listening to anything. Of course you can suggest you pray together during the day’s journey. Hopefully, he or she will get the message.

God's Judgment Is Always Fair

1 Corinthians 11:31-32 (NLT)—*But if we examine ourselves, we will not be examined by God and judged in this way. But when we are judged and disciplined by the Lord, we will not be condemned with the world.*

God wants us to judge and examine ourselves so that He won't have to judge us. God loves us so much that even when we neglect to take responsibility or refuse to be accountable for what we do and say, He steps in to spare us from the same condemnation the world is destined to receive.

The great champion boxer Joe Louis once said to a very worthy opponent, "You can run, but you can't hide." I say to you, dear reader, that you may do wrong and wound others with your words, but a day of reckoning awaits all of us.

It can only be some kind of spirit from the devil that causes people not to say "I'm sorry. I missed it. Please forgive me." Such an attitude is, in fact, designed by the enemy to keep us from enjoying the benefits of God's blessings, which are readily available to His forgiven children.

**I want God,
more than anyone else,
to speak well of me.**

The devil cannot stop you and me from loving Jesus, so he tries to deceive us into thinking that simply loving the Lord is sufficient to be blessed of the Lord. But that is not entirely true.

To be blessed of the Lord is to be eulogized by Him, which means to be "spoken well of." I must tell you that refusal to take responsibility for one's words and deeds and neglecting to apologize when one is wrong will not inspire God to speak well of that person.

I don't know about you, but I want God, more than anyone else, to speak well of me. His correction is my insurance policy against being condemned with those who reject Him in this world. Therefore, I gladly accept His chastisement. How about you? Remember: God's judgment is always fair.

On the Verge of Total Disaster

Proverbs 5:14 (NKJV)—*"I was on the verge of total ruin, In the midst of the assembly and congregation."*

Membership in a particular church or organization does not guarantee success or victory. Proverbs 5 tells us how to live a victorious life and why you can miss it even with your name on the roll of the most famous assembly in the world.

Proverbs 5:1-2 reads, "My son, pay attention to my wisdom; lend your ear to my understanding, that you may preserve discretion, and your lips may keep knowledge." To "preserve discretion" means to appreciate good judgment.

Verses 12 and 13: "How I hated instruction, and my heart despised correction. I have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined my ear to those who instructed me!" If you knew all you needed to know, teachers would not be necessary. We do not come into this world with instruction attached to our brains! Help is needed and is effective for those who pay attention and respect the fact that God loved them enough not to leave them uninformed.

I can generally conclude that every child of God on the verge of total ruin hated what they were told to do, resented being corrected in what they were doing, and refused to be obedient or listen to their instructor. So he or she missed it. If that describes you, it is not the end of your life.

Being on the verge of total ruin means you are too close for comfort, but not too close for recovery. God does not allow us to be comfortable in disobedience. That is why we get on the verge and do not just plummet headlong into total ruin.

How do we alter this? Repent first, then rejoice that you can resume walking in obedience to what was spoken. Ask the Lord for help with your negative attitude and respect those sent to instruct you. He will help you. It is not to His glory to have you ruined. However, if you fail to correct your actions, He will allow you to experience the consequences of your choices. It is not His best for you, but He will not force His best on you. The choice is yours.

Divine Intervention

Proverbs 3:25-26 (NKJV)—*Do not be afraid of sudden terror, Nor of trouble from the wicked when it comes; For the Lord will be your confidence, and will keep your foot from being caught.*

An evil influence is in the earth with a license to cause sudden, unexpected terror. This influence creates trouble and throws snares across the path of God's people. Don't let this knowledge frighten you; rather, allow it to prepare you for things to come with the knowledge of the truth of God's divine intervention on your behalf.

I love Scripture that tells of God's promises to me, equipping me with His weapons to deal with terrorism, pitfalls, and any other vile, ungodly effort of the devil. The devil knows that all he has going for him is deception, and he hopes that I will not know or understand what my Father has provided for me.

Imagine the devil's surprise when he comes expecting to

fool me into thinking that he is something, but discovers instead that I know *I* am somebody—somebody who respects the value of knowing God's truth, somebody who understands that all victory for me is found in knowing His Holy Word for myself.

At least once a month, I enjoy a "Pamper My Flesh Day." But it does not begin to compare with daily pampering of my spirit through reading His Word. My spirit is energized and refreshed as I believe what I read, look for ways to apply it to my life, and then share it with others.

Are you ready to be refreshed, grow in confidence, walk safely in your journey, and lay down in sweet sleep? Of course you are. Then ask the Father for His help in scheduling time together with Him. His wisdom and grace will be more than adequate to bring you into that place of faith and peace where you will not have to be concerned about your foot being caught!

God allowed me to enter the twenty-first century, and I plan to apply the same principles that brought me victory in the twentieth century: His name, His Word, His fruit, and His grace.

Ask the Father for His help in scheduling time together with Him.

It Is Not Your Fault, It Is Just Not Your Season

Luke 1:25 (NKJV)—*“Thus the Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on me, to take away my reproach among people.”*

Zacharias and Elizabeth were both considered righteous before God. They walked in all His commandments and were blameless (verse 6). They had no children, and the society of that day considered that to be a punishment for sin in their life. It was believed that pleasing God guaranteed children; displeasing Him resulted in no children.

Zacharias said to the angel of God, “I am an old man and my wife is also old; how can this birth you speak of occur?” They may have been advanced in years, but they did not discontinue what it took to conceive. In other words, he took care of God’s work first and when his service in the temple as a priest was complete, he headed home. Why? That is where his partner in this miracle was, and he and she were obviously still active in the recreation of physical intimacy, though there had been no evidence of re-creation through them.

Elizabeth said the people held her in reproach even though she obeyed God and had no blame. What does that tell you? Get over people and their opinions of you—fast. When God has spoken to you and everything about it seems impossible, forget everything and everyone else. Then watch God alter “the norm” and confuse the experts, so that His Word to you will not return void. The Word completes itself, but Zacharias and Elizabeth also had a part to play.

When God has spoken to you, He looks upon you or at you. He remembers His covenant with Jesus, and with very little effort on your part, the impossible becomes not only possible, it becomes reality. John was a real baby born of this age-advanced couple.

A baby may not be what God has spoken to you. Whatever He said is in the making already; He had a plan before He gave you a purpose. Dare to believe Him, and you will receive all that He has spoken to you.

Authority and Anointing Versus Eloquence

2 Corinthians 10:11 (NKJV)—*Let such a person consider this, that what we are in word by letters when we are absent, such we will also be in deed when we are present.*

Never confuse eloquence with anointing. Paul was ridiculed and contemptible in speech as far as the Greeks were concerned. You and I might have been considered a big joke to them. But what do “they” know?

I am grossly deficient academically. Frankly, I do not want to take time from prayer, study of the Word, and fellowship with the Father to pursue an academic education at this time in my life. Yet I learn from everything and everyone. I have no challenge with education; it is a good thing. There are those assigned to complete school—and they should. But before you look down your educated nose and conclude that others are beneath you, pay closer attention to what they and God are doing together.

My lack of academic education was no accident, nor was I financially deprived. I chose to drop out of school because spiritual things excited me more. I realize now I could have had both, but there is no unscrambling those eggs. Though I regret not having an education from a school, I do not feel inadequate or inferior to anyone. Why? Because the anointing of God on me for five minutes is worth more than money can buy. Walking in my God-given authority has opened doors of opportunity for me to be used of the Lord on behalf of others.

Remember what Jesus stated through Paul, “God will take the foolish things of this world to confound the wise and the mighty” (1 Corinthians 1:27). Academics helps instruct you to earn a living. The authority and anointing of God will instruct you to live in line with His plan for you personally.

When you do not know where to go next, go nowhere. Wait until direction comes to help you find your way. With His authority and anointing, you will find yourself in the lead regardless of how you may articulate what He tells you to say.

Some Things Are Left to Test You

Judges 3:4 (NKJV)—*And they were left that He might test Israel by them, to know whether they would obey the commandments of the Lord, which he had commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses.*

This generation of Israel had never seen the power of God on their behalf nor had they fought in any wars (Judges 3:1-2). Just because they had been born into a covenant relationship did not mean they understood the terms of the covenant, and the Lord wanted to know where their hearts were.

Very little has changed over these centuries. God did not tell the children of Israel to dwell among the people of the land, He told them to possess the land. It was made very clear to Moses and their forefathers that there was to be no marriage between God's children and the children of the heathen. That has not changed even today. Believers and non-believers are to abstain from marriage regardless of how much they are attracted to each other. It is not about attraction; it is about obedience.

Their choice to dwell among the nations, give their children in marriage to those nations, and become unfaithful to the one, true, living God to run after the gods of the nations has been and always will be costly. It was evil in the sight of God then, and it is not acceptable to Him today.

Until you know who you are and what you are made of, you will not walk in all that is yours through Jesus Christ.

We often wonder why God does not "right every wrong" and fix every problem so we would be "choice-free" and live without concerns. When someone is always going to bat for you or bailing you out of situations, you become ill-equipped to know what to avoid. He has given us all power, all wisdom, all grace, and the Holy Ghost to lead us and guide us into all truth. What we do with these determines our level of victory.

Stop complaining about the test and begin to praise God that you are counted worthy to be tested. Until you know who you are and what you are made of, you will not walk in all that is yours through Jesus Christ.

Authority and Anointing Versus Eloquence

Psalm 90:12 (NKJV)—*So teach us to number our days,
That we may gain a heart of wisdom.*

In the song, "Right Now Is the Right Time," there is a line "Why put off 'til tomorrow what you could be doing today, The God we serve is a right now God and right now He is in this place."

Many of us procrastinate, because either we think things are not important enough for our immediate attention, or we do not believe the help we need from the Lord is available in the present. God is in this place. What place? Wherever you are doing whatever He needs you to do. He is a right-now God.

Procrastination is a form of rebellion and disobedience. A friend told me his wife has to remind him that their electricity and cable service will be turned off if he does not send in checks to cover their services. I am not talking about someone needing to wait for the next paycheck; these are wealthy people with multiple homes and cars.

It matters not how much you have in the bank or in your pocket, if you do not write a check and mail it, companies will cut off services to you. You may be the nicest person in the world and going about doing a lot of good, but if you are a procrastinator, you are deceived. You think your days in the earth have no assigned number. In your mind, wisdom has nothing to do with completing what God has given you to do. Please do not die not having paid your latest insurance premium.

What has the Lord been speaking to your heart to do for Him? Why have you not taken care of it, procrastinator?

I am not talking about people telling you what you should be doing because their opinion or what you are doing is not what you should be doing. God does not send His servants to criticize another. The Holy Spirit will correct, chastise, and convict you without condemnation. But that is not a license to continue procrastinating.

Integrity as an Armour Bearer

Proverbs 10:9 (NKJV)—*He who walks in integrity walks securely. But he who perverts his ways will become known.*

No one ever needs to be protected from being innocent. Prosperity, completeness, and uprightness are drawn to the magnet of integrity in a person.

The word integrity is not found in the *King James Version* of the New Testament, but the Old Testament speaks volumes in just a few verses. Job held fast his integrity and declared that one thing he would have at the end of his life was his integrity (Job 27:5).

The Psalmist said he wanted to be judged according to his integrity (Psalm 7:8), and he wanted integrity and uprightness to preserve him (Psalm 25:21). In other words, he would trust his God to examine him and find him innocent of accusations or charges. Being in right-standing with God and innocent of abusing others would create an invisible barrier of protection around him and keep out any and all assigned to harm him.

Much is stated in the Bible about walking in one's integrity. Perverted ways are not the paths of one walking in his integrity. Guilty paths are sooner or later exposed. What you do in darkness will come to light.

Proverbs 11:3 says the integrity of the upright will guide them. The second part of that verse says, "...but the perversity of the unfaithful will destroy them." I love scriptures that present the benefits as well as the ill-consequences of failing to make the right choices.

God made us "choice" people. He informed us in advance of the choices that were profitable to us, because He wanted us to understand the price for unprofitable choices before we made them.

Think about where you are today. Do you stop to consider the effect your choices will have on others? Or are you so in pursuit of your passions that you show no compassion for others? Is your word your bond, or do you agree to things because you never learned how to securely say no?

Lack of integrity not only will cause you to grope through life in darkness, it could result in your becoming unfaithful. That is not a good thing.

A Balanced Scale Is Not Good Enough

Proverbs 15:3 (NKJV)—*The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good.*

If our efforts for the Lord and our fleshly deeds for the devil are equal in number, we have a problem. God is watching everything we do and everywhere we go, and we need to ask ourselves what He sees. His eyes observe the deeds of people, and His ears are attuned to what we say. Would we have the same conversation with Jesus that we have with our friends and relatives? We need to settle once and for all whose side we are on.

“Hell and Destruction are before the Lord; so how much more the hearts of the sons of men” (Proverbs 15:11).

Hell is a real place and destruction is its byproduct. Since this invisible, spiritual place exists and God who is spirit can observe its operations, how much more is He aware of the thoughts and intentions of our hearts.

You are the keeper of all that happens on your watch.

I have learned in these 70 plus years to guard my thoughts at every turn because the forest of my life’s work could be destroyed with one uncontrolled thought. Think it long enough and before you know it, it has taken possession of your faculties. It takes less effort to do good and to do what is right than it does to do evil and wrong all the time.

Evil requires great effort on your part. It tries to occupy space and pay rent in your head. Refuse to allow it. There is no profit in doing wrong. Knowing that God is aware of the good and the evil helps me stay focused and quickly eliminate all evil from my life and my thoughts.

You are the keeper of all that happens on your watch. That thought lurking in the back of your mind now—you know, the one that you hope no one ever knows—is known by God. Before you act on it, confess that it is not your thought and solicit His grace to help you keep watch also.

Sign On, Sign Up, or Sign Out

Mark 8:38 (NKJV)—*“For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”*

The day for closet Christianity is over. We are not secret agents, fearful of being discovered. To recruit others, we want the entire world to know who we are and what we do. I am not ashamed to identify with Jesus.

I was born again in 1944. I signed on to be a Christian and signed up to be a member of the church where my mother attended. The pastor was a man on fire for God. He made the Scripture come alive. By the time I was seven, I understood it enough to get saved.

Then that pastor died. The next pastor was more intellectual in his presentation. At about the same time, my Sunday school teacher, a beautiful woman in her mid-twenties, also died. Only recently did I realize how their passing stunted my spiritual growth. I was no longer hearing the Word taught. I was learning from Sunday school quarterlies and teachers without much anointing. I was not ashamed of His Word; I was ashamed that I did not know more of it. After a circuitous journey, I was again exposed to truth and Jesus began to make me free.

We are living in an adulterous and sinful generation, ignorant of Jesus and His words. But that does not have to be the end of the story. In spite of what some so-called Christian leaders say, Satan has not taken over the Church. That is a lie. The gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. All saints need to be in the assembly for training under an anointed pastor assigned by Jesus to prepare them for the work of their ministry to the heathen.

When you are convinced that the work you are called to do with Christ cannot be stopped, don't hesitate. In these last of the last days, either sign up and get busy or sign out and step aside.

I'll Take Care of Separating if You Will Obey

Joshua 24:2 (NKJV)—*And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'Your fathers, including Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods.'"*

Regardless of the religious affiliation of your parents or grandparents, God extends His Son Jesus Christ to you.

A woman named Barbara called in to *The Choice Is Yours* broadcast a while back and stated that she was Catholic because her parents and grandparents were Catholic. She wanted to know about being born again and speaking in tongues. I talked with her, took her to John 3:16 and Romans 10:9-10, and turned her over to the prayer partners. They shared scripture concerning the baptism in the Holy Ghost. She was born again and filled with the Spirit. She is still a Catholic as far as I know, but now she is a born-again, Spirit-filled Catholic.

Barbara called the program after hearing of God's power. I was simply the instrument to help her cross from family tradition to a new life in Christ Jesus. Her choice to obey the prompting of the Spirit upon hearing truth from God's Word and then to receive by faith what we shared brought her over to God's side.

Joshua 24:3 reads: "Then I took your father Abraham from the other side of the River, led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac." Why did God not allow Sarah to conceive on the father's side of the river? I suspect, aside from God's time and season, that Abraham had to cross the bridge of obedience to the side of the river where the promises of God awaited him. I believe the promises of God are received only after we obey. And at times, obedience requires separation from loved ones.

The Apostle Paul was zealous for God, but he needed more truth. Truth, in the person of Jesus, met him and changed his life forever to the point of affecting every other believer for life. Are you ready to cross the river of obedience? Swim if you have to. The water is fine.

Sexually Immoral People

1 Corinthians 5:9 (NKJV)—*I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people.*

Sometimes we act as though it is a crime to judge the behavior of sexually immoral people in the body of Christ. The Bible is clear we are not to judge the behavior of those outside the body; God will judge them (1 Corinthians 5:13). However, when it pertains to those inside the body, the Word of God instructs us to judge their immorality and refuse to keep company with them (1 Corinthians 5:9,11). Verse 13 concludes, "Put away from yourselves the evil person." The same is true for the covetous, idolaters, revilers, drunkards, and extortionists who may be a brother or sister in the Lord.

One reason ungodly behavior is prevalent in the Church, even among the leaders, is because leadership is afraid to preach the truth about it. To do so hits too close to home. You will not preach about what you are guilty of. If you stop preaching about the truth of God's Word because someone's friend or relative does not line up with it, you will soon find yourself with little to preach about. You must choose either to preach the whole counsel of God and let Him reward you, or to neglect preaching the truth of God's Word and have the Lord judge you. James 3:1 informs us that a greater condemnation awaits those who are appointed to teach truth, yet fail to do so.

God is not impressed with the size of your congregation; He is concerned only with the quality of disciples you are making. Any time truth is ignored to retain popularity, the power in the life of both leader and disciple is diminished. Love tells the truth and believes that the learner will repent and adhere to it in the future. Fear tells people what they want to hear and hopes they will not leave.

We do not help others or ourselves when we choose to violate God's Word just to retain their fellowship or to keep them as part of our lives or church family. Is it better to please God or people? Pastors, consider repenting.

Get Involved and Stay In Step!

Proverbs 18:1 (NKJV)—*A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; He rages against all wise judgment.*

Someone said, "One who cuts himself off from others will soon be out of step with everyone." How true! All of us need occasional solitude. There is nothing quite like time alone with the Lord or in the Word. But remember when Jesus pulled aside to be with the Father, He always returned to demonstrate that He had done so to be better equipped to meet the needs of the masses. There is quite a difference between being alone with the Father for a season and isolating oneself to pursue or seek your own agenda.

**There is hope and help
among God's people.
Won't you receive it?**

One thing I have learned is not to expect others to understand who I am or what my mission is. My flesh longs to have fellowship with certain people; however, my spirit man knows that is contrary to the Word of God. Only God would approve your spending time with a professed atheist and yet having no fellowship with a Christian brother or sister who will not live according to his Christian faith (2 Thessalonians 3:6,14).

It sounds like a hard saying, but it is not. One does not know any better, the other knows better and yet refuses to adhere. One is ignorant or uninformed. The other is rebellious and hardheaded.

A young man with a controlling spirit moved his family out and away from anyone that could offer them encouragement. Why? So he could perpetrate his mind games on them and even worse. He was and, in my opinion, still is emotionally sick. I have hardly prayed for him, because I believe he knows what he is doing and is enjoying it. His mother expressed that she believes he is fully aware of his actions. I am not convinced my prayers could help him, because I don't believe he wants to change. He rejects the wisdom of God's Word.

Get back in step by assembling yourself together with others who seek God's desire above their own. There is hope and help among God's people. Won't you receive it?

Their Courage Failed

Joshua 4:24 (NKJV)—*That all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty, that you may fear the Lord your God forever.*

The same God that dried the waters of the Red Sea held back and dried up the waters of the Jordan. God always has a purpose when He performs the supernatural. Usually it is to establish in the hearts of His people a significant memorial they will never forget—which includes rehearsing it to their offspring for generations to come.

The God who provides the water to cause plants to grow and humans to live can and will allow things to dry up as a judgment. Job said those who forget God will wither like a plant, his roots are dried out below and his branch withers above (Job 8:12, 18:16).

Two things which I have observed furthered my understanding of how fragile life is: The leadership of Baghdad, with its luxurious palaces and yachts, was gone in almost an instant. And a well-known doctor whose wealth and fame resulted from his health products, accidentally fell on ice and, after being in a coma, ultimately lost his fight for life.

Everyone needs Jesus and they need Him now. God wants us to be in position for His hand to bless us so that we can know that He and He alone is mighty on behalf of His people.

One evening during a prayer service, I asked our congregation if Osama bin Laden surfaced saying he had accepted Jesus Christ as Lord, what would be their reaction. Most were so stunned by the question they could not answer. The Spirit of the Lord shared with me that He has serious work to do among Christians before He can move on the hearts of some heathen. Paul, who became an apostle, was at one time no different in his attitude toward Christianity than bin Laden is today. That is why it took years before he could fellowship with the believers—they could only focus on who he had been, instead of seeing who he had become. Has our courage failed us in neglecting to remember the transforming power of our mighty God?

Do Your Children Know Who Made the Difference?

Psalm 44:1 (NKJV)—*We have heard with our ears, O God, Our fathers have told us, The deeds You did in their days, In days of old.*

You never told me that before." "Why didn't you share that with me?" "This is the first I'm hearing of this." How many of us have made these statements to our parents or heard our own children say them to us later in life? What an injustice to keep faith-encouraging truths from our children.

What did the children of Israel hear from their forefathers? Verses 2 and 3: "You drove out the nations with Your hand, but them you planted; How you afflicted the peoples and cast them out. For they did not gain possession of the land by their own sword. Nor did their own arm save them. But it was Your right hand, Your arm, and the light of Your countenance, because You favored them."

That is powerful. When did we stop telling our children about the Almighty God in our midst? They often have no hope because we neglected to tell them of His mighty power and faithful love.

Often I share with employees in the condominium where I lived as I observe them sweeping or mopping floors, "That is how I got my start." I tell them that in the summer of my twelfth year, I operated a hotel elevator to help purchase my clothes. I scrubbed nearly 32 floors every Saturday for eight dollars.

I do not want them to think that I always was as they see me today. God has done some mighty things to bring me from then to now and I am grateful. As the faces of the employees in our building light up when I tell them of my beginning, I want our granddaughter and others to hear also and be glad.

We rob others of a lesson in faith when we give the impression that life has always been good and fair. It has not, but the grace of God has been enough to see me through. Therefore, I have neither fear nor regret. Please tell your children the truth and show them the One who makes the difference.

Your House Is Covered, Not Theirs

Joshua 2:18 (NKJV)—*Unless when we come into the land, you bind this line of scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and unless you bring your father, your mother, your brothers, and all your father's household to your own home.*

Rahab had acknowledged the God of the Israelites as the one, true God. She asked the spies to spare her parents and siblings when they returned to possess the land given to them by God. She understood that everyone was either going to be destroyed or enslaved, so she was buying some insurance for herself and her family also.

When you cooperate with God's plan for people, His covenant is with your house, not that of your relatives. Joshua stated, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15).

When you are the head of the home, you choose which God you will serve. Rahab chose Jehovah, her family had not. But because she did, God protected her house. Therefore, anyone in her house enjoyed the benefit of her commitment to God. Her family could have rejected her offer and remained at home, however, they chose to move in with her. As a result, while everyone around them was destroyed, they were totally unharmed.

As much as you want God's protection for your loved ones, they have to establish their own covering with Him unless they come into your home and live according to His requirement of you and your commitment to Him.

Jesus is available to everyone who chooses to come to Him. If your words to your relatives do not seem to penetrate, perhaps you need to stop talking to them about the Lord and begin talking to the Lord about them. Stay in God's face and walk according to His Word. He will honor your request, because it is already His desire for them to be a part of His family. He will perform the supernatural, if that is what it takes. Commit them to Him. Rest in Him. Thank Him in advance for the manifestation. Start today.

Adversity Purifies the Heart

Proverbs 17:3 (NKJV)—*The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, But the Lord tests the hearts.*

The refining pot and furnace eliminate that which has no value so that the true value of the silver and the gold can be appreciated. God allows a similar process to help us see what we are. Adversity comes not to destroy us; its purpose is to separate us from what lacks true worth.

Of course, none of us would volunteer to experience life's refining pots and furnaces, but both are needed to help us and cause the power of God to rise in us. The Lord does not test us because He needs to know more about us. He knows that we need to know more about ourselves.

Many of us do not fully know who we became when we were born again. We have wisdom. We have favor. We have an anointing to pull down every stronghold that would seek to exalt itself against God's Word in our lives. Yet, we continue to tolerate things that should have taken the closest exit long ago.

I have no problem with the prosperity message when it lines up with the Word of God, benefits people, and brings glory to the Almighty. I cut my spiritual teeth on faith, and I attempt to live by faith because it pleases my Father God. I don't walk by faith just to get things or to avoid life's not-so-fair twists and turns. The things needed in my life are present and in abundance because my motivation is to seek first the Kingdom, not things.

Am I suggesting that we can go through life adversity-free? No, not at all! I am saying that since God is looking for us to be refined and become pure, He permits adversities to help us determine our value.

Each of us, in order to do and be all that God intends, must first eliminate everything that lacks value in our lives. We then must visualize our value before we proceed in our purpose. Finally, we must recognize that adversity does not come to destroy us, but is allowed by God to refine and define our hearts toward Him.

Neither Broadway Nor a Broad Way to Life

Matthew 7:13-14 (NKJV)—*“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”*

People often look for the spectacular, missing the supernatural. The lights and glamour of Broadway are not where most people live. When the lights are dimmed and the applause has ceased, those actors walk the streets of New York City or ride the buses or subway home. Few leave in chauffeured-driven limos to return to servants and mansions.

Onstage they live out their fantasies, and we the audience live out ours through them. We, too, must return to living outside the lights of tinsel town. The question is, Who are you when the fantasy is over?

Luke 13:24 reads, “Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able.” Why will they not be able to enter? Because Jesus is the one door that provides access for them to experience real life, and no one told them the cost of admission is repentance of their sins and acceptance of God’s grace to forgive.

I hear so many people say, “I need God to do something special in my life.” My question is what are you doing for Him to warrant anything more than a joint-inheritance with His Son Jesus? Have you taken time to look up His promises to you through His Son Jesus? Act like you believe them and watch what takes place when you exercise faith in Him. Jesus longs to see God’s people manifested in this world as the sons of God taking their rightful places in the earth.

I enjoy Broadway shows, glitz, and glamour. But even more, I love the discipline required to produce a beautiful life for His glory. I keep my eyes on the narrow gate leading to the door that opens to a perfect world for all eternity.

Acknowledged by God

Exodus 2:25 (NKJV)—*And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged them.*

This verse nearly caused me to jump out of my seat. Think about it. Joseph was now gone. The king who once granted favor to the children of Israel was also dead. In time, these free people found themselves in bondage.

What do you do in such a crisis? You cry out to the One who will never leave you nor forsake you. You call upon the One who already knew this would happen. Thank God, the bondage was not the end of the story; their deliverance was. God heard their groaning and remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Where are you today? What looks hopeless and helpless in your life? If you are a child of God through Jesus Christ His Son, cry out to God; groan if you must. God will hear your groaning and remember His covenant with Jesus and acknowledge you. It matters not if the entire world knows your name, or if no one but your mother, spouse, or children know who you are. There comes a time when life presses you to the point that being acknowledged by God is all that really matters.

The children of Israel did not rehearse to God what the oppressors were doing to them. They appear to have just discussed the predicament they were in and God acknowledged them. He already knows you and your plight in life. He is just waiting for you to believe that your only hope for change is found in Him.

Do that today and He will acknowledge you also. Why? Because He loves you and He has a covenant with His beloved Son Jesus. The challenges you face at this very moment are neither too large nor too small for God to hear. He will remember what He has already spoken in advance concerning you.

Why wait? Why lean to your own understanding? If you knew the solution, you would have applied it already. Acknowledge that you do not know what to do. Tell Him and watch Him acknowledge you. What are you waiting for? Do it now, this very moment.

Not Equal or Alike, But Appropriate

Genesis 49:28 (NKJV)—*All these are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father spoke to them. And he blessed them; he blessed each one according to his own blessing.*

People today that leave an inheritance to their children and their children's children try to equalize the gifts. Thank God, Jacob who obviously loved his sons, was so tuned in to God that he operated in the wisdom of God concerning their future. The blessing that he provided was not equal distributions of his wealth, it was the privilege of sharing with them what awaited them in the future. It was not equal or alike, but it was appropriate based on their respect for their father, for Almighty God, and for the responsibility required of them.

Genesis 49:1 reads, "And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather together, that I may tell you what shall befall you in the last days." I am certain that Reuben, Simeon, and Levi never thought their previous behavior would be a consideration in determining their future course of life, but it was. There are consequences and rewards for everything we say and do. Closer attention should be given to those things, for we will reap what we sow.

I am both amazed and amused that today's offspring think they are entitled to receive an inheritance just because they were born into a certain family. Many of them contribute nothing to the family's growth and increase. Some refuse to even live the same Christian lifestyle, but they expect the blessing of God to be heaped on them as it was to their ancestors.

Think again. When we who are blessed of the Lord give or leave our abundance to relatives that refuse to acknowledge Jesus Christ as His Son and walk the walk with Him, we will cause our own blessings to be hindered with wrong choices concerning others.

Stop this very moment to examine your thoughts and intentions as to the distribution of the blessing of God in your life. Remember Jacob. Decide that the greatest inheritance to leave our relatives is the wisdom and knowledge of who Jesus is. He will provide from there.

They Added Nothing to Me

Galatians 2:6 (NKJV)—*But from those who seemed to be something—whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man—for those who seemed to be something added nothing to me.*

Pay close attention to demands placed on you that are contrary to the Word of God. False brethren required Titus to be circumcised though he was Greek. Paul said, “We did not yield in submission even for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue” (verse 5). Any time anyone requires of you things you know are not right or in the Spirit of Jesus and you agree to it, you cut off your anointing to share the Gospel.

Paul recognized that there were those who seemed to be “something.” But he said whatever they were made no difference to him. Once you understand that those who seem to be something add nothing to you, then you also understand that they cannot take anything from you. Any time you yield to personal preference and neglect to be led by the Spirit of Christ, you are headed for bondage and not liberty in Christ Jesus.

Pillars of the church should be able to perceive the grace that has been given to you (Galatians 2:9). And by the same grace, you should be able to perceive what is in them. True pillars of the church may not always understand what you are all about, but if they are of a right spirit, God will show them and you can have fellowship.

Never allow anyone to threaten you with loss to get you to do what is contrary to what you know is right. When you accept people’s threats, you also accept their bondage and become their slave. You abandon being a slave to Jesus who will never ask you to do anything that violates the Word of God.

Security for your family is never achieved by submitting to a person’s threat. Never see the one who threatens you as one who can add to you. After all, what they have come from the same source that supplies you.

My Presence Is Your Rest

Exodus 33:14—*And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.*

Moses had already brought the children of Israel out of Egypt. Now God was requiring him to take them into the Promised Land. This concerned Moses more than getting them delivered, so he wanted God's assurance for this task.

I must sense His presence in order to rest, to be comfortable in the midst of chaos.

So many of us get delivered from the Egypt of our lives. We accept Jesus, and we are going to heaven someday. But God wants His children

to enter into His Promised Land: to possess it and enjoy the fruit of the land, which is whatever benefits there are in whatever land He has promised to us. He wants us to get on with subduing it.

It is time we stop circling around the Promised Land. Did God promise us a journey to it but not the possession of it? No, He wants us both to enter in and to take it over as our own.

"How?" you may ask. Stay in His presence.

We don't have to linger around a certain location in order to sense His presence. He said, "My presence shall go with thee." Therefore, wherever we go, His presence will be with us; and there is nothing quite like His presence. His presence is the comfort zone that our spirits, souls, and bodies long for.

Rest is a gift that comes from being in His presence. It is not good enough just to know He is always with me and that He lives in me. I must sense His presence in order to rest, to be comfortable in the midst of chaos.

Moses said unto the Lord, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." With him I say, Lord, don't even take me into Your Promised Land if I am not able to sense Your presence there. For it is Your very presence that is the daily shew bread that sustains me and stimulates me to rest in You.

Father, I desire Your presence more than anything in this world because with it, Your Word is a reality in my life.

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