

GLENN A SALS BURY

More
Heavenly
Treasures

Worthy Meditations



*Experiencing the
Transformational
Truth of God's
Sovereign Grace
and Eternal
Purpose*

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Great Books, Defined.

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To the faithfulness of God's Spirit in anointing His Word to my heart and life.

To the unfailing love of Jesus Christ, Who continually draws me to Himself.

To the sovereign purpose of the Father, Who sent the Son into the world to seek those whom He loved; I am grateful to be one of those recipients of unconditional, electing grace.

And to my family, all of whom have been called into His family, and whose unconditional love remains the joy of my earthly experience.

Preface



So, then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

—Romans 10:17

HOW OFTEN WE long to have greater faith! Yet I find it easy to forget that the only Source of power is the living Word of God. Christ Himself is alive to us in His Word. We cannot hear Truth unless the Spirit anoints our ears to hear. And the only Truth in the universe is the Word of God.

As the world scene continues to grow darker, I believe our greatest comfort rests in hiding God's Word in our hearts and lives. But the *earth dwellers*, those who do not know Christ (though they may be religious), struggle desperately and in vain to find human, earthly solutions to their dire situations (Revelation 13:12–14). The Lord Himself described the days of worldwide turmoil and *distress* that will precede His return to earth: "For there shall be great *distress* in the land...and upon the earth *distress* of nations, with perplexity...Men's hearts failing

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them for fear...” (Luke 21:23, 25, 26, emphasis mine). King David, in the midst of his circumstances wrote, “In my distress I called upon the Lord, And cried unto my God: He heard my voice out of His temple...” (Psalm 18:6). Believers know the One Solution to dire situations!

The Word of God reveals the character of the Lord to us. We discover His unconditional love, the riches of His grace, His sovereign power, and His continual faithfulness. The Lord draws us to Himself through His Word. We learn to trust Him; we begin to *hear* His voice.

Yet there are very few believers who are discovering or hearing the foundational, doctrinal truths that produce transformational living in Christ. The Word of God is often overshadowed by programs and worldly enticements to gain a crowd. *Nothing* has the power to produce faith and a joy-filled life except the Word of God. Christ Alone, the living Word of God, is “the Author and Finisher” of faith (Hebrews 12:2).

The greatest gift the Lord can give us is the revelation of Who He is. Therein lies salvation. Yet He is infinite; He is God. He has revealed Himself in His fullness in the written Word. And it is this Truth that sustains us.

I have written this second book of “treasures” because God has given me a passion to share the riches of His Book. I continue to be lifted above my own distresses, earthly preoccupations, and personal challenges by the transforming truths that are hidden in that Book.

May your own heart and life be enriched beyond measure as you meditate on the pages that follow.

Resting in His Grace,
Glenna

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Section Three

Worthy Meditations

*But Mary kept all these things,
and pondered them in her heart.*

—Luke 2:19



Chapter 60

The Simplicity of Prayer



The mother of Jesus saith unto Him, “They have no wine.”
—John 2:3

ONE OF THE great saints of the early twentieth century, Dr. O. Hallesby, had much to say about the simplicity of true prayer. His insights from the account of when Jesus turned water into wine at the marriage of Cana serve to encourage all of us.¹ Many of the following insights flow from Dr. Hallesby’s teachings.

You will recall the events described in John 2:1–11. Jesus, His family, and the disciples were invited to a marriage celebration in the town of Cana in Galilee. As the guests were enjoying the food and drink at the wedding reception, a problem arose. The host and hostess ran out of wine!

We can stop there for a moment and ask ourselves if we are aware of some lack or need in our own lives. Or perhaps you have a friend or family member who is facing a problem currently.

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Consider what unfolded when Jesus' mother, Mary, became aware of a problem or a need. The moment she saw what the need was, she immediately went to the right Person for help—she went straight to Jesus and told Him everything.

How often do we find ourselves trying to fix our problems in our own way, attempting our own solutions before we finally turn to the Lord?

Next, notice what Mary said to Jesus. In simple words, she just stated the facts: "They have no wine." It is worth noting that Mary did not elaborate on the severity or potential consequences of this lack. She did not even offer any suggestions for a solution! She just expressed a need. And in this situation, she actually was interceding on behalf of the needs of someone other than herself.

Mary seems to have felt that her statement was sufficient. She simply expressed her concern to the Lord. She knew she did not have to influence Him or persuade Him to act in a particular way. She knew that He was the One Who would know what should or would be done in the situation. She left the situation in His hands because she knew Who He was—the One Who accomplishes "all things after the counsel of His own will" (Ephesians 1:11). This simplicity on Mary's part is a great example of the gift of faith. She knew Him and trusted Him as a result of the faith she had been given (Hebrews 12:2).

Certainly Mary never before had seen Jesus turn water into wine. So there is no doubt that she did not even think of this miraculous solution as the way out of the difficulty that had presented itself.

How many times do we find ourselves trying to think of the *logical* means by which God might solve our current problems or

The Simplicity of Prayer

difficulties or situations? Yet, often when the Lord finally rescues us or solves our dilemmas, He uses circumstances or solutions we never could have imagined.

Mary's simplicity and her awareness of the Lord's wisdom and power serve as marvelous reminders to us. When we lay our concern or need before the Lord, we can state it and leave it with Him. He knows what He plans to do. He knows what means He will use. And no one is so willing to meet our requests as He is.

Of course, when the Lord turned the water into wine, the results were above and beyond the greatest expectations of everyone at the party. The wine He produced was far better than the wine the governor of the feast had been serving earlier! And we learn that the Lord answered Mary's expression of need as a means of manifesting His glory (John 2:11). Seeing this, "His disciples believed on Him."

Oh, Lord, give us the grace and the faith to come to You at once with our needs and to trust Your sovereign wisdom in answering our requests.

Chapter 61

Boasting in What Matters



My soul shall make her boast in the Lord.

—Psalm 34:2

*R*ING DAVID HAD much to *boast* about as the king of Israel, as a human being who had reached the pinnacle of worldly success. Yet David’s greatest joy was to boast in the Lord. David recognized the Lord as the One, the Only One, about Whom he should *boast*.

The Hebrew word for “boast” is *halal*, and it means to *make a show* or *to glory in*. In the New Testament, the Greek word for “glory” also can include the concept of *making a show* or *boasting*.

The apostle Paul wrote, “But God forbid that I should *glory*, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Galatians 6:14, emphasis mine). Another reading would be, “May it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ...” Paul recognized that every single element in his life had been

Boasting in What Matters

transformed by the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross. He, Paul, had been set free from the captivity of Satan; he was now a new creation; his sins were forever removed from him; he had discovered his purpose, his calling in life. He had received the gift of eternal life, to reign forever with the King of Kings. All of this, and much more, was accomplished for Paul and for each of us as believers on the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

All of the material gain in this world, the powerful positions, and the human accomplishments fade away in light of what is ours because of what happened on the cross. Paul himself wrote, "...I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord: for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung [refuse], that I may win Christ" (Philippians 3:8). Nothing on this earth can be compared to knowing Christ and understanding His work on our behalf.

In writing to the Corinthians, Paul says, "Most gladly therefore will I rather *glory* in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Corinthians 12:9, emphasis mine). In other words, "I would rather *boast* about my weaknesses so that I can experience the power of Christ." The world does not give much honor to weaknesses. Earth dwellers *boast* in perceived strengths. But not Paul—he knew he had no strength except the powerful presence of Christ in his life. And that reality, the indwelling Christ in Paul, was a result of the grace flowing from the cross.

The Scriptures are clear about the fact that the Lord will not share His glory. Ezekiel 39:25 states, "I...will be jealous for My holy name." We are to *boast* only in His Word, His power, His grace, and His mercy. "For by grace are ye saved through

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faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, *lest any man should boast*" (Ephesians 2:8, 9, emphasis mine). Notice that the Word warns against our boasting in *our* faith or *our* works! Faith is a gift from Him (Hebrews 12:2), and good works of any kind are the work of the power of the Lord Himself (Ephesians 2:10). If we think we contribute to His work in any way (including "tapping into Him," "cooperating with Him," or "choosing to be obedient"), we have stolen from the fact that it is *only* the finished work of Christ on our behalf that is accomplishing anything of eternal value in our lives as believers!

The Word of God consistently reminds us that we have *nothing* to boast about, glory in, or exult about other than the cross. "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18).

If we are feeling weak in our Christian life, if we are longing to experience greater strength or power or joy or obedience, there is only one answer: consistently *boast* in the *finished* work of Christ on the cross, accomplished for all who know Him.

Lord Jesus Christ, draw us anew to the reality and the truth of who we are in You. Help us to see that we have died with You on that cross. We are a new creation, raised to eternal life by the power of Your death and resurrection. And it is by Your Spirit we are sanctified, day by day. Hallelujah, what a Savior!

Chapter 62

*The Queen of Sheba:
a Saint!*



The queen of Sheba will also rise up against this generation on judgment day.

—Matthew 12:42 NLT

*I*MAGINE THAT! THE queen of a Gentile nation became a believer nine hundred years before Christ was born into the world. How? By seeking out the wisest man on earth, King Solomon of Israel. She asked of him “all that was in her heart” (1 Kings 10:2). And King Solomon answered “all her questions; nothing was too hard for the king to explain to her” (1 Kings 10:3 NLT).

The queen of Sheba was a very wealthy and powerful person in her own right. She ruled a kingdom in what is now northern Africa or southwestern Arabia. “She arrived in Jerusalem with a large group of attendants and a great caravan of camels loaded with spices, huge quantities of gold, and precious jewels...she gave the king a gift of nine thousand pounds of gold, and great

quantities of spices and precious jewels. Never again were so many spices brought in as those the queen of Sheba gave to Solomon” (1 Kings 10:2, 10 NLT). Yet this powerful woman, ruler over many, with coffers full of money, “heard of Solomon’s reputation, which brought honor to the name of the Lord, and she came to test him with hard questions” (1 Kings 10:1 NLT).

The queen was drawn by the truth she had heard about Solomon—that his wealth and his wisdom were a result of his relationship with the Lord God of Israel. She came seeking to know the truth. She came with a heart that was willing to listen. She was so eager to learn that she willingly shared her abundance with Solomon, who didn’t have a need for it. She desired to express her gratefulness to him for giving her an audience with him. And, miracle of miracles, this woman’s eyes were opened spiritually. She understood the greatness of the Lord as a result of being in Solomon’s presence!

That is a truth worth pondering. When others are with us and hear and see what is unfolding in our lives, do they worship the Lord, recognizing His glory in us?

“When the queen of Sheba realized how wise Solomon was, and when she saw the palace he had built, she was breathless... She exclaimed to the king, ‘Everything I heard in my country about your achievements and wisdom is true... The Lord your God is great indeed! He delights in you and has placed you on the throne of Israel. Because the Lord loves Israel with an eternal love, he has made you king so you can rule with justice and righteousness’” (1 Kings 10:4, 5, 6, 9 NLT). What incredible insight the Spirit of God gave this woman. She understood the very reason for Solomon’s reign and recognized the Lord God of Israel to be Lord over all.

The Queen of Sheba: a Saint!

There are some attributes in the person of the queen of Sheba that apparently did not exist in the lives of the religious leaders who, according to Jesus' words, will be condemned in the day of judgment. The Pharisees, the Jewish religious leaders, were questioning the King of Kings, the Source of all wisdom and riches in the universe, yet they did not come to Him to listen or learn. Rather, they said, "We want you to show us a miraculous sign to prove that you are from God" (Matthew 12:38 NLT). They did not see or value this King.

Christ responded, "Someone greater than Solomon is here—and you refuse to listen to Him" (Matthew 12:42 NLT).

Lord, may we be learners, seeking You for wisdom and recognizing that all the abundance in our lives has its source in You.

Chapter 63

Finish the Course



I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.

—2 Timothy 4:7

THE EARLY SAINTS were very aware that the Lord had called them into *the way*; each one had a course laid out, an ordained assignment. The apostle Paul told Timothy that he, Paul, had finished the course that had been set before him. He had fought for the truth of the gospel of grace and had protected (kept) the faith given to him by the Lord Himself.

John the Baptist is described as having “fulfilled his *course*” (Acts 13:25, emphasis mine). The Greek meaning behind the English word “fulfilled” is *to accomplish*, (the Greek word *pleroo*). John the Baptist’s ordained calling (or set course) was to announce the coming of the Messiah. He finished, completed, his calling, which included being beheaded.

The Greek word for “course” is *dromos*. It contains the overtones of a race course, a running track that has been set or

Finish the Course

laid out. And amazingly, we read in Hebrews 6:20 that Jesus Christ is “the Forerunner” Who has entered into the heavenlies, going ahead of us, having completed His ordained course. The Greek word for “forerunner” is *prodromos*. He ran the course, opened *the way*, and serves as the “hope set before us,” the anchor who keeps us steady as we run our own personal *dromos* (Hebrews 6:18, 19).

The apostle Paul understood clearly that his assigned course included pain, suffering, and imprisonment. The Lord said of Paul, “He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles...For I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name’s sake” (Acts (9:15, 16).

Therefore, Paul could say, “none of these things [sufferings] move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24). Paul knew that his course, his calling, was uniquely ordained for him and given to him as an assignment from the Lord Jesus.

In the book of Hebrews, chapter eleven, the author outlines the names of many of the early saints who by faith ran their individual races. The writer summarizes this review of the “hall of faith” by giving us encouraging words for our own races. Hebrews 12:1 says, “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith...let us run with endurance the race that God has set before us” (NLT).

Interestingly, the word translated “race” in this Hebrews passage is *agon*, which actually means fight or conflict. In all other places in the New Testament, it is translated fight or conflict. The message to us is that as believers, each and every one of us

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is living out our own “faith fight.” We have been given our own “hurdles” and “high jumps” and “long jumps” and “relays.” This is the Lord’s means of strengthening us and conforming us into His image.

Lord, help us to embrace our own assigned dromos, keeping our eyes on You, the Prodomos, Who has finished the race and opened the way for us to follow.

Chapter 64

*In Christ Before
the World Began*



In hope of eternal life, which God...promised before the world began.

—Titus 1:2

THE APOSTLE PAUL wrote to Titus, a believer who was preaching the gospel on the island of Crete. Paul described himself as a slave of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, who has “been sent to bring faith to those God has chosen” (Titus 1:1 NLT). In the King James Version, these same people are called “God’s elect.” Paul also said that he was bringing the truth that would give them “the confidence of eternal life, which God promised them before the world began” (Titus 1:2 NLT).

Isn’t it difficult to grasp the concept that God made promises to us before the world began? How is that possible? What other biblical clues do we have that confirm this truth? And if we could get a glimmer of what this really means, how might that enhance our faith, our “confidence in eternal life?”

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Paul often used the phrase “before the world began.” He wrote, “Long ago, even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ...His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 1:4, 5 NLT). In 2 Timothy 1:9 Paul says that the power of God has “saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” And in Ephesians Paul says, “I was chosen to explain to everyone this plan that God, the Creator of all things, had kept secret from the beginning...This was his plan from all eternity...” (Ephesians 3:9, 11 NLT).

We tend to think of eternity as infinite, linear time stretching into the future. But eternity is a concept that is not linear, nor is it related to time. In fact, the literal Greek translation of “before the world began” is “before the ages.” Somehow time and ages are related to the created world as we currently know it. Eternity is outside of time, yet eternity contains ages. The infinite, eternal concept can best be captured in Christ’s statement about Himself: “I am the Alpha and the Omega—the beginning and the end...I am the one who is, who always was, and who is still to come...” (Revelation 1:8 NLT). He always has been; He always will be. His plan is eternal and unchanging and has, therefore, always been in place.

The psalmist writes, “Before the mountains were created, before you made the earth and the world, you are God, without beginning or end” (Psalm 90:2 NLT). And in Psalm 139 we read, “You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed” (Psalm 139:16 NLT).

In Christ Before the World Began

This eternal plan of God has been and is focused on us, His elect. Paul says that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins, just as God our Father planned, in order to rescue us from this evil world. That is why all glory belongs to God through all the ages of eternity (Ephesians 1:4, 5 NLT). Paul describes the good news of the gospel as the message about Jesus Christ and “his plan for you...a plan kept secret from the beginning of time” (Romans 16:25 NLT). Notice that time had a beginning but the Lord’s plan for us existed before that.

We gain further insight into the mystery of God’s plan as we read the Lord’s conversation with His Father in heaven. Jesus said, “Father, bring me into the glory we shared before the world began. I have told these men about you. They were in the world, but then you gave them to me. Actually they were always yours, and you gave them to me...” (John 17:5, 6 NLT). The Lord indicated that we belonged to the Father before the world began and that we as believers are not related to the world but rather we are related to eternity. Jesus continued, “My prayer is not for the world, but for those you have given me... They are not part of this world any more than I am... Then the world will know... and will understand that you love them as much as you love me” (John 17: 9, 16, 23 NLT).

Through these amazing biblical truths we begin to get a glimpse of the miraculous relationship we have with the Creator. He knew us before the world began; He had a plan for us before the world was created; He is accomplishing that plan; and His plan includes sharing with us His eternal glory. And He has an eternal assignment for us because we are eternal beings with an eternal purpose.

*Lord, shine the light of Your Spirit on our understanding
that we might live in this truth, day by day.*

Chapter 65

Unanswered Prayers?



I called to Him but there was no reply.

—Song of Solomon 5:6 NLT

*H*OW OFTEN HAVE you experienced praying over and over again about the same ongoing issues, concerns, or desires in your life? Sometimes we just feel like giving up. It seems like the Lord isn't listening or He has gone on vacation! We occasionally become discouraged because we feel we aren't praying "properly" or we aren't "worthy" enough to receive an answer.

It is thrilling to read the words of Charles Spurgeon on this topic. He wrote, "Unanswered petitions are not unheard. God keeps a file for our prayers...they are treasured in the King's archives. There is a registry in the court of heaven wherein every prayer is recorded...thy Lord hath a tear-bottle in which the costly drops of sacred grief are put away...wait a little...thy Lord's time will be better than thy time."¹

Unanswered Prayers?

We know from the Scriptures that the Lord loves His own fully and completely. His very Being is loving. First John 4:16 says, “God is love.” Everything in our daily experiences is designed by His hand of love to serve one purpose: to conform us to His image and prepare us to share in His glory for all the ages to come.

Only Christ knows the beginning and the end of our lives. He designed the details of each of our births, selected our parents, our places in history, and our geographical locations, and He supplied the gifts and talents that are uniquely ours.

You will recall the words of the wisest man who ever lived: “There is a time for everything...A time to be born...a time to die...A time to tear down and a time to rebuild. A time to cry and a time to laugh. A time to grieve and a time to dance...A time to search and a time to lose...A time to tear and a time to mend” (Ecclesiastes 3:1–7 NLT).

The solid foundation upon which we can stand in prayer is that of God’s love for us. And the pillars we can lean against are His perfect plan for us and His perfect timing in executing that plan.

If there ever was a believer who had reason to lose hope in having his prayers answered, it must have been Job. He suffered loss after heartbreaking loss. His friends claimed God was punishing him for unconfessed sin. His wife urged him to give up hoping in the Lord. Yet Job understood God’s sovereignty. He said, “Nevertheless, his mind concerning me remains unchanged, and who can turn him from his purposes? Whatever he wants to do, he does. So he will do for me all he has planned. He controls my destiny” (Job 23:13, 14 NLT). Job also said, “He knows where I am going. And when he has tested me like gold in a fire, he will pronounce me innocent” (Job 23:10 NLT).

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We discover the Lord's grace and mercy in "the rest of the story" of Job. Job 42:12, 10 reads, "So the Lord blessed Job in the second half of his life even more than in the beginning...In fact, the Lord gave him twice as much as before!" (NLT).

In the midst of it all, Job stood firm on the foundation of the Lord's love for him, in spite of outward circumstances. He said, "I know that my Redeemer lives...in my body I will see God...Yes, I will see him with my own eyes" (Job 19:25–27 NLT).

Lord, thank You for the promise that we can indeed call unto You and You will answer (Jeremiah 33:3). Give us the grace to wait and to believe Your Word.

Chapter 66

*Don't Worry About
a Thing!*



Be careful for nothing...

—Philippians 4:6

IT SEEMS LIKE the apostle Paul might have had a lot to worry about. He had no job, no steady income, no close family, plenty of physical challenges, constant danger, beatings, shipwrecks, and imprisonments. In fact, as Paul wrote the words above, he was in prison in Rome, having lived under all these hardships for more than two decades. Yet he had found the Lord Jesus Christ to be so faithful in his life that he actually could, from personal experience, urge other Christians to live a worry-free life!

The Lord Himself told us that this is the only way to live. He said, “Your heavenly Father already knows all your needs... So don’t worry about tomorrow” (Matthew 6:32, 34 NLT).

David, the psalmist, with all of his persecutions, personal failures, and major responsibilities as king of Israel wrote, “Cast

thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee” (Psalm 55:22). The Hebrew word for “burden” can be translated *lot*. In other words, whatever might be our lot in life, commit it to the Lord. He will look after us!

Charles Spurgeon gave great insights into this truth. He wrote, “The very essence of anxious care is the imagining that we are wiser than God, and the thrusting ourselves into His place to do for Him that which He has undertaken to do for us... this presumption in intruding upon His province, is all sinful... Anxiety makes us doubt God’s lovingkindness, and thus our love to Him grows cold.”¹

Do we really see worry as sin? If so, maybe a good place to start to free ourselves from our worries is to confess to the Lord our personal sins of worry and doubt. Tell Him we are sorry for not trusting Him with our current lot in life. Agree with Him that we are trying to be wiser than He is, coming up with our own plans. Apologize to Him for not believing that all that is unfolding in our lives is working together for our highest good!

Sometimes it is not enough for us to be told not to worry and simply to trust God. We want to “cooperate” with what the Lord is doing. The apostle Paul explains to us what we can do actively. He writes, “...in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God” (Phil. 4:6). Paul actually is telling us to petition the Lord, specifically, for a particular resolution to a situation and then to thank Him, before the answer arrives, that He is handling our requests!

In a practical way, it is sometimes helpful to write down our specific petitions, date them, and place them inside a “God-box,” a box with a lid that closes. The very closing of the lid is an act

Don't Worry About a Thing!

of faith—casting our cares upon Him and not revisiting our same nagging concerns.

What a relief it is when we experience the freedom from worry. How wonderful it is to walk in a place of peace and rest... this is the Lord's invitation to each of us today.

*Oh, Holy Spirit, enable us to release our thoughts, worries,
and anxieties into Your safekeeping.*

Chapter 67

*Bring Every Thought into
Captivity!*



Casting down imaginations...and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

—2 Corinthians 10:5

QUR MINDS ARE often our worst enemy when it comes to living the Christian life. Our minds (*psyche*) and our bodies (*soma*) are very influenced by the world of the senses. The apostle John wrote, “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world” (1 John 2:16).

We live in the world. We process information through what we see (television, magazines, Internet, etc.) or hear or touch or experience. This often leads to mental longings like a desire for fame, fortune, beauty, travel, bigger and better stuff, a different spouse, etc. The end result of these mental processes is often frustration, depression, divorce, drugs, overwhelming debt, dissatisfaction, and/or dangerous imaginations!

Bring Every Thought into Captivity!

The real life of a believer is not to be lived with a focus on the world of the senses! The life of faith is completely related to the invisible world of the Holy Spirit. And, as a result, this life of faith often seems difficult, even impossible.

The apostle Paul tells us what we are to do in order to avoid being swept into the world's disappointments and agonies. He says that the key is to reprogram our minds—to tear down all of the thoughts and reasonings that exalt themselves against knowing the Lord better. And instead, we are to bring every thought into captivity to Christ.

The key, according to Paul, is to focus on the things of God. So how do we do that? There are a variety of activities that can help us when we are ready to let go of our negative emotions. Here are some ideas:

- Read the written Word of God. “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Romans 10:17).
- Sing worshipful songs.
- Think about God’s creation, the beauty of nature. (Stand under the stars. Sit by the water. Listen to the birds. Watch the sunsets and the sunrises.)
- Invest in thinking about how to help others who have greater needs than you have.
- Spend time with believers who love Christ.
- Turn off the TV and your computer.
- Read uplifting, inspirational, or educational books or magazines. (Choose not to feed on that which does not enhance your thought life.)
- Practice thanking the Lord for your blessings. Name them, one by one.

More Heavenly Treasures

There are many choices we make each day that affect our mental condition. Paul tells us, “Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2).

Lord, help us to move in Your direction through our own daily thought patterns. Give us grace to “cast down imaginations” and bring our thoughts into agreement with Your thoughts.

Chapter 68

*The Incredible Power of
the Word*



Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that
proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

—Matthew 4:4

THE MOST RECENT Gallup poll says that only 30 percent of Americans believe the Bible to be true from beginning to end. And that percentage is dropping at an increasing pace.

We are living in a world that has become smitten with the wisdom of man, from Darwin's theory of evolution to the preoccupation with human potential. To actually believe in six days of creation or in a worldwide flood or in the bodily return of Jesus Christ to this earth is to place yourself in a shrinking minority. Yet Christ Himself told us that every single Word of God is essential to true, meaningful life. How it is, then, that we are more drawn to the evening news or the latest novel than we are to knowing God's Word?

More Heavenly Treasures

The answer is simple. Since the garden of Eden, Satan has been deceiving human beings about the Word of God. There, his first satanic act was to question the validity of the Word of God. He said, “Hath God said, ‘Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” (Genesis 3:1).

Satan’s second step, after questioning God’s Word, was to state flatly that God’s Word is a lie. He said, “Ye shall not surely die” (Genesis 3:4).

Most of us want to “fit in” with the world in which we live. We do not want to be perceived as uneducated or naive or, especially, intolerant! There is great pressure upon us to be broadminded and loving (defined by the world as being “tolerant”). Yet, if we know Christ, we are called to live by faith. And, “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17).

David, the psalmist, said that God has magnified His Word even above His very name! (Psalm 138:2). If the Lord values His Word in such an incredible manner, and if His Word is the very means by which our faith expands, maybe we ought to dare to run against the tide of “popular opinion” and Gallup polls. Perhaps we ought to dare to test the possibility that His Word is life-changing and Spirit-anointed by beginning to store it up in our hearts and minds, day by day.

Something miraculous happens when we dare to believe that God means what He says and that the Word of God is a heavenly message sent to us by the Holy Spirit. And, ultimately, no amount of human logic or reason dares to rise up against it.

Oh, Lord, give us a fresh desire to hide Your Word in our hearts as darkness and blindness settle in upon the world.

Chapter 69

The Gift of Repentance



When they heard these things, they...glorified God, saying, “Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance...”

—Acts 11:18

ISN'T IT THRILLING to realize that repentance is a gift and that God is the One who gives us the ability to repent?

The Greek word for “repentance” is *metanoia*. Literally, it means to change one’s mind. The Scriptures indicate that our human minds are always at enmity with God (Romans 8:7). Left to ourselves, “there is none that seeketh after God” (Romans 3:11). A miraculous event has to occur for us to even know we are sinners. The light of the Holy Spirit must bring us alive spiritually. Then we actually see that we are sinners who need a Savior. At that point, we discover that Christ is God and has died for our sins.

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The apostle Paul understood the miraculous reality of repentance. He wrote, “And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins...Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)...” (Ephesians 2:1, 5). And Paul prayed for believers, “asking God... to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you might grow in your knowledge of God. I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light...” (Ephesians 1:17, 18 NLT).

When talking about unbelievers, Paul suggested that we should “be patient with difficult people...Perhaps God will change those people’s hearts, and they will believe the truth. Then they will come to their senses and escape from the Devil’s trap” (2 Timothy 2:24–26 NLT). In the King James Version we read, “...instructing those that oppose themselves; if God...will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.”

There are two practical and encouraging applications for us when we realize that the Lord Himself is the Author of repentance. First, when we experience the guilt of sin, our response can be to praise God for the very awareness of sin. We confess our sin (agree with Him about sin) because He has gifted us with repentance. Second, we can pray peacefully for loved ones or friends who don’t know Christ, recognizing that the Holy Spirit is the One who will change their minds (*metanoia*), granting them the miraculous ability to repent.

Lord, we recognize that “whatever is good and perfect comes to us from God above” (James 1:17 NLT). We praise You for the blessing of repentance. Kindly continue to flood us with Your light.

Chapter 70

Angelic Presence



They are spirits sent from God to care for those who will receive salvation.

—Hebrews 1:14b NLT

*M*UCH CONFUSION SURROUNDS the topic of angels. People tend to believe a variety of myths about angels. For example, many people believe that when you die you become an angel, that angels have wings and fly from place to place, or that angels are worthy of our worship.

The Scriptures provide the facts about angels. The Greek word for “angel” is *aggelos*, and it means a messenger or an agent. Angels are created beings that are designed to serve God as His messengers, His agents. They are never to be worshipped.

Angels look like human beings when they are visible. And they always appear as male human beings. (Even the names of angels tell us that: Gabriel, Michael, Lucifer.) At the tomb, following Christ’s resurrection, we read that Mary Magdalene

saw “two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain” (John 20:11, 12). The angels talked with her; they engaged in normal conversation. In Luke we read the account of this same scene. Mary Magdalene and others came to the tomb and found the stone rolled away and, “Behold, two men stood by them in shining garments” (Luke 24:4). Then the same conversation is recorded. The angels looked like men.

The author of Hebrews writes, “Don’t forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it!” (Hebrews 13:2 NLT). The reason you would not “realize it” is because angels look like human beings!

There are other created beings called cherubims and seraphims. These creations do have wings, and they are related to the worship of the Lord. But they are not angels (Isaiah 6:2, 6).

One of the specific responsibilities of angels is to protect those individuals who are going to become believers. We read, “Angels are only servants. They are spirits sent from God to care for those who will receive salvation” (Hebrews 1:14 NLT). If you know Christ, you have a personal angel who has been assigned to you since birth! And our individual angels look after us during our entire lives on earth.

For example, Peter, the apostle, was in prison in Jerusalem, chained to two soldiers. Suddenly an angel appeared in the cell and set him free (Acts 12:6–8). Peter ran to the home of Mary, the mother of Mark, and knocked at the door. A servant girl, Rhoda, ran to the door and recognized Peter’s voice. She ran back inside to tell the saints, who had been in prayer for Peter at that very time. Rhoda said, “Peter is at the door!”

Angelic Presence

They said, “You’re out of your mind...It must be his angel” (Acts 12:9–15 NLT). These saints knew and understood that every believer has an assigned angel!

What about you? Have you praised God for His glorious provision for you since your birth?

For he orders his angels to protect you wherever you go. They will hold you with their hands... (Psalm 91:11, 12 NLT)

Lord, what an incredible truth! You have assigned an angel to guard and protect each of your children! What a glorious mercy. Thank You for Your care and Your love.

Chapter 71

Taste and See!



O taste and see that the Lord is good.

—Psalm 34:8

WHAT A STRANGE invitation! The psalmist invites us to taste and discover the goodness of God. The Hebrew word for “taste” is *taam*, and it relates to perceiving truth through experience. The psalmist is inviting us to experience the truth that the Lord is good. But we may well ask, “how?”

The apostle Peter seems to have grasped what King David meant. Peter actually quotes this psalm. He writes, “You must crave pure spiritual milk so that you can grow into the fullness of your salvation. Cry out for this nourishment as a baby cries for milk, now that you have had a taste of the Lord’s kindness” (1 Peter 2:2, 3 NLT). Peter equates the experience of salvation with the tasting of God’s kindness. And then he indicates that

if you want to taste His kindness more fully, you must develop a craving for His Word!

The author of Hebrews also connects the tasting of the heavenly gift with having “tasted the good word of God” (Hebrews 6:4, 5). We know that Christ Himself is the Father’s “heavenly gift” to us. Moreover, Christ is the living Word of God, and He invites us to “eat” of Him.

In John, chapter six, we read the record of when Jesus physically fed the five thousand, multiplying five barley loaves and two fishes. He later explained to the disciples the spiritual significance of this event. He said, “You shouldn’t be so concerned about perishable things like food. Spend your energy seeking the eternal life that I, the Son of Man, can give you” (John 6:27 NLT). Then Christ said, “I am the bread of life...I am the bread from heaven...the bread from heaven gives eternal life to everyone who eats it...For my flesh is the true food, and my blood is the true drink” (John 6:35, 41, 50, 55 NLT).

The Lord invites us to taste Him, to eat of His flesh, His body broken on our behalf. We are to live through tasting His blood that was shed for our sins. The question is: How does this become our practical, daily experience?

The Lord gave us the answer to this question. He said, “People need more than bread for their life; they must feed on every word of God” (Matthew 4:4 NLT). There is life-changing power in the written Word of God. We experience the Lord Himself through tasting (eating) His Word. Faith comes by hearing the Word (Romans 10:17). The gospel, the Word of God, is the power of salvation (Romans 1:16). We are born again through the Word (James 1:18). And by the Word of God the

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heavens and the earth were created (2 Peter 3:5). If we long to experience more of the Lord's grace and mercy and kindness, He invites us to taste Him, to eat His Word.

Lord, give us a fresh hunger for Your Word. Enlarge our capacity to live by the promises You have given us. Enliven our minds to comprehend Your Life in us, revealed through Your Word.

Chapter 72

The Light Has Come!



Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord
is risen upon thee.

—Isaiah 60:1

THE SCRIPTURES OVERFLOW with references to light. The first words spoken by God in the Bible are, “Let there be light.” And the result? “There was light” (Genesis 1:3)! God Himself is the Source of Light. And Jesus identified Himself as Creator, as God, when He announced, “I am the Light of the World” (John 8:12).

Light has incredible power and produces amazing results. Light produces life in plants. Lack of light has been known to produce sadness and depression in human beings. Light also produces beauty. We cannot see colors without light. All of creation is visible because of light.

Light brings knowledge. If we cannot see, we lack knowledge. Light also manifests reality; we see more clearly. Even the verb

“lighten” brings a sense of relief! And “enlighten” brings a sense of wisdom and understanding.

In the Scriptures we learn that Jesus is the Life and the Light (John 1:4). He is not *a* light but rather *the* Light. He manifests reality to us. In fact, the Greek word for “truth” is *alethia*, and it actually means reality. Jesus said, “I am...the truth” (John 14:6). Outside of Christ there is darkness (lack of light) and falsehood (lack of truth). And outside of Christ there is death (lack of Life, which is produced by the Light).

What can these truths about Light mean to us in a practical, daily application? Perhaps we should think again about what the Lord meant when He said to believers, “You are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14). Are we aware that we are light bearers if Christ lives in us? The apostle Paul says that we shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse world (Philippians 2:15).

The Greek word for “lights” is *phoster*, which means light-giver and is used to describe starlight! The Lord exhorts us to “Let your light...shine...” (Matthew 5:16). Here the word for “light” is *phos*, which means radiance. Are we radiant? Do others see the Light shining from us?

The psalmist writes, “The entrance of Thy words giveth light...” (Psalm 119:130). And in Psalm 119:105 he says, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet” (Hebrew word is *ner*, which means light). Perhaps our light shines brighter as His Word dwells in us!

There is an interesting verse in the story of Esther and Mordecai that is related to when they were celebrating their freedom and safety from evil Haman. Esther 8:16 says, “The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy...” Joy is often associated with light in the Scriptures. Do others experience joy when they are with us?

The Light Has Come!

The apostle Paul writes, "...let us put on the armour of light" (Romans 13:12). He is suggesting that there is a spiritual battle going on in the world. Our best weapon is the light! (The Greek word for "armour" is *hoplon*, which means *weapon*.) And in the Greek text it says, "put on the armour of the light." Once again we are reminded that the calling we have as believers is to live in the Light!

Lord, brighten Your Light in us that we might be light-bearers of hope, joy, and truth, bringing Your Life to those among whom we shine.

Chapter 73

What is “Faith”?



For not all have faith.

—2 Thessalonians 3:2 ESV

SOMETIMES WE USE words and concepts unconsciously, without really questioning the true meaning behind the words. “Faith” can be one of those elusive words. The Greek word is *pistis*, and it refers to “a divinely implanted principle.” Therefore, the apostle Paul could write that not all people have faith. The reason? Because faith is a gift from God Himself.

Nevertheless, the question remains: What is “faith”? The apostle Paul says that believers have the “spirit of faith” (2 Corinthians 4:13). He also tells us that this faith is the gift that the Holy Spirit gives (1 Corinthians 12:9). It is a gift that only those who know Christ have received. First Corinthians 12:3 says, “No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.”

What is “Faith”?

So, faith is a divine gift, active only in those who are alive in Christ. Yet often the general population will say things like: “I have faith that things will work out.” “I have faith in the universe.” “I have faith in the goodness of man.” That use of the word “faith” is simply the secular term for human “hope.” And the foundation for that humanistic “hope” is an individual’s personal philosophy or worldview. The Scriptures tell us that Satan is the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4), and he has a world system based on what is really false hope.

So, how do we become recipients of divine faith? Again, the apostle Paul tells us, “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). The instrument the Spirit of God uses to deliver faith is His Word. And in what form is faith delivered to us? Is faith something concrete? In Galatians we discover that faith has its source in Jesus Christ and that it is His faith that we receive, in the same way that it is His forgiveness, His righteousness, and His redemption that become ours as gifts. “A man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ...” (Galatians 2:16). Jesus Christ in us is the concrete form of faith.

This truth, that I live by the faith of Jesus Christ, has a remarkable impact on the realm in which believers actually reside. The realm of faith is an entire dimension that exists outside of the realm of Satan’s world. Faith changes the way we see. Isaiah 45:22 says, “Look unto Me, and be ye saved.” Faith affects our taste. First Peter 2:3 states, “...ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.” We have access to heaven here and now, by faith (Ephesians 3:10–12). According to Psalm 45:8, faith also affects our sense of smell: “All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia...” Even our hearing is unique. Isaiah 55:3 states, “Hear, and your soul shall live.”

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In addition, faith affects our worldview. “By faith we understand that the entire universe was formed at God’s command, that what we now see did not come from anything that can be seen” (Hebrews 11:3 NLT). That view of creation is spelled out in the Word of God. Faith understands this truth!

No wonder Jesus told the disciples that just as He was not of this world, so, in the very same way, those who follow Him are not of this world (John 15:19). Instead, we are told that “the just [believers who have been justified by Christ’s life] shall live by faith” (Romans 1:17). We are victorious over any and all of the agonies of Satan’s world, including death, because of this divine gift. “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:4, 5).

Finally, the ultimate faith experience will be the sight of Christ’s return to reclaim His creation, this world. We are “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time...at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:5–7).

Lord, remind us that we are Yours as a result of Your Life planted in us, Your Faith-Life. May we view our entire life experience through a conscious understanding of this faith-based life.

Chapter 74

The Art of Waiting



But...we with patience wait...

—Romans 8:25

WHAT IS IT that makes waiting so difficult? Don't you find yourself impatient, even discouraged, when you have to wait for the resolution of a situation or for an answer to a serious dilemma or to simply know what action you are supposed to take? Waiting with patience seems like an oxymoron!

The Scriptures are full of exhortations that tell us to, "Wait... on the Lord" (Psalm 27:14). Is it possible that our understanding, humanly, of the waiting process is quite different than what the Lord is actually talking about in His Word?

We live in a world that does not want to wait for much of anything. We refer to the "now generation," young people who want to own all the stuff *now*. We have fast food on every corner. We love fast cars; we hate delayed flights. We want customer service *now*. It seems that self-gratification is the driving force

behind this constant impatience. And if we analyze what is being sought after, we discover that we want to satisfy the desires of our flesh. And, strangely, ultimately, we never are satisfied. We still are impatient for more.

In contrast to the world's perspective, the scriptural concept of waiting is virtually always in relationship to a Person. "Our soul waiteth for the Lord: He is our help and our shield" (Psalm 33:20). This kind of waiting is in relationship to the Sovereign God, Who alone has the power. We wait upon Him because we know He alone is in charge of every detail of the universe. There is no point to being impatient. It is a useless exercise, a waste of energy. He is Lord over all. And that includes gas prices, slow customer service, difficult people, loss of jobs, bankruptcy, the housing market, delayed airplanes, barking dogs, etc.

The apostle Paul makes several references to waiting. The Greek word he uses is *apekdechomai*, and it means to long for. He writes, "The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God" (Romans 8:19). All of creation (plants, animals, fish, etc.) is waiting. Creation is longing for, preoccupied with, Christ's coming, at which time the saints will be revealed.

In 1 Corinthians 1:7, Paul says that the saints are "waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." That is the preoccupation of believers.

In the Gospels, another form of the word "wait" is used, *prosdecho*, which also means to have a forward mindset. Mark 15:43 says, "Joseph of Arimathaea...waited for the kingdom of God..." And Luke 2:25 states that "there was a man in Jerusalem...Simeon...just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him."

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There seems to be a pattern here. The process of waiting is directly tied to the invisible realm, to the realm of Jesus Christ. Perhaps those of us who know Christ can be freed from the impatience and the anxiety of the world's focus if we rethink what we really are waiting for day by day.

In Galatians 5:5 Paul says, "For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." Believers, Paul explains, are living in the realm of the Holy Spirit, waiting by the Spirit's power, for Christ's righteousness to be established in us. We are empowered by the gift of faith to wait, with expectation, for this reality in our lives. Here we see the saints waiting...but they are waiting for something that is eternally important and only can be supplied by the Sovereign God.

The prophet Isaiah wrote often about waiting. In this familiar passage he says, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31). The Hebrew word Isaiah uses here is *qavah*, which means to expect, to look for, to hope. The prophet is saying that those who look to the Lord, who expect His response, who hope in His plans, will be renewed, strengthened, refreshed.

Perhaps we need to recognize how weary we become if we wait for, have our hopes in, this world's way of satisfying us. Instead, we can release our impatient, frustrated way of living. We can embrace rest, peace, and patience because we are waiting upon the only One Who is in control of everything. And He can be trusted; He is gracious, full of loving-kindness. His ways are perfect.

Jeremiah, an Old Testament prophet who had every earthly reason to be impatient and discouraged, provides great

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encouragement for us as we practice the art of waiting. He says, “The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him...It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord” (Lamentations 3:25, 26).

Lord, give us the grace to have all of our expectations, all of our waiting, centered in You.

Chapter 75

The Blessing of the Blood



Ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

—Ephesians 2:13

*V*ERY FEW SOCIAL gatherings include a discussion of blood! In fact, even in Christian circles there is very little focus on the blood of Christ. Yet in days gone by, the saints seem to have had a greater appreciation for the incredible significance of Christ's blood. One of the great old hymns was often on the lips of believers: "There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins. And sinners, plunged beneath that flood, lose all their guilty stains"¹ (William Cowper, 1772).

When we grasp the significance of Christ's outpouring of blood, His bloody death on our behalf, we long to be immersed in that "fountain filled with blood." It is the means by which we are "brought near" to God Himself.

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The apostle John tells us that “the blood of Jesus...cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). When Christ shed His blood on the cross, all of our sins were future because we were not even born. Yet that blood, when applied to my life and your life, cleanses us from all sin—past, present, and future.

Another of the old hymns praises the power in Jesus’ blood:

Would you be free from your burden of sin?
There’s pow’r in the blood...
Would you o’er evil a victory win?
There’s wonderful pow’r in the blood...
Would you be whiter, Much whiter than snow?
There’s pow’r in the blood...
Sin stains are lost in its life giving flow...
There is pow’r, pow’r, Wonder working pow’r
In the precious blood of the Lamb.²

—Lewis E. Jones, 1899

The apostle Peter wrote about “the precious blood of the Lamb.” He said, “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life...but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect” (1 Peter 1:18, 19 NIV). The Greek word for “precious” is *timios*, and it means revered. The world reveres wealth and abundance; saints who have been washed in His blood revere the effects—we have been brought near to God. We have peace with the Father through the blood of the cross; we are reconciled to God (Colossians 1:20).

The Lord Himself made shocking statements about His blood. He said, “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man,

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and drink His blood, ye have no life in you” (John 6:53). The Lord was teaching that He is Life. To be alive in Him in the fullest sense is to be gaining our strength and enjoyment by “eating” from His person (depending on His life in us by faith) and maintaining our daily sustenance by “drinking” from the Fountain of Life (counting on His shed blood to give us eternal life).

Lord, give us a renewed reverence for the “wonder working power of Your blood.”

Chapter 76

A Refuge from the Storm



O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted.

—Isaiah 54:11

THE DISCIPLES EXPERIENCED, firsthand, the agitation and fear that comes with a “tempest” in life. Matthew 8:24 says, “There arose a great tempest in the sea... the ship was covered with the waves...” and the disciples were sure they would die!

Have you ever felt this kind of overwhelming fear because of the circumstances in which you find yourself? Have you ever felt like you were without comfort and afflicted? Charles Spurgeon, the great nineteenth century preacher, said some thrilling words about our responses to the “tempests” in our lives. He said that when the vessel (ship) of a believer “is on its beamends, and no human deliverance can avail,” we must simply and entirely trust ourselves “to the providence and care of God. Happy storm that

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wrecks a man on such a rock as this! O blessed hurricane that drives the soul to God and God alone!”¹

Spurgeon went on to explain why he described our tempests as a “happy storm.” He wrote, “When he is burdened with troubles so pressing and so peculiar, that he cannot tell them to any but his God, he may be thankful... For he will learn more of his Lord then than at any other time.”²

We are, as Spurgeon says, to embrace our tempests and look up to the One who created the sea! The great patriarch Job understood the work of the Sovereign God who loved him and yet brought calamity into Job’s life. Job said, “Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil [calamity]?” (Job 2:10). Job trusted God against all human logic. Spurgeon said, “Your faith would lose its glory if it rested on anything discernible by the carnal eye.”³

The Lord has given us numerous promises from His Word upon which to stand in the midst of life’s tempests. He promised: “No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it” (1 Corinthians 10:13 NIV).

Perhaps the greatest personal testimony to this promise is displayed in the life of Horatio Spafford, a Chicago attorney. He sent his wife and four daughters ahead on a family trip to Europe. In a horrific accident at sea, his four daughters drowned. As he himself glided over that very spot in the ocean on his way to meet his wife, he wrote his famous hymn, “It Is Well with My Soul.”⁴

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When peace like a river,
Attendeth my way,
When sorrows, Like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot,
Thou hast taught me to say,
“It is well, It is well with my soul.”

Lord, help us to rely on Your sovereign hand of love. You “arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm” (Matthew 8:26). May we place our trust in You, not looking upon our circumstances, and rest in the calm of Your Presence.

Chapter 77

*The Land of the Shadow of
Death*



The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light:
they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them
hath the light shined.

—Isaiah 9:2

STRANGELY, THE BIBLE again and again describes the earth as the land of the shadow of death. When the Holy Spirit prophesied of the Lord's entrance into the world, He said, "Through the tender mercy of our God...the dayspring from on high hath visited us, To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1:78, 79).

Our world is a place of darkness, sitting under death's shadow. Death hovers over the entire planet. That is biblical truth. The "dayspring from on high" is the reference to the Light of the world visiting this dark planet. Luke records that He came in order to guide us into peace. If you have ever been

lost in the dark, frightened and confused, you have some sense of appreciation for the peace that comes when you have been found and led back to safety. David, the psalmist, wrote, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me” (Psalm 23:4).

The Bethlehem shepherds received direction from the angelic light and the Word of God. The wise men received direction by the Light of the star in a dark sky. Christ tells us that He is the Light that brings light into the morbid darkness of this world.

The Scriptures actually tell us that this planet is under the reign of Satan himself. “The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ...should shine” on them (2 Corinthians 4:4).

When Christ was born into the world, His arrival was marked by a universal display of light. And the Lord said of Himself, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12). Light is the source of life. To be delivered from “the shadow of death” requires the light to dispel the shadow, and life overcomes death. Jesus said, “I am...the life” (John 14:6).

The miracle of photosynthesis, the entrance of light into plants, produces life in the plant. Interestingly, light casts a shadow also. Yet even the *Shadow* of His Light brings life and growth. In describing the Lord, the prophet Hosea wrote, “They that dwelleth under his shadow...shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine” (Hosea 14:7). The psalmist wrote, “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the MOST HIGH shall abide under the shadow of THE ALMIGHTY” (Psalm 91:1).

The Land of the Shadow of Death

Sadly, most of the world has rejected the Light that would free them from the shadow of death. As John 3:19 states, "... light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light..."

Lord, teach us to seek You, the Light, that we may experience Life while dwelling in this dark world. Cast Your Shadow over us, protecting us from the shadow of death. We are those who want to dwell in Your Light.

Chapter 78

Abide With Us



But they constrained Him, saying, “Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.”

—Luke 24:29

*I*N CHAPTER 24 of Luke we read that after His resurrection the Lord appeared on the road to Emmaus. He joined two discouraged disciples and began to explain the Truth of the Scriptures to them. Their hearts “burned within” them as the life-changing Truth of the Word of God penetrated their minds and hearts.

As the disciples arrived at their destination, they did not want to part ways with this incredible Teacher. (They still had not recognized this Teacher as Christ Himself.) They were so enamored with the Truth that they begged (“constrained”) Him to dwell with them for the night.

The Holy Spirit may well be speaking to us personally in this familiar passage. The Lord has given us His written Word.

Abide With Us

And we have yet to grasp fully the glorious Truth of Who He is and what He has done. Meanwhile, the day in which we live is drawing to a close. The night of His return in judgment is drawing nearer and nearer. It is “toward evening,” the midnight hour in world history. Perhaps we are to invite Him, afresh, to abide with us as night falls.

The Greek word for “abide” is *meno*, which means to continue or to remain. It is the same word Jesus used in the parable of the vine and the branch. “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself...” (John 15:4).

As believers, we know that Christ has taken up residence in us by the Holy Spirit. He never will leave us or forsake us. Yet there are many times in our days or in a season of our lives that we are not experiencing the fruit of the Spirit. Our supply of His love, His joy, His peace, or His faith seems to be lacking. But there is an encouraging truth for us in the Emmaus Road incident.

The key factor that caused these disciples to want to spend more time with Christ was the incredible experience that learning from the Word of God gave them. It was hearing and understanding the Truth that caused them to want to be in the Lord’s presence. As a result they begged Him to dwell with them.

If we are not experiencing the fruit that comes from abiding in Christ, it may be time to discover the Word of God afresh. Maybe we have become sidetracked with the busyness of life, the preoccupation with the world as the night approaches. Perhaps we need to extend a fresh invitation to the Lord to “abide with us,” to allow us to consciously experience His powerful indwelling life.

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Those on the road to Emmaus were walking with the Lord, learning from Him, moment by moment, while it was still day. And as darkness fell, they knew they wanted to remain in His presence. In response to their invitation to dwell with them, we read, “And He went in to tarry with them” (Luke 24:29).

Lord, thank You for your constant indwelling. We consciously invite You, afresh, to renew our hunger for Your Word and refresh our awareness of Your Presence. You alone bring the Light that produces fruit in the midst of a darkening world.

Chapter 79

Living in the Now!



Now are we the sons of God.

—1 John 3:2

IT SEEMS LIKE we might enhance our daily joy as believers if we believed more thoroughly in the blessings we have *now* in Christ. The apostle John confessed that “...we can’t even imagine what we will be like when Christ returns. But we do know that when he comes we will be like him...” (1 John 3:2 NLT). Meanwhile, we are *now* like Him because we are born of God, children of the Father, “a new creation,” fully embraced into the heavenly family. Right *now*, this very moment, you are a child of the King of Kings if you know Christ to be God in the flesh.

The apostle Paul wrote, “There is therefore *now* no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). We are standing, this very moment, in the presence of the Lord, and we are counted as holy, blameless, and faultless. Moment by moment, hour by hour, day by day, week after week, we can

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live in the *now*, with the understanding that the verdict of God has found us to be counted as sinless in His courtroom.

The tiny Greek word translated as “now” is *nun*, and it means at this time and henceforth, from here on into the future. The apostle Paul lived in the constant awareness of the *now* of God’s gifts. He wrote, “For though your hearts were once full of darkness, *now* you are full of light from the Lord...” (Ephesians 5:8 NLT, emphasis mine). And Romans 5:9 states, “...being *now* justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath” that is coming (emphasis mine).

Paul seemed to grasp his standing in Christ so completely that he could apply these realities to his moment-by-moment living. In Galatians 2:20 he says, “...the life which I *now* live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God Who loved me, and gave Himself for me” (emphasis mine). Paul saw himself as having been crucified with Christ; his old nature, his former self, was dead. And *now* he was a new creation in whom and through whom Jesus Christ was living His life.

Are these the biblical truths upon which we base our daily living? “But *now* being...free from sin...” (Romans 6:22, emphasis mine). “But *now* we are delivered from the law” (Romans 7:6, emphasis mine). “*Now* then it is no more I that do it [sins], but sin that dwelleth in me” (Romans 7:17, emphasis mine). “...you that were sometime alienated...yet *now* hath He reconciled” to Himself (Colossians 1:21, emphasis mine). These are the truths that set us free to walk in grace and mercy, moment by moment—*now*.

Father, open our eyes of faith to see that we are now Your children, standing in Your good pleasure every single moment of our lives.

Chapter 80

The Obedience of Faith



The mystery...now is made manifest...made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.

—Romans 16:25, 26

THIS IS A strange phrase, “the obedience of faith.” In this particular passage, Paul is explaining that the mystery of salvation in Jesus Christ is now being revealed to all peoples, Jews and Gentiles, to produce “the obedience of faith.” What is that exactly, “the obedience of faith”?

Paul uses this same phrase in his opening words to the Romans: “...His Son Jesus Christ our Lord...By Whom we have received grace...for obedience to the faith among all nations” (Romans 1:3, 5). In the Greek, the Word actually reads, “...we have received grace...for faith-obedience.” This same phrase is what appears above in Romans 16:26.

Paul is quite clear in his own life about how obedience occurs. When we obey the Lord’s call to salvation, or when we

obey Him through righteous living, our obedience is a result of faith in His Word. And how do we obtain faith? Faith is a gift, given to us out of God's storehouse of grace. He Himself produces faith in us. As Romans 10:17 says, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The Lord must open our ears to His truth, and the result is action on our part. Why? Because we cannot resist His will for us (Romans 9:19).

This truth, when rightly understood, is shocking to our normal way of thinking about obedience. We tend to believe that if we muster up enough self-discipline and make the "right choices" we can be obedient to God's highest and best for us. But Christ Himself gave us clear teaching about why obedience is not a result of human wisdom or human choices. As He preached among the religious Jews, revealing Himself as God in the flesh, these hearers rejected what they heard. And Jesus said, "Why do ye not understand My speech?...Because ye cannot hear My word...Ye are of your father the devil...He that is of God heareth God's words" (John 8:43-47). These men heard with the physical ear, but they were not given the gift of faith to believe.

The Scriptures also tell us that obedience is learned as we walk in Christ. In Hebrews we read that Christ Himself "learned obedience" through the things He suffered (Hebrews 5:8). The Lord did not have to learn not to sin; but He did grow up into manhood learning to hear the Father's voice and obeying the Father's will for Him. In Gethsemane, the Lord prayed three times, asking not to have to go to the cross. And then the Father gave Him the grace to obey. Jesus said, "Not My will, but Thine, be done" (Luke 22:42).

Peter wanted to stay by Christ's side to the very end. But the Lord said, "No, I have given you over to Satan so you can

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become a stronger believer” (Luke 22:31–34, free translation). And, later, it was Peter who wrote, “. . . he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin” (1 Peter 4:1). Peter learned, as we all must, that we have no strength to be obedient unless the Lord supplies us with faith-obedience. It is then that our “righteous living” is truly a result of the Holy Spirit’s sanctifying work in us—not the fruit of our own “labor.” And often, the Lord designs our learning through the pain and suffering of disobedience.

Lord, may You receive all the glory whenever we see our own responsiveness to Your Word. For we know it is You Who “works in us both to will and to do” of Your good pleasure (Philippians 2:13).

Chapter 81

*A Peace-Producing
Truth!*



Lord, Thou wilt ordain peace for us: for Thou also hast wrought all our works in us.

—Isaiah 26:12

*I*T SEEMS THAT one of our larger challenges as believers revolves around “the search for God’s will” in our lives. We struggle with what our purpose or calling is. We measure our Christian *performance* of “good works” with the ministries of other Christians. We find ourselves envying the gifts and callings of others. All of this produces disturbance, anxiety, and frustration. We lack the *peace* we long for in Christ.

Yet the Scriptures give us truth that, when we believe it, can set us totally free from this kind of thinking. Isaiah wrote, “LORD, you will grant us peace, for all we have accomplished is really from you” (Isaiah 26:12 NLT). The apostle Paul said that it is “God Which worketh in you both to *will* and to *do*, of His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13, emphasis mine). Paul also said

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that we are God's "workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained" that we should accomplish (Ephesians 2:10).

And in case we still might have doubts, Paul added that when he was still in his mother's womb, God, by His grace, called him to preach Christ to the heathen (Galatians 1:15). Similarly, the Lord spoke to Jeremiah and told him that *before* he was born God had *ordained* him to be a prophet (Jeremiah 1:5).

And in case we might think that Paul and Jeremiah were special cases, the psalmist said of the Lord, "You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed" (Psalm 139:16 NLT).

King Solomon also recognized God's sovereign reign over our lives and our works. He said, "We can make our plans, but the Lord determines our steps" (Proverbs 16:9 NLT). Imagine the peace, the *daily* peace, that can be ours when the Holy Spirit applies these truths to our own individual hearts!

Arthur Custance, an amazing man of the Word who went to heaven in 1985, explained that God has an appropriate work for each of us and has given us the appropriate qualifications. He said, "The casting of our lot is truly in God's hands... What a comfort to know that...our life work was planned way back there in eternity!"¹ If we could only rest assured of this in times of delay, or defeat, or uncertainty.

Saint Augustine stated that the child of God is physically immortal until his (or her) appointed work is done.² Paul says of David, "after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep" (Acts 13:36).

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Lord, open our eyes to see that our election is not only to salvation but also into the gifts and callings to which we are ordained. May we rest in this knowledge, secure in the peace of Your plan for us.

Chapter 82

Faith Comes to Us!



But before faith came, we were kept under the law... But after that faith is come we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

—Galatians 3:23, 25

*M*ANY OF US have memorized Ephesians 2:8, 9 that tells us we have been saved by God’s grace “through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” The Greek text shows that the process of being saved is entirely a work of God. The faith to believe is a gift given to us by the sovereign Lord. Yet, as with many familiar scriptures, it is good to ask this question again: Do we really believe that faith is a gift?

Time after time, articles, books, and sermons emphasize our need to *have faith*. Often the implication is that we ought to be able to manufacture faith from within ourselves. But the Scriptures point us to Jesus Christ as the only source for *saving* faith as well as for *daily* faith. Paul wrote, “...a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus

Christ” (Galatians 2:16). The Greek text refers to *Christ’s* faith, not our faith *in* Christ. All of our works, even after justifying faith, must flow from Christ’s supply of faith or they are *dead* works. Romans 14:23 states, “Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.”

Paul underscores this reality in 1 Corinthians 4:7, which says, “For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?” The apostle is chiding believers for comparing their works against the works of others. In 1 Corinthians 12:4, he explains that “there are diversities of gifts.” He then lists some of the gifts: wisdom, knowledge, healing, *faith* (1 Corinthians 12:8, 9). Faith is a gift, and some saints have been given an increased portion of faith, based on God’s good pleasure (1 Corinthians 12:18).

Our preoccupation with our “lack of faith” often leads to morbid self-examination and a feeling of being “less than” other believers. Yet we read, “Thy People shall be willing in the day of Thy power” (Psalm 110:3). “For promotion cometh neither from the east, or from the west, Nor from the south...God... putteth down one, and setteth up another” (Psalm 75:6, 7). “A man’s heart deviseth his way: But the Lord directeth his steps” (Proverbs 16:9). We are being called to *depend on the Lord alone* for faith to obey, faith to act, faith to believe for the results we desire in our lives.

In Hebrews we read that it is “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God” (Hebrews 11:3). Faith is a *gift* that provides *revelation* and *wisdom* and *understanding*. But not all people have faith (2 Thessalonians 3:2). The Source of faith is the Lord Himself. He is the Supplier. We are to be: “Looking unto Jesus the *Author* and *Finisher* of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2, emphasis mine). And we are to “live by

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faith” (Hebrews 10:38). Day by day, we are called to rely upon Christ Himself. This is *faith*. The Greek word is *pistis*, to rely upon and to be assured.

Lord, may we be given a fresh supply of faith in Your faithfulness. May Your faith come to dwell in us more fully.

Chapter 83

The Gospel Produces Fruit



...ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel;
Which is come unto you...and bringeth forth fruit.

—Colossians 1:5, 6

SOMETIMES IT SEEMS that the Christian world makes a distinction between salvation and good works—as if you could have one without the other. And occasionally we hear or read messages that exhort us to “shape up and produce some fruit.” The emphasis seems to infer that our *actions* are the means by which good works are accomplished. On the surface that is a reasonable assumption. We certainly recognize that helping others or serving on the mission field or giving to the poor, etc., are *actions* that are good works when done in the Spirit. However, the scripture from Colossians tells us it is the “*Word of the truth of the gospel*” that is the *source* of good works.

John Bunyan, the seventeenth century author of *Pilgrim’s Progress*, wrote, “Plant in the sinner good doctrine, and let it be

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watered with the word of grace, and there will be the fruits of holiness...The doctrine of the forgiveness of sins received by faith will make notable work in the heart of a sinner to bring forth good works.”¹

It seems evident that the *power* that produces good works is the Word of God. The apostle Paul, in discussing the work of ministry, wrote, “My job was to plant the seed...Apollós watered it, but it was God, not we, who made it grow. The ones who do the planting or watering aren’t important, but God is important because he is the one who makes the seeds grow” (1 Corinthians 3:6, 7 NLT). This *seed* that Paul planted was the *Word of God*. It took root because it fell on fertile soil. And the Lord prepares “good soil” by His Spirit, applied to His Word.

When the disciples asked the Lord what they should do to work the works of God, Christ answered, “This is the work of God, that ye *believe* on Him Whom He hath sent” (John 6:29, emphasis mine). The Lord was teaching them that the works of God *flow out* of saving faith. And saving faith comes by the Word of God (Romans 10:17).

The Lord also taught this truth, this connection, between saving faith and good works, or fruit, in Matthew 7:17 and 18 (NLT): “A healthy tree produces good fruit, and an unhealthy tree produces bad fruit. A good tree *can’t* produce bad fruit, and a bad tree *can’t* produce good fruit” (emphasis mine).

The Lord’s brother, James, wrote, “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead...” (James 2:17). He was saying that a tree that *claims* to be good (alive) will be confirmed by the kind of fruit that appears. Hanging beautiful red apples on a dead thorn bush will not turn the thorn bush into a “good apple tree.”

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John Bunyan stated, “The best way to provoke others and ourselves to good works is to be often affirming to others the doctrine of justification by grace...for as faith animates to good works, so the doctrine of grace animates faith.”²

May we find ourselves continuously abiding in good doctrine, rejoicing in the gospel of the grace of God, and knowing that good works will be the result.

Lord, may it be so.

Chapter 84

*The Birth Registry of
Heaven*



...and the books were opened: and another book was opened,
which is the book of life.

—Revelation 20:12

*F*ROM GENESIS TO Revelation, the Scriptures reveal to us that the Lord places a great emphasis on *books*. He keeps records, especially birth records.

In Genesis, chapter 5, we find the Book of the Generations of Adam. Carefully recorded are the names and life spans of Adam's descendants. In Matthew, chapter 1, we have the Book of the Generations of Christ's ancestors. The birth registry of the "first Adam" and the "second Adam" are carefully recorded.

There is another book that should be of special interest to us. It is the Birth Registry of Heaven, the Book of Life. It contains the names of all those who are "born from above," fathered by the Holy Spirit. (See John 3:3 and 1 Peter 1:23.) These are the

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names of the *saints* whose *citizenship* is in heaven because we were *born* there!

The apostle Paul reminds believers that our *citizenship* is in heaven (Philippians 3:20) and our names are registered there in the Book of Life (Philippians 4:3). In the book of Revelation we find the apostle John encouraging the saints who are being persecuted. He reminds them that they will walk in white garments, their names appearing in the Book of Life (Revelation 3:5).

Do you ever wonder *when* your name was written in the Birth Registry of Heaven? The apostle John told us! He explained that all who eventually will come to know Christ have been written in “the book of life from *the foundation of the world*” (Revelation 17:8, emphasis mine).

In addition to the book of life, there exists in heaven another set of books. John the apostle saw these books being opened at the time of Christ’s return to earth in judgment. Every person who ever has lived who is not registered in the Book of Life is registered in the Books of Works. These books contain the records of all their deeds while they lived. And all of those registered, with all their works, good or bad, were “cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:11–15).

The Lord Himself has given the answer as to how we can *know* in which book our name appears. The disciples thought their *works* might be recorded and qualify them for heaven. But Jesus said that there is only one work that matters and that is to “believe on Him” Whom God has sent, Jesus Christ (John 6:29). Those same disciples experienced great works of healing and power in their ministries and were very excited about the miraculous results they had. But Jesus said to them, “...rejoice

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not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven” (Luke 10:20).

The Book of Life is also called The Lamb’s Book of Life (Revelation 21:27). Jesus is the Lamb of God who was slain on the cross for our sins. Those whose names are in the Book are those who recognize the slain Lamb. We are those who by His stripes have been healed...and are being returned to the Shepherd, to our place of birth in the heavenlies (1 Peter 2:24, 25).

*Father God, may we pour out praises upon You for sending
Your Son to rescue us whose names You have had recorded
for all eternity.*

Chapter 85

*The Seal of God's
Approval*



Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit
in our hearts.

—2 Corinthians 1:22

THERE IS SOMETHING quite amazing about the reality of God Himself as the *Author and Finisher* of our life in Christ. All that is holy and heavenly has its source in the Creator, Maker of heaven and earth. First, He *ordained* us, set us apart, to be joined to Him for eternity (Ephesians 1:4). Then, He *called* us to Himself, to know the Shepherd personally (Romans 8:29, 30; John 10:3). And there is much more...

In writing to the Corinthians, Paul explained that *God* is the One “who gives us...the ability to stand firm for Christ” (2 Corinthians 1:21 NLT). In addition, God has *anointed* us (2 Corinthians 1:21). The Greek word for “anointed” is *chrío*, the verb from which *Christos* is formed. In every other passage in the New Testament, it is used to describe the state in which Christ

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dwells. He is *anointed chrio*. For example, Christ says of Himself, “He hath *anointed* Me to preach the gospel to the poor” (Luke 4:18). To be *anointed* is to have the Spirit of the Lord upon us for a specific calling. He has *anointed* us to serve Him in the plans He has ordained for us individually (Ephesians 2:10).

In 2 Corinthians 1:22 Paul says that God has “also *sealed* us.” The Greek word is *sphragizo*, and it includes the sense of *being marked or branded* by the Owner, the Sealbearer. Paul explains *how* God brands or seals us. God Himself places “the Holy Spirit in our hearts as the first installment” of everything He is still going to give us in the future (2 Corinthians 1:22 NLT). Imagine that! God intends to shower additional, even grander, blessings upon us in the future. This “earnest of the Spirit in our hearts” is God’s pledge to us that more is yet to come. We are *sealed* by Him, counted as fully approved and ordained to receive these future benefits.

One of the future benefits God is going to give us is a *heavenly body*! “Our dying bodies make us groan and sigh...We want to slip into our new bodies so that these dying bodies will be swallowed up by everlasting life. God himself has prepared us for this, and as a *guarantee* he has given us his Holy Spirit” (2 Corinthians 5:4, 5 NLT, emphasis mine).

Another reason God has given us the “earnest” or first installment of His Spirit is to prove that “...he has *purchased* us to be his own people” for eternity (Ephesians 1:14 NLT, emphasis mine). This “down payment” of the Spirit, this seal, is also God’s way of identifying us as His own, “guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption” (Ephesians 4:30 NLT).

Notice that in each of these passages of Scripture we are told about what *God* has done, what *He* has guaranteed to us.

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He has *gifted* us with His seal of approval, demonstrated by the fact that He has given us His Spirit. This is the work of our Sovereign God, based on no qualifying work of our own. Hallelujah, what a Savior!

Lord, give us the grace to praise You, day after day, for Your abundant love and anointed calling!

Chapter 86

Chasing the Wind



That which is now, already has been; and that which is to be,
already has been...

—Ecclesiastes 3:15 AMP

*W*E LIVE IN a very noisy, busy, fast-paced world. People are striving for money; the politicians continue to bombard the airwaves with repetitive, competitive noise; technology leaps forward faster that we can purchase and learn it. Often we mistakenly begin to take the things of this world far too seriously. We actually begin to think that all of our “comings and goings” are critical to our future peace or success.

King Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, received the wisdom of God and saw quite clearly how fruitless the activities of the world actually are. He said, “And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven...and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit” (Ecclesiastes 1:13, 14). In the Hebrew, the word “vanity” means

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that which soon vanishes. The phrase *vexation of spirit* means *feeding on the wind.*

Wise Solomon was very clear about the fact that humans *think* they are making progress in technology, science, fresh thought, medicine, etc. However, in reality, he says, "...there is no new thing under the sun. Is there anything whereof it may be said, 'See this is new?' it hath been already of old time, which was before us!" (Ecclesiastes 1:9, 10).

The Lord said to Solomon, "I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee" (1 Kings 3:12). Based on this statement, we have to confess that Solomon knew more than we know about the big picture of the universe and the history of the world.

How might our life experiences change if we dared to believe that we are "chasing the wind" when we have the same mindset as unbelievers have? The Lord Himself, in speaking of believers, said, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:16). Because we are citizens of heaven, we find true peace and hope by focusing more on the *wisdom* of heaven (the Word of God) and less on the noise and babbling of this world.

The apostle Paul made an interesting comment on this topic. He said, "Yet when I am among *mature* Christians I do speak with words of wisdom, but not the kind of wisdom that belongs to this world, and not the kind that appeals to the rulers of this world, who are being brought to nothing. No, the wisdom we speak of is the secret wisdom of God...And God has actually given us his Spirit (not the world's spirit) so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us" (1 Corinthians 2:6, 7, 12 NLT, emphasis mine).

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If we are to *hear* the Spirit and live in the wisdom from above, we may need to *be still*. Solomon said that he “tried to observe everything that goes on all across the earth.” And he “discovered that there is *ceaseless activity*, day and night” (Ecclesiastes 8:16 NLT, emphasis mine). King David, Solomon’s father, wrote, “Be still, and *know* that I am God” (Psalm 46:10, emphasis mine). The Hebrew word for “still” is *rapha*, and it means “cease your efforts.”

In addition, Solomon said that the Lord’s wisdom, buried in our hearts, “lights up a person’s face” (Ecclesiastes 8:1 NLT). This is quite a contrast to the furrowed brow of the world!

Solomon’s wisdom, given by revelation, caused him to know: “Whatever exists today and whatever will exist in the future has already existed in the past” (Ecclesiastes 3:15 NLT). So, we are free to *rest* in God’s sovereign reign. We can cease chasing the wind. We are free to gain a deeper understanding of heavenly wisdom since *that* is our *current* home (Ephesians 2:6).

Lord, help us to “Live no longer as the ungodly do, for they are hopelessly confused” (Ephesians 4:17 NLT).

Chapter 87

Fully Persuaded



For I am persuaded that [nothing]...shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

—Romans 8:38, 39

HERE IS A difference between knowing a fact and being persuaded by that fact. For example, the apostle Paul wrote, “I know, and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself” (Romans 14:14). We can know or be aware of a fact; yet to be persuaded (Greek is *peitho*) is to be fully convinced, emotionally as well as intellectually. Persuasion influences our very way of functioning and our thinking and actions.

Paul lived boldly as a believer because he was persuaded that nothing ever would separate him from the love of God. He was not afraid of death or of the process of living. He said that “neither death nor life...shall...separate us from the love of God...” (Romans 8:38). And he went on to say that he was

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persuaded that neither “angels, nor principalities, nor powers” could separate him from the Lord’s love. Angels include not only the elect angels who protect us but also the evil angels like Satan himself. Principalities refer to a mysterious kind of invisible beings in the atmosphere. The Greek word for “powers” here is *dunamis* and has reference to the evil workings of the invisible world like magic, astrology, and casting of spells. Still, nothing, no amount of evil, can separate us from the Lord’s love.

Paul continued, “I am persuaded that neither...things present nor things to come” can separate us from God’s love. Aren’t there many times we feel that what is unfolding in our lives right now is so dishonoring to God that He cannot possibly love us? Or we look into the future and fear our own ability to stay faithful to Him? Yet Paul’s words assure us that what is currently at work in our lives and whatever the future holds never will cause the Lord to quit loving us!

Finally, Paul exclaimed, “Neither...height, nor depth nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Nothing in the heavenlies and nothing in hell can separate us. Not even success (height) or failure (depth) can separate us. No human being (creature) or any other of God’s creation can separate us!

Are we as persuaded as Paul was? Do we live in the daily reality of God’s love that was given to us in Christ Jesus? Are we persuaded that His love never will be withdrawn from us, no matter what the circumstances of our lives may be?

Lord, by your Holy Spirit, persuade us more fully, day by day, of Your love. We long to live boldly and fearlessly for Your glory.

Chapter 88

He Works Effectively!



For He that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles.

—Galatians 2:8

THE APOSTLE PAUL was always very clear about how he as a believer had the power to live and minister to others. He said that God wrought it in both Peter and himself. The Greek word for “wrought” is *energeo*. It refers to energy or strength put forth from within in an *effectual* manner. God effectively energized these two apostles in their work.

Paul stated that the *energeo* produced by God in Peter “was mighty” and also was in him as he ministered to the Gentiles. The same word *energeo* is the Greek word also translated as *mighty*. Paul added that this *energeo* worked effectually in Peter and in him. The Greek word translated “effectually” is also *energeo*! And, used as an adjective, it means *efficient*. So, God’s work in Paul

He Works Effectively!

was an effective, efficient energizing that produced the mighty results God Himself intended!

So, what does that “lesson in Greek” mean to us in our daily walks as believers? The answer to this question is critical to our walking freely in Christ. Paul writes in Philippians 2:13, “For it is God Which worketh in you both to will and to do, of His good pleasure.” The same Greek word, *energeo*, is here used to describe what God is doing in every single believer. He is effectively energizing you to accomplish His will and to do what pleases Him!

Do we really believe this? Often it seems we are very confused about how to live the Christian life effectively. We look at our own lives and sometimes feel we are ineffective in serving the Lord or living a life that really honors Him.

Paul explained that he “was made a minister” by “the gift of the grace of God” (Ephesians 3:7). And how did he get this gift of ministry? It was “given unto” him “by the effectual working of His power” (Ephesians 3:7). There is that word again—*energeo*, the effectual, efficient power of God given to individual believers by the grace of God! Paul was amazed at the Lord’s grace, “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints” (Ephesians 3:8).

The Lord is revealing a truth that can set us free in our daily walks as Christians. He alone is the Energizer who will accomplish His good pleasure in us.

Lord, teach us to rejoice in Your power and Your effectiveness in our lives as ones who love You and long to serve You well.

Chapter 89

*Don't Try to Figure It
Out!*



Cease from thine own wisdom!

—Proverbs 23:4b

*M*OST OF US are quick to confess that the Lord's ways are not our ways and His thoughts are not our thoughts (Isaiah 55:8, 9). Yet we seem to wrestle every single day with the mental gymnastics of what He is doing in our lives. And our worst struggles come when our circumstances simply make no sense whatsoever! In these moments in our lives, several things can happen to increase our confusion. We have other believers who often come to us in love and attempt to rescue us or straighten us out. Job experienced this. Or we read books written by humans who also are trying to figure out how to make sense out of God's ways in a believer's life. Or we make lists of the "pros" and "cons" for a course of action. Yet the fact remains that God has called us to "cease" from all of this.

Don't Try to Figure It Out!

In 1 Corinthians 14:33, we are told that God is not the author of confusion. Darkness and lack of spiritual understanding is the *natural* condition of our humanity. We see “through a glass darkly” (1 Corinthians 13:12). And Paul made it very clear that God has “made foolish the wisdom of this world” (1 Corinthians 1:20) and that “the foolishness of God is wiser than men” (1 Corinthians 1:25).

So, what does this mean to us in our everyday living? Perhaps we are to cease trying to solve our own problems or *make sense* out of that which appears to be *illogical* or *unusual* in our life circumstances. Rather, we should focus on the fact that the Lord is calling us to look to Him, resting in the reality that *He* knows what He is doing. He *is* Wisdom; He *is* Truth; He *is* the Sovereign Lord over all of our circumstances, and His will shall be done (Ephesians 1:11). “Christ [is] the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1:24).

Sometimes we remain puzzled by the *how* of resting in His wisdom. The apostle Paul was driven (by the thorn in his flesh) to discover that it was in his *weakness* that the power of Christ would *rest* upon him (2 Corinthians 12:9). And the Lord often *drives* us to give up our attempts to figure things out in our lives. The Holy Spirit ultimately brings us to a place of rest, and we begin to *watch* the Lord work in our lives. What is the *reason* the Lord desires for us to *cease* from our own efforts? Because He alone desires to receive all the glory for what unfolds in our lives! Isaiah 63:14 says, “The Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest: so didst *Thou* lead Thy People, to make *Thyself* a glorious name” (emphasis mine).

As humans we seem to get it backwards in terms of understanding our roles as believers. We tend to think that God

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expects us to figure out what He wants, and then we attempt to accomplish what we think He wants so that He will be happy with us. But this is not His plan. Rather, He loves us fully, based on *nothing* in us. He has *freely* given us His love (Romans 8:32). And He intends to live out His life in us based on *His plan* for us that was determined before the world began (Ephesians 2:10).

The psalmist understood the Lord's ways and penned these words: "I love the Lord, because He hath heard My voice and my supplications. . . I was brought low and He helped me. Return unto thy rest, O my soul" (Psalm 116:1, 6, 7).

Thank You, Lord, that You have instructed us to "cease" from our own efforts and works. You have called us to rest in Your Wisdom and Your Plans. Give us grace to see and to rest in Your finished work on our behalf. Grant us the freedom to stop trying to figure out what You are doing in us. Let us trust You in all things.

Chapter 90

*God Revealed in Christ
Alone*



No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son...
hath declared Him.

—John 1:18

QUR HUMAN ATTEMPT to grasp the reality of God's very nature is puny at best! Yet the Word of God gives us some amazing insights into the mystery of the Godhead.

God the Father seems to hide Himself from humans. His *glory* is too much for us to handle here on earth. Yet He has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ. We read that the Son is the “express image” of God (Hebrews 1:3). And we are told that the Son is the Creator of all things, “by Whom also He made the worlds” (Hebrews 1:2). Christ is “the image of the invisible God...by Him were all things created...all things were created by Him, and for Him” (Colossians 1:15, 16).

It seems staggering to realize that the Lord came face-to-face with some of the Old Testament saints in a *visible* form, a

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pre-incarnate body. He walked with some (Genesis 3:8; Genesis 5:22). He ate lunch with some (Genesis 18:13–22). And then there is a fascinating passage in 1 Chronicles 28:19, in which David explained to Solomon that the Lord had given him the pattern, the blueprints, for the building of the temple. The Lord had given them to him *in writing*! David said, “All this...the Lord made me understand *in writing by His hand* upon me... all the works of this pattern” (emphasis mine).

We also recall that the Lord “communed” with Moses and gave him “two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God” (Exodus 31:18). And Daniel *saw* the fingers of God write on the wall at Belshazzar’s feast. Daniel 5:5 says, “In the same hour came forth fingers of a man’s hand, and wrote...”

In the New Testament, we also see the Lord writing. “But Jesus stooped down, and with His finger wrote on the ground...” (John 8:6). The Creator of the universe writes! Don’t we wonder in what language He was writing? (There must be a heavenly language so that we will all speak the same language!)

As we contemplate these solid, visible demonstrations of the Lord’s person, we may better grasp the fact that He is *real*. He is our very Best Friend. He walks with us; He talks with us; He is a person. And He is deeply interested in all the *concrete*, even mundane, events and circumstances unfolding in our lives day after day.

In the first century, as God walked the earth in His visible body, He taught us how to have a *concrete, daily* relationship with Him. He encouraged us to rely on Him for our food, our finances, and our future. Matthew 6:25, 27, 32 says (NLT), “So I tell you, don’t worry about everyday life...food, drink, clothes...”

God Revealed in Christ Alone

Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?...Your heavenly Father already knows all your needs.”

What if we were to *see* the Lord Jesus as actually *sitting with* us, *walking with* us, *talking to* us, *listening to* us, *shopping with* us, *paying bills with* us? What if we were to recognize that the very words on the pages of our Bibles are *written* by the Finger of God to us personally? (See 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.) What if we were to recognize that He is holding us in the palm of His hand moment by moment? (See John 10:28, 29.) Perhaps our relationship with Him would be more concrete and intimate.

Oh, Holy Spirit, give us fresh understanding of God the Father's love for us as revealed in the concrete, human expression of Himself in Christ Jesus, who "understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same temptations we do..." (Hebrews 4:15 NLT).

Chapter 91

The New Creation: You!



Those who become Christians become new persons. They are not the same anymore, for the old life is gone. A new life has begun!

—2 Corinthians 5:17 NLT

IT IS STAGGERING to grasp the fact that “the old you,” the person you were before the Spirit of God came to dwell in you, is gone. It is dead and buried. In the place of “the old you” is a totally new creation, “the new you.” God, the Creator, actually has been birthed in you. So Paul could write, “I myself no longer live, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20 NLT).

Peter described what has happened to us when he wrote, “Your new life did not come from your earthly parents...this new life will last forever because it comes from the eternal living word of God” (1 Peter 1:23 NLT). Just as God created the world through His *spoken* Word, so also He made us new

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creatures. (“And God said, ‘Let there be light’ and there was light” [Genesis 1:3].)

Huge confusion seems to surround this profound truth in the lives of many believers. We often are taught that we have two natures, the old me and the new me, and we must *choose* which one we will follow. This is not true biblically. Paul, the apostle, tells us that “our old man [our old Adam nature] is crucified with Him” (Romans 6:6). Now we are new creations, “alive unto God” (Romans 6:11). Before we were born anew, we were “servants of sin”; we were “free from righteousness” (Romans 6:20). But now we have been freed from sin and have become slaves to righteousness (Romans 6:18, 22). Paul writes, “For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3). “Ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man...” (Colossians 3:9, 10). This is *finished* work. The old is gone. The wine of the Holy Spirit has been poured into the new creation, a born again believer.

In Ephesians, Paul exhorts believers to see who we are in Christ. He says, “Throw off your old evil nature and your former way of life... You must display a new nature because you are a new person... righteous, holy and true” (Ephesians 4:22, 24 NLT).

Read that carefully. Paul is not telling us to choose between the old and new nature. Rather, he says believers are righteous, holy, and true, so we are called to let go of the habits and mindset of the past. The more we see who we are in Christ, the less the Enemy can drag us into guilt and sin and failure. We will believe the truth about ourselves and live accordingly.

The old nature is dead and gone. We now are new creations living in the flesh, the body of death. The flesh is not the old nature. The old nature was “the old me.” There now is “a new

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me” living in a body that still experiences “the lust of the eyes” and with a mind that is being renewed but still has “the pride of life.” It is our spirits (“the new me”) that have been redeemed and are headed for heaven. We have yet to escape the corruption of the flesh. When He comes, “this corruptible must put on incorruption” (1 Corinthians 15:53).

For now, we are to rejoice in who we really are in Christ. This is the practical means for escaping the fleshly activities that tempt us. “So you should consider yourselves dead to sin and able to live for the glory of God through Christ Jesus” (Romans 6:11 NLT).

Lord, anoint our eyes to see who we are in You.

Endnotes

Chapter 60

1. O. Hallesby, *Prayer* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1994), 46–47.

Chapter 65

1. Charles N. Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening* (Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 179.

Chapter 66

1. Charles N. Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening* (Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 294.

Chapter 75

1. Robert Morgan, *Then Sings My Soul* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003), 68.
2. *Ibid.*, 248.

Chapter 76

1. Charles N. Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening* (Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 488.
2. *Ibid.*, 488.
3. *Ibid.*, 488.
4. Robert Morgan, *Then Sings My Soul* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003), 185.

Chapter 81

1. Nick Harrison, Editor, *His Victorious Indwelling*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1998), 131.
2. *Ibid.*, 130.

Chapter 83

1. John Bunyan. “Christian Behavior” (Acacia John Bunyan— Online Library, 1674), <http://acacia.pair.com/Acacia.John.Bunyan/> (accessed May 11, 2011).

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