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INTRODUCTION

It is impossible, in so short a treatise, to bring into full view the love and vision of our Father and the full implications regarding His character. Volumes have been written on the nature of God; yet there remains in the Church a continuing dichotomy of thought and doctrine. One element teaches the unchanging and all-embracing love of God, who loves without discipline or correction. This is the God that makes spoiled, selfish brats of His children. The other side portrays a God, whose demands can never be satisfied, constantly haranguing the people with the threat of a ceaseless, burning and agonizing hell. It is called "the two faces of God." Others refer to it as the "two hands of God." Somewhere between these two extreme swings of the pendulum lies the truth.

I vividly recall as a young lad of about eight years of age the constant terror I endured because of the "hell fire and brimstone" messages to which I was subjected. I can remember the nights I would lie awake and wish I had never been born, because I did not know how to be saved, and I was convinced that if I died I would spend eternity in a burning lake of fire. Little did I know that my heavenly Father had already assured my salvation and had wrapped His tender arms about me. The price had been paid. The Lamb of Calvary had purchased, with His own life, my eternal destiny. My righteousness was merely an extension of His righteousness. How could I realize in those frightful nights, that there were millions who were going through life embroiled in that same conflict? What a terrible "gospel"!

To what purpose is the preaching of eternal torment, if it is not to scare someone into a "confession of faith"? After that message has done its work, what sort of scare tactic will keep them on the straight and narrow? At Jesus' infancy, there came men from foreign lands to lay gifts at His feet. In His manhood, they came streaming o'er the mountains and the naked wastelands searching for this One, who was a healer and a miracle worker. They brought their lame, their sick and infirm that He might simply touch them. They brought their little ones that He might bless them. Were the multitudes drawn to Jesus through fear or some threat of reprisal? I think not! Neither did fear keep them following Him. They followed Him in the heat of the day. They followed Him throughout the cold nights. They followed Him for days without food, for they saw in Him the possibility of life and wholeness. Men still find, in Him, the assurance of eternal riches, when everything around them has lost its value and gone bankrupt. When they have run out of options, they turn to Jesus. They have not turned to a Jesus who bears the whip or wields a rod. They come to One whose hands pour forth the balm of completeness and restoration. In this One walked the exact image of the Father. Our message has been so contradictory that people have grabbed their heads in confused rejection of this unpredictable and capricious God, but He, Himself, gave us this irrevocable promise; ***"I change not"***.

In the beautiful "Song of Songs", the little Shulammite maiden struggles through a maze of obstacles and uncertainty. She then makes the ultimate discovery that, *"He is altogether*

lovely". From those who have followed on to know the Lord, comes the constant flow of encouragement to the searching and weary: *"Be not cast about with every wind of doctrine—He is altogether lovely."*

Love and truth must always be held in delicate balance. If there is an extreme emphasis placed on love, then there is the ever-present danger of the whimsical embrace of all sorts of fairy tale beliefs. The love of God is not that mushy, gooey or blind sort of love. Even though it is longsuffering and forgiving, it is yet demanding in every sense of the word. This love will hold your feet to the fire when everything in you wants to run away, all the while whispering encouragement and pouring the oil of healing over your soul.

On the other hand if the emphasis is placed on truth to the exclusion of love, it can be as cutting as the sword and as corrosive as acid. Truth, out of time or out of place, can be as destructive as a lie. There must, indeed, be a critical balance between love and truth. When held in balance, truth will work its necessary exploration, exposure and surgery, while love will cleanse and heal the ensuing wound. They will work in harmony as does the scalpel and antiseptic.

The following words, though unpleasantly conspicuous in their deficiency will, I trust, bring some degree of solace to a people who have seen God through a myopic vision of harshness and vindictiveness. The way to God must of necessity be the convergence of many paths through the Door, Christ Jesus. May the Lord open the eyes of our understanding that we may grasp the eternal truths of His word.

CHAPTER 1

HELP! MY VISION IS MYOPIC

Probably the last thing God needs is for someone to defend Him. He sits in absolute sovereignty over the kingdoms of heaven and earth. He needs not give a reason for why He does things, nor does He have to explain His choices among men. As we study the Scriptures, there are many accounts that leave our minds befuddled and whispering to ourselves, "That doesn't seem right." To the natural mind, the Scriptures are a mountain of glaring contradictions; saying on the one hand, "*thou shalt not kill*", yet ordering men to slay with absolute disregard for human life and punishing them if they had human compassion and spared some of the people.

There are some fundamental things we need to have imprinted upon our foreheads if we are to walk in peace and faith in this troubled world. The first of these is, **God is all wise**. He makes no mistakes. He never alters His original plan. He makes no later "add-on" corrections to the original document. The blueprint has been drawn up and there will be no erasures. In our little finite minds, we are positive we know the way because we can see a well-worn path ahead. As one of the great poets has written, "When on a journey and I am faced with two paths, I always choose the one less traveled." That may sound a little foolish but usually that is God's way.

The next important thing is, **His judgments are righteous**. Simply put, there are no inequities or injustices with God. In times when there is an untimely death of our loved one, or one of our little ones is born with some terrible deformity, we always tend to question the disposition of our Father. The ever-present "why" plagues our serenity. The age-old question of the very existence of a loving Father springs forth from the mouth of the tempter, "If there really is a benevolent God, why does He allow such suffering and pain in the world?" Faith is always tested with those things that to the natural mind seem completely unreasonable. Yet there is probably nothing that pleases God so much as bare, naked faith. **Faith takes root on the sterile rocks of human hopelessness.**

There are many more attributes that we could consider, but let us just name one more. **God is love**. There is no room for hate, for revenge or retribution. There is no "get-even" spirit. When the world was filled with idolatry, hatred, violence, greed, strife and sexual savagery, God so loved the world that He gave the dearest thing He had, His only begotten Son. Another thing we should ponder is that God has never suffered defeat. He has never had a failure. If you think He has, you need to re-evaluate the omnipotent God. Oh! If you listen to the evening news or look at the supermarket tabloids and let your mind dwell on the world's condition, it will appear that God's grand design for universal peace and salvation is a dismal failure and lies in glaring contradictory testimony on the numerous battlefields of this planet. It appears He has been out-smarted, out-flanked and humiliated at every turn of history's page. Seemingly, the greatest embarrassment lies in the fact that a creature of

His own design and creation has accomplished this. The Professor's own experiment has suddenly taken over the laboratory. Is it any wonder that the inhabitants of this planet are so involved in idolatry and devil worship? On the surface, Satan appears to be the winner.

There are three words that we have used to describe God. They are omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. They simply mean all powerful, all knowing and all present. Although these words have been frequently used by most religions of the world, few believe in their testimony.

Bill Moyers had as his guests on the PBS network, a number of elite religious personalities. Included among them was a noted Jewish rabbi, three women who were professors of religious studies in well-known universities and two other men, who were professors of theology in Old Testament history. Almost to a person, they all seemed to agree that God had created something good in the beginning but which was now totally out of control. At one point the rabbi made this astonishing statement, "God is a very nervous God. He is either biting His nails or sitting on His hands." As I listened to these guests, it seemed no one believed that God was sovereign, that He had total knowledge and control over the affairs of heaven and earth. Most seemed to consider Him as some sort of bumbling genius who blew up the laboratory along with the formula, and we are all now hurtling through space at the speed of light, completely out of control. As a consequence of His loneliness or some giant ego in which He desired to replicate Himself, God created man (however that might have occurred) and now wrings His hands as a worried parent, not knowing if His child is wandering the back alleys in search of food scraps or has fallen prey to some devious design of Satan who seems to be much smarter and more powerful than God.

What utter nonsense! Is it any wonder that Jesus uttered these startling words, *"Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?"* How can we have faith in something or someone constantly changing or of uncertain origin and less certain destination? How can we believe in a God who is nothing more than a reactionary always on the defensive, or one who is being outwitted by Satan, who is one of His created beings? It resembles to some degree Frankenstein's monster that has suddenly gone berserk and is completely out of the restraint and control of its creator. The computer that is programmed by man is now smarter than the man who programmed it is.

There have always been those who having observed the injustices in the world, all the pain and evils that befall us, especially to the very young, question the very existence of a benevolent Father. "I should not be surprised that the day should come when men will refuse to believe in God simply on the ground of the apparent injustice of things. They would argue that there might either be an omnipotent being who did not care, or a good being who could not help, but that there could not exist a being both all good and omnipotent or else he would never have suffered things to be as they are."---Macdonald. Most of God's children have never come to grips with the absolute necessity of evil in the world.

If we are to walk in any degree of peace and serenity, we must believe that God is following a carefully designed plan that was formulated in His mind before ever there was a star in the heavens or any creature in the universe. When there was only this incredible mass of pure energy, there came forth a voice that said, "**Let there be**" and that voice triggered an explosion of unimaginable power. That violent eruption loosed a monumental attraction of atom to atom until tangible substance began to appear from that which was not heretofore visible.

It seems as we study the nature and manner of God's dealings in history, we find a God who deals in seed--preparing--planting--growth--maturing and harvest. So I care not whether you believe in the big bang, steady state, creationism or evolution. God is totally in charge and is following a carefully designed blueprint. Man's capriciousness does not affect in the least the outcome of God's architectural genius. We cannot alter by our faithlessness nor can we thwart by our selfishness the divine strategy of our Holy Father. Had God left one iota of His miraculous plan contingent upon man's ability to execute or achieve, the entire structure would collapse in utter chaos. God has never entrusted the completion of His wondrous design to man's ingenuity; nevertheless, He has extended to man the invitation to work with Him in His grand endeavor.

Because man believes that he is the center of the universe, he sees the entire intentions of God as hopelessly delayed or in disorganized shambles. Scientists believe that the salvation of our world and of the universe lies hidden somewhere between the realms of mathematical calculations and nuclear physics. Physicians believe it lies in the laboratory of genetic research or in the field of molecular biochemistry. Politicians are positive we can solve the world's problems with bigger government, more money and strict adherence to the laws of ecology. Most students of religion are assured that our only salvation lies in the confines of a common religious belief that lays down the guidelines of human behavior and man's responsibility to his brother. Ecumenism is their ultimate goal.

All of these may be well and good in their place but all operate in glaring error when we examine closely the realm of God's domain. Man is not the center of the universe. God is! Man does not control his own destiny. God does! Man will not preserve nor will he fulfill the intentions of our Father. God will! God has merely deigned that we may have a part in its completion, if we build according to the pattern. God spoke to Moses while giving instructions concerning the building of the Tabernacle in the wilderness and said, "*See you make it according to pattern*". (Ex. 25:40, Heb. 8:5) Paul instructs us in the third chapter of first Corinthians, "*For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through*

fire." Notice! The works were tried by fire and some were lost; but **the man was saved**. No one will escape the trial by fire. Every work must be tested.

There are numerous accounts throughout history of man being deceived by the enemy into believing that he is the fundamental ingredient in the purposes of God. He is not! There have been immense organizations built on the strength and attractiveness of some man's personality. Charisma has become a modern catchword. We have watched in wonder as a whole organization collapsed and perished upon the death or failure of its founder. Did that rise and fall affect the plan of God? Not one iota! Entire kingdoms have come and gone without causing so much as a ripple in the sea of God's purposes. Alexander the Great, Napoleon, Attila the Hun, Hitler, Mussolini, and countless others would be totally forgotten were it not for some teacher attempting to teach us the importance of history.

God is omnipotent. He was before everything and everything exists because of His power. He is the glue that causes all things to cohere. No one is wiser than God. Not man! Not the devil! Certainly not demons! All are created beings, brought forth from the hand of God the Father, designed by His genius to fulfill a specific purpose. Satan is doing precisely what he was created to do. **He does no less. He can do no more.** He and his emissaries manifest the exceeding wickedness of evil in order that the glorious counterpart, the grace and holiness of God, might appear more glorious.

In his book, "The Knowledge Of The Holy", A. W. Tozer makes this profound statement, "To admit that there is one who lies beyond us, who exists outside of all our categories, who will not be dismissed with a name, who will not appear before the bar of our reason, nor submit to our curious inquiries requires a great deal of humility, more than most of us possess; so we save face by thinking God down to our level, or at least down to where we can manage Him."---end quote.

"Monarchy—Not a Democracy"

In a democratic society, we have great difficulty in relationship and behavior while in the presence of a monarch. The mentality of the present Christian is to get "chummy" with God. We profess to be "palsy walsy" with this God of grandeur; yet Cherubim and Seraphim, the angelic creatures of antiquity, would fall on their faces paying homage to Him. One lady told me God would come and tickle her and push her on a swing like a child. This is an example of bringing God down where we can manage Him. If we can think God down to our level, there is then no change necessary in this irresponsible capricious person that we are.

Satan has never stepped in to alter, delay, thwart or stay the hand of God. If you think so, then you assign him a place equal with God. He has always displayed with unmistakable clarity the glaring contrasts that are used in man's schooling. He obeys with fearful awareness the edicts of God and fulfills his "ministry" in the economy of God. Let us rest assured, Satan is not a mad dog out of control. **A mad dog--yes! Out of control--no!** He

is kept on a tight leash invading only the territories under his authority. He never goes beyond the parameters of his designated domain. When Pilate mistakenly said to Jesus, *“Do you not know that I have the authority to release you, and I have the authority to crucify you?”* Jesus answered and said unto him, *“You would have **no** authority over me, unless it had been given you from above.”* (John 19:10,11) If anyone knew about the temporary loan of power to Satan or to man, it was Jesus. He never wasted His time rebuking the enemy or trying to escape His own circumstances. He recognized them all as open and well known in the realm of the Spirit.

On the Mount of Transfiguration, the Father opened the eyes of Peter, James and John in order that they might behold, in the realm of the Spirit, that which was hidden to the natural sight. The identity of Moses and Elijah was revealed without a formal introduction. The spirit realm is a sphere where we *“know as we are known”*. They eavesdropped on the conversation as Jesus and these two representative men discussed how Jesus would soon be crucified in Jerusalem. The crucifixion later caught the disciples by surprise, but only because their preconceived traditions had clouded their perception of what they had seen and heard on the holy mount.

Neither Satan nor any of his underlings slipped in on God's blind side. He has no blind side! They fulfilled perfectly the will of the Father. God knew, Jesus knew and all the hosts of heaven knew the agenda of the ages. Crucifixion was no afterthought. God's slaves—His servants, (the Pharisees, priests and Romans) accomplished His will precisely as the plan had been conceived. The priests offered the true Passover Lamb of God upon the altar of sacrifice at the precise time the feast of Passover was being celebrated throughout the land of Israel. In doing so, they fulfilled perfectly the will and plan of God, although they knew it not, *“for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”* (1 Cor. 2:8) It was imperative that the priests offer the Lamb to the Lord on that day. No architectural miscalculation! No proprietor's change of mind! The Edifice that appeared to be a colossal blunder was, in fact, the foundation stone for the Lord's most glorious masterpiece--the Kingdom of God.

When we are in trouble, we inevitably look for the nearest exit sign—the first off ramp. Pain, disease, discomfort, sorrow are all so objectionable to each of us that we invariably go through the spiritual warfare syndrome. We quote scriptures! We rebuke the devil! We remind God and the devil of the promises given us! We deny! We resist! We spend precious days and years in wasted energy before we finally get down to the nitty-gritty of seeking our Father and the reason for the unpleasant situation. When Jesus was asked, *“Who sinned, this man or his parents?”* His response was, *“Neither this man nor his parents, but that the glory of God might be manifest.”* I sincerely believe that there are few that fit into this category. There are times we will never know the reason, or it may be years before the answer comes; but if we allow patience to be our bedfellow, we will oftentimes become extremely aware of the purposes of a loving Father in our lives. Gold is neither extracted nor purified apart from much processing. The dynamite blasts its ore from the stubborn rocks, and crushing is then needed to bring it into a usable phase. There follows

the chemicals or the fire to separate the gold from the dross. Only then is it in a workable condition. If it is to be formed into jewelry or coins, great fires and pressure will follow. However, the American church has looked at everything that inflicts any pain or distress as being totally alien from God. It has been compared to a man walking through the line in a cafeteria, loading his tray with only the things that please him. He refuses everything distasteful to him although it may profit him physically. He picks and chooses which scriptures he desires to feed from and ignores or rejects the rest, relegating them to a different era or another people. He shuns the very things designed to strengthen and change him into the perfect stature of Christ.

What earthly father would not welcome the sincere questioning of an inquisitive child? Every parent is well aware of the endless "whys" that flow like a tireless little brook from the heart of a curious little one. Do you not think our heavenly Father is as eager to hear and answer the honest questions and doubts we entertain from time to time? However, we need to be extremely careful that our "whys" arise out of an earnest desire for knowledge from the Father rather than the stubborn argument of a resistant rebel.

The following questions, only a few of many, immediately come to mind that I am sure many folk have not considered but yet need to be addressed. These appear in scripture as obvious contradictions; however, they are really harmonious in every facet. What is the purpose of evil? If God is omnipotent and omniscient, could He not have prevented even the entrance of sin in the beginning? Why did He obviously invite Satan to seduce Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden? Was His purpose in creation frustrated in any way? Did the entrance of sin affect God's eternal plan? Was redemption only an afterthought to meet an unplanned and undesired difficulty? Was God's sacrificial Lamb His primary design or was it an alternate backup? If it was a substitute plan then God becomes a reactionary who responds to the wiles and whims of some devious enemy. What was the object of the incarnation? Could not God have accomplished through Adam what He eventually accomplished through Jesus? What is God's ultimate intention for man? Is it not to conform man to His own image? If that is true, and man either through indolence or rebellion is not pressed into His image in this life, does God reject him as being unfit or will God continue His workmanship in our behalf in some future age? If there is some impurity in the clay, does the potter relegate it to the scrap heap, or does He with patience and determination work the clay until every foreign element is removed? If God does not, cannot, perfect us in this life, how many persons will there be who attain to this lofty goal; and is God still the God of the miraculous if He can only bring to perfection those who are of superior quality? How many men die in faith today having been perfectly conformed into the image of God? If He will continue His work in the next age on those who are less than perfect, could He not in the afterlife start from scratch with one who has never been introduced to Him? These are all logical inquiries that the scriptures address.

Let us consider another "problem" area. *"And we are setting these truths forth in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the (Holy) Spirit, combining and interpreting spiritual truths with spiritual language [to those who possess the (Holy) Spirit]. But the natural, non-*

spiritual man does not accept or welcome or admit into his heart the gifts and teachings and revelations of the Spirit of God, for they are folly (meaningless nonsense) to him; and he is incapable of knowing them--of progressively recognizing, understanding and becoming better acquainted with them--because they are spiritually discerned and estimated and appreciated." (1 Cor. 2:13,14 Amplified) Observe again, *"And you [He made alive], when you were dead [slain] by [your] trespasses and sins."* (Eph. 2:1 Amplified) Spiritually dead men cannot hear nor can they respond to the word of truth unless God graciously opens their understanding. Even should they hear the message of life, if they are carnal natural men, they cannot comprehend what is being said. It will sound to them as foolish, idle tales. Is it any wonder Jesus says, *"No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day."* (John 6:44)

"I'll Change My Citizenship Tomorrow"

If I understand these passages, it is utterly impossible for a man to "decide to be born again". One higher than himself must seize him and draw him to a higher plane. He must be overshadowed. He must be overpowered. The Rider on the white horse must conquer him. It is utterly impossible for mineral to become vegetable, for vegetable to become animal or for animal to become divine unless it is elevated to that position by one who is higher. The mineral can be assimilated into the roots of the cabbage and thus become vegetable but not of its own striving. The cabbage can be eaten by a cow and thus become animal having been raised to another level by one which is immediately higher. The cow is then laid out in the meat market as steak and man dines upon it. Therefore the unsuspecting cow is incorporated into the realm of humanity. Here again it is not of its own will or strength but of one who is higher than itself. When man is integrated into the family of God by the miracle of the New Birth, he has been genetically infused by a higher power and raised to the position of "Godhood" but not of his own authority or will. It was, is, and always shall be by the incomprehensible grace of the Lord. These are born---"*not of blood, not the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*" (John 1:13)

Many folk have a problem with the thought of God's presence being everywhere at once. A certain figure took Ezekiel by a lock of his hair and carried him by the Spirit to a place where he beheld the abominations that were being committed in the sanctuary of the Lord. *"Son of man, do you see what the elders of the house of Israel are committing in the dark, each man in the room of his carved images? For they say, 'The Lord does not see us; the Lord has forsaken the land'."* (Ezk. 8:12) They offered sacrifices to idols, thinking the Lord was not aware of their activities. How could the Lord know this? Jeremiah 23:23,24 gives us an inside look that we would do well to remember. *"Am I a God who is near, and not a God far off,' declares the Lord. 'Can a man hide himself in hiding places, so I do not see him,' declares the Lord. 'Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?' Declares the Lord."*

People want to make God like a super man. They give Him arms, legs, feet and hands; consequently, they have enormous difficulties putting these arms and legs everywhere at

one time. We easily fall into the same snare those old priests did and begin to think, "God does not take notice of one so inconsequential as I. God does not see me on this little speck of a planet." We must remember the words of Jesus as He spoke to the little Samaritan, *"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in Spirit and in truth."* He did not say, "God is a spirit," but "God **is** spirit." As Spirit, He fills every molecule of heaven and earth. Like an electromagnet when the voltage is present, every particle is aligned. There is a lesson here for all that are sick or *weak* in their bodies. Allow the flow of God's power to align the molecules of your body by the current of His Holy Spirit.

The very presence of the Lord speaks of life. Death is as alien as night is from day. If you will consider this at some length, you will be forced to agree that the Creator of all things has a plan for all those "dead" planets suspended out there in space. They, at this present time, seem to be nothing more than lifeless, floating debris, serving no purpose, emitting no light, only uninhabited reflectors occasionally used as a navigational guide. Earth itself was once void and without form or life until the Spirit of the Lord began to brood (incubate) upon the vast extent of the waters. Life began to appear, perhaps slowly at first, for God was speaking out of His creative energy, *"Let there be—let there be!"* And life was.

If you will meditate on these things sufficiently, light will spread its illumination in your spirit; and you will begin to understand a purpose for your being. You were not created to sit upon some distant cloud strumming a golden harp, for which you have no present yearning or ability. However, there is now being worked into your being integrity, faithfulness, obedience and love for the Father, that exceeds your carnal ambition and need for applause and attention. God is working into you a consuming hunger for the reclamation, reconciliation and restoration of all things. If we will work in harmony with the Spirit in His molding and purification of His chosen vessels, we will inherit a part in the bringing of life to the vast reaches of the universes. Does that astonish you? For what purpose were you brought into this world? To make a million bucks? To become a noble do-gooder? That may be part of it, but rest assured it is not the ultimate. God's design for you is much loftier than you can ever imagine. *"Eye has not seen and ear has not heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him; but to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God."* (1 Cor. 2:9,10)

One thing needs to be firmly embedded in our spirit. Only God is omnipresent. Satan, angels and demons are all localized. In the book of Job is an immensely interesting account. As the sons of God presented themselves before the throne of God's splendor, there is Satan standing in line with the rest of them, waiting his turn. He was localized then and he still is. The spirit of evil is pervasive in the carnal mind, but that old serpent is not. With that in mind, we must question when people so often say, "The devil came to me," or "The devil made me do it." Probably not! The spirit of evil, the presence of demons or the pull of the flesh is usually the culprit. Few have ever encountered Satan. Few have become a threat sufficient to warrant Satan's personal attention.

CHAPTER 2

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S SHATTERED IMAGE

One can hardly contain the wonder that grips the spirit as we consider the dream given to King Nebuchadnezzar some six hundred years before the time of Christ. It is one of the most significant pieces of the prophetic puzzle given in Scripture, and that to a heathen king. It would seem that if God wanted to reveal anything to His people He would at least do it through a choice "anointed" vessel. Well, He did! We must remember the words spoken to Peter in the vision given to him. *"What God has cleansed, that call not thou common or unclean."* (Acts 10:15) He can speak through a heathen king or He can speak through the mouth of a donkey. It remains truth.

Nebuchadnezzar's dream was the image of a great statue. *"The head of that statue was made of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay, and crushed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth."* (Dan. 2:32-35) The prophet Daniel interprets the dream for the king and says, *"You are the head of gold."* (Dan. 2:38) This image represented the entire age of the Babylonish system. It included the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nero, Napoleon, King James 1, Mary, queen of Scotland, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton and our present administration. Not all these were evil rulers but all were a part of the Babylonish system. With the exception of Nebuchadnezzar, all these were a part of the legs of iron and the feet of iron and clay. These all headed governments with man as their chief. They depended on man as their sustaining strength, wisdom and wealth. How could they be anything but Babylonish? The Scripture is crystal clear. There will come a time when the stone will crush every kingdom and it will crumble to the ground. Whether it be that evil empire of The Soviet Union, China, Iraq, Iran, Japan, Indonesia, Great Britain or the United States, each will crumble into one giant pile of rubble, having been crushed by the stone cut out without hands.

Many have preached that the stone that crushes the feet is Jesus Christ, but we would disagree with this interpretation. The Kingdom of God is the stone that crushes the feet, and it grows until it becomes a great mountain and fills the whole earth. Jesus refers to the Kingdom of God as leaven that woman (the church) places into a measure of flour and the whole lump is leavened. Of course, prophetically, a mountain or kingdom always signifies a large nation while a hill is a small nation. John the Baptist cried with a loud voice, *"..Every mountain and hill shall be brought low."* (Luke 3:5) He was quoting Isaiah forty. Isaiah

gives us a logical conclusion to the disruption. It is in order “*..that the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together.*” (Isa. 40:5) Man cannot see the glory of the Lord through this garish and gaudy display of Babylon.

This image that fills Nebuchadnezzar’s vision is our first introduction to the kingdoms of this world that oppose the kingdom of God. I realize the head of gold, arms and breast of silver, the bronze, iron and clay speak of different kingdoms and different ages; yet they speak of much more in the realm of the Spirit. Notice! Daniel was a prisoner in the kingdom of Babylon when Nebuchadnezzar summoned him forth to interpret his dream. The church has been a prisoner of sorts, walking quietly among the malignant spirits of this world’s system for the past two centuries. Oh! There have been moments of glory and of victory; but for the most part, the church has existed under the authority of the world’s system. It is the government that tells you where and how you will pray. It is the government that decides what is and what is not a cult. Just as Daniel was summoned to speak a word of knowledge to a worldly king so the church is presently called upon to lend respectability to a system corrupt and deteriorating. The tragedy is that the “church” system is supported by the Babylonish system of this world. Revelation 17 portrays for us a beautiful woman riding upon a scarlet colored beast, having seven heads and ten horns. This beautiful woman displays for us a church system that has become loose, permissive and whorish and has committed fornication with the kings of the earth. The good news is that, in the coming age when the sons of God are manifested, the kingdoms of this world shall be violently thrown down and “*the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth as the waters cover the sea.*” (Isa. 11:9)

This shall be a time of great joy for some and a time of tremendous distress for many. “*And the kings of the earth, who committed acts of immorality and lived sensuously with her, will weep and lament over her when they see the smoke of her burning, standing at a distance because of the fear of her torment, saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour your judgement has come.’*” “*And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, because no one buys their cargoes anymore...*” (Rev. 18:9-11) As one can clearly see, the fall of Babylon affects the commerce of the world greatly. If you read the entire chapter of Revelation eighteen, you can see the commerce involves every known trade and commodity. This will cause a great shaking in the earth as per Haggai 2:6,7. “*Once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land. And I will shake all the nations; and they will come with the wealth of all nations; and I will fill this house with glory.*” Paul uses this Scripture in Hebrews twelve to expand the thought that God will shake everything that can be shaken in order that those things that cannot be shaken shall remain. Watch out stock market! Watch out banks and lending institutions!

Very often man will demolish the walls of some building and erect a totally different structure in appearance upon the same steel and concrete. He will lay a new highway on the foundation of an existing one. He will incorporate the good things of one type of government into a new one that is being established. That’s how this nation came to be a

republic. However, God will not use the superstructure of some previous kingdom upon which to build His kingdom. Every kingdom must be brought to dust and rubble. Only those things that have their foundation in almighty God will survive the shaking. Can you imagine the convulsion? Can you imagine the despair as men see all their wealth disappear over night? Is it any wonder Jesus said men's hearts would fail them as they look upon the things happening on the earth? There will arise from the earth a collective cry that our Lord will hear. It was because of the loud cry of hopelessness that God heard Israel in the land of Egypt.

Every dispensation has ended in cataclysmic events. From man's expulsion out of the Garden of Eden, the flood in Noah's day, the carrying away of Israel into captivity, the crucifixion and ultimate destruction of Jerusalem and the slaughter of God's people in the dark ages are all hallmarks of the changing ages. These are the closing doors of passing dispensations. Does anyone really believe we will glide painlessly from this age into the next? Numerous scriptures testify to the contrary. Extreme pain and unspeakable joy mark every natural birth. God will set up His kingdom in triumph and glory on the rubble of man's genius. Many are looking for an escape to some far-off heaven as our Lord "splits the eastern sky". Many are expecting Jesus to ascend the throne in Jerusalem where man will have prepared an elaborate temple for him. Both, I fear, miss the mark a thousand miles. God has been preparing Himself a temple, built from living stones. This temple is called, *"the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband."* (Rev. 21:2) *"Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you...For the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are."* (1 Cor. 3:16,17)

We have watched the church of almighty God cower in the shadows for centuries because her walk did not bear witness to her testimony. It has been like the little child trying to tie his shoes. He knows the strings ought to make a knot but all he can do is twist them together. His knowledge is right but his ability is limited. We have known what has needed to be done, but we have not possessed the power to accomplish it. It's all a matter of maturation. We have tried and tried and tried. We have wrestled and sweated and groaned and cried in despair but all in vain. We have read in the Scriptures how this thing ought to work, but it hasn't worked the way we thought it should. Many have turned their backs on the way of Christianity because their testimony made them look like fools. It seemed as if God had forsaken them. Isn't this what Jesus cried, *"Why hast thou forsaken Me?"* Even Jesus was not exempt from the feelings of abandonment. Cheer up! Take heart! I see the stone hurtling through space aimed straight for the feet of the proud image of Babylon. The impact is imminent. The cry is already on the lips of those in heaven, *"The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever."* (Rev. 10:15)

I have included this brief account of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in order to emphasize the indisputable fact of the absolute sovereignty of the Lord of heaven. Twenty-five hundred

years have come and gone and the details of this dream have been fulfilled precisely. The remainder shall come to pass as surely as the coming dawn. God is still God.

CHAPTER 3

WHAT HAPPENED TO MY HEAVEN?

David speaks of the magnitude of God with these words of wonder: *“O Lord, Thou hast searched me and known me. Thou dost know when I sit down and when I rise up; Thou dost understand my thought from afar. Thou dost scrutinize my path and my lying down, and art intimately acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue, behold O Lord, Thou dost know it all. Thou hast enclosed me behind and before, and laid Thy hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is too high, I cannot attain to it. Where can I go from Thy Spirit? Or where can I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend to heaven, Thou art there. If I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the dawn, if I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, even there Thy hand will lead me, and Thy right hand will lay hold of me. If I say, ‘Surely the darkness will overwhelm me, and the light around me will be night, even the darkness is not dark to Thee, and the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike to Thee.’”* (Ps. 139:1-12) Here we see God permeates—He saturates the whole of the universe with His presence that encompasses both heaven and hell. We’ll consider this later in chapter five.

Unlike the many gods of the heathen, who cloak themselves in darkness and stand in mysterious aloofness demanding no one approach them, our God ever invites us to draw nigh to Him in childlike simplicity. By that, God does not mean childishness, but childlikeness. There are no hidden formulas, no mysterious solution nor ten-step program that some would have you follow. This is not a privileged solicitation to a chosen few but a word of invitation that is extended to all creation to “know the Lord”. Granted, He does hide Himself from the curious and the nonchalant but in the same instant reveals Himself to the simplest heart that seeks Him in sincerity and honesty. **This realm of our Lord’s dwelling is called heaven.** The place of His kingship, where He dwells as king, is as surely heaven as some immense city with golden streets and walls of jasper. We have tended to localize Him, therefore making Him distant and unapproachable. We have robbed Him of His omnipresence, seating Him on a mythical throne in some enigmatic city, too distant and too detached for us to fellowship with and far too lofty to care for any so insignificant as we. In doing so, we have relegated Him to the same position and posture as the heathen god, ever ready to dispense punishment but withholding His love and compassion. Jesus always gave Himself to the weaknesses and needs of a beaten and distressed people. Remember, He was Emanuel, God with us, the invisible God made visible.

In contemplating this realm called heaven, let us first be aware that there was a heaven in the Old Testament. This was not an invention of Jesus or of His disciples. This was not something Paul concocted. Enoch was caught up to be with God and Elijah was

transported into heaven on a chariot of fire. I do not believe either is ever mentioned as receiving a pair of wings as transportation or a mansion and halo as a reward. I recall no mention of a harp or certain pieces of real estate as their inheritance. Heaven has been in existence as long as God, because heaven is that entire realm of the Spirit of God rather than some geographical location.

There has existed a deep-seated fear in all the earth that a nuclear war will erupt where the world will be enveloped with deadly radiation and every living thing will be destroyed, for every cubic inch of this world's surface will have been penetrated by its malevolent influence. We can readily understand how radiation or an invisible nerve gas could conceivably slip into every cranny and crevice, having its fatal effect on everyone. Somehow we find it difficult to understand God in that same perspective. Arms, legs and torso are a must for our infantile minds; so we formulate a worship of statues and icons. Why must we make Him like a man having the appearance of some imaginary brainchild? **God is not a man! "God is Spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth."** *"Do I not fill the heavens and the earth? Declares the Lord."* (Jer. 23:24) *"Behold! Heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain Thee."* (1 Kings 8:27) In these Scriptures, it is unmistakably clear that God saturates the heavens and the earth. Everywhere God exists, heaven is also there, for the King rules in His domain.

In the book of Revelation, the New Jerusalem comes down to earth. We do not go up to it. Heaven is not somewhere we are going. It is a viable reality we can apprehend now. Heaven is where it has always been and where it shall remain and that is where the Father dwells. If in your imagination, the Father dwells in some distant place sitting upon a secluded throne, unapproachable and aloof; then that is where heaven is to you; and it will always remain a place remote and unattainable in this life. If, however, the Father dwells richly in the essence of your being, communicative and caring; then heaven has been brought from the future into the present, from the lofty to the local, from the distant to the near. Heaven is and always has been the abode of the Father. Very simply put, if your Father is far away—so is your heaven. If your heaven is far away—so is your Father. If your Father is one with whom you daily fellowship and converse, then you are living in the kingdom of heaven even while dwelling in the confines of earth. The man sitting chained in the foulest of prisons can allow his spirit to soar in glorious freedom.

"You Are God's House"

Most folk get the idea from John fourteen that heaven is a place where upon our acceptance at the gate by Saint Peter, we receive our passport and a deed to our palace which sits upon choice real estate. Jesus began His narrative in this chapter by saying, *"In my Father's house are many mansions."* Observe carefully. He is speaking of **His Father's house---it is neither your house nor my house.** If we contemplate this for a few moments, we will be forced to agree that **we** are the Father's house, that our bodies are temples of the living God. All who are believers constitute a room of the Father's house where He dwells. Jesus is not referring to our dwelling place but the Father's place, or

abode. The word “abode” is incorrectly translated “mansion” in John 14:2 (KJV) but is rightly translated “dwelling places” in many other translations. It is the same Greek word (*mone*) correctly translated in verse twenty-three where Jesus continues His dialogue by saying, “*If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our **abode** (mone) with him.*” This Greek word is used only twice in the entire New Testament and both are found in this account. The translators used the word *mansion* because it better fit their theology. Keep in mind this is not your dwelling place, but God’s. In His great house (the church—the redeemed) there are many rooms—dwelling places—hearts where He dwells. Jesus said, “I am going to prepare a place for you that where I **am** you **may be** also.” The “place” He was going to prepare was a relationship He presently enjoyed with the Father but was unavailable to man, for the door into the Holiest Place (Gods dwelling place) had not yet been opened. Jesus already enjoyed that intimacy, but it was closed to you and me. Jesus came to change that. At His crucifixion, if you recall, the veil to the Holiest Place was torn from top to bottom. This was God’s doing, not man’s. The death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus and the Spirit’s advent at Pentecost threw wide the door into that realm of intimate relationship where Jesus walked even prior to His death. There was not one person ever born again until the life that had been shut up in Jesus was poured out through the rending of the veil—that is His flesh. The “prepared place” was now a present reality.

I have a friend who, out of his own resources, built a small church and apartment under one roof. One day a lady was reproofing him a bit over some small disagreement and said to him, “You should be a little more flexible, seeing this is God’s house.” He replied, “This is not God’s house! This is my house! I built this house... You are God’s House.” His answer left her speechless, for she knew he was right. “*The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands.*” (Acts 17:24) “*Solomon built a house for Him. However, the Most High does not dwell in houses made by human hands; as the prophet says: ‘Heaven is my throne and earth is the footstool of my feet; what kind of house will you build for Me? Says the Lord; or what place is there for My repose? Was it not My hand which made all these things?’*” (Acts 7:47-50) We so often have mistaken the building in which we meet as God’s house. It is not God’s house at all. It is not holy; although, it may be sanctified or “set apart” for the place in which we meet to worship the Lord. We have spent millions of dollars adorning and embellishing the wood, stone, brick and mortar with stained glass, expensive pews and plush carpeting. A brush arbor or an adobe hut would be just as holy. So heaven is not particularly a place where we are going but a realm in the Spirit where we enjoy the intimacy of the Father walking in our garden. There are some in this life that appear to have walked under an open heaven. I believe Enoch was one of these men. He walked **with** God instead of praying to some distant monarch sitting majestically in outer space. This is the paradise Jesus promised to the dying thief that dark day on Calvary’s hill.

There appears to be a glaring contradiction when we say God is everywhere and yet is secluded in the Holiest Place. Under the old economy, the Holiest Place was a definite place housed inside walls of the physical temple. However, this **place** became a

dimension with the crucifixion of Jesus and the rending of the temple's veil. As long as we see the Holiest of Holies as a place rather than a dimension, it will ever leave us perplexed and confused.

Heaven is a realm where the Spirit, Who knows all things and has all power, has incorporated into Himself our hungry spirit, which has been crying, *"Abba Father"*. In that sphere, we become an extension of His person, a pure expression of His glory. Oh! What need has a spiritual being for a mansion on Main Street or a cabin in the corner of gloryland? Do you believe Moses or Elijah owned palaces setting in the midst of a well-watered garden? Some will argue that we will have a heavenly body not too different from our present body except it will be incorruptible. If you recall, the Sadducees, who believed neither in a resurrection or a life hereafter, posed a question they believed would trap Jesus into embarrassed silence. A certain man died leaving his widow without children. Under the Law his brother was required to marry the woman and father children unto his departed brother. His brother married her and died, leaving no children. Now there were seven brothers who in turn married her and died, leaving no offspring. Finally the woman died. The question was, *"Whose wife shall she be in the resurrection, for they all had her as wife?"* Jesus' answer was swift, without hesitation, *"You do greatly err, not knowing the scriptures nor the power of God. In the resurrection, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven."* (Matt. 22:23-33) Angels, as you recall, could take on the appearance of man for a temporary covering; but their natural state was as spiritual beings that were invisible to human eyes. So man's transformed body resides in the invisible sphere of the Spirit. Heaven's inhabitants are pure spiritual beings who can assume a physical body for the purpose of fulfilling the will of the Father. That is and will be the main purpose of our spiritual body, to become an extension of our heavenly Father. Neither time nor space will be a deterrent to executing the Father's will, for eternities past and eternities future will be compressed into the ever present now. To many, heaven is like some celestial country club where you can while away your days doing anything your heart desires. Play golf in the morning, with an afternoon swim and cocktail; then in the evening, you can retire with one of your numerous wives—depending on the interpretation of which of the tens of thousands of sects and denominations you belong. Of course, this type of heaven does not apply to women—only to men. What an utterly foolish and carnal pipe dream. That is just an extension of the old fleshly desires.

Sadly, the reality of heaven has been projected far into the future. We'll either have to die or wait until the "rapture" to enjoy its glory. This is one of Satan's great lies. Whether it is salvation, faith or some ministry of the Kingdom, tomorrow or next month or next year will be a better time to begin than now. An old song of the 40's comes to mind called "Manana". Manana in Spanish simply means tomorrow. Why act today? Tomorrow will be soon enough. Why pray today? Why fast today? Why spend time in meditation today? Procrastination has been called the thief of time. May I say it can rob you of more than time? It can choke the very life from all your dreams and accomplishments, both in time and eternity.

"My Golden Shoes Don't Fit"

If you believe that heaven is a geographic place with streets of solid gold and mansions of some tangible building material, then there are scriptures that pose some extremely real problems for you. *“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My word shall not pass away.”* (Mk. 13:31) *“And I saw a **new** heaven and a **new** earth, for the first heaven and the first earth passed away.”* (Rev. 21:1) *“Behold I create **new** heavens and a **new** earth.”* (Isa. 65:17) *“The **new** heavens and **new** earth which I make will endure before Me, declares the Lord.”* (Isa. 66:22) *“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for **new** heavens and a **new** earth, in which righteousness dwells.”* (2 Pet. 3:10-13) If we consider these verses apart from our theological persuasion, we will be compelled to agree that not only is something wrong with the earth, but something has polluted the heavens as well. Both must be purified. Peter’s description is extremely graphic. *“The heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat.”* What just happened to your mansion next door to Jesus?

We all agree that the earth needs a radical renovation; but how did the heavens become defiled? We could be tempted to spiritualize all the above scriptures and contend that they testify to the cleansing of our earthly bodies and our heavenly spirits and how the fires of the Holy Spirit will bring cleansing and renewal; but the text of Peter’s writing does not permit this interpretation. How could this unlettered fisherman pen such words except by the revelation of the Spirit of God? His description sounds like a nuclear explosion occurring in the heavens and enveloping the earth. Whether this will be kindled by a nuclear war or by the process by which the universe came into being, I’m sure I do not know. Many are aware of the scientists’ fears that the initial explosion of that first nuclear device would ignite a chain reaction in the atmosphere that would destroy all creation. Of one thing we are certain, this destruction which is so violent is not annihilation. Peter prefaces his remarks by saying that the old world perished by water. We know that the old world was not destroyed but cleansed because Noah stepped out of the ark to view a purified world. It probably didn’t look terribly different but there was an incredible difference from the one he had last seen.

Satan and unclean spirits obviously still have access to the heavenly realm. The book of Job and the prophet Micaiah give us ample evidence of this. The “Manchild” of Revelation twelve gives us clear insight into what the future holds. The Manchild—these overcomers—this people out of a people—is caught up to God and to His throne. Only then is there war in heaven and that old dragon cast unto the earth to vent his anger on the inhabitants thereof. Has that happened yet? I don’t think so! I haven’t run into any water-walking, fire-breathing miracle workers roaming the earth. It will be the “caught-up” ones

who will literally save the earth. *“The deliverers (saviors) will ascend Mount Zion to judge the mountain of Esau, and the kingdom will be the Lord’s.”* (Obad. 21)

CHAPTER 4

OUR FATHER’S RESPONSIBILITY

In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus utters a very simple statement that has been either ignored or misunderstood by most teachers and theologians. *“For truly I say unto you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished.”* (Matt. 5:18) KJV uses the old English in saying, *“Not one jot nor one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all is fulfilled.”* We listen to the evangelists who cry, “There is not one thing left to be fulfilled until the end of the world.” We beg to disagree. There is yet much that remains unfulfilled which gives us tremendous encouragement. The promises of fulfillment bolster our spirits.

If our understanding is not badly flawed, we understand that God requires nothing of man that He Himself is not the paragon of example. God requires certain rules of caution in order to protect man. *“When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof, that you may not bring bloodguilt on your house if anyone falls from it.”* (Deut. 22:8) Before the days of OSHA, men and women worked in dangerous situations. There were exposed gears, whirring saw blades, spinning wheels and slashing knives to name a few. Whether it was in mining, shipbuilding or sawmills, many deaths and numerous mutilations occurred in the workplace because the employer did not care or was unaware of the danger. Now, because of OSHA, there are fewer hazards present in our places of employment, and the automobile industry is extremely inventive when it comes to our safety. If a couple owns a home with a stairwell, a gate is often placed before the stairs to insure that their little one does not fall down the stairs, causing permanent injury or death to their innocent loved one. Car seats, bicycle safety helmets, lifejackets and a host of other safety measures have been taken to protect our health and well being. Even some cities require a homeowner to keep the sidewalk in front of his home clear of ice and snow, in order to protect the passersby. The homeowner is liable, even on public property, for the safety of the public.

God is no less concerned with our eternal welfare. He gives patterns and types all through the Scriptures. This is just one of them. If a man built a house, he was required to build a safety parapet or railing around the edge so no one could fall over the side and cause injury or death. The owner was responsible for the safety of all that entered his house. If God required this of man, will He not adhere to the same rules of Law? Would God erect a structure where innocent and careless children could fall to their death? Would God, in all His wisdom, not see the danger of placing ignorant and innocent children in that type of

environment? Would He not care or provide some sort of redemption? This is the exact picture of man in the Garden of Eden. The Garden was created; then subsequently, man was created and placed in it. Satan, with all his wiles, was waiting on the steps for our forefather, Adam. God had purposely placed him in a house with no railing or parapet to prevent his fall. The story has been told for countless ages how this pair of innocent children was led over the brink. Surely God had a remedy. Surely He would not abandon His little ones in this time of desperate need. The answer is clear and provides the basis for every gospel message that is preached. **Oh! But the message has been changed.** It now provides for only a chosen few. For only the “little flock” has the price been paid, while the vast majority of Adam’s sons and daughters are lost eternally to burn in unquenchable fire. The missing parapet let them fall, and the remedy was not all-inclusive.

Let us consider another portion of scripture. *“If an ox gores a man or woman to death, the ox shall surely be stoned and its flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall go unpunished. If, however, an ox was previously in the habit of goring, and its owner had been warned, yet he does not confine it, and it kills a man or a woman, **the ox shall be stoned and its owner also shall be put to death.**”* (Ex. 21:28,29) Satan was God’s ox. God fashioned him and created him to gore. I realize that many will have enormous problems with this statement, however Jesus said, *“He (the devil) was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him.”* (Jn. 8:44) Many will try to evade the clear statement of our Lord by slipping in this question, “From the beginning of what—his fall from God’s intimate circle?” The statement is clear. He was a murderer from his very conception. He was created a murderer. He was created to rob, kill and destroy. *“Behold, I Myself have created the smith who blows the fire of coals, and brings out a weapon for its work; and I have created the destroyer to ruin.”* (Isa. 54:16) If this is true and he was known to gore, if he was created for this purpose, then God is fully responsible for what happened in Eden. The Scripture states that not only must the ox be slain but also the owner, who knew the ox would gore. The death penalty was not only passed upon the raging ox, but God now stands with a sentence of death hanging over His head. Preposterous! Yet the scripture is clear. Jesus was slain before the foundation of the world. This God, Who became a man, Emanuel, bore His cross up Calvary’s hill to pay the price of allowing His ox to gore the race of mankind. Not only shall the ox be put to death but also the owner of the ox. The owner of this raging ox redeemed the whole of humanity.

“I am the Lord, and there is no other, the one forming light and creating darkness, causing wellbeing and creating calamity; I am the Lord who does all these.” (Isa. 45:6,7) *“If a trumpet is blown in a city will not the people tremble? If a calamity occurs in a city has not the Lord done it?”* (Amos 3:6,7) These Scriptures show the Lord’s hand in bringing destruction on a people. If He digs a pit and the unwary fall into it, is He not responsible? Will He not save them eventually? If the dumb sheep becomes entangled in the thorn bush and cannot extricate itself, will not the Shepherd of the sheep seek until He finds the lost one, bearing it gently back to the fold? If our ultimate salvation is dependent on our brilliance in choosing Him or our knowledge in making the right choices in our walk with

Him, heaven help us. We might as well throw up our hands in despair, for the pits are too well camouflaged, and we cannot see that there is no fence around the rooftop. But such is not the case. God takes upon Himself our absolute deliverance. Men simply cannot imagine a God of such magnitude having that much love for our freedom. It seems like a fairy tale. George Macdonald, that godly author of the eighteen hundreds, sat teaching his children this very truth, when one was overheard to say, "It sounds too good to be true."

His response was "Ah! But it's too good not to be true." What a peculiar trait, that man always wants to earn his own way. Pride will not permit him to accept total redemption unless he has gone through severe, even self-imposed pain and expense.

CHAPTER 5

HELL—A PLACE OR A SITUATION

As we have briefly considered the realm of heaven, let us now spend a few moments investigating the domain of hell that has been proclaimed from the pulpits and street corners innumerable times. Anytime you mention hell, most people automatically think of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The word hell conjures up images of a burning inferno where creatures are writhing in pain as they scream out their curses or plead for deliverance. It is thought to be a place where, as if the flames were not enough, there are the constant taunts and harassment by Satan and his horde of sadistic demons. Unimaginable horrors are unlocked from Satan's darkest creativity to be loosed upon the tortured frames of those poor souls who are committed eternally to this place of endless agony. No hope of reprieve awaits them. No parole system is in operation. No expectation of forgiveness is forthcoming, though they plead ceaselessly. Nothing but despair, endless torment and darkness is their daily experience as days stretch into months, and months into years, forever and forever. After a million years of these indescribable horrors, they are no nearer the end than when they first began, according to the modern theologians.

Present there are the Neros, the Stalins, the Hitlers and the architects of the holocaust. Of course! They deserve to fry! Retribution is their just reward! The child molester, the rapist and the serial killer all have their reservations in that terrible place and rightly so, we would say. They're getting their just rewards. Could it possibly be that the soul next to Judas is an innocent little lady from the slums of some third world country who never heard of this Savior? Perhaps there is a young virgin girl who has not committed her life to Christ or perhaps has not even heard there ever existed a loving Jesus? Could it be that there are multitudes of children who were never born again, simply because of their ignorance and age? Unthinkable! God would never send such as these to hell! But wait a minute. Remember the scriptures. Peter and John had healed a man and the resulting crowd gave Peter a chance to preach Jesus to them. ***"There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must (can) be saved."*** (Acts 4:12). Paul later enforces the testimony with these words, ***"For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus."*** (1 Tim. 2:5) In other words, there is only one door, not many paths that lead to the same place. Then there is the familiar theme of the evangelist, ***"Verily, verily, I say unto you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."*** (John 3:3) ***"Unless one is born of the water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."*** (John 3:5)

There was at one time a comic strip entitled **Calvin and Hobbes**. In this strip there was a bratty little boy who had a cloth tiger. If anyone happened to be near, the tiger was simply a toy; but when alone, that rag doll became a real fur, fang and claw tiger. These two played a certain game called Calvinball. In this game they each made up the rules as they played. This would insure each their victory, at least to the one who made up the last rule. Christians have adopted this method of playing the “game” of Christianity. If the situation begins to cause extreme pain or lays open to question our denomination’s cherished doctrines—**change the rules!**

The Bible is remarkably clear that when Adam sinned, we all sinned. When Adam embraced death, he took us all down with him for we were in his loins at that time. Paul goes to great lengths to establish this as he uses the example of Abraham paying tithes to Melchizedek; and consequently, because Abraham paid tithes, so did Levi because Levi was still in the loins of Abraham. Watchman Nee uses an illustration that is extremely helpful on this subject. The depiction is as follows: “If your great, great grandfather had died in infancy, where would you be? Of course you would not exist because you would have died in the loins of that infant. Your existence depends on his life and the propagation of his genes. You are simply a continuation of his life. All major Christian religions believe this concept of original sin. Here is our problem. If we were born sinners, how can we cut off our sinful heredity? Since we were born in Adam, how can we get out of Adam? The blood cannot take us out. It washes and redeems us but it does not change our position. There is only one way. Since we came in by birth, we must go out by death. To do away with our sinfulness, we must do away with our sinful life.” Paul sums it up very nicely when he makes the extraordinary statement, “*We...died to sin.*” (Rom. 6:2) Since Adam included all of us in his own body when he dragged us down to sin and death, our only means of escape is as we are included in the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. So Paul says, “*I am crucified with Christ.*”

“Calvinball”

If the above is true (and all of your Christian experience depends on it), then that sweet little baby was born a sinner, not because it has committed some atrocious sin, but because it was in the loins of Adam when he sinned. It is a sinner, not by deed nor by choice, but by birth. If for some reason that child should die at the age of two, seeing it is a sinner not born again, what is its destiny? Now at this point most Christians will begin to play “**Calvinball**”. We will begin to change the rules because we cannot bear the thought of the consequences, which has been passed down to us in our aberrant theology; a doctrine which says, “**If you die having not been born again, you will go directly to hell and burn for eternity.**” Because our theology has no room between the two extremes of a glorious heaven and an eternal lake of fire from which there is no hope of redemption, we must change the rules in order to avoid this conflict. Most will immediately say, “That baby will go right into the arms of Jesus.” My question is, **Why? How? Was it born again?** No! Then what is its right of passage? How does it enter into that realm of the redeemed

without the proper passport? “Because it has not reached the age of accountability,” will be the response. **What age is that and where is that found in Scripture?** Is that age fourteen? Or is the age twenty? Does this age apply to the retarded child as well as the normal child? Is the native aborigine of Borneo placed within the same circle of judgment as the American child? If this is a true concept, then ignorance has become a savior. If ignorance is a savior, then let us never tell the heathen about Jesus. If we tell him and he rejects the message, he will be doomed eternally in that horrible place called hell, with never a chance for repentance; but if he dies in his ignorance, he will be spared along with the innocent baby. History shows that at least ninety percent of all who hear the gospel will reject the message; so it would be much wiser and more compassionate to leave them in darkness if ignorance were a savior.

If all are saved before this imaginary “age of accountability” and if some ninety percent of all adults will reject the message of the gospel, then we must agree that that heartless murderer, Herod, did an enormous favor to all those babies he slaughtered when he tried to annihilate Jesus. Pharaoh was in fact a compassionate man as he caused the slaughter of countless infants for he unknowingly sent them directly into heaven without losing one to Satan. They bypassed the sorrows, tears, heartaches and failures that is the fate of every mature adult.

Saint Augustine was born in 354 A.D. and at an early age became a bishop in the Roman Catholic Church. He was the foremost Christian theologian of his day, who ranked first among the early fathers of the church. Many of his teachings still permeate the literature and beliefs of all Protestants. Permit me to quote one passage from one of his writings. “Though infants departing from the body without baptism will be in the mildest damnation of all, yet he greatly deceives and is deceived who preaches that they will not be in damnation.” (meaning thereby unending punishment—my comment). Martin Luther, that great hero of Protestants, makes this statement, “It is the highest degree of faith to believe that God is merciful, who saves so few and damns so many; to believe Him just, who of His own will makes us necessarily damnable.” Present day Christians have embraced this sort of teaching to the sorrow and consternation of their souls. I simply cannot conceive of my heavenly Father being of that nature.

These are the puzzling incongruities and inconsistencies I wrestled with for years. I was attempting to harmonize the obvious difficulties the Scriptures presented in contrast to the “Christian” faith. Jesus was asked by Peter, *“Lord, how often shall I forgive my brother his trespass against me, til seven times?”* Now Peter thought that seven times in one day concerning the same wrong was more than generous. Jesus stunned him with this answer, *“I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.”* (Matt. 18:21,22) Now here was one of my nagging problems. Jesus, who is the express image of the Father, requires that we forgive our brother as often as is necessary, four hundred and ninety times in one day, if it is needed. Yet, the Father will not forgive, even once, those crying to Him from hell! Where is the justice? **We know He is just!** So where is the Creator’s concern for His creation? Because a stubborn child resists his father’s demands, does the father

throw him into a burning building? How unthinkable! Where is the compassion of our God? I'll tell you where it is. It is bound up in the heart of One who so loved the world that He gave the dearest thing He could give, His only Son--then He kept giving and He kept giving. Our Father has not changed nor will He ever. He remains constant.

How contradictory is the father who slaps or spanks his young child because it does not as yet walk in the rules and concepts of the dad. Each dad who behaves in such a manner teaches his child that our heavenly Father is of the same nature. Children learn God from their earthly fathers; consequently, they grow up believing that our heavenly Father is merely a God of rules and regulations. If more fathers would treat their children as they want God to treat them, the majority of homes would be healed. *"And you shall teach them to your sons, (the words of the Lord) talking of them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road and when you lie down and when you rise up...so that your days and the days of your sons may be multiplied in the land."* (Deut. 11:19-21) Dads! Hear me when I say, you are teaching your children each and every day. What you teach is your choice, but you are that child's first impression of God—either harsh and austere or kind and gentle.

Chapter 6

A DOTING FATHER OR A SADISTIC FIEND

Let me borrow a little story from Dr. Loyal Hurley and his thoughts on judgment. “The Riverside Daily Press for Nov, 1940, had an Associated Press report from San Francisco as follows: ‘A father's Curse’ was the legacy left by Dennis Donohue 3rd, fifty four, member of a well known family here, to his two daughters by a former wife, in a will filed for probate in Superior Court. ‘And to my two daughters, Frances Marie and Denise Victoria Donohue’ he wrote in his own hand, ‘by virtue of their unfilial attitude toward a doting father, and because they have repeatedly thwarted my efforts to see them, I leave the sum of one dollar each and a father’s curse. May their respective lives be fraught with misery, unhappiness and poignant sorrow. May their deaths be soon and of a lingering, malign and torturous nature. May their souls rest in hell and suffer the torments of the damned for eternity’.”

Of course such an attitude could not be that of a doting father but of a cruel, sadistic fiend. Because his children had not exhibited a filial attitude toward their father, he was willing to plunge them into the torments of “hell fire” for eternity. How unthinkable vicious and inhuman, yet in ignorance the conventional church system paints our loving Father with the same stroke of the brush. We have all been “unfilial” children, denying Him His rightful place in our lives. Relatively few have repented and invited Him to occupy the throne-room of His own property. Will He, therefore, relegate the rest of His children to a place of endless torment and irreconcilable alienation? This is the God of the “Orthodox Church”. No more terrible insult was ever given to the God of grace.

It is imperative that there resides in our hearts a certainty that there is no unrighteousness with God. To even consider such likelihood will destroy our faith. He is pure beyond any possibility of adulteration. He is just beyond any potential of favoritism. He loves without reservation. He is forgiving apart from any resentment. He accepts, apart from consideration of status or personality. He is perfect, having no need of correction or change. As He has been in eternities past, so shall He forever be.

With these considerations in mind, what loving father would hand his twelve-year-old virgin daughter over to a lecherous old man, expecting that she could in her innocence and weakness, be able to endure the wiles, strength and reasoning of a scheming predator? The answer is obvious. No one in his right mind! Yet our loving Father, knowing all things, placed Adam and Eve at the “mercy” of a conspiring, conniving heartless beast.

Remember! Satan was sitting on the doorstep waiting for the creation of Adam and Eve. He did not just happen to appear in the Garden. God placed him in that paradise before Adam was brought forth. He did so knowing full well that they had neither the experience nor the wisdom to counteract his advances. They simply were no match for that serpent of old. We find the explanation of His action in the eighth chapter of Romans, verses twenty and twenty one. *“For creation (including Adam and Eve) was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.”* What kind of father would do that? I'll tell you what kind; a Father, who being omniscient, could see the end from the beginning and foresaw the necessity of the fall in order that all creation may be enveloped in the ultimate reconciliation. The altar was erected, the fire was lit and the Lamb was slain even before the foundation of the world.

Because of books like “Embracing The Light”, many are of the opinion that everyone will leave this world and float peacefully into that beautiful light of glory. Although I have no bones to pick with the author, there have been multitudes that have not experienced the beautiful light awaiting them but have passed from this life into a screaming hell of torment. When I insist that hell is not eternal, I as well insist that it is real and the flames are agonizing. It will burn away every vestige of the smell of Adam. I believe there is a very real hell here on this earth where men and women writhe in torment day after agonizing day until the rebel is slain within them. If they persist in their path of the renegade, hell still awaits them in the afterlife. It is designed to burn away the dross and impurities, and it is guaranteed to achieve that result. It may take a thousand years or ten millenniums, but the end will be the same—purity.

My mind goes back to the events surrounding little Polly Klaas as she was at a sleepover with two of her friends. A parolee named Richard Allen Davis, who tortured, raped and killed his twelve-year-old victim, kidnapped her before the eyes of her two friends. After Davis was captured and brought to trial, he showed absolutely no remorse but was arrogant and sullen throughout the entire proceedings. Everything in me wanted to see him tortured to death. The question arises. Will he go to hell? Without question! How long will he be there? He will be there as long as it takes to change him from a sinner to a saint. Will he be saved? Of course! When he has been purified from his murderous Adamic nature he then will join the multitude of others that have passed through the same crucible of purification, joining in the praise to our heavenly Father.

I have watched the miser die as selfishly as he lived. Many are the lechers who died as lustful as they passed through this life. The hateful have often remained full of hate to the very end. The agnostic and infidel have remained unchanged as they gazed at the guillotine poised above their necks. This does not alter the glorious design of God's grand scheme one iota. There will come a day when God will be *“All in all”*. (1 Cor. 15:28) Don't try to pin me down to a time frame or a sequence of events. I haven't a clue. I'll let the prophetic prognosticators decide that. I can only trust in what Scripture and God's divine nature teaches me. One will not contradict the other.

Chapter 7

THE CROSS

People have a rather sentimental and impractical attitude concerning the cross. Its symbol has become an extremely popular piece of adornment, hanging about the necks of thugs and in the ears of thieves and murderers. In reality, it matters little whether it is emblazoned with jewels or clad with gold; it yet remains a ruthless enemy to Adam. One has to wonder. If Jesus had been electrocuted, would people wear a little electric chair about their necks or dangle them from their ears? Yet, they may. The worldly mind operates in a state of blind confusion.

It is almost humorous to hear preachers say, "The Holy Spirit is a gentleman. He will never force His way uninvited into any situation." Tell that to Saul of Tarsus. Can't you hear Saul mumbling as he staggers to his feet, blind and terribly shaken after being knocked to the ground. "I thought the Lord was a gentleman." Often they persist, "He is easily offended. If you anger or wound Him, He will leave, never to return." I agree totally that He can be offended, but He will not leave His newly acquired dwelling no matter how much you try to evict Him. He is absolutely unshockable and never caught off guard. Although He may give you the silent treatment for a few days or months, He is as near as a whisper, but you must approach Him on His terms. "*He beareth not the sword in vain*," is not spoken only of civil authorities. He is diligently at work slaying the children of our former ruler (fleshly appetites and ambitions). Just when they think they have learned to co-exist with Him, the Sword does its dreadful work. Many of the children of Adam are completely unaware that they are living on death row. The sword of Damocles swings ever closer to their necks.

When Adam was placed in the Garden, he was the delegated representative for all creation. In other words, he stood as the authoritative substitute, chosen by God to act in our stead, to stand in proxy if you please. Whatever he chose, we chose. Whatever he rejected, we rejected. His fate was our fate. Unlike our congressional representatives, who are elected by the people to act in our stead in the Houses of Congress, Adam was chosen by God to be our surrogate. In order for him to represent us in unlimited corporeality, God, in His unfathomable wisdom, gathered all of creation and incorporated them into this representative man. He merged in this one person the history and future of every living thing. Listen! Adam was actually the two persons who had been separated by divine surgery there in that place called Paradise. When the choice was made to become as gods unto themselves and walk in self-sufficient independence, all of creation was estranged from God and became aliens and strangers to the Holy One. Our representative

had cast his vote for our secession. Therefore, knowingly or not, Adam determined the destiny of every living thing.

When a man leaves Europe and becomes a citizen of the United States, his children will not be European they will be American. As a direct result of the law of “like begetting like” we were all born in sin, saturated with the nature of rebellion and wickedness. We were sinners by disposition, not by choice. Since we were hidden in the loins of Adam, we, as did Noah, Abraham and Moses, cast our vote in favor of secession from the Kingdom of God. Most Christians view this as the greatest calamity to befall the human race. Countless sermons have been preached on the tragedy of the “fall”. In reality, it was not a tragedy at all. It was by far the greatest manifestation of genius the world has ever witnessed. God knew that neither Adam nor any of his seed had the capability of looking past the exterior and seeing the heart of a matter. So apart from the Spirit’s wisdom, man would always choose what appeared to be right as a result of the logic of his mind and what his natural eyes told him. He could do no other. He was locked into this immutable law, **“Like begets like! Everything reproduces after its own kind.”** Being the loving Father that He is, God could not allow men to be the masters of their own fate. In order to bring forth all men in ultimate reconciliation, He must first incorporate them in the person of Adam. He will then treat all men as one man.

As Jesus hung there on that cursed tree of torture and death, an astonishing miracle was transpiring in the realm of the Spirit. God was again gathering together every creature that had breath in its nostrils, those that had made that death-embracing journey with Adam, and wrapped them into the outstretched arms of His dear Son. He took every creature that had been an unsuspecting, if not unwilling, participant in Adam's fall and included them in Jesus' death. After He had finished with humanity and when He had finished with the creatures of the earth, He reached out and with one sweep of His mighty arms harvested every wandering spirit from the realm of darkness and incorporated them into Jesus Christ. Does this abrade against your theology? Read with open hearts the following scriptures.

*“For in Him **all** things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—**all** things have been created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and **in Him all things hold together**. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything. For it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to **reconcile all things to Himself**, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether **things on earth or things in heaven**.”* (Col. 1:16-20) Do you not see the all-encompassing harvest of His mighty love? Only one creature now stands in open defiance to the Father. Disregarding his mighty roars of rebellion, our heavenly Father joined Satan to that innumerable host. “Oh! Now that’s the last straw! I was with you up to this point!” Well, may I ask some questions? Is Satan a created being? Is he one of the invisible spirits in the heavens? Is he included in this vast array of creation? He then must be included in the reconciliation of those things in heaven; those **things** referred to in the

above Scriptures. Last of all He wrapped up in one immense package the Law with all its restrictions, judgments and limitations and slaughtered them all at Calvary. Then as now the power of the cross is an offense to the politics of religion.

Just as Adam before had taken us all into the pit of darkness, Jesus now redeemed us all in His death and resurrection. Not only is “*Christ the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.*” (Rom. 10:4) He is also the end of the carnal man. When Jesus gasped His final breath and cried, “It is finished”; Adam exhaled his final breath in all of us.

“But!” you protest. “Be sensible! Look around you. There is violence, murder, rape, child abuse, drug abuse, spousal abuse, incest, adultery, fornication, lawlessness in the streets, corruption in Washington, political intrigue in the U.N., filth being vomited out of Hollywood, pap pouring from our pulpits, cultural unrest, entire nations being racially and culturally purged, unimaginable brutality, savagery unparalleled in history; and you say Adam's nature died!” The truth is, you are right, and that's only the surface of the ills and evils that permeate our society; however, my Father is not imprisoned in this compartment called time. He ever lives in the present.

Allow me to quote a short statement by A. W. Tozer: “God contains past and future in His all encompassing being. To Him every event has already occurred, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say it is occurring. With Him there can never be a memory of things past nor an expectation of things to come, but only a knowledge of all things past and future as instantaneously present before His mind.”

Since God has neither yesterdays nor tomorrows. He dwells ever present in the here and now and sees you finished—perfect—without a single flaw or defect. I care not that your husband was an abusive drunkard or philanderer, or that your father deserted you as a child and left you homeless and destitute; Jesus Christ took every one of these societal rejects to the grave with Him and brought them forth in His triumphant resurrection. Each will one day stand in glorious perfection proclaiming the boundless grace and love of our precious Lord. That does not mean that He will close His eyes to our sins or ignore the horrible evils that sent His dear Son to the cross. The fires of hell will purge every creature either in this age or the ages to follow; however, God sees it now as already complete. Small wonder every creature, both great and small, prostrates themselves before the throne of the Ancient of Days crying, “Holy, Holy, Holy.”

“A Free Moral Agent”

Many of us have protested that it was unfair that we were incorporated into Adam and by impersonal genealogy born guilty, when we had no choice in the matter whatsoever. On the surface it does seem unfair. But consider this; if we had been given the choice, most of creation would have chosen the wrong path, as they presently have, thereby being lost eternally. That we are free moral agents is exactly what most churches erroneously teach today. Had you been given the prerogative to voice your options in the Garden and not

been impounded in Adam then there would be no assurance of your salvation today. We have the assurance of eternal life because we were enveloped in the person of Jesus Christ—the second Adam—along with the rest of creation. His death was our death. His journey into hell was, likewise, our journey. His resurrection was our resurrection. Just as our journey with Adam was a foregone resolution, even so our expedition with Jesus is an assured reality. The reservations were made before the world was ever formed. Many have erroneously taken their stand that we are delivered **from** death because of His death. Not True! We are not delivered **from** death. We are delivered **through** death. Our participation in His death automatically made us participants in His resurrection. His death was our death! We died with Him! No! More correctly, we died in Him. **We were crucified with Jesus! We were resurrected with Jesus! We are now seated with Jesus in the heavenlies.**

In order to sidestep the beautiful truth of the ultimate reconciliation of all men, there are those who contend that the atonement was not found in the cross. They understand that if they embrace the atonement of the cross, then the truth of universal reconciliation must also be accepted. *“All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” (Isa. 53:6) “Who His own self bear our sins in His own body on the tree.” (1 Pet. 2:24) “Christ should by the grace of God taste death for every man.” (Heb. 2:9)* This is the work that Jesus did on the cross for **everyone**. There is an old southern gospel song called, **“I Should Have Been Crucified”**. Although the song is nice and fits the traditional theology, it misses a critical point. **We were crucified with Him.** When He died, we died. We didn’t escape the death.

Someone used the following story to illustrate a remarkable truth. When a distinguished sculptor was asked, “How do you take a block of marble and end up with such a beautiful likeness of the subject?” His answer was profoundly simple. “I merely chisel away all that does not look like him.” Simply put, he saw the finished product long before he ever made the first chisel mark. Michelangelo saw, from a flawed block of marble that other sculptors had rejected, the magnificent statue of David. Even so, God takes this flawed piece of stone that we are and chisels away all that is not like Him.

I am acquainted with a dear brother who, before starting construction of a house for their dwelling, built one in miniature, complete with kitchen, baths, bedrooms and movable walls. The roof could be lifted off so his wife could move walls, cabinets or closets in this miniature house. When she had completed all the rearranging of the room sizes and kitchen placements etc. to her liking, he erected the house to the exact dimensions and they live there happily to this day. She got to design the house she desired and he had a blueprint, which needed no revisions, from which to build their home.

A good craftsman or artisan always knows what the finished product should look like. He does not “play it by ear”. In the spiritual realm these men are called visionaries, dreamers and mystics. When I say that God sees us perfect, having no blemish nor stain, I do not mean to infer that there will not be a lot of chiseling before that **Day**. Most of our cherished

resources and talents will lie as scattered debris upon the wastes of time while the master Sculptor works in joyous assurance. Many of our most cherished gifts will be washed with bitter tears amid the rubble. Rest assured! The day will come when the sound of the hammer on the chisel will no longer be heard as the Spirit surveys His work with a smile.

Many feel that this message frees a person from responsibility; and regardless of his or her lifestyle, they can waltz right into the portals of glory, enjoying both the pleasures of sin and the joys of heaven. Nothing could be further from the truth! Every man or woman that persists in living their life in riotous rebellion will find the gaping jaws of hell awaiting them. The fires will eventually purge them of every impurity. Hell is a vital necessity before heaven can become a glorious reality. The fact for which we contend is that hell is not eternal.

When we speak of ultimate reconciliation, I can fully understand the outrage and disbelief of the average Christian because our entire lives have been filled with the sermons and testimonies that, in fact, refute the witness of the Bible. This message flies in the face of every evangelistic sermon we've ever heard. All our Christian experience has been programmed to accept the joys of eternal heaven or the agonies of an everlasting hell. Human logic embraces the theory that man is a free moral agent. This gives us the godlike position of independence and masters of our own fate. If that is true, how did you make your choice in the Garden of Eden? Were you present to make your opinions known? Of course you weren't! No one consulted with you at all. Your position was determined before ever you were born. Who gets to choose where he shall be born or for that matter, who shall be his or her parents? Did you choose which sex or color you wanted to be? I think not! True, there are numerous things we are responsible for in making choices and or decisions that will greatly affect our station in the kingdom of God. I believe we can choose to remain strangers, as it were, to God, never knowing Him as the tender loving Father many have found Him to be. We can sing about Him, talk about Him and even preach about Him, yet never know Him in an intimate, life-producing relationship. This walk is chocked-full of choices but the matter of your eventual salvation is not one of them.

CHAPTER 8

WHEN IS ALL—ALL?

*“The last enemy that will be abolished is death. For He (God) has put all things in subjection under His (Jesus) feet. But when He (God) says, ‘All things are put in subjection,’ it is evident that He (God) is excepted Who put all things in subjection to Him (Jesus). And when **all things** are subjected to Him (Jesus), then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One (God) who subjected all things to Him (Jesus) that God may be **all in all**.”* (1 Cor. 15:26,28) As we with open hearts plumb the depths of this scripture we readily see that there are no exceptions in this victory. No one has been left out. Not one being in His vast universe is standing on the outside of His all-encompassing embrace. He will be **ALL IN ALL**, not all in some or some in all but **ALL IN ALL**.

Jesus made an interesting statement in His last public discourse. *“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.”* (John 12:32) Now we've all heard numerous sermons preached from this portion of scripture. The interpretations being that if Jesus is lifted up on the cross or is elevated in praise, He will have a magnetic appeal to all men, attracting mankind to His irresistible personality. These are good points and fall within the correct rendition of the scripture, yet they do not give the perfect translation of this phrase. The word “draw” is taken from a Greek word “helkuo” meaning to drag. So if we read this *“And I, if I be lifted up will **drag** all men to Myself”*, it gives us an entirely different meaning. On the one hand, we see Jesus appealing to men to follow Him, begging them to give Him just a chance (this is how our invitations are extended); whereas on the other hand, we see this Jesus not as a simple shepherd pleading with man to come and be saved, but as a sovereign king dragging us, often against our wills, out of the pit of destruction unto His holy embrace. “That could never happen. He will not violate man’s will!” men say. Go to the hospital and visit the man who lingers at death’s door as a result of an accident. Yesterday he was an atheist. Today he prays with extreme devotion, having been dragged into the presence of God through divine intervention. Paul and Jacob are not the only men who have been violently attacked by the “Hound of heaven”. I once had a small dog that had wandered onto the street and was hit by a car. I picked up this badly wounded little thing only to have it violently bite me. How often we fight God as He drags us out of the place of destruction. In our pain, we resist the cure.

I used to watch the old swashbuckling adventures of the renowned swordsmen of the silver screen. I sat transfixed as John Barrymore, Douglas Fairbanks Jr. or Errol Flynn would do their gymnastics over tables, up and down stairs, all the while dodging objects being hurled in their direction. At last their adversary was pinned to the wall, the foil being whipped from their hand by a skillful flick of the steel. They now stood helpless before the master of the

sword. The Holy One does no less. We rebel. We resist. Every defense we raise is torn from our grasp. The Rider on the white horse runs us down and stands with the sword of the Spirit at our neck. He pursues us in dedicated certainty until we have been backed right into the kingdom of God. The majority of us did not come willingly. Most of us came screaming and kicking every step of the way for we loved the darkness and filth in which we wallowed. The raven that Noah released did not return to him because it relished the carrion floating on the water. It found its food and relaxation in that abundance of filth. Carnal man always resists and flees from God. He will always hide among the trees attempting to cover his nakedness with some flimsy self-made fig leaf. He defies every attempt of anyone to rule over him. Paul refers to this as a war between the flesh and Spirit. I've listened to many Christians testify of how God delivered them from the miry pit; however, they did so with almost a drool on their lips, salivating over some of the many memories they still cherished. Obviously, the carnal man was still asserting his presence. Lot's wife loved her memories.

*"Therefore also God hath highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus **every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**"* (Phil. 2:9-11) Paul repeats this affirmation again in Romans 14:11, *"As I live, says the Lord, **every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God.**"* This is not, as some contend, a pipe dream of Paul's. It is a direct quote from Isaiah. *"I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me, **every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance.**"* (Isaiah 45:23) NAS To me this appears to be all-inclusive. It seems there are none excluded, and the praise that comes from their lips is a praise that glorifies the Father. Threats of punishment or coercion of will does not extract it. This worship erupts spontaneously from hearts that have been changed not some forced adulation extracted from trembling prisoners. There has occurred a transformation, whether in this life or beyond is really not important. The important thing is that every creature openly bows in worshipful adoration.

*"And I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.' **And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all the things in them, I heard saying, 'To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever'.**"* (Rev. 5:11-13) It does not appear that anyone has been excluded in this powerful witness to the truth. Whether they are locked up in some prison in the heavens or in the earth or on the sea or under the earth, they were all included, without one exception. Isn't that glorious? Hallelujah! When Jesus stood before the Father after His resurrection and entered into the Holiest Place in the heavenlies, bearing His own blood, He could victoriously report, "Father, I have lost none."

Our forefathers in the faith have characterized our Father as a harsh, austere, monstrous sort of God, demanding sacrifices to be thrown into the fires of exacting extremes, or burned upon altars of outrageous worship. Promises of severe retribution hung over the heads of all that did not scrape and bow in slavish obeisance. With a raised club He waited at every bend in the road or around each corner to give you your just dues for stumbling in the path. As one young lad expressed it, "God is someone who's always spying on us to see if we're having any fun so he can put a stop to it."

If you should ask most Christians this question, "In the hereafter, who would you prefer as your judge, Jesus Christ or God Almighty?" Most would say, "Jesus". "Why?" "Because Jesus is nice and forgiving and never condemns, while God is distant and harsh and severe." However Jesus said, *"When you've seen Me, you've seen the Father."* Jesus came to reveal the Father to a world that had and still has a warped idea of His person. The Father has always been tender, loving, forgiving, gentle, kind and longsuffering. If He was not so, we would all have been annihilated long ago.

In Israel's settling of the land of Canaan, there was a heathen god called Molech. In their heathen worship, the firstborn of every family was dedicated to the fire. In other words, that beautiful newborn son was burned as an offering to Molech in order that the remainder of the family would be saved. It is significant that one was offered to the fires while the many went free. This is a counterfeit of the harvest of the first-fruit in which the first sheaves of the field were gathered and waved before the Lord. In accepting the first-fruit of the field, the Lord is accepting the whole field. He doesn't accept the first-fruit and burn the rest of the field. *"If the first piece of dough be holy, the lump is also; and if the root be holy, the branches are too."* (Rom. 11:16) In this instance, Molech extended more grace than the modern church ascribes to God, whom they believe is willing to consign the multitudes to an everlasting fire while only the few are saved.

How could we be so diverse in our opinions? Is it because we have had a warped view of what hell actually is, where it is and its purpose for existing? If God is so loving, so compassionate and so just, why does He not just eradicate those who have refused or ignored His overtures? There are some denominations that preach that the unjust will be burned as the chaff. In this way they escape the problem of ultimate reconciliation. If this were to happen, then there would be an even greater problem. Paul makes this statement, *"For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven; inasmuch as we, having put it on, shall not be found naked. For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed, but to be clothed, in order that what is mortal may be swallowed up in life."* (2 Cor. 5:2-4) Paul says that if a body has not been prepared in the heavenlies, then when he or she dies that person would be an unclothed or naked spirit. On the other hand, why would God require them to spend an eternity in indescribable anguish? Is it some element of revenge that He must enforce to balance the requirements of justice? I think not! God doesn't get His feelings hurt nor does He carry a grudge. These are human traits and as such, man has

slipped them into the interpretation of the Bible. We have brought God down to our level. It is because of our unforgiving spirit, not His, that we demand a hundred-fold retribution where people “pay up” for their sins. When Jesus was rejected, He wept, but not for Himself. When we are rejected, we become angry and demand punishment. If we loved the world with the same intensity God exercises, we wouldn't be so willing to relegate people to hell for eternity. **Those people who are so interested in saving the world are the same ones who become so indignant when you contend that that is exactly what God's intentions are.**

In Romans nine, Paul makes a classic defense of God's actions as he attempts to answer some of the questions and objections of the new Christians in Rome. They failed to grasp the reason behind God's declaration concerning Jacob and Esau. *“There was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac; for though the twins were not yet born, and had not done anything good or bad, in order that God's purpose according to His choice might stand, not because of works, but because of Him who calls, it was said to her, ‘The older will serve the younger.’ Just as it is written, ‘Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.’ What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! For He says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.’ **So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.**”* (Romans 9:10-16) What happened to the free will of man? God ignores our foolish theology and chooses whom He wills in His time. God passed over men so appealing, that even though they mightily impressed the prophet Samuel, He chose a ruddy complexioned shepherd lad to be king over His people. God has not changed. He passes over the learned, the lettered, the educated, the intellectual and strikingly handsome to pour His anointing oil upon a simple unschooled country lad or a product of the city's ghetto that they might bear His end-time message to the hungry masses. **The truth rarely finds room to abide in the house of the intellectual giant.** It is usually birthed in the manger and raised in poverty and obscurity.

As we examine this, we will have to admit that our sympathy is more aligned with the thinking of the Romans. Why would God make an arbitrary distinction between these two little ones while they were still in the womb of Rebekah? Before either child was born or knew good from evil, God declared with shocking finality, *“I have loved you,” says the Lord. But you say, “How hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother?” declares the Lord. “Yet I have loved Jacob, but I have hated Esau, and I have made his mountains a desolation and appointed his inheritance for jackals of the wilderness.” Though Edom (Esau) says, “We have been beaten down, but we will return and build up the ruins;” ‘thus says the Lord of hosts,’ “They may build, but I will tear down; and men will call them the wicked territory, and the people with whom the Lord is indignant **forever.**”* (Malachi 1:2-4)

We are shocked and appalled at God's apparent indifference to life. He slays men by hundreds of thousands with no remorse nor sense of loss for His creation. He sends a flood and wipes out literally millions of people. Men, women, children and countless innocent

little babies are the victims of His displeasure. How could He do that? Let me emphatically declare. Simply because a man departs this life does not mean that God is through with him or that this life holds our only hope or that physical death spells the end of man's chances of relationship with his Creator. Although Abraham had made adequate intercession for the inhabitants of Sodom, yet because there could not be found even ten righteous persons in the entire city, God rained fire and brimstone out of heaven upon the people and destroyed them all. Among the victims of God's wrath were the countless children and babies. There were no survivors with the exception of Lot and his two daughters. The fire of God's wrath destroyed all of Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities of the valley. Let us read a portion of scripture found in the book of Ezekiel. *"And your sisters, Sodom and her daughters and Samaria with her daughters, will return to their former state, and you with your daughters will return to your former state."* (Ezekiel 16:55) The question is how can Sodom be returned to her former state when she was utterly destroyed? If in this life only we have hope, what hope can Sodom enjoy after her absolute obliteration? I tell you, God is not bound to this brief span of time. There are yet countless ages in which He shall complete His purposes. Restitution, restoration or reconciliation is a work only God can do, and He will only do it in His own good time.

A brilliant attorney never asks a question from a witness that he does not already know the answer. He doesn't like surprises. Our all wise Father never takes a chance. He is not a gambler. He never allows the future of His divine vision to hinge on the whims of weak and vacillating men. He could make that amazing statement regarding Jacob and Esau because their destinies were designed in the "board room" of heaven in the eternities past. Jacob's spirit had been sent forth from God to fulfill a specific purpose. Esau's spirit had been fashioned to perform exactly as God had designed it. These were representative men. Esau was a man of the flesh. His entire demeanor was directed toward fulfilling the physical appetites. He had little or no regard for God or the things of the Spirit; yet he would be held in high esteem today as a man's man. Although Jacob had many flaws in the flesh and had to be put through God's "contriting machine", he had a heart for the things of God. This is how God created him. Have you ever wondered why you have such a hunger for God and His kingdom while your brother or sister shows absolutely no interest in the Spiritual realm? Let me assure you, that is no accident. You do not stumble upon this pathway. *"And a highway will be there, a roadway, and it will be called the highway of holiness. The unclean will not travel on it, but it will be for him who walks that way, and a wayfaring man though a fool, will not wander on it."* (Isa. 35:8) In other words, this is not a highway one will blindly stumble across. If one has found this highway, it has been by divine destiny.

When our nation was being settled, all those folk from New England didn't suddenly pick up and move west. No! Out of the varied mixture of preachers and prostitutes, pure and profane, there were those who were different from the rest—hardy souls, who had a deep longing for a new land. They were pioneers, pilgrims, explorers, trappers and mountain men. They dared to leave the comforts and safety of the "walled cities" to search for a new land. Something within drove them mile after mile through prairies and burning deserts,

over snow-capped mountains, fording raging rivers, facing hostile beasts and inhospitable people. They pushed ever farther west until they reached the Pacific ocean. Only then did they stop. It is no different in the economy of God. He chooses, in certain ages (dispensations), men of distinction to accomplish a certain phase of His blueprint. These men do not follow the well-worn paths of conformity and accepted theology. They are dreamers, visionaries and men whose hearts are in another land. They may have their feet on the ground but their hearts are in the heavens. They find it difficult to “settle down” for their aspirations are rooted in the unseen things of the Spirit.

Roofers do not arrive on the job site the first day of construction. After those men who shoot the boundaries and elevation have followed the architect’s vision, there arrives on the building site the heavy equipment and men who operate those huge beasts as skillfully as a surgeon using a scalpel, uprooting trees and moving mountains of dirt. Then come the carpenters, cement men, steel workers, electricians, wallboard hangers, etc. Each doing the job he was trained to do. Perhaps a “dozer” operator can do electrical work or a carpenter may be able to lay tile, but they normally operate within the area of their own expertise. We have the mistaken idea that God is going to begin and finish this kingdom thing in one grand and glorious dispensation. He didn’t create the heavens and earth that way, nor will He finish the “westward expansion” with miners and trappers.

The writer of the book of Acts records an exceptional declaration concerning the day in which we live. *“Simeon hath related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name. And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written, ‘After these things I will return, and I will rebuild the Tabernacle of David which has fallen, and I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, **in order that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by My name.**’ (Acts 15:14-17) In that day I will raise up the fallen booth of David, and wall up its breaches; I will also raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old; that they may possess **the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by My name,**’ declares the Lord who does this.”* (Rom. 9:11,12)

In these passages, we understand how God called out from among the Gentiles a people to bear His name. How long this endeavor will last, I’m sure I don’t know, but at least 2000 years. After He has separated a Gentile people (non-Israel) who reflect His nature and character, then *“I will return and rebuild the Tabernacle of David, which has fallen down.”* If I err not, I believe the Tabernacle of David has to do with the natural Israel, which was cut off from the main olive tree. Paul assures us in the eleventh chapter of Romans, that when the fullness of the Gentiles has come, the natural olive branch (Israel) will be grafted back into the tree from whence it was severed.

The next step is extremely important, for Acts 15:17 begins with, *“**In order that...**”* In other words, all that was done before was a necessary prelude or preparation to that which follows. *“**In order that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord...**”* Amos contains an

identical promise. *“I will raise up the fallen booth of David...that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by My name.”* Remember now, this Edom whom the Lord shall save, is the same Edom whom He said He hated. *“Jacob have I loved but Esau (Edom) have I hated.”*

God goes to incredible lengths of time and human experience to give us a clear portrayal of His dislikes for the fleshly man and his appetites and of His approval of the Spiritual man. This is precisely what the two trees in the garden represent. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil is nothing more than the carnal mind with all its pride, self-sufficiency, independence, and its worldly, sensual appetites. The tree of life has to do with the mind of Christ or that mind which was in Christ. Paul admonishes us with these words, *“To be carnally minded is death, but to be Spiritually minded is life and peace.”* If the carnal mind is death and the *“last enemy to be conquered (destroyed) is death”*, could he not be speaking of the death of the carnal mind with all its fleshly desires rather than physical death that we so often believe it to be?

“Tenderness and Hardness—Both from the Same God”

Romans 9:17,18 enforces our comprehension of how God reigns supremely in heaven and in earth. For the Scripture speaks regarding Pharaoh, *“For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth. So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.”* Again this truth is asserted, *“I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion. So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.”* (Romans 9:15,16) This leaves the “free will of man” hanging out there on the tenuous thread of human fancy.

God spoke to Moses regarding Pharaoh, *“When you go back to Egypt see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your power; but I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go.”* (Ex. 4:21) *“You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall speak to Pharaoh that he let the sons of Israel go out of the land, but I will harden Pharaoh’s heart that I may multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt.”* (Ex. 7:2,3) *“And the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart and he did not listen to them.”* (Ex. 9:12) *“Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants.’”* (Ex. 10:1) *“But the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart.”* (Ex. 10:20- 27; 14:4,8) Now let us be reasonable for just a moment. If the Lord hardens your heart, you are not going to be nice and tenderhearted, are you? You couldn’t be tender even if that was your nature. Permit me to ask you a perplexing question. **Did Pharaoh do the will of God concerning Israel?** I believe you will agree he performed it to the letter. God used Pharaoh as a crucible of fire and hardship in order to make Israel willing to return to the land of Canaan. Israel needed help. They were like content little birds in a nest, and they were not about to leave by their own choice. They would never have left the only home they had ever known to embark on this journey

to a strange land had the Pharaoh of Joseph still been alive; but remember, this is a few hundred years after Joseph. None of these people had known anything outside of Egypt. Their total experience was wrapped up in this land. Hear me! If Pharaoh was the weapon—the tool—the fire God used to crowd Israel back to Canaan, do you think this same Pharaoh will be relegated to the fires of hell to burn eternally, without hope of recovery? I think not! Especially when it was God Himself who hardened him.

CHAPTER 9

FIRE—THE CRUCIBLE OF GOD

Ahab, king of Israel, had degenerated into a weak, wicked and selfish ruler, due in part to his corrupt wife, Jezebel. Remember! Kings were supposed to be a representative of God to the people. Ahab had been anything but a reflection of God. So God purposed to slay king Ahab. Micaiah, the prophet, reveals amazing insight into the realm of the Spirit when he gives us this remarkable revelation. *“I saw the Lord sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by Him, on His right and on His left. And the Lord said, ‘Who will entice Ahab to go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?’ And one said this while another said that. Then a spirit came forward and stood before the Lord and said, ‘I will entice him.’ And the Lord said unto him, ‘How’. And he said, ‘I will go out and be a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all of his prophets.’ Then the **Lord** said, ‘You are to entice him and also prevail. Go and do so.’ Now therefore the **Lord** has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; and the Lord has proclaimed disaster against you.”* (1 Kings 22:19-23)

If anyone believes that Satan or demons have a free hand, this should prove otherwise. Doesn't this remind you of Job? In that account, the sons of God presented themselves before God to give account of their activities. Satan was there in their midst and was asked the question, “What have you been doing?” “Give an account of your activities.” God had to approve all the activity of Satan's operations. Remember that Satan operates in the permissive will of God. He didn't seem overly anxious to get involved with Job. God Himself sent the demon that went to entice Ahab. Many people will object and declare with passionate fervor, “Our Father would never use sickness or demons to perform His will!” Let me assure you, God will use **anything** and **everything** that is needed to correct and mold His children into His image. Let me further guarantee. **He will succeed in His objective**, if not in this age then in an age to come.

In case you believe that this is strictly an Old Testament phenomenon, Paul's experience should dispel any inclination in this direction. *“And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, **there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan**, to buffet me--to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He has said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness’.”* (2 Cor. 12:7-9) Notice! The messenger of Satan (a demon) was given by God as a daily source of discomfort and/or irritation to continually remind Paul that the authority and power of his ministry lay, not in his intellectual powers, of which he had much, but in the revelation of the Master. I wonder how many of God's people are endeavoring to rid themselves of a God-given “companion” by weekly visits to the family physician or a daily consumption of the latest wonder drug?

Jesus tells us of a man who owed an insurmountable debt of about \$10,000,000. As he begged for forgiveness from his lord, his master freely forgave the entire debt. He, in turn went to one of his servants, who owed him eighteen cents and demanded payment. His servant begged for time to pay, but he would not grant it. Instead he threw him into a debtor's prison until the debt should be paid. This despicable action came to the attention of his own lord who called him to account for his actions. His own lord rebuked him with these words; *"You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you entreated me. Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow-slave, even as I had mercy on you?"* And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers to be tormented until the last penny of the debt was paid. Now please hear this last verse, and may God imprint it indelibly into your spirit. *"So shall **My heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.**"* (Matt. 18:23-35) **Attention!** It is the heavenly Father who passes sentence. This is the same loving, gentle, compassionate Father who healed the broken hearted, loosed the captives from the prison-house, opened the blinded eyes, stanchd the flow of blood from the non-Jewish woman, raised the dead and now looses the "hounds of hell" on the transgressor. The tormentors do His bidding. This is indeed tough love.

There was a time when I thought that this was a reference to the lake of fire where men were tormented eternally after death. Not so! This hell that Jesus is referring to is a very real existence in the here and now where the tormentors are demons sent forth from the presence of a loving Father to correct our selfish, greedy, headstrong, independent walk. Our Father is determined that not one of His children shall perish. The Lord spoke a word deep into my spirit one day that really got my attention. He said, **"The judgments of God are not punitive--but corrective."** Many parents punish their children simply to inflict pain. The child has caused them pain so they want to repay pain for pain, a tooth for a tooth. God's punishments are never to inflict pain for pain's sake. If we will submit to the purification process with a yielded will, the pain that arises from punishment will be understood to be corrective measures from the Lord. As we have stated before, gold is not extracted and purified apart from the crushing and the fires. Now that is indeed painful, but it is not punishment to merely inflict pain.

Do you believe hell is a place where we are afflicted with intense pain because God wants to hurt us? Absolutely not! In the parable we noted, taken from Matthew eighteen, Jesus said, *"Turn him over to the tormentors until the debt is paid in full."* If hell is eternal and there is no escaping--how can we pay a debt in full measure? Or for that matter, how can we pay even the least part of a debt? If the punishment lasts forever, then it is apparent that the debt has not been satisfied. Jesus bore the debt of our sin on the cross. *"Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."* Not only did He bear your sin, but He bore the sin of the entire world; however, **He did not bear the pain of our correction.** Pain and discomfort are more often than not, a necessary ingredient of our processing.

Considering this place called hell, is it an actual geographical place or is it a condition of torment designed to bring correction and repentance? It eventuates to this simple choice. Is it a place or a condition? I contend that it is a means of correction; therefore, it is unlikely that it is geographic and cannot be eternal. It lasts only so long as the need remains for change.

Let us observe a remarkable passage from the book of Luke. Jesus had been teaching the disciples the importance of being ever alert and ready for the appearing of the Master. Peter asked the question, *“Lord, are you addressing this parable to us or to everyone else as well?”* And the Lord said, *“Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time, Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you, that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But if that slave says in his heart, ‘My master will be a long time in coming,’ and begins to beat the slaves, both men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk; the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him, and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces, and assign him a place with the unbelievers. And that slave who knew his master’s will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, shall **receive many lashes**, but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will **receive but few**. And from everyone who has been given much shall much be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more. **I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled.**”* (Luke 12:41-49) Let us not glide swiftly over this last statement but ask ourselves this question. What kind of fire was Jesus so anxious to cast upon the earth? Of course, it was the Holy Ghost and fire cast upon the earth on the day of Pentecost; however, this is also the same fire spoken of by the old prophet Malachi. *“But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap. And He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the Lord offerings in righteousness.”* (Mal. 3:2,3) Notice! These are priests who are being put through the fire!

If Luke 12 is a parable of heaven and hell, of rewards and punishment (which most of the church believes), the faithful will be enriched with food and rations to be allotted to slaves of lesser authority. This seems to be part of their (the faithful) reward. On the other hand, the slothful and deceitful servant will be beaten with many stripes. This we understand to be hell. Then there are those who commit sins just as heinous, but they are beaten with fewer stripes because of their ignorance? Is hell less hot for these, the ignorant, or is it of less duration? If the punishment is corrective, then it cannot be eternal or everlasting. It must be for an age or a time period. It must be to bring correct understanding and purging from all impurities.

We have been called to be a kingdom of priests unto the Lord. (Rev. 5:10) Will we have to endure the smelter’s fire as the sons of Levi? Will the fire of God be our portion? Of course! God has always been a God of fire. It was a pillar of fire that rested over the

Israelites at night. It was the God of fire who responded to the prayer of Elijah. It was with fire the Holy Ghost descended on the day of Pentecost. The fire is not to make you shake and bake but to burn away the dross that imprisons and hides the glory of the Lord. Is it any wonder that Jesus was anxious for that fire to be started? He realized that this fiery furnace was necessary to bring forth the gold and silver in its purity.

When we contend that the “hell” of the New Testament is corrective and therefore of a certain duration, there immediately arises a cacophony of objections because of the words “everlasting”, “eternal”, “forever and ever”, etc. which are used to describe the torments of hell. How can something be forever and yet have an end? How can anything be eternal and yet last only an age? These are logical questions that need to be addressed.

Let us first take a glimpse into church history and see how our Bible came into being. Most sincere students of the scriptures will agree that in the original text, the scriptures are without error, having no contradictions; however, in the numerous translations there resides a multitude of errors. These errors occurred because those men who were the translators did so either out of ignorance or because it agreed more perfectly with their religious bias and prevailing doctrinal theology. Their fingerprints are everywhere. Words have been added to make the thought flow. Phrases have been altered because the original text contradicted their understanding of the Scriptures. This is exactly what happened when the original texts were translated into the Latin and when the Latin Vulgate was translated into the English version.

King James 1 was the first Stuart King of England. He believed in the divine right of kings, the belief that kings get the right to rule from God rather than from the consent or choice of the people. He supported the Anglican Church and sponsored a translation of the Bible in 1611 that is now known as the King James Version. However, he also persecuted certain Protestant groups such as the Puritans and even had many dissenters put to death because they did not worship according to his doctrine. Some of these Puritans migrated to America in 1620 and founded the Plymouth Colony. You must understand! This man had been raised in the house of the Roman Catholic Church. His doctrine and theology was basically from a Romish mindset.

In England, the reformation was established by an act of state. The immediate cause for the break with the Roman Catholic Church was the refusal of Pope Clement V11 to annul (cancel) the marriage of King Henry V111 to his first wife because she had borne him no son as a successor to the throne. In 1534, Parliament passed the Act of Supremacy, which made the monarch the head of the church in England. Henry V111 remained fundamentally a Roman Catholic. He had simply deposed of the Pope and took his place as the “Vicar of Christ” in England. King James 1 was essentially no different than Henry V111. He was, in all aspects, a Roman Catholic in faith and theology. The translators of the Latin Bible were warned not to interpret anything which would be embarrassing to the Church; consequently, they adhered to the Roman doctrine of everlasting punishment, which the Latin church had used as a threat to intimidate and control its disciples.

Remember! Jesus never used fear as a means of gathering followers. **He used love.** Those who follow Jesus in purity of life always will do so out of love. Fear of hell is never able to produce purity. It will keep one apparently walking the straight and narrow while their minds are roaming the alleys of the ghettos feeding from the filth of the discarded garbage. It reproduces a people who are ever in need of repentance, rededication and renewal, always seeking forgiveness while struggling to make heaven.

I cannot take the time nor the space to enumerate every scripture containing eternal, everlasting, forever and ever, etc; but almost without exception they are translated from a Greek word "**Aionios**" or a Hebrew word "**olam**", which mean "age-lasting". We derive our word eon from the same Greek word, "**aionios**". Eon is not everlasting. It is for a long duration of time, but it has a beginning and an end. If you use Strong's concordance exclusively, you will wind up confused. These people have the same mind set as the KJV translators. Young's Analytical Concordance is a better reference in my opinion. Better still is the Concordant version of the New Testament. I am reluctant to go into minute detail to prove my point. If hunger and thirst for truth cannot compel one to investigate the hidden treasure, intellect and reason stand no chance whatsoever. Persuasive argument only makes proselytes of hell. Revelation transforms men into saints.

I have listened to the indignant protests coming from God's "defenders of the Word". "If hell is temporary and lasts only for an age--or a period of time when all men will eventually be saved, then why not live it up now? Why not drink life's cup to the fullest?" In reality that is an incredibly foolish statement. Why do we not tell that young son or daughter, "Forget the rules and laws of the government? Live exactly as you wish. Drink, rob, steal, murder, engage in any deviate sexual behavior you desire, whatever turns you on, do it. You may go to prison, but you'll get out in twenty or thirty years. You'll eventually be free." How stupid could one be? Because of our love for that young one, we'll do everything within our power to keep them out of that place where the daily menu is rape, anger, fear, torture and unceasing degradation. That place is called a "correctional institution". Its purpose is to change the ways the rebels think and live. Hell is designed to change a person, not imprison them forever. Please tell me why anyone would ever choose to have that as a part of their future.

"The Law"

To that person who has not followed on to know the Lord, God will be perceived as having two natures because we do not understand the two inseparable links of our salvation. One of those links is the Law and the other is Gospel. Each deals with the two lies Satan told Adam in the Garden of Eden. One of the lies was about God. Satan accused God of lying when He said Adam would die if he ate of the forbidden tree and that God begrudged him a place of co-authority. The other lie had to do with man. Satan beguiled Adam with the lie that he could become like God through self-will and independent struggle. We still see much of the Christian world is deeply involved in endless "doing" in order to find favor with God. Their independent nature still exalts itself in trying to gain heaven through self-effort.

God deals with both lies in scripture. The Law deals with man in showing him the utter futility of any person ever lifting himself up by his own bootstraps. The Law condemns man at every turn and leaves him in a state of frustration and despair. The Law with its myriad rules and commandments was impossible to keep. The lie of Satan was exposed. Man could not be holy or accepted by God through self-effort. The Gospel, on the other hand, reveals God's infinite love. It shows the lengths to which our Heavenly Father will go to impart His love, His nature and ultimately even His throne. There seems to be a glaring contradiction between the Old Testament and the New Covenant; yet they are, in reality, two sides of the same coin.

John the Baptist, who represents the Law, preached repentance from Satan's lie about man. There must be a rejection of and repentance from the idea that we, through self-effort, can affect one iota of change. While with much pressure and effort, I once tried to change a person I knew, the Lord interrupted my agonizing with these words, “**You** cannot change **anyone**.” Before I could get that statement digested He continued, “You can’t even change yourself.” I could reluctantly accept the fact that I could not change anyone else, but I was positive that with much effort and discipline I could perform some sort of metamorphic change in myself. This is nothing less than delusive pride.

Jesus asked the question, “*Can a man, by taking thought, add one cubit to his stature?*” The answer goes without saying. There must be a preaching of the Law to expose our sinful state to ourselves. Unless and until there is a recognition of our utter depravity and helplessness, there will be no repentance, hence no sense of urgency to call upon Him who is the answer to our problem. Many preachers—people—churches never get beyond the screaming, “*Except you repent*” message. This is only step one. It is needful and positively necessary; nevertheless, this message by itself will not save anyone. It is an invitation to The Way. If we view God from the perspective of Law, He appears harsh, demanding, implacable, bloodthirsty, unforgiving and unfeeling. If this is your idea of God, you are still under Law.

The gospel deals with the lie concerning God’s grudging man a place with Him. The gospel, through Jesus Christ, reveals the fathomless depths of God's love and purposes for man. He will forgive the habitual adulterer. He will deliver the raging demoniac. He will accept the greedy tax collector. He will fellowship with sinners. He will embrace the thieves and malefactors. He will seek out the lost and straying sheep and bear it tenderly back to the fold. He will forgive the paralytic his sins; although, he hasn't even asked to be forgiven. He will feed the hungry, heal the sick and wash the feet of weary disciples as He stoops to minister to the poor wretched masses. This is the gospel. This is the good news.

This is the goal of the Law. To those who walk in Christ Jesus, there is no condemnation. The Law has accomplished its purpose; and now under the umbrella of gospel (grace), we walk in freedom. However, if any persists in willful sin, the Law will suddenly appear and hammer you with guilt and condemnation. The Law ever lurks nearby to escort you back to Jesus Christ and the way of gospel.

To live under the demands of the Law leaves one in perpetual turmoil, never finding absolute peace. Its demands are too overwhelming. Its goals are too idealistic. Perfectionism is altogether impossible. Despair is the ultimate result. As Law is applied correctly, it will lead us, yea! Drive us to Christ. This is its aim. It is our “child-conductor”. It does not unveil to us the whole portrait of God; rather it reveals the true condition of man in his fallen state. I did not learn God from the Law. I learned about sin. Paul is very specific when he states, *“I had not known sin, but by the law; for I had not known lust except the law had said, ‘Thou shalt not covet...’ For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.”* (Rom. 7:7-11) The law condemns and slays us. **It does not annihilate us.** Jesus said, *“Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope.”* (John 5:45) Jesus promised them that Moses (Law) would accuse them before the Father. It will at the same time accuse you to you. As on a movie screen, it will project before you your every flaw and weakness.

“Revival or Intimacy”

Let us briefly examine a portion of scripture with which most of us are familiar. *“He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord.”* (Deut. 8:3) Notice! The manna was given, not to satisfy but to sustain. It was designed to make them hungry and thirsty, not for the garlic and leeks of Egypt but for more of the Father. Instead, they lusted after the melons and meat of the prison from which they had just recently escaped. Today, God visits us with seasons of refreshing and revival; but these are designed to create a deeper hunger for Him, not to replicate yesterday's move of the Spirit. Each move of God should make us run after Him with greater fervor. Moses (Law) cannot bring you into Canaan, which is the overcoming life. To enter the overcoming life, you must not try to duplicate last Sunday's service or last month's revival. Let Moses die in the wilderness while you die in the baptism of Jordan to that wilderness life. Moses will lead you wandering year after year in a place of desert and thirst arguing over Scriptures and ever debating theology and doctrine. The Law and Gospel appear in glaring contradistinction; yet they are inextricably woven together. One condemns, while the other justifies. One slays while the other resurrects. One produces death while the other brings forth life.

Adam was cast out of the Garden of Eden; and at the entrance to the garden, there was placed an angel with a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the Garden. In order for us to partake of the Tree of Life, which dwells in the midst of the Garden, we must pass by this angel with the flaming sword. We seem to entertain the mentality that we are forever forbidden from entering again into the garden of Paradise.

Not true! But as we enter into the place of the Tree of Life, we are thrust through with the sword of fire, which lays the axe to the root of the old tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The life of earth and hell must be slain in us. *“Behold, the Lord will come with fire...and His rebuke with flames of fire, for the Lord will execute judgment by fire and His sword on **all** flesh; and those slain by the Lord will be many.”* (Isa. 66:15,16) We find in the book of Revelation that a sword proceeded out of the mouth of this one who was called the Word. This sword slew the inhabitants of the earth with a great slaughter. If we will consider how the Lamb makes war, it appears almost ludicrous. Can you imagine a lamb with a sword doing battle? The lamb is one of the most defenseless of all the animals. It has no fangs, claws nor armor of defense. It is not swift of foot nor does it have a coat of camouflage that it may hide in the background. It sends an open invitation to every predator that it is an easy meal. Is it any wonder that in the book of the Apocalypse there are always those armies gathering to make war with the Lamb? It appears to be such an easy victory. The martyrs of Christ have always been those defenseless ones who sang in their dying and apparently lost the battle; but in their dying, they won the victory over their enemies. There was an unseen sword that slew those who would eradicate and obliterate these “helpless” lambs. Many were the executioners who, after burning Christian at the stake or crucifying them, embraced the lowly Jesus as their Lord. Taken in context with the sword at the entrance to the Garden of Eden, the sword of the Lord on all flesh in Isaiah and the sword of the Lord in Revelation, we are brought to the conclusion that the sword of the Lord is the Word of the Lord; and His slayings are like the slaying of Saul on his way to Damascus. Let me reiterate. **The slayings of the Lord are not annihilation.**

“Scripture vs. Revelation”

We can never know the mind of the Lord through the Scripture alone. In fact, the Scripture through misinterpretation may even harden us to the truth. Only by the Spirit can we really understand the thoughts of God. Those old Pharisees were hardened to the truth; although, they knew the letter of the law perfectly. Paul gives us the solution when he says, *“The letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life.”* (2 Cor. 3:6) That is precisely what it is intended to do. The letter (Law) is designed to kill us. The Spirit is given to enliven us. Would you understand if I say, the walk of the overcomer is not a word (logos) walk? It is a Spirit walk. It is not a Scripture walk, but a revelation walk. May I expand on this briefly? The Tabernacle in the wilderness had in its outer court two articles of furniture. One was the brazen altar, which was a figure or a type of the cross; and the other was the brazen laver. The laver of brass speaks of the law. In the word of Law, we see a reflection of our filth. Consequently, we are cleansed by the washing of the water by the word. Hear me very carefully! This is all outer court. It was not designed as our permanent dwelling place. Remember! God is dwelling in the Holiest Place, and our journey is to approach and apprehend Him. As we enter into the Holy Place, we are then guided and instructed by the ministry of the seven-fold Spirit of God, or the golden lamp-stand with its seven branches. If we insist on remaining at the brazen laver and receiving our direction from there, we will never go on unto perfection, for we will have never learned His voice. It is imperative that we accommodate ourselves to His Spirit.

As we leave John the Baptist (who is Law) and his screaming of “*Repent! You brood of vipers,*” and “*it is not **lawful** for you to have your brother's wife*” and are joined to Christ, He will invite us to “*come and see*” where He lives. Faith will begin to build in our hearts and a different attitude begins to develop within our spirit. The demands of Christ are no less than the demands of the Law, but now our obedience is provoked from a heart of love rather than fear. He now empowers us to fulfill what the Law could never do with its heavy yoke of rules, demands and ordinances, for the yoke of Christ is easy and His burden is light.

CHAPTER 10

THE WORSHIP OF IDOLS

I was shocked one night while in Canada as the Lord gave me one of those rare visions of revelation. I saw myself paying homage to an idol, worshipping before an icon which was suspended from the wall. When I was aroused from the vision, I was horrified at the prospect of being an idol-worshipper. I racked my brain attempting to bring to the forefront any incident when I had knowingly worshipped an idol. My prayers brought no response from heaven. God answers in His own time. Many years passed until one day I was struck with the truth which had been veiled for so long. To worship a god who is not the true God is to be an idol worshipper. If the god that I worship is a god of my own imagination or of my traditional learning and is not an accurate representation of Jesus, it is a false god--for Jesus was the express image, the exact replication of the unseen God. I had been worshipping a god who was unforgiving, demanding, austere, unapproachable and vindictive. I immediately repented of my idol worship and vowed to have no other gods before Him. I have since endeavored to insure that the gospel I preach is indeed the good news.

“Power or Intellect?”

From the very beginning we are introduced to a God who demonstrates His nature through power and wonders. In the beginning, He spoke and worlds began to appear where there had henceforth been only gaseous emptiness. He was not a being who could be defined by man's limited imagination or vocabulary. Man has always wanted to explain God to the heathen. When Moses asked the question, “Who shall I say sent me?” God's reply was a puzzling enigma. “Tell them **I Am** sent you.” I've heard preachers elaborate on this phrase. “He wasn't the I Was or I Shall Be, but the **I Am**. He was not declaring what He hoped to be or what He would become.” These are plays on words that really miss the point.

We have stated earlier how men have attempted to bring God down to their level, in order to be able to intellectualize or be comfortable with Him. After having made Him a super-man, that admittedly possessed great power, we have now stripped Him even of His power and made Him a figurehead of the kingdom, much like the queen of England. We acknowledge that He moved in great power once, but now He reigns in delegated authority by right of the rule of majority and by laws and position. It has conveniently slipped our minds that He said, “*I change not.*”

Christianity is the only religion that was founded on miracles. Oh! I realize that Mohammed supposedly leaped into heaven from the rock that is now housed in the

“Dome of the Rock”, in Jerusalem. Nevertheless, his tomb is still with us to this day. Jesus’ tomb is empty, as millions have witnessed, and they go praising God for its emptiness. His birth was a miracle. His life was a continuing succession of miracles and His resurrection and ascension was a miracle. The coming of the Comforter at Pentecost was a miracle and the in-filling of believers with Himself is a miracle today. Almost everyone would agree upon these premises. Knowing that He is a God of miracles and that He does not change, how is it that we have replaced Him with a god who is not expected to do miracles today; and those, who still believe He does, are subjected to the highest degree of ridicule? The present theology portrays a God who has relinquished his power to doctors, psychologists, alarm systems and automatic weapons.

We, as Christians, have been called to be a terror to demons and an offense to the world. We are to be as contrasting to the world as light is to darkness. As salt, we have been called to bring not only purification to our surroundings but a stimulating taste as well. Instead, we have listened to the reasoning of the darkened mind and now fit in beautifully with the same crowd that crucified Jesus. Our light has become darkened, and our saltiness has lost its savor. Our very presence should be an offense to the world. We, by just being present, should make the world so uncomfortable that they would like to be rid of our company. We should be a threat to demons; insomuch, that they scream in terror at our presence. However, now they can approach us and tell a dirty joke, without fear of retribution. I wonder how many men told Jesus an off-colored joke? Christianity has, for the most part, lost its cutting edge. Our messages have become a monologue of explaining God rather than demonstrating Him. Jesus said, *“If I, by the finger of God cast out demons, know that the kingdom of God has come nigh unto thee.”* (Lu. 11:20) We must have drifted far from the kingdom of God. God is still a God of the miraculous. Because we have been unable to appropriate that power, we explain, “the days of miracles are past.” **God has not changed! We have.** He has always dealt with man as a loving Father deals with His sons. Nevertheless, our approach to God has become a maze of programs and liturgy. In our studies, we have made intimacy with God a result of systematic theology. “Unless you understand Greek and Hebrew, you can never know God.” How foolish! Intimacy with God is as simple as the relationship of a child with his or her loving Father.

The present mentality has reduced the husband and father to the place of a bumbling oaf who struggles to just make it through the day without stumbling into a wall or falling half dressed into a mass of briars. Men have become a composite of “Dagwood Bumstead” and “The Three Stooges”, a totally unneeded joke, except for procreation and child support. This mindset, whether we realize it or not, is translated right over into the realm of God the Father. He is widely regarded as nothing more than a meddling nuisance. Today’s religion, with all its structure and pious pageantry, is essentially idol worship which presents God in an entirely different light than what He actually is. He is still a God who can make the iron float,

still the storm or fill a net with fish. He is not an addendum, an add-on accessory but the very essence of life. Unless He is the sum and substance of our religious gatherings, we are involved in idol worship. If our prayer is some stilted, dry arrangement of words, used as filler to take up time or satisfy some heathen need of sacrifice, it is idol worship.

CHAPTER 11

THE MIRROR IMAGE OF GOD

We are changed into the image of the god we worship. Jesus looked at those critical old Pharisees and said, *"Ye are of your father, the devil."* Their concept of God was so warped that they had unknowingly become the image of the enemy of Jesus. I heard a wise man say something to this effect; "If you will walk in intimate relationship with anyone for just three short weeks, you will begin to think like they think, act as they act, speak as they speak and live as they live." We have witnessed young preachers who were an echo of their favorite preacher. They even copied the gestures and mannerisms of their "hero". Singers by the score try to sing exactly like their idol of song. Children mimic their parents. This attitude is as normal as breathing; but as we progress in Christ, we need to exchange heroes. We have observed men and women joined in marriages who are totally different in demeanor and temperament; however, after decades of living together, they act as one. They begin to assimilate into their own character and nature the attributes of the other simply through association. It doesn't require a lot of straining and concerted effort--just daily intimacy. In many cases, they even begin to look like one another. Years ago a young woman by the name of Patty Hearst was kidnapped by a group of young radicals and forced to live with them. In a matter of weeks, she was caught on camera holding an automatic weapon, participating in a bank robbery. She had become one with them through the wonder of association.

As we walk in intimacy with God, we will begin to assimilate His attributes. If you perceive your God as being harsh, judgmental, short tempered, demanding, uncaring and cruel, that is the type of "Christian" you will become. If your God is a god of law rather than grace, you will filter everything through the demands of the Law. People who live under the law tend to be meticulously exacting. They constantly hurl scriptures in your direction. They often demand an eye for an eye, ever pressing for conformity to their interpretation of godliness. Is it any wonder that we see the Pharisees in such an unholy light? They were merely replicating the god they knew. They were the product--the outgrowth of the "letter" apart from the Spirit. They would demand death to a woman caught in sin and stone Stephen, then later Paul, because their own theology had been offended. God had not been offended, only their theology.

Little has changed today. Oh! We will not kill them for their "heresy", but we will murder their reputation and willingly relegate them to an eternity of unspeakable torment because they do not worship the way we do. They conform to the wrong Sabbath. They baptize in error. They don't observe communion in the proper fashion. Their music isn't worshipful. A delegated, recognized authority does not cover them. Their clergy are not educated in Hebrew and Greek; and besides all that, they smoke. The list is endless as long as the Law dictates our behavior. The Law is, however, absolutely necessary in our salvation.

The Law, as Paul concurs, is holy and righteous; but it is only the first step in our conversion. All of its demands, all of its condemnation, its intricate path through the maze of rules, cleansings and sacrifices were designed to bring man to the desperate cry of, *"Oh! Wretched man that I am. Who shall deliver me from this body of death?"* (Rom. 7: 24)

As this strict and demanding "child-conductor" brings us to Christ, we are to leave his ceaseless requirements and flee to Christ even as the disciples of John the Baptist left him and joined themselves to Jesus. To attempt to follow the Lord in Spirit, while yet cleaving to the "friend of the Bridegroom", will leave us confused and disoriented--sending out mixed signals to the world. If, on the other hand, the God we serve is patient, kind, gentle, forgiving, easy to be entreated, approachable and non-judgmental; then our intimacy with Him will work into us these same attributes. It is not an exercise in self-will and discipline that brings forth these fruits. It is as *"we, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed (transfigured) into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit."* (2 Cor. 3:18) Note carefully. If we daily behold the Law in the mirror, we will be beat down with judgment and condemnation and also beat others down, for we will be changed into the image on which our eyes have been fixed. If we steadfastly behold the Lord, we shall be changed into His image--from glory to glory--incrementally. It is impossible not to be. It is just that simple. What we fasten our eyes upon is precisely what we shall become.

It is no accident that the evangelist preaches hell fire and damnation. He is preaching Law. He is preaching condemnation. To be a good evangelist, he must also preach a Christ who is the answer; but he, of necessity, will give you a good dose of disapproval and punishment. This is a ministry functioning as designed. The sad part is that many of these evangelists become weary of traveling and of dragging their families from city to city; so they settle down to become pastors. If they are truly called to become evangelists, they will never be good pastors for their messages will be filled with harshness and demands producing a people who attempt to follow Law. They will inevitably have an erroneous concept of God. We've all seen churches with this disposition. They're looking at only half the picture.

"Embracing the Truth"

David had already been anointed to be king of God's people; yet he had to flee for his life as King Saul, the man of flesh, sought to kill him. Jonathan, Saul's son, loved David and ever sought to preserve his life. He angered his father as he mediated on David's behalf. He met David in a secret place, *"And Jonathan said to David, 'Go in safety, inasmuch as we have sworn to each other in the name of the Lord, saying, The Lord will be between me and you, and between my descendants and your descendants forever.' Then he (David) arose and departed, while Jonathan went into the city."* (1 Sam. 20:42) Again, Jonathan slipped away from his father's presence and met David secretly. *"And Jonathan, Saul's son, arose and went to David at Horesh, and encouraged him in God. Thus he said to him, 'Do not be afraid, because the hand of Saul my father shall not find you, and you will be*

king over Israel and I will be next to you; and Saul my father knows that also.' So the two of them made a covenant before the Lord; and David stayed at Horesh **while Jonathan went to his house.**" (1 Sam. 23:16-18) In each and every instance, David is left to fend for himself while Jonathan retreats to the safety of his father's system. There was nothing wrong with Jonathan's knowledge. Everything was wrong with his commitment. He felt he could have the best of both worlds; however, we read in graphically simple detail, *"And the Philistines overtook Saul and his sons; and the Philistines killed Jonathan and Abinadab and Malchi-shua the sons of Saul."* (1 Sam. 31:2) Jonathan was not willing to risk "losing it all" for the sake of something or someone not yet enthroned; consequently, he lost it all with those to whom he gave his alliance. Permit me to impart this word to you. **Only overcomers will attach themselves to the truth before it is enthroned; therefore, they shall reign with Him.** The principal is perfectly depicted in scripture.

Truth is and always has been pursued, harassed, ridiculed and held in suspect because it will forever be a threat to the status quo, the governing elite of the religious world. With regard to Jesus, the Pharisees' shameless confession was, *"If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."* (John 11:48) They had absolutely no regard for truth, only their position of authority, which was but a temporary loan from Rome, not the true dominion from God. Position and rank always means more to the politics of religion than does truth. Saul screams these words in Jonathan's face, *"For as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, neither you nor your kingdom shall be established. Therefore now, send and bring him to me, for he must surely die."* (1 Sam. 20:31) Conversely, it was also true that as long as Saul remained alive, David's kingdom could not be established. One or the other must die! It is no different in our lives. As long as the man of flesh—the Adamic man is alive, the kingdom of the Spirit cannot be established. The carnal man demands the death of the Spirit man, and the Spirit man cannot abide the carnal man.

The following poem, "This Present Crisis" by Thomas Lowell, expresses the thought beautifully:

Careless seems the great Avenger.
History's pages but record
One death grapple in the darkness
'Twixt old systems and the Word;
Truth forever on the scaffold,
Wrong forever on the throne,
Yet that scaffold sways the future,
And, behind the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadows,
Keeping watch upon His own.

It is much easier to embrace reason, pageantry, pomp and ceremony than the revelation of truth, which stands in naked vulnerability, open to the jeers and mockery of the skeptics and unbelievers. Proverbs 18:13 reads like this, *“He who gives an answer before he hears, it is folly and shame to him.”* Let me put it another way. **Contempt before prior investigation produces perpetual ignorance.** My prayer is that you will investigate this message before you accept or reject it.

Consider the following:

The coward shrinks from new truth.
The lazy are content with half-truths.
The arrogant believe they possess all the truth.

Let us tread softly here for there is the expected likelihood that we will be misunderstood. I want to be as clear as possible and proclaim unto you that the written word will never contradict the revealed "Word" by the Spirit of revelation. It may contradict what you think to be the truth; but in reality, Scripture and revelation of the Spirit will always agree. We can, however, take the Scripture and amass tons of verses and "prove" a lie. Sadly, I fear, this is what the "church" is largely guilty of doing. The traditions of men have been enthroned and sit with jeweled crowns upon the seat of government while truth is harassed with human fervor through the back streets and byways in order to be eradicated from the face of the earth. Truth is not a system of rules or laws that can be opened to chapter and verse to give us guidance. That is true for the infant or the child but not for the sons of God whose quest is to know Him in all His fullness. You may memorize volumes of scripture which tell you about Him, yet never really get to know Him. Truth is not something you can learn in the classroom, but it is life that springs up in a joyous artesian fountain to reproduce the fruit of the Spirit.

“Truth Recognizes Truth”

Mary had barely conceived the Holy One, by the Spirit of God, when she went to visit her cousin Elizabeth. Elizabeth was now a full six months into her pregnancy with John the Baptist. As Mary entered through the door to her home, Elizabeth exulted with joy and excitement and cried with a loud voice, *“For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.”* (Luke 1:44) Herein lies the secret to recognizing truth. If truth is being proclaimed, there will be a leap of excitement in the womb of our spirit. There will be recognition of truth from the Spirit of Truth, an awareness of life from the Spirit of Life. It may not be the whole truth or even pure truth; nevertheless, the very seed or grain of truth will cause excitement in your spirit. Very often this will be in direct opposition to everything you have been taught to believe. Reason, with all its head knowledge, will immediately rise up to mock and ridicule the source of this sudden excitement. A dozen "proof scriptures" will enter your mind to oppose and annihilate this strange intruder. We must understand above everything else that reason is a treacherous and seductive enemy to the manifestation of truth. All you need to do to prove this is to

study church history and see how truth was opposed at every encounter by the religious leaders of their day. It is little different today.

On the other hand, when truth is not proclaimed there is a dampening or muting in our spirit and a dullness is apparent. It may be well presented, the homiletics may be perfect but there seems to be no sharp cutting edge. It appears to be the efforts of one doing battle with a unsharpened sword. All that can be accomplished is the beating and bruising by a dull weapon rather than the dividing of soul and spirit. We must be careful here that we do not confuse the excitement of flesh with the stirring of life.

Some years ago, the Lord spoke a very startling word to me early one morning. **"Truth changes under daily examination."** After much resistance in my soul man, I understood that truth itself does not change but my comprehension of truth will change as I grow and meditate on the things of the Lord. It may later appear totally different than when it was first conceived. **Truth at its first inception is always perceived as error!** Consider "justification by faith", "priesthood of the believer", "baptism of the Holy Spirit", "manifestation of the sons of God", or "ultimate reconciliation". These have all initially been received with sneering mockery, much resistance and skeptical derision.

Let us briefly consider the letters to the seven churches recorded in the book of Revelation. In these letters, remarkably, there is not one promise given to the churches. Only to the overcomers are the promises given. In the account of the Manchild in Revelation twelve, it is the Manchild birthed by the church that is caught up to God's throne and empowered. The woman is not thus empowered but rather flees into the wilderness where God has prepared a place for her. Everyone does not stand on equal footing in the kingdom of God. There are kings, lords, rulers and then there are those who are ruled over as subordinates. Heaven is not a socialistic, equal opportunity organization. True, *"whosoever will may come and drink of the waters of life freely;"* but only those who do the will of the Father may reign with Him. Only the overcomers will govern. One glimpse into the book of Revelation will open our eyes to this truth. On the throne were twenty-four elders who are representative of the Old and New Testament overcomers; while there was a multitude of people out of every nation, people and tongue who stood before the throne with palm branches in their hands, singing the song of redemption. They were in heaven, but they were not ruling with Him.

"To Conceal or Reveal"

It has been said that the word of God is like a veil that both conceals and reveals. Its truths will be hidden from the casual and the merely inquisitive reader. The precious nuggets will appear as common stones and dust. The word will not yield its riches to the weekend prospector. Its deceptive cover will conceal the abundant riches hidden within. *"Why do you speak to them in parables?"* Jesus was asked. His answer is astonishing and to the carnally minded almost offensive. *"So they can neither see nor understand."* (Matt.

13:10,13) He hides His truths from the nonchalant. The man-made "metal detector" may uncover an occasional nugget, but the mother lode will forever remain cloaked in secrecy.

As Christians, we seem to think that we are required to make the things of God extremely simplistic to the unbeliever in order to persuade them to accept Christ as their savior. To the Christian, we speak in deep hidden mysteries; but to the unbeliever, we speak in simple understandable phrases. Jesus did just the opposite. To the unbeliever, He spoke in riddles; but to the disciple, He spoke in clear simplicity. That will not appear so strange when we consider that He approached the world with a much different attitude and understanding than do we. How would you describe the radiant beauty of autumn leaves shimmering in an azure sky, to a man that has been blind since his birth? How could you illustrate the scintillating movement of the colorful Aurora Borealis on a cold arctic night, to one whom had never seen the light of day? How would you teach the beauty of a musical movement to one whom had never had hearing? Jesus approached the world with the understanding that they were both blind and deaf. Consequently, when Nicodemus, that learned man of the Sanhedrin, approached Him with flattery and honor, he was cut off in mid-sentence with the profound utterance, "*You must be born again.*" Jesus understood the futility of attempting to explain the mysteries of God to one who was both blind and deaf. Yet we become adept in this exercise of futility with all our methods and formulas. Only God can open the blinded eyes and make alive the dull of hearing. To understand this truth will eliminate much of our methodical procedures and will drive us to the source of truth, Jesus Christ.

At the same time the word is concealing its treasures to the indifferent, it is revealing its riches to the hungry and diligent. To the outside observer, the Tabernacle in the wilderness was less than spectacular with its covering of badger skins and the smell of burning flesh; yet to the priest, who ventured within its walls, there were treasures of gold and aroma of incense. "How could those old Jews have missed their Messiah when He came?" we wonder. It was because the truths of God had been concealed beneath the ugly wrappings of their traditions. Jesus came as the Word was made flesh, but the outer garment of His flesh concealed the divinity that it housed. They were so offended by this lowly carpenter's son that they not only rejected Him but crucified Him in their blind rage. They could not receive this breach of their traditions by so lowly a peasant who slept under the stars, ate grain on the Sabbath with unwashed hands and dined with sinners. As sure as the Tabernacle of old concealed its abundance of gold under badger skins, the divinity of the Father lay hidden behind a not so attractive itinerant preacher who was a troublemaker.

It is no different today. Truth comes mounted upon a lowly ass into the sanctuary of our heart, and it requires a revelation from our Father to strip away the deceptive covering. When the writer of Proverbs declares, "*Buy the truth and sell it not,*" (Prov. 23:23) there is the distinct implication that it is costly to come by, but that which you can also count as something commercial, disposable at your fancy. It can be used to further your television ministry or gain favor with kings. There have always been those who somehow steal the

truths of God and manipulate them to their own advantage. They enter in some way other than by the Door; consequently, the Lord says, *"Depart from Me, ye who operate in lawless self-will. You never allowed Me to become intimate with you."* (Matt. 7:23 lit.)

It is extraordinarily difficult to relate the doctrine of universal reconciliation in so brief a dissertation; for to do so would require a commentary on the entire Bible, for indeed, the truth is woven throughout scriptures. I am neither qualified nor inclined to attempt that task. We have simply tried to stir up your pure mind in order that there might be evoked a genuine search for truth. How will God equalize and balance judgment and mercy on all? I'm sure it is not all in this life, but to say I know how or when is to plunge into gross conjecture. Do I believe in reincarnation? Absolutely not! However, one does not need to be reincarnated to have the judgments (or blessings) of God be loosed upon them.

Most Christians will agree that Jesus was the pattern Son. He is set forth as a template or a model from which each of His children will be fashioned. We have emulated Him in preaching the gospel, casting out devils, healing the sick and ministering to the poor and needy. Careful examination will reveal the astonishing fact that Jesus' greatest ministry began after His resurrection and ascension when He, at last, entered into the Holiest of Holies and began His priestly functions as our heavenly High Priest. He walked this earth in a body of humiliation and limitation and all power was given Him in heaven and in earth; yet He could not minister to the spirits in prison until He was crucified. Only then could He go by the Spirit to those in prison. *"For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the Spirit (or spirit); in which also He went and made proclamation (preached) to the spirits now in prison, who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark."* *"For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God."* (1 Peter 3:18,19:4:6) This is an exceedingly difficult passage when viewed from the orthodox stance. The passage itself, however, is not difficult at all. It clearly states that Jesus, by His spirit, went to those spirits who were disobedient to the message preached by Noah during the one hundred and twenty years the ark was in preparation. What was Jesus' message? Was it a message of hope or a sentence of doom? I'm sure He preached the good news. Did they all believe or were there still those who clung to their self-willed ways? I'm sure I don't know; nevertheless, I am convinced there were those who embraced the good news of the gospel and were translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son. If there were those who still rebelled after having heard the good news, they will have to wait until the "fires" of judgment have done their perfect work.

If, in fact, Jesus is our pattern, will there be a greater, more expansive ministry awaiting us in the realm of the Spirit? We personally know men and women who were cut off, seemingly at the very beginning of their time of productivity for the Lord. I'm sure many of you wonder at times, "Why has God invested so much in me, and yet there seems to be no dividends for His kingdom. I haven't won any souls nor done anything of apparent worth for

Him. It seems as if it is all preparation and purging." May I give you a word of encouragement? **It ain't over yet! The best is yet to come!** Our preparation is not primarily for this life. *"Do you not know that the saints will judge the world...Do you not know that we shall judge angels?"* (1 Cor. 6:2,3) This has nothing to do with judging the holy angels who do God's will but of setting right that which is wrong among those angels who have been aligned against God. Remember, an angel is by interpretation, a messenger. Those angels (messengers) may be preachers or false witnesses. If we follow the pattern Son, our priestly ministry will begin in earnest when we depart this body of weakness and limitation. **Heresy?** Believe me when I say, there was a time I would not have dared to share these things with anyone even in secret, much less on paper. We have listened with some degree of chagrin as our loving Father has been portrayed as a distant, impatient tyrant. Men have depicted Him as an unfeeling, demanding dictator with no regard for life or pain. Nothing could be further from the truth. Jesus reflected the kind and gentle Father when He healed the sick, had compassion on the oppressed, delivered the demoniac and freed the slave of sin. He washed the feet of the very one who sold Him to the adversary and forgave those who impaled Him to the tree. Even in His death, He carried one with Him to Paradise, who only moments before, had been a thief and a reject of society. This does not depict a harsh and unforgiving God, does it? This is not a Father who is saying, "What can you do for Me but what can I do for you." This is the Father I wish to proclaim. This is the God I want the world to embrace. Too long have we been bewildered by the messages that present to us two or even three gods, who are diverse and going in different directions.

CHAPTER 12

DEATH

A word that has been twisted, either through error or design, is this word called death. We find it introduced in the beginning of the scriptures. God had spoken unto Adam and said, *"From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die."* (Gen. 2:16,17) There naturally arises the persistent argument of whether this was spoken of natural death or spiritual death. Many insist that this is a physical death because Adam did not live out even one day (a thousand years) before he died. This seems to stretch the issue a bit. It seems more scriptural to consider death in the light of Jesus' own words. In almost every occasion, Jesus referred to physical death as "sleep". Concerning Lazarus, He said, *"Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, that I may awaken him out of sleep."* (John 11:11) *"And the tombs were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised."* (Matt. 27:52) *"And entering in, He said to them, 'Why make a commotion and weep? The child has not died but is asleep'."* (Mk. 5:39) Again He said, *"This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die."* (John 6:50) *"Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word he shall never see death."* (John 8:51) One of Jesus' disciples said unto Him, *"Let me first go and bury my father and then I will follow you."* But Jesus said unto him, *"Follow Me and let the dead bury their own dead."* (Matt. 8:21,22)

Jesus spoke of the dead as those who were separated from the presence and fellowship of the Father. In the account of the prodigal son, the father spoke with regards to this lost one and said, *"This son of mine was dead, and has come to life again."* And again, *"We had to be merry and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live."* (Lu. 15:24,32) Paul likewise uses the same language when describing those alienated from the presence of the Father's family. *"You were dead in your trespasses and sins"* *"He loved us even when we were dead in our transgression."* (Eph. 2:1,5) *"And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions"* (Col. 2:13)

"Dead Men Walking"

So we understand that we can walk around in these temporal bodies, accumulating wealth, being involved in the social activities of church events or political engagements, manifesting all the attributes of life and yet be dead. We are as a branch cut off from the root system having no life flowing into our spiritual bodies, if we are estranged from the life source

which is the Father. When Adam sinned, the fellowship was broken, the lifeline was cut and Adam immediately died. No! He did not cease to breathe or labor or reproduce, but he was dead. If we can agree that separation from the Father is death, then we have a platform from which we can plunge into the deep clear water of His word. Paul quotes from the Psalms and states, *“For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death.”* (I Cor. 15:25,26) Now the supreme question arises. Is that physical death or is that separation from God the Father?

In the account of the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man lifted up his eyes in hell and was separated from the comforts of Abraham's bosom by an impassable gulf or chasm. Each unregenerate person is separated from the bosom of the Father by the veil or gulf, which is called flesh. It is impossible to come to Him as long as we abide in death. The coming of the life (Spirit) of Christ into our spirit abolishes--conquers death and we are resurrected unto life. *“This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power.”* (Rev. 20:5,6) You see the first resurrection has nothing to do with being six feet under and the grave bursting open to release a reconditioned body. The first resurrection has to do with a person being snatched out of the prison-house of death by our precious Lord.

I observed recently as one elderly lady agonized over the fact that the state department had not declared her son dead as a result of a war incident. He had bailed out of a B-29 somewhere over the Korean coast. His parachute had been found upon the beach along with those of the other crewmembers; but his body had not been found. Consequently, he was still officially missing in action, and his mother patiently waited for some word from him or about him. If natural love can reach so far and live so long, I cannot conceive of my heavenly Father being at rest so long as even one of His offspring is lost in the slums of some back alley or in the depths of a tormenting hell. If there is yet one man or woman who is estranged from God and still wandering in the realm of death, then the work is not finished. Heaven will be forced to admit failure if all of God's creation is not reconciled unto Him. That is not an acceptable choice! The love of the Father runs too deep. Jesus will never be satisfied until He is **all in all**. My hope, my faith, my future and indeed the future of all mankind rests not in our ability to come to Him, but in His ability to draw us to Himself. He is no respecter of persons. What He has done for me and for many of you, He will ultimately do for all.

I vividly recall sitting that day in my eighth-grade science class and listening to Mr. Holtzhauser say, “Matter can neither be created nor destroyed, only its form changed.” The thought occurred to me “This man does not know about the creation and how God created everything from nothing.” I know not whether he did or did not embrace scriptural creation. However, I do know my knowledge was extremely limited at the time; and since then, my finite understanding of the creation has drastically changed. In the many years that have come and gone, I have preached many funerals and have used the same expression that my science teacher quoted to us that day. Life has merely taken on a different form. It has not been destroyed.

The truth of the matter is, nothing of God can die. To do so would invalidate His eternal being. Whenever His word takes form and clothes itself in whatever image He has chosen to give it, that form may change innumerable times; but the change will always be just another reflection of the original word. Jesus gave us an illustration of how the Kingdom of God grows. *“The earth produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head.”* (Mk. 4:28) This is why our understanding of the Kingdom of God is so much different today, than that of our distant ancestors. They saw the blade and we are seeing the head or a glimpse of the mature grain. I choose to believe that there was a time in the eons past when we all were a part of His immense Spirit or more correctly a part of Him. In those glad days when *“The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy”* (Job 38:7), we rejoiced about the throne of God waiting with blissful expectancy for our spirit to be housed in a body. *“Therefore when He comes into the world, He says, ‘Sacrifice and offering Thou hast not desired, but a body Thou hast prepared for me’.”* (Heb. 10:5) Jesus existed as the Father’s Word long before He was given a body to indwell. Years—perhaps eons later, He groaned in His spirit for release from His earthly body of weakness and limitation and to be clothed with the glory He had with the Father in the eternity past. Jesus did not cease to exist when He was crucified on the cross. His form was changed, for Peter says that He went by the Spirit and preached to those who were held in prison, in a place called hell (hades). The Word never failed nor died; however, its form was altered dramatically.

Some folk, rather than believe in universal restoration, would embrace a theology that says God will simply obliterate all the ungodly and they shall be burned as the chaff of the field. If these are truly eradicated, then something of God has died—something that had His breath and likeness. I think that is highly unlikely.

“A Time for Unveiling”

Let us consider a word from one that refused to be conformed to the opinions of others. **“A thought conceived but not expressed is at best only an unborn child, not only without any influence on the world, but of whose very existence the world may be unconscious; but once brought forth it becomes part of the living working universe, to work there its appointed season, and possibly to leave its mark for good or evil on all successive time.”** ---Jukes

There is a time to bring forth truth just as there is a time for the babe to come forth from the womb. To force, prior to its appointed time, its manifestation can cause much pain and confusion. Not only do I believe that the time is appropriate for this message, I am convinced it is long overdue. Our Father has suffered enough false accusation from the mouths of those who know Him not, whose self-righteousness would close the entrance to His throne to everyone who does not embrace their doctrine. We have endured that mentality far too long.

Nothing is so enslaving as being at the mercy of others' fears and doctrines.

Two groups come immediately to mind. One is the high school football coach, whose future rests in the hands of young teenagers. If he cannot motivate them into a winning attitude, he will be gone ere many months have passed. Each succeeding game he must concoct some new magical scheme that will capture their imagination--some heart stirring speech that will take their breath away. Some have been known to break things, throw chairs through windows and kick in lockers. Tears streaming down the face are also good motivational tools. The other group consists of the pastors who have obligated themselves to people who do not desire the truth, and he realizes that to offend the power structure will cost him his position. In that dilemma, he must value integrity above all or else learn the games of religious politics. Some preachers have even been known to resort to the same emotional gymnastics as the coach with his teenagers. Some are so good they can loose the fountain of tears, as easily as one turns on a faucet.

May we, who have heard that mystical sound, embrace it to our breast that our joy might be full, understanding the derision and persecution we have invited. *"The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord."* (Matt. 10:24) The gospel—the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ is not about multitudes of the rebellious burning in hell forever, nor those being eternally lost who have yet to hear about Him. The Good News is that when we were dead in our trespasses and sin, unable, because of our condition, to respond to His voice, He sought us out and impregnated us with His divine seed. The sweet psalmist of Israel penned these words, *"For Thou dost light my lamp; the Lord my God illumines my darkness."* (Ps. 18:28) In other words, the Spirit—the fire—the life of God came and joined with our spirit, that was dead, so that we may be made alive. Then and only then can we see and truly "hear" the things that pertain to God. We could not respond to Him while we were "dead", but now we exult with songs of joy and praise to Him who came and lifted us out of our prison of darkness and death. Was it not He who said, *"You didn't choose Me; but I chose you."* (Jn. 15:16) Having chosen us, He will bring us unto the absolute likeness of His glorious perfection. So shall we ever be with the Lord.

CHAPTER 13

LIFE AFTER DEATH

Let us briefly consider a recurring objection to this doctrine of reconciliation, which I have heard many "learned" men propound: "For any to be saved after death or to be rescued from the fires of hell would totally negate the work of the cross and allow men to enter into heaven apart from the atoning work and cleansing blood of Jesus Christ." Let me emphatically state; **no man can come to the Father except through Jesus Christ!** No man can gain entrance to the Holiest of Holies except he come by the way of the brazen altar and bring with him blood from the propitiatory sacrifice. Every man must come by the way of the cross. We merely maintain that it does not necessarily require that the transformation be accomplished in this life of darkness and humiliation.

The other bone of contention is that we maintain that hell is not everlasting but designed to last only so long as is needed to burn away every last suggestion of sin and carnality. What other purpose would our Heavenly Father have for such a place of torment? I cannot conceive of a tender Savior who would weep over the lost and wandering sheep in this present life, to be content and rejoice with a "little flock" of believers while the vast majority of His creatures are suffering the agonies of an eternal hell. I choose to believe that He shall not rest until every last sheep of His creation is safe within the fold of His all-embracing love and grace. This One who left the ninety and nine to seek out the one lost sheep will surely leave the "little flock" to rescue the billions of souls lost in hopelessness and despair. I know not whether that will be accomplished in this age, the next age or the dispensation of the ages to come. I can rest assured that all that came out of Him in the beginning will one day be gathered together in Him that He may be **all in all**. I, for one, cannot imagine that this Holy One, who was sent as Savior of the world, the sacrifice for all sin, would one day stand before the Ancient of Days and confess, "Father, you gave me ten talents (enough to save a thousand worlds), but I've only managed to rescue a mere handful." Can we believe that this One, who is "*willing that all men would be saved*," is unable to save the vast majority, who will now burn eternally in unquenchable fire! Do we dare to think that this one (Adam) who sinned in the beginning and passed sin and death to all men, is greater than that One (Jesus) who, through obedience, transmitted life to all? "*For as in Adam **all** die, so also in Christ **all** shall be made alive.*" (1 Cor. 15:22) Is the "all" concerning Adam greater than the "all" concerning Christ? Is the sin greater than the remedy? May it never be! Or do we again play Calvinball?

The scripture is very clear. "*The last enemy to be conquered is death.*" I'm quite sure that the second death is one that will be vanquished by this One, who is the fountain of life.

Although the torments of hell are very real and the second death a fearful reality to the many, I will never believe it is too monstrous or too horrendous to be conquered by its very creator. It too will deliver up the dead that is in it, and **our Father will reign in joy and victory.**

What I have endeavored to write did not spring forth from a fountain of learning and intellect but from a revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. I cannot prove from the original Hebrew or Greek the "proof texts" for my belief, although there are many scholarly writings on the subject available to any sincere seeker. I did not arrive at these conclusions because of the presentation of a burdensome weight of evidence; however, God began to speak His truths into my spirit many, many years ago. I began to feel as a betrayer if I portrayed Him only in the light of anger, judgment and retribution.

If we observe the conversion of Saul of Tarsus and the ensuing transformation to Paul the Apostle, we must agree that it was not accomplished by the preaching of the Scripture. It was accomplished by divine revelation--by regal confrontation. He would not--yea!--could not check out the truthfulness of his divine encounter with the pillars of Jerusalem whose message was already becoming "old order". He dared not ask for their approval or opinion. **God ceases to give revelation where consensus is sought of other men! Revelation will not tolerate other men's consideration.** Hear me when I say, revelation will be the means of the next great harvest. God will not again use the mechanics of homiletics (the art of creating and preaching sermons). Whereas "deep" sermons serve to confuse and confound the simple, even the illiterate understand beautifully the revelations of the Father. This is my hope. This is my excited expectation. This will effectively eliminate the pulpit, that barrier which stands between "clergy" and "laity", between shepherd and sheep, between the gifted and the common. The dumb will preach the gospel with a glowing revelation of the radiant Christ. Their lives will preach infinitely more forcefully than the learned and educated scholar of the "letter".

CHAPTER 14

THE SEED WITHIN

Each day brings a new revelation of the phenomenal advances science has made in this the twentieth century. We welcomed the advent of the atomic age with awesome amazement. The electronic progress has astounded us all with its computers, fiber optics and satellite television. Now genetic engineering has us in the grip of a hopeful fear. Cloning and sex alternatives leave the average man or woman in a state of apprehensive wariness. Where will it all lead? We remember Hitler and his mad experiments in the death camps. What shall be the end of this genetic research? For, we know, the unregenerate man is altogether wicked, capable of unimaginable extremes. He is ever in search of a way to make huge sums of money and live forever. There is an enormously important element in this experimentation called deoxyribonucleic acid or DNA for short. The Lord began to deal with me in the early eighties about our spiritual DNA, and I understand it has now become a "lollypop" message. That's fine, if the revelation accompanies the message. God's DNA was passed on to us through His Holy Seed. *"For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God."* (I Peter 1:23) The scripture further states, *"Who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."* (John 1:13)

There is an expression used in regard to someone whose lifestyle does not measure up to the standards of a particular community's moral code. They call it "bad seed". "What could you expect? They were born of bad seed," is the assertion. A portion of that is true because we produce after our own kind. Like begets like. However, the lives that follow are more likely to be formed by the company he or she keeps and the surrounding environment in which they live. The pressure of peers and the climate of their homes exert immense influence on the growing child. True, the carnal seed of Adam is invariably tainted. It bears within its character the very nature of all the sins and demonic activities of its progenitors. That fact can never be altered. God never promised to rework or refurbish your horribly scarred and twisted life. He promised to give you a new life, which is derived from the imperishable and incorruptible seed planted within.

The human mind is staggered when we consider the implications that are inextricably connected to the seed of God. If we are indeed pregnant with the Holy Seed, then that seed will inevitably and without exception reproduce a Son of God. It would be impossible for it to do otherwise. The laws of God would have to be altered, and God would lose His credibility of unerring truth and wisdom.

If you will allow your spirit to delve into these mysteries, join with me in a bit of parabolic meditation. Remember! A parable is simply a story that conveys a deeper truth. In the

following little story I chose the name Dolores because the name itself means pain. The name Enoch is one who walks with God and Sterling is silver, which speaks of redemption.

Dolores was a beautiful young lady who had spent her early years on the "wrong side of the tracks". I refer to her as a lady, yet she was hardly a lady in the true sense of the word. Because of her beauty and seductive nature, more than once she had been involved in affairs that the small town was aware of, and the townspeople savored the gossip as if it was a part of their breakfast menu. She had been the subject of many prayer groups, as some dear soul had related an imagined encounter and after much embellishment, requested a prayer be said in her behalf. It at least added some "life" to their meetings. Limousines on several occasions had been seen escorting her to the neighboring city. She didn't seem to mind this uninvited attention; in fact, she rather relished the hungry looks of the men. The jealous glares of housewives were predictable; many, of whom, would have been delighted to secretly exchange places with her for a brief time.

Enoch Sterling had seen Dolores on several occasions as their paths crossed in the little village. He had spoken to her on one brief encounter as he changed a tire on her dilapidated sedan. He found her intriguing but didn't view her with the same sensual absorption as the majority of the townsmen. He sensed that something deep within her cried out for freedom and reality. He didn't see her again for a considerable length of time for he was extremely busy with the large estate that his father had left him. With the farming, livestock and the countless investments his father had made, of which he was previously unaware, his time was all but taken. Nevertheless, in the midst of busy responsibilities for properties and personnel, his mind would drift back to the lovely young woman fretting over a flat tire beside the road.

"This is foolish," he thought to himself. "Either pursue the woman or get her out of your mind." Easy to say, but getting her out of mind seemed an impossible task; so the next time he was in the little town he inquired as to her whereabouts. With knowing looks he was informed that she was in the beauty shop down the narrow street. It was not unusual for everyone to know where Dolores was anytime she was in town. Her very presence set off a tempest of whispers. Ignoring the raised eyebrows and stifled grunts, Enoch made his way toward the little beauty shop as curious eyes watched him from some sheltered safety. Everyone had supposed that Enoch would find company with some city lady whose upbringing was proper and acceptable, yet no one knew much about him really. They considered him as a sort of recluse who wished to be left alone. Little did they know that he knew much more about them than they him.

Just as he was approaching the little beauty salon Dolores stepped out, or shall I say glided out, beautiful in the morning sun. He stopped and tipped his hat. She

thought that was rather quaint, since the men she knew would never do that. "Miss Dolores" he said, "I know this is somewhat sudden, but would you consider having dinner with me at my estate this coming Saturday?" Her heart tremble for just an instant and then she remembered this approach was as old as history. Nevertheless she smiled sweetly and replied, "Why Mister Sterling, I'd be delighted." "All right then, it is settled. I'll pick you up around seven," he said, again tipping his hat as he turned to leave. She seemed both amused and a little piqued at being dismissed so hastily, yet she could hardly complain. She had rarely been treated as a lady. At least he tipped his hat.

Over the next several months, Dolores spent every Saturday with Enoch Sterling, arriving early in the morning and staying for the evening meal. The town's rumormongers were more than a little annoyed because Dolores was always home before midnight every Saturday. She was fond of Enoch but there was missing that burning passion she supposed she would have for someone she hoped to marry. However, she was really taken by the overabundance of things she had never had. "It's just not fair for some people to have so much, while others have so little," she mused.

It came as no great surprise when Enoch proposed to her; and although he was the man she had never found in another, still it was with a slight reluctance she accepted. She struggled with this apparent dichotomy, this cross-pull in her spirit. Of course, she would marry him! He offered her all that she had never had, wealth, security and companionship. She had had her fill of pawing men with money stained and polluted. Despite the lavish surroundings, the wedding was quite simple. With only intimate friends in attendance, they became Mr. and Mrs. Enoch Sterling. For the first time in their acquaintance, Dolores spent the night at the Sterling estate. The town prophets began their "ministry". "It will never last!" "She only married him for his money." "If he only knew what sort of woman she is." "You can't change bad seed." It seemed no one was happy for this wayward girl who had found a husband. They had rather see her rot in some hovel of sin than to be married to a man who could help her.

There was a violent battle raging within her as she busied herself with the chores of the estate. She had never known the particulars of money management on this scale. She had no training in the complex affairs of investments, neither in securities nor in people. She was increasingly frustrated because she didn't even know what her husband wanted or where he was headed. Like most people, Dolores had been a compliant opportunist. Without strategy or forethought she took advantage of doors that apparently opened to her. She was a master of selfish expediency, yet she did not know how to open doors that were obviously shut; so she drifted aimlessly on this ocean voyage, not having a home port in mind nor a means to reach it. Enoch left her for brief periods of time to give his attention to some pressing business, and when he did, she, of course, was in charge of all he

owned. It just began to dawn on her that when she married Enoch, she not only became wealthy but she also became responsible for the management of that wealth.

It was on one such occasions when Enoch was away and the complexity of the estate was beyond her grasp, that she stepped out to the porch and called the foreman, saying as she had many times before, "Lester, I'm going into town for awhile. If Mister Sterling should return before morning, tell him I'm staying at the home of a friend. I'll be back tomorrow." The foreman shook his head as the big sedan turned onto the highway. He watched it disappear from view, still shaking his head and silently groaning inside. He'd worked for Mister Sterling senior and had help raise Enoch. This same directive had been relayed to Enoch before, and he had watched the pain in his eyes intensify with each message.

Dolores had hardly left when Enoch, arriving from the other direction, turned into the drive. Lester immediately approached and after the usual formalities, he relayed the message Mrs. Sterling had given him. There was a resolute pain that was noticeable but Enoch's only comment was, "I'll go see if I can catch her and tell her I'm back." Enoch sped out of the drive with tires losing traction on the turn to the main highway, his mind racing faster than the vehicle. He had never been deceived by any desire in his own mind to defend his wife's past. Although he knew that there was an element in her that still wanted to roam the back-roads and side-streets of life, he loved her intensely and always believed that the day would come when she would lose all desire for the sordid and impure. Sure, he had pushed her, but not beyond her capacity. He had enticed her with visions of the future, yet she seemed unable to shake the bonds of her past.

Rounding a curve on the tree-lined highway, he noticed smoke coming from a ridge to his right. As he approached he recognized the car he had given Dolores as an anniversary gift. Running to the burning car he ripped open the door and reached into the fire which now threatened to consume her body. Oblivious to the burns on his own arms, Enoch lifted the burning form from the funeral pyre and carried her safely some distance away and laid her gently on the grassy knoll. The crash into the tree had done terrible damage to her face and the fire had almost charred her entire frontal area. Fortunately the car seat had protected the back portion of her body.

For what seemed like hours, he waited for the helicopter to transport her to the burn clinic. Miraculously her heart beat with a strong and steady pulse, but precious fluids were seeping from her now still body. After strong medication she was now asleep. "Mister Sterling," the doctor said, "The prognosis is not good. I wish I could be more optimistic but as badly burned as she is, we can't promise anything beyond tonight. If she does survive the shock, infection will surely take its toll. Mister Sterling, you understand the human body can take only so much distress. I'm sure it

will only be a matter of hours-- days at the most. I'm sorry." They were both in tears by the time he had finished. Enoch, numbed by her pain and the possibility of the loss of his beloved wife, responded gratefully as the doctor, in unprofessional manner, put his arms around him and embraced his sobbing frame.

There was no sleep for Enoch Sterling that night. He repeatedly slipped over to the side of her bed to gaze at his once so lovely wife. The numerous wounds on her swollen face bore witness to the fact that if she should, by some miracle, hold onto life; she would never be the beautiful Dolores he had married. He lifted the side to the little tent they had erected over her naked body and immediately wished he had not. Layers of skin lay around her body, releasing their tenuous hold on life. They had been married just under five years; and Dolores had changed for the better, but the progress had been slow. Enoch consoled himself with the reality that a reed grows speedily, perishing with the first winter's blast; but the oak counts its life in decades or even centuries.

Stubbornly, Dolores clung to life, hanging by an invisible thread tied somewhere deep within to the love Enoch had given her as an anchor. She felt that love day by painful day as she clawed her way out of the dark valley of death toward the light she had never seen but knew was there. Doctors shook their heads in amazement as they watched from the sidelines while this war was waged before them. The day came when Enoch, as he entered the room, was informed, "We are going to begin the skin grafts. Fortunately we have a good source from her back, but be aware, as much as thirty percent of grafts fail. They simply slough off." Here again, Dolores defied the ordinary. She simply refused to give up any of her grafts. During the wait for the grafts to take, Enoch was by her side encouraging her to be strong and not give up.

Enoch slipped to her bedside one morning and found her crying. "What's the problem sweetheart, are you in worse pain?" He asked.

Her answer was one that could be expected but was not comforting to Enoch. "I demanded a mirror from the nurse. I knew I was disfigured but I never dreamed it was so horrible. How can you ever love me again? I'm not the same person you married."

"No." Enoch responded, "You're not the same person I married, but I didn't marry a face or a body. I married a person and that person is more beautiful than when I took her as my bride. Can you believe that?" Dolores spent the next several weeks getting that down into her spirit. Even in the midst of her distress she found she had a peace that she had never known before.

Enoch arrived early one morning to find Dolores sleeping. As he slipped over to her bedside and gently placed a kiss on her cheek, she awoke with a crooked little smile

and took his hand. "I have some news for you," she said. "Mister Sterling, you're going to be a father." He stood there in shocked silence. After all she'd been through, his concern was could she survive a full term pregnancy? "We only found out last night," she continued. "I hadn't the slightest indication." Enoch was elated yet fearful for his Dolores.

The hospital released Dolores from their care after the grafts were healed with the understanding that therapy would be needed for a long period of time. As the baby rapidly grew inside Dolores, her skin grafts and scars refused to stretch as a normal pregnancy necessitates. Instead they tore and bled and those were nine months of hell for Dolores even as the excitement of life stirred within her. The day of arrival came and Dolores was taken back to the same hospital but this time under the care of her obstetrician onto another wing. Her labor pains were intensified because of the buildup of tears and scars. Through the anguish and screams, she fought courageously, determined to bring forth this extension of life. The pains persisted for what seemed like an eternity; then there came one mighty push and a son screamed his introduction to the world. She smiled in triumph as the doctor laid the yet unwashed infant across her scarred breast. Hardly had her arms reached to enfold her child when she gave a hushed little sigh and went to sleep.

After the winter was gone and the fields were alive in their gaudy spring finery, Enoch walked out to the family cemetery carrying their son, Enoch II. Kneeling by her grave, he thought of this precious son that she had borne within a horribly scarred body, yet the seed was unaffected. That seed matured and became a perfect child. His mind reached back and grasped a scripture he had heard many years ago. *"For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable (corruptible) but imperishable, (incorruptible) that is, through the living and abiding word of God."* (1 Pet. 1:23) He remembered the doubts and confusions he had suffered through the years thinking God had forsaken him, after he had stumbled and often fallen in the way. What a reassuring peace gripped his heart, knowing that the **SEED** was sure and eternal. He knew that our entire past, all our scars and disfigurements, can never affect the **DNA** of the **SEED**. He left the place where Dolores' earthly body was housed, comforted by the faithfulness of our loving Father.

Please indulge me in my simplicity. When we plant a field with corn, do we expect to reap a harvest of potatoes? Of course not! We do not even give it a second thought but that there will be a stand of corn where we sowed the seed. If we should take our finest mare and breed her to an outstanding stallion, we expect in about ten months to have her deliver, not a calf, not a chicken nor a goat, but a fine little foal. The thorn bush will not produce figs nor will a briar bring forth grapes. We all are convinced of this, aren't we? When God has impregnated you with His holy Seed at the time we call regeneration, what can that seed generate except an offspring of God Himself? How can it do otherwise for we have been re-gened? Some call the "Sons of God" message outdated and irrelevant; however, it is

the most modern and appropriate message one could trumpet. The sound that comes forth is not one of timid uncertainty, but of unwavering assurance.

“One Step Forward—Two Back”

Being raised in a Pentecostal atmosphere was to me both a blessing and a curse. It was a blessing because of the freedom of worship that accompanies that rich culture. But it was a curse in the sense one never knew if he or she would be saved tomorrow. There was always the uncertainty that was present between revivals. It was just such a time while wrestling over some nagging problem that the Lord spoke very clearly into my spirit; “Can’t you believe that you’re my son?” My answer was pathetic at best. “Lord, I want to believe. I try to believe. I hope one day to believe.” He continued, “You need to study the birth of Jesus.” I was somewhat perplexed because I had rehearsed the birth of Jesus for some twenty-five years every Christmas. Nevertheless, when the Lord speaks it would do us well to obey.

Early the next morning I arose to a brisk December day and made myself comfortable, while opening the Bible to the first chapter of Luke’s gospel. I began to read the account of the birth of our Lord. *“Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary. And coming in He said to her, ‘Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you.’ But she was greatly troubled at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this might be. And the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid Mary; for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end.’ And Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I am a virgin?’ And the angel answered and said unto her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God’.”*

It was at that precise moment the Lord spoke into my spirit these words, **“Could Mary have miscarried?”** These four words stunned me and changed my life forever. This is a question I had never considered. The very idea had never crossed my mind. It was absolutely revolutionary to consider its possibility. “Of course she could not have miscarried,” I reflected. “To do so would negate God’s word and utterly alter His blueprint. God would have to start all over. She could never have aborted that divine Seed.” It was at this instant the Lord interrupted my musings with this pointed question, **“How were you born again?”** As I began to retrace my life to the time of my conversion and how I had with much struggling wept, prayed and pressed my way through the birthing process. Nothing seemed to fit until I remembered the verse in 1 Peter, *“You have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word (Word) of God.”* (1 Peter 1:23) Then my eyes fell on the scripture I had just finished reading. The process was the same. The Holy Spirit came upon me and the power of the

Most High overcame me (by this time I was shouting) and that Holy seed shall be called a son of God.

This gave me the answer to the nagging question of unconfessed sin. Two men who kill each other in a vicious fight go out into eternity without the opportunity for confession. Men go to war with the express purpose of killing another of God's children, many of whom are devout Christians. Then there is the horrendous occurrence of the suicide. Because of mental illness or severe depression, he puts a gun to his head and ends his life or she takes an overdose of pills and says goodbye to this world. Each has, in their own way, done what they think will forever end the misery they are in. In the denomination I was in, these people were automatically relegated to the fires of hell for eternity. Because the Law says, "*Thou shalt not kill*", and these were self-murderers and faced God with this sin in their lives. The Law really declares, "*Thou shalt do no murder*." There's a huge difference. However, if we are to be damned to the fires of an eternal hell because we are guilty of one sin, is there any hope for any of us? Is there one of us so pure as to not entertain an evil thought? I need not go through the catalogue of sins. There is not one pure, no not one. But praise God if we are unfaithful, yet He remaineth faithful. That precious seed, with which we are impregnated, will yet produce a son of God made like unto His image. It may not be in this life; nevertheless, it will spring forth in fruitful abundance.

CHAPTER 15

CHRISTIAN CANNIBALISM

As a response to the disciple's supplication, "*Lord, teach us to pray*," the Lord introduced us to what is referred to as "The Lord's Prayer." It isn't really the Lord's prayer. His prayer is recorded in John 17 and in the Garden of Gethsemane, and also on the Cross as He spoke to His Father. Yet, the prayer of Matthew 6 and Luke 11 has been the model prayer of the church. In this pattern lie these words, "*Give us this day our daily bread*," or "*Give us day by day our daily bread*." The emphasis is, it would seem, that bread is needed daily. Of course, you remember that the exhortation of Moses concerning the manna in the wilderness was that it must be gathered daily. Have not most of us immediately thought of ham and eggs, or rice and gravy when we consider our daily bread? This is not entirely wrong, but our greater need is for the greater supply of the Manna from heaven, of which we must be daily partakers. Our life, our strength and our relationship are utterly dependent upon this constant supply. How I enjoy the alpine meadows with the icy streams skipping down from some distant snowdrift. This is the same refreshing that emanates from the person of the Lord. May I borrow here from a little book called, "Coffee break With God?"

A mother once stopped by her recently married daughter's home unexpectedly and was promptly greeted with a flood of tears. Alarmed, the mother asked, "What happened dear?"

Her daughter replied, "It's not what happened, but what keeps happening!"

Even more concerned, the mother asked, "What is it that keeps happening?"

The daughter replied, "Every day there are dishes to be washed. Every day there are meals to be prepared and a lunch to be packed. Every day there is laundry to be done and beds to be made and the house to be cleaned."

"And?" the mother asked, still unsure as to the nature of the problem.

"Don't you see?" the daughter said through her tears. "Life is just so daily."

Prayer to most people has become just so daily. Even our mealtime offering of thanks has degenerated into a dry-mouthed groan of repetition. When our friend bestows upon us some attractive gift or welcome meal, do we pour upon him a series of timeworn phrases we memorized in childhood, of which at one time was sincere, but now are mere hollow echoes? I hardly think so. We give him a genuine "Thank you, I appreciate that, it's just

what I needed." He is not offended that the language is not more colorful or the length of the Gettysburg Address. He can perceive without effort either the sham or the sincerity of the gratitude expressed. Picturesque wording or duration of praying does not impress our Father. Many times, while praying in the early morning hours, I have fallen asleep while talking to the Lord. If my own words put me to sleep, imagine how much He was impressed. **You cannot say a prayer. Prayer must be prayed.** This is one reason why meditation should be a practicable substitute for our wordiness. Someone said of me one time, "He's never at a loss for words." At the time my pride took it as a compliment, but looking back it was not really a compliment at all. Wordiness is not the true character of prayer.

On one occasion, we are given to understand that Ezekiel was speechless for seven days as he waited for the proper time to speak. This is an unthinkable contradiction to our way of life. "Get it done!" "You're wasting time!" "Don't talk it to death!" "Just do it!" These are common phrases we often hear today. We would have to be in a deep coma to wait seven days without a single word. There is a time to speak, and there is a time to be silent. We are a people who are assaulted daily with a barrage of noise pollution. To wait in mute expectation until the cobwebs are swept away is a blessing few realize in this hurried, harried society.

In this country which has been so blessed with abundance, there is an eating disorder which is called anorexia. It literally means a loss of appetite, especially if it is prolonged. We find it difficult to understand anyone whose appetite is not whetted when an appetizing meal is set before them. In the natural realm, they are now calling anorexia a disease. To what can we attribute it when the same symptoms occur in the spiritual realm? Christians who have no hunger or craving for the person of the Lord are seriously afflicted by some unseen malady which, if not corrected, will cause their death. We would be deeply concerned if our loved one suddenly stopped eating, yet we take in stride Christian friends and loved ones who have no interest in the things of God except on "special days".

Another eating aberration we have been exposed to in the last twenty years is a passionate, howbeit, abnormal, craving for food called bulimia. After the gorging of food, it is often regurgitated in order to stay in "shape". How many Christians have an intense hunger for the things of God, only to reject the written or proclaimed word because it is troubling to their lifestyle or doctrines? They find the message sweet in their mouth but bitter to their belly. To eat of Him, to "cannibalize" His person will leave not a single area of one's life unchanged. We want the reassurance of His presence but not the demands of His kingship. We desire to be called sons of God before enduring the training and rigors of a servant and a child.

"The image of God currently popular is that of a distracted father, struggling in heartbroken desperation to get people to accept a Savior of whom they feel no need and in whom they have very little interest. To persuade these self-sufficient souls to respond to His generous offers God will do almost anything, even using salesmanship methods and talking down to

them in the chummiest way imaginable. This view of things is, of course, a kind of religious romanticism, which, while it often uses flattering and sometimes embarrassing terms in praise of God, manages nevertheless to make man the star of the show. God's professed children are bored with Him, for they must be wooed to meetings with a stick of striped candy in the form of religious movies, games and refreshments."---Tozer

"We Are What We Eat"

History bears record of many races of people who held to the belief that whatever we eat is assimilated into our being, and we take on the nature of that which is eaten. The American Indians were known to eat the heart of a bear in order to take on the bravery and ferocity of the bear. The same was true of the eagle, that they may have the eyes of this grandest of birds. Most tribes were content to use only the wild animal kingdom for their dietary fare. There were, however, many tribes and clans in South America who sacrificed men and children, eating their vital organs in order to incorporate the cherished elements into their own bodies. In other parts of the world, such as Borneo, other islands of the seas and many areas of Africa, this ritual was taken a bit further and cannibalism was a common occurrence. It was never primarily a matter of food that this was practiced but rather to take on the admirable attributes of the unfortunate entree on the menu. There have been those lamentable times when famine was so pervasive and hunger so overwhelming that people ate each other and even their children as a source of food, but this was not intended to incorporate the characteristics of the less fortunate one.

The gospel according to St. John is one of the deepest books in the entire Bible. We would not give the new convert the book of Revelation as a starter, yet we give them the book of John that is as deep in mystery as is Revelation. In the sixth chapter of John, Jesus infuriated the Pharisees and so puzzled His disciples that many walked no more with Him. He serves us a piece of meat so tough that most ministers do not plumb its depths and gravity. *"Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have **no life** in yourselves. He who eats my flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life; and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me. This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate, and died, he who eats this bread shall live forever."* (John 6:53-58) We understand this to mean that His flesh is His nature, or His word; and His blood is His life. He is saying, "Unless you partake of My word and My life, you have no life in you"

It is extremely doubtful that the masses of God's children have the acute awareness that it is of vital importance to feed at His table daily. As we have visited many of God's precious families, the focal attention of the home is the entertainment center. Numerous magazines are visible and easily accessible, but the Bible or books of inspiration are placed neatly in some bookcase. I believe that we, as ministers, have done a grave disservice to the children of God by the implied message that attending church services three times a week

is sufficient. Eating three meals a week is not sufficient to being strong and healthy, especially if the meals are only pap and filler.

Here we have made a grave error in substituting the Scriptures for His Word. **The Scriptures are not His word!** They contain His Word. They reflect His Word. They are a testimony of His Word. They are a history of His Word but they do not constitute His Word today. The Old Testament is a history of God's dealings with a people and sets Israel as a pattern in the natural, for the things that would follow in the realm of the Spirit. If they would walk in His precepts, life would be the result; but if they rebelled and refused, death would be their portion. The New Testament is a journal of men's relationships with the Father through Jesus Christ. The first four books are a record of Jesus' birth and life on earth and His intimacy with the Father. The book of Acts gives us the account of the coming of the Holy Spirit and how He **normally** works in the lives of normal Christians. The book of Acts seems light years apart from our formal church life but that was and is the normal Christian life. The epistles of Paul give us a divine revelation concerning the Law, its purposes and limitations. We are also given an insight into God's love and purpose for a family.

Please understand me when I say, **there is not one life-giving sentence in the entirety of the Bible.** Life is wrapped up, concealed and deeply entrenched, not in a book, not in letters but in the person of Jesus Christ. The Bible is a guide, a road map, and an encouragement to those who read it and a warning to the disobedient. It is a treasure of nuggets but it only points us to the gold mine. These treasures are available to those travelers who make their way to this mystical realm of the Spirit and our Father who reigns there.

"I'll Study My Way to Heaven"

Look with me to the couple who has decided to take an automobile trip from southern Texas to Maine. He breaks out the atlas and begins to study each and every highway connecting the two extremes. No side roads, none of those little black lines or the dashed ones will do. Only the double striped red lines will serve the purpose. A week has passed by and the man has broken out his magnifying glass, still poring over all those possibilities. A month--a year slips by until he knows every highway number, every city bypass and every toll he will encounter. Still he is no closer to Maine than when he began his dreams. How many believe he will ever reach Maine by memorizing the atlas? The atlas will not get him to Maine. It won't even get him to Arkansas. It merely points in the right direction. To actually get to Maine involves getting into his car, starting the engine and driving north. Rather than using the atlas, wouldn't it be much more enjoyable to have a very dear friend accompany him who knew the route by heart? The Bible is not the way to the Father! It is a roadmap that directs us to **The Way**. Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, except through Me."* (John 14:6) Neither the Veda of the Hindus, the Koran of Islam nor the Bible of Christianity is the way. Jesus is the door, the way, the strength and the life of God the Father. It would be much more exciting to have this dear friend walk with us and show us the route, then the journey would be as thrilling as the

destination. Today most people merely endure the journey. We close our eyes to the beauty and the possibilities surrounding us. Our entire dreams are wrapped up in what we will do when we all get to heaven.

The Bible is, in a sense, a "how to" book to those who seek a closer walk in the Spirit. You cannot read much of this "how to" book until you come to realize it is never a complete volume. It is always pointing to another ultimate solution. One simply cannot arrive at the ultimate intention of God by study and memorization of scripture. It is good. It is profitable. It is wonderful as it instructs and encourages us, but it is incomplete. There are many people who will ultimately wind up disappointed, frustrated and confused because they will discover that memorizing and quoting scripture will not produce life. It produces knowledge but knowledge cannot produce life. It only "puffs up".

Let us assume there is a young bride who desperately wants to have a child. She can go to counselors, read tons of literature on the subject, consume loads of vitamins, and even take fertility pills. Nothing will avail unless and until she comes into intimate relationship with her husband. Once that is accomplished, everything else is of little consequence. It is the relationship that produces the life within her. Relationship has been the missing ingredient in the lives of most children of Christ. We are content, as were the children of Israel to have another speak to us. *"Let not God speak to us anymore,"* they cried. Our cry is more subtle. "We hire a pastor to give us God's word." Is it any wonder that we eventually become jaded, having watched men's personalities exhaust themselves year after year and their flaws becoming more conspicuous? The glory of God will overshadow the flaws of men.

In this accelerated push button society, there have been a lot of artificial means to conceive what appears to be life to the hungry seeker. Today the "rebirth" has to be quick, simple and with no embarrassment to anyone. If the applicant should get a little happy and shout or if in his sorrow for past sins he should weep above a whisper; he is quietly ushered to another part of the sanctuary. In order that our children are not exposed to anything which might upset them, they are usually kept in a segregated part of the building away from where the action is—or should be. Natural birth is hardly like that. It matters little whether it is a hospital room, an elevator or the back of a taxi; when the time arrives for the baby's delivery, it will make its messy appearance, eradicating all modesty in the process, announcing its presence to all within earshot. A sweeping rebirth happened on the day of Pentecost to those who had been in waiting. There was a cacophony of voices, a clamor of languages and a stunning attraction to all of Jerusalem. No one could deny that something extraordinary was happening. Today, they are asked to quietly make their way to the front of the building, while no one is looking and the organ music is softly wafting its muted tones across the stilled and passive congregation as the midwives effect the delivery by Cesarean method. It's quieter and quicker. We must understand that the applicants have had a liberal dose of Christian psychology and gymnasium foster care. Amazingly, despite all these questionable methods, there are some who have undeniable been born again; but most have been left as abortive creatures, not truly being introduced to the One who is food

and drink indeed. They are led to believe that the local fellowship is their source of life instead of Him who is the true bread.

As Jesus ministered to that little woman at the well of Sychar, something extraordinary took place. We well know what happened to the Samaritan woman. She went screaming her experience to all who would listen, until the whole city was evangelized in one day. But what happened to Jesus? When His disciples returned from buying groceries, they found this hungry, thirsty man who had earlier sat down beside the well tired and spent, filled with energy and sustained by a food they were as yet strangers to. On what had He been dining? How had He been refreshed? It wasn't vitamin pills He had ingested or some mysterious "second wind" He was experiencing. He had been feeding off the strength and vitality of the omnipotent One. That intimacy had infused Him with not only Spiritual empowerment, but physical vigor as well. There is hardly a way to isolate the one from the other. Since the spirit is inextricably joined with body, any time there is a joy, an exhilaration or surge of spirit within us, there will be a manifestation of strength in our natural man. No one can spend time in the Holy of Holies and leave the outer court unaffected. Life will flow from the one to the other.

The apostle John gives us a remarkable insight into the beginning. Although obscure and always open to question and ridicule, there are some testimonies that are irrefutable. He declares through a word of knowledge, *"In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him; and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men."* (John 1:1-4) If John was right, this visible Jesus was the invisible Word of God and was an integral part of God from the very beginning. There was a certain day when Jesus, the man, was born; but no one can point to a time when the Word did not exist. The Word goes as far back as God. One was not before the other. God took His Word, which always was, and encapsulated it within the limitations of a human body. It grew—first an embryo, then a fetus, then a baby, to a teenager and finally to a full-grown man. When Jesus said, *"Except you eat of My flesh and drink of My blood, you have no life in you,"* He was not inviting anyone to take a bite out of His arm or cheek. He spoke in spiritual terms. They heard in the natural. Most were offended at this preposterous statement. Jesus came as the unrivaled iconoclast. Their moldy old traditions were under assault, an assault that would crush the feet of their revered image.

It was with some amusement I watched as a preacher, attempting to emphasize his point, tore a page from his Bible and ate it because the angel had told John to eat the little book. I'm quite sure his revelation was not expanded one iota. Although this was and is a rather farfetched caricature of what the man really believed, many still hold to the same theories that eating the Scriptures can give one life rather than partaking of the One who is Life.

In biology—or the study of life—we soon discover that there is a wide variety of foods given to the host of animal life in this world. You will not find the deer eating raw meat nor will

you find the lion eating wheat. They each will feed on the portion allotted them. Only in cases of severe hunger will there be any deviation from this order of feeding and that only temporary. In the third chapter of the book of Genesis, Satan is given this edict which sets limits on his menu. “... *Dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.*” In other words, Satan was given the entire range of that which is earthy or carnal as his sustenance. To the man Adam, God said, “*By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for **you are dust**, and to dust you shall return.*” (Gen. 3:19) The wisest man of all the Old Testament had these wonderful words to say, “... *Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.*” (Eccl. 12:7) The flesh of man is of the dust of the earth. Amazingly, it even contains the same percentage of water, as does the earth. Is it any wonder we suffer so much sickness and infirmity in the flesh when this six-foot pile of mud is the main entrée on Satan’s menu? We can live in health and strength, but only when the spirit-man is strong enough to keep Satan’s foot out of the door. That requires a constant vigilance. My most severe problems in the flesh occurred when I thought the battle was over, so I shed my armor and hung it on the wall. Man, because he is dust, is food for the wicked one only so long as he persists in living in that carnal realm. That which is spiritual, that which is heavenly, that which the Father has translated into the Kingdom Satan cannot touch.

“Why Am I In This Civil War?”

Among many nestling eagles, owls, pelicans, storks etc. the stronger chick will attempt to shove the weaker one from the nest to its certain death. The weaker one will invariably be the youngest of the brood. If it cannot expel it from the nest, the stronger will dominate all the food, literally starving the other to death. I’m sure many of you have watched these events happen as the television crew documents the proceedings. It stirs sympathy within our hearts.

In regeneration, the older and stronger inhabitant will try to evict the newcomer—the latecomer from the house or to kill it outright. If that doesn’t work—and it can’t—then it will attempt to dominate the food source. This often works until the Christ child is left famished and emaciated. Adam cannot kill the Seed, but he can dictate the kind of food that is allowed in the house. If the Christ child is nourished, he will grow up to rule the household, crowding the carnal man out of the house or starving him to death. Most demons will gladly leave if they are simply not fed. In the natural life, there is stiff competition for food. It is no different in the Christian’s life. Spirit and flesh literally are in constant conflict over nourishment.

When any man is born from above, his diet is decreed to change. His appetite takes on a fresh flavor. A new hunger arises within him, and he begins to feed on delicacies of the heavenlies. After its metamorphosis, the butterfly will never return to eating leaves. It now feeds on the nectar of the blossom. This pattern is beautifully illustrated for us as we trace the history of Israel’s journey from Egypt to Canaan. As long as Israel was in Egypt, they shared in the same diet as the Egyptians. God had no problem with that until they crossed

the Red Sea. Then God became very particular with what they ate. God caused manna to fall upon the ground in the early morning and it had to be gathered before the sun was high so that it did not become putrid. It could not be stored or saved until the next day or it would spoil and breed worms. The only exception was the day before the Sabbath when they were commanded to gather enough for two days. On this day only did the manna remain pure and edible. Are you aware that the manna on which you fed yesterday and which gave you sustenance can today be foul and full of worms? Yesterday's message, which brought me life, has grown rotten today. Because there had been no inward change in them, Israel still had the same hunger for Egypt's bread as they always had. Consequently, they all yearned for the leeks, melons and garlic of Egypt. Their lust for the old world's variety, in contrast to God's sameness, turned their hearts away from their inheritance and angered God. They were a special people and God had prepared a special food for their health and well being. Don't expect the caterpillar to drink nectar! It doesn't know how nor has its appetite been reborn.

Let me declare unto you this day. You who have been born from above are a special people. We are the "apple of His eye". We are so special that He prepared in the heavenlies from the beginning of time a special food, a heavenly manna called Jesus. Little wonder Jesus taught us in word and deed, *"Except you eat of My flesh and drink of My blood you have no life in yourselves."* He was giving us the simple formula for heavenly living.

"Help! Is My Warranty Still Good?"

As he hands over the keys to your brand new automobile the dealer warns, "Remember, this model operates on premium gasoline only. Enjoy your car." You're so excited you hardly hear his instructions; so the first time you need fuel, you remove the hose from the pump and fill it up with diesel. Guess what happens—or doesn't happen? Your shiny new car won't run. After being towed back to the dealership and they have drained the fuel tank, filled it with premium gasoline and purged the system, you are again cautioned, "This automobile will only run on premium gasoline." The dealer shakes his head as you drive off, suspecting he will see you again shortly. Later in the week as you are enjoying a beautiful country tour, your lovely new car sputters and dies. That's right, it's empty again. Being miles from any source of gasoline, you glimpse a clear inviting brook nearby. "Surely, a couple of gallons of that pure water would get me to a service station," you reason. Five gallons of crystal clear water later, it still will not run. You are livid. How utterly unreasonable these automobile manufacturers are to restrict you to such narrow confinements that you cannot use a broad range of fuels! Even the Telephone Company insists that you dial each number in sequence before you can reach your party. How narrow-minded! How constricting! How extreme!

This is no different than that which occurs in the realm of the Spirit. There are absolutes that must be adhered to. Jesus spoke of this narrow way which leads to life and of the broad way which leads to destruction. Satan has been allotted his food and the born-again

believer has been allotted his food. The two are worlds apart. Satan well knows the boundaries wherein he can function; but the Christian, for the most part, is like the driver who puts the wrong fuel in their new car and yet expects it to function properly. We expect to feed off of the world and still walk in the Spirit. It just will not happen. We become frustrated and more than a little angry when we quote Scriptures and they do not work, or we rebuke Satan and he laughs at us. How can we expect this spiritual vehicle to respond properly when we have filled it to capacity from the putrid garbage that has been pumped out of that cesspool called Hollywood? That is not the food, the fuel, and the strength on which we were designed to operate.

The Word, Who was always a part of God, a free expression throughout the universes, creating and enlarging on everything that was, came forth and graciously became limited in a vessel of flesh. That vessel functioned in glorious fashion although housed in a little Jewish body. The more they tried to extinguish the light the brighter it shone. This Word, though very constricted, still possessed the same wisdom, the same power, and the same mission as in the beginning. Those things spoken in the creative beginning continue yet to glorify, to expand and to expound the magnificence of the Father. The heavens declare His handiwork, and the earth exults in praise when considering how He reigns in resplendent majesty. Inside this ordinary looking field, called the kingdom of God, is hidden a treasure so priceless that when a man actually sees it, he will sell all that he has and buy that field.

It seems incongruous to the carnal mind that one could buy the things of God. The scriptures are clear; the medium of exchange is not gold or silver. Isaiah records, *“Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.”* (Isaiah 55:1) The book of Revelation declares essentially the same thing; *“I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire, and white garments, that you may clothe yourself.”* (Rev. 3:18) It seems a glaring contradiction in terms to invite someone to come and buy without cost.

In the comic strip “BC”, their unit of monetary exchange is the clam. It would be ludicrous for anyone today to load up a sack of clams in order to buy a washing machine. They would laugh you off the showroom floor. It is just as absurd for anyone to assume they could buy the things of God with those things we hold precious. Gold and silver are as worthless clams in His sight; but let no one be deceived, to apprehend the things of God will cost you dearly. Many people have gotten a small glimpse of the Father and His kingdom and are endeavoring to ingratiate themselves to that realm with gold and silver. Clams! “Since I studied voice at the conservatory and was a singer in the world, surely He would welcome me as a singer in His sanctuary.” Clams! “I was a music major and have a degree in my field, I’m sure I would be received with some degree of honor.” Clams! “I attended seminary and was the top student in homiletics and delivery. I’m sure I would be qualified to serve as a pastor over His flock.” Clams! These are all nice and good in their place; but these attributes will not ingratiate you to God nor purchase one degree of favor with Him. In fact, God requires us to come empty handed. As the song says, “In my hand no price I bring; simply to Thy cross I cling.” The price that is required to buy this field, to

apprehend the presence and power of our Father is dearer than your talents, no matter how highly refined they may be. A sobering thought is that **God never accepted live sacrifices**. These sacrifices had their lives poured out in a total tribute. This was not a casual decree. It embraced the pattern of God's dealings with man. First there is evening and then morning. First there is death—then life. Life springs out of death consequently, death is not the end but the beginning.

It is remarkable that in the last decade or so there has been a virtual explosion of entertainment and media spectacles that have focused the attention of the world on the occult—the world of darkness. There has been an increasing awareness of the possibility of monstrous earthquakes, meteors, asteroids, tidal waves, volcanoes, plagues, viruses and an assortment of hitherto unknown bacteria—all of which can or will eradicate most of the mammal population of the world. I do not think this is an accidental convergence of carnal minds. It is rather more likely the predictable effect of spiritual visitation from the world of darkness to the sons of darkness who know not the Lord.

I listened with some astonishment as a prophet spoke to another these words: “You need to repent, for you have been involved in necromancy.” The recipient of these words was immediately defensive, but the prophet continued, “You have been fellowshiping with the old man and following the advice of one who is dead. Adam has been crucified. Don't listen or have communion with him.” This affinity or communion with the realm of darkness and its reasoning will open a Pandora's Box to those who fellowship in that realm.

The world of the redeemed, for the most part, seems totally unaware of this heightened activity. It is life as usual. Jesus is coming soon to catch us away from this wretched world of sin and wickedness is the accepted theory. In the days of Jesus' fleshly sojourn on earth, demons were always among the first to recognize Him as the Christ and to understand His purpose for coming. While the religious community was reprimanding Him for eating with unwashed hands, demons were screaming in terror at this threat to their very existence. They were painfully aware of what was transpiring in the Spirit realm even before Jesus was born. Their will—thought—nature was imparted to carnal men because these men were flowing harmoniously in the same spiritual domain.

“Communion”

How can wicked men and women be able to plug into that vast network of evil, while God's children grope about as unseeing lambs? The answer lies in the realm of communion. The wicked, unconverted and carnal are willing partakers of the cup of Satan's brew, drinking fully of his concoction while the children of God stagger blindly along looking for someone to lead them, knowing little or nothing about the world of the unseen. While the wicked are in perpetual fellowship with Satan, drinking of his nature, being conformed to his image, the children of God live a life of incredible mixture—attempting to be “spiritual” in church services, yet all the while giving themselves to that other world of darkness and confusion. The church stands in wonder at one who can bring forth a word of knowledge or a

prophetic revelation, not understanding that this is the normal Christian life. Each of us should be able to feed at that table. Yet, for the most part, Christians feed more from the table of Satan than they do from the table of God. Little wonder that Isaiah cried to a people in much the same condition as today's church, *"For all the tables are full of filthy vomit, without a single clean place."* (Isa. 28:8)

While standing in a huge national museum in one of the larger northern cities, I was quite taken by two extremely large parabolic reflectors standing some distance apart in the main section of the building. If two people had been standing the same distance apart as these reflectors, they would have needed to raise their voices considerably in order for one to hear the other. However, as you stood in front of either of the dishes, you could merely whisper and be heard distinctly by someone standing at the other dish. These were sound gatherers placed strategically in relation to one another. You could say that they were attuned to each other.

The piano, or any other stringed instrument, works on a similar basis. As one note is struck, every note of the same value will resonate across the entire scale. The upper notes of a piano use three strings tuned to the same pitch. These strings must be perfectly in tune, or they will send off harmonics of opposing tones, which not only distort the sound but take away from the true note that is desired. Even when all the strings are in perfect tune, unless they are at perfect pitch, they will not resonate with the soundboard, which has been designed to oscillate at a certain frequency. No less is true with other stringed instruments. "What has this got to do with our relationship with God?" you may ask. It has everything to do with it. Herein lies the central problem with today's Christianity. In our fast-paced, push-button, volume oriented society, we simply have not the time to submit to the arduous "stretching" required to bring us into tune with His Holy Spirit. Consequently, we simply do not hear most of the whisperings of the Lord. If my spirit has been brought into perfect tune with His Holy Spirit, I will hear the slightest whisper. If my spirit is the least bit out of tune, and I hear something in the Spirit, I will not be sure it was God, for my spirit will not resonate within me. It is a most remarkable fact that most Christians do not seem to recognize the absolute necessity of harmony in the Spirit.

"In the beginning was the Word." The Word was the creative agency of Father God. Out of the mouth—the being of this awesome unspeakable mass of light, wisdom and energy, there came forth a Word, *"Let there be"*, and it was so. Borne upon the wings of faith, that Word accomplished the exact purpose for which it was sent. The Word of God is always accompanied by the Spirit of faith, but more than that, faith releases the Word. The Word, as it were, was held prisoner in that vessel of flesh called Jesus. There were many times when the faith of Jesus released the Word and that Word accomplished the exact purpose for which it was sent. There were other times when the Word housed in Jesus was released by another's faith. Remember the little lady with the issue of blood. Her intense desire took the key of faith and loosed the imprisoned Word in Jesus and she was made whole. There were many others to whom Jesus spoke, *"Thy faith hath made thee whole."* There were some whose faith sprang up immediately, and they received a miraculous

healing or deliverance. Faith had found the key instantly, so they were healed instantly. To one healing came as he washed the clay from his blinded eyes. Others were delivered as they went to show themselves to the priests. Jesus never failed because He obviously knew how to use the key. The Word spoke the Word and it was so. We hear people often say, "God told me." If God truly speaks a Word to you, faith will rise up within to bring that Word to pass. As that same Word is confined in this vessel called flesh, it can only be released by an active faith. The Word rides in on the vehicle of faith.

Jesus prayed a short but most profound prayer saying, "*Glorify Me with the glory which I had with You before the world existed.*" (Jn. 17:15) So we see by this that He did exist as a Spirit being before the world was. Then we find there came a day on Calvary when that Majesty of God laid aside the temporary house called Jesus and once again took His place as the Word of God. Jesus had said in John 14:23 "*We will come and make our abode with you.*" In another place He said, "*He is with you but shall be in you.*" (Jn. 14:17) Every Evangelical believes that when a person is truly born from above the Spirit of Christ—the Spirit of God—the Holy Spirit comes to make His abode in us. When His Spirit comes, it is joined—welded—fused with our human spirit. We now have abiding within us the Wisdom, Power and Love of the ages. We need not travel to some distant star to dine at this table. It is as near as a whisper. We now have available at our behest all the wisdom of the ages. There is not one question, not one moment of perplexity, no sickness, no weakness, no limitation nor fear that the answer does not lie as close as a breath.

CHAPTER 16

THE KNOWER WITHIN

Let us assume that we are strolling down the hall of a building that houses the world's most powerful computer. In the memory of this computer is more information than is contained in all the encyclopedias of the world. Every theory and formula of physics, every scrap of medical knowledge and every star which graces the heavens, its size and distance are all wrapped up in this computer. Every shred of obtainable knowledge is hidden there. Well, you get the picture. As we pass by the person at the keyboard, we ask the operator, "What are you doing?"

"I'm playing solitaire," is the reply.

We stand in astonishment as we stutter, "That's like taking the Hubbel space telescope and studying the dirt under one's fingernail."

"You don't understand," our operator responds, "I don't know the access code."

"Do you have a book of instructions?" is our next question.

"I do, but that thing is so involved and complicated I never got past the first page," the operator responds with a yawn.

This all leaves us shaking our heads in unbelief. What a colossal waste of time! Surely this operator is answerable to someone. The management will not permit this type of activity to continue. Inside every person born from above lies all the knowledge and wisdom of the universe. Does that surprise you? This same Word who spoke the worlds into existence, Who was in the beginning with God and Who was God, now dwells in the heart (soul, spirit) of every born-again believer. He brought with Him the wealth of the ages--the wisdom and knowledge of the eons. At the fingertip of every believer is the right answer, the right path, and the indisputable choice. What shall we do with this reservoir of wealth? How shall we respond to this treasure hidden in the field of our person? I have witnessed countless Christians playing solitaire as it were, with their lives, making dumb choices, agonizing over direction, claiming the Lord as their God yet never learning how to approach Him nor speak His language. "But I don't know the access code", is their response. I've also made my share of these mistakes. The Bible is full of illustrations and demonstrations of men and women who went through the same torment of soul discovering this torturous path. Jesus said, *"Narrow is the path and few there be that find it."* (Matt. 7:14) Now Jesus was not speaking of the "heaven" of the modern Christian but of a way which leads to life. Isaiah speaks eloquently of this walk. *"A highway will be there, a roadway, and it will be called the highway of holiness. The unclean will not travel on it, but it will be for him who walks that way, and fools will not wander on it."* (Isaiah 35:8) In other

words, Christianity is not a way of life one stumbles upon but a family into which we are born.

Probably the greatest disservice the church has taught its children is an option between two extremes. On the one hand there are those who teach that to know God is as simple as walking. All one needs to do is pray the sinner's prayer and knowing God is the inevitable result. You will naturally evolve from a child to a son by going to "church" and being involved in its religious programs. Nothing could be further from the truth. As a matter of fact, the "church's" programs are, for the most part, the dedicated enemy of intimacy with God. They will repeatedly cause one to lean upon the arm of human wisdom and understanding.

The other extreme expresses itself in the idea that it is not possible in this life to know God in any degree of intimacy. God is much too removed and involved in insuring the harmony of the universe than be moved by our immediate problem or the small disruptions of our lives. This is as much a diabolical lie as the first. Unless we are convinced that He is vitally interested in the everyday—humdrum affairs of our lives, we will have nothing upon which to anchor our faith. The doctrine of Christianity hangs from this thread.

There is, in modern religious circles, a term and practice which seems anathema or taboo. That is the understanding of meditation. I am not here speaking of the Hindu exercises of yoga, where the soul is separated from the mind and body, but rather of sitting in quiet contemplation in the presence of our Father. Our world is filled with a cacophony of discordant noises. Our prayers become a list of things we wish the Father to do or at least support. "Father, we need a new car (our old one needs washing) and help my son get the promotion he is seeking. Help us to move out of this house to a better neighborhood." Noise pollution is the dominant contamination in our cities, homes and "churches". It is as if silence is a mute curse. I will agree wholeheartedly that there are times when a crucial need arises for fervent prayer. There are times for crying with a loud voice and for entreating Him with cries and groans; but there are more times when we should be still before the Lord, listening for that hushed voice within our spirit. Look with me at the "church calendar" and observe how plans are concocted to absorb every spare moment of your time. This leaves one little time to sit in extended contemplation or spend quality time with the family. The turbulence of the outer world will find its way into our homes, our "churches" and our lives if there is not a vigilant guard posted at the entrance to our spirit. Is it any wonder that contemporary "Christian" music reverberates with the deafening sounds of the street? Can our worship services be greatly in contrast to what we listen to at home or in our cars? In other words, can we change our masks or the longing in our heart of hearts just because we have entered into the "sanctuary"? The leeks and garlic of Egypt are ever enticing.

As Elijah stood on the mountain before the Lord, God made to pass before him a great wind that shattered the mountain and even broke the rocks, but God was not in the wind. He later caused an earthquake to violently shake the ground upon which Elijah stood, but

God was not in the earthquake. God subsequently brought forth a great fire to rage about him; however, He was not in the fire. The Lord then began to speak to Elijah in the midst of a gentle blowing wind. This gives every indication that the tender directions of the Lord are rarely received in the deafening activity and clamor of our daily involvement. If we truly desire to know Him, we must set aside some time of quietness and solitude to eat and drink of Him.

Today's religious hierarchy, with its separation of clergy and laity, priest and populace, stands in vivid contradiction to God's family of believers. It has become a convenient way to hire someone to tell us what God is saying. Many of the clergy, of course, never hear from God. Their sermons are merely a topical dissertation that can be easily lifted from the computer program or a good scripture commentary; nevertheless, it relieves the ordinary listener from the responsibility of praying, fasting and waiting on God. "That's what we pay the minister for." That was exactly the attitude of Israel after God had spoken to them from the mountain. His voice was so alien to them, so frightening, that they implored Moses saying, "We don't want God to speak to us any more. You listen to God and tell us what He says, but let not God speak to us lest we die." (Ex. 20:19 paraphrase) Instead of a nation of priests, which was their rightful inheritance, they became a people who knew not the tender presence of God.

There are many references in scripture of Jesus praying. On one occasion He fasted and prayed forty days and nights. Another mentions how He, *"rising up a great while before dawn went out to a secret place and prayed."* We know that before He chose His twelve disciples, He had spent the entire night in prayer. Jesus is marking out a pattern for our lives, a template we must follow if we are to know the Lord. We dance and shout, while singing, "Jesus paid it all", obviously believing since He prayed so much, we are not required to do the same. I seriously doubt that at any time He took one of the scrolls of scripture with Him in order to comprehend the mind of His Father. Being poor, I doubt that He owned any of the sacred scrolls. He did not use the Scriptures as His daily guide, although He knew them well. It was in fellowshiping with the Father that He found comfort, strength and guidance. Many Christians, when in need of direction or intervention from the Lord, will go to a "prophet" in order to receive a "word". Some will even allow their Bible to randomly fall open to a spot and fasten their gaze on the first verse to which their eyes are "drawn" and accept that as the direction of the Lord. If you are a little child, one who has just begun his walk with the Lord, He will occasionally honor these innocent means; however, as a Father, His great desire is to reveal Himself to you.

Recently there were certain churches that had a nation wide prayer vigil in order to persuade God to intervene in the impeachment hearings in Congress, pertaining to President Clinton. My interest was drawn to the fact that the pulpits were continually filled with men who were arguing his case, but no one prayed. It was more like a political convention rather than a prayer vigil.

Wednesday night prayer service is an ordinary part of many "churches" agenda. Almost no one attends these meetings with the thought of praying. There may be a song or two, a few words regarding some business affair or a short "sermonette" but prayer is usually relegated to someone being called upon to lead in the dismissal benediction. It would probably be a safe assumption to conclude that there are extremely few Christians who spend one hour each day sitting in the presence of our Father, with everything else shut down, unplugged and closed out, with the idea of total dedication of that time to intimacy with the Father. In the realm of the natural, men spend hundreds of dollars in candlelight dinners, beautiful flowers and the assurance of extended privacy in order to enjoy time with their beloved. Time, however, spent with our Father is such a chore to most, consequently few know Him in any degree of intimacy.

A friend recently said to me, "I've spent a lot of time this year in prayer. Well actually, I've done a lot of whining to God this year." Jesus did not bring a long wish list to the Garden of Gethsemane. We have the count of only two phrases being spoken. *"If it be possible Father, let this cup pass from Me, nevertheless, not My will but Thine be done."* Perhaps He prayed for some lengthy period of time, for He awakened His disciples on three different occasions. Doubtless, He was not whining nor seeking an escape route. He needed added strength and composure for the approaching hours. He was well aware that His hour had come. We, on the other hand when sensing a "presence" a "gut feeling" or a "premonition" of approaching needs in our family, friends or ourselves, often push it into the background with television, shopping or some cheap novel. Is it any wonder we're so often caught unprepared? There is really no reason to ever be caught off guard. We have a "Knower" abiding within who knows all things from beginning to end. Should He not be consulted? Why would anyone ever ignore this limitless source of power and knowledge except perhaps we do not know the access code or we are unfamiliar with His language? In any event, here is this unspeakable treasure hidden in our field, waiting to be discovered. Tares, thorns and a host of other Adamic baggage immediately spring up to rob us of our heritage. Our vision must be unclouded lest we become discouraged in our quest.

Contrary to the popular opinion that makes Him common, the Holy Spirit or Spirit of Christ comes to us as an extremely complex individual. Remember! His thoughts are as high as the heavens above our thoughts. He is like a stranger who has persuaded us to allow Him access into our homes and once inside proceeds to take over the premises. He has been referred to as the Benevolent Dictator. He is much akin to the huge male lion that takes over an established pride of lions. Not only does he banish the former ruler, but also he sets out to kill all his offspring. Is it any wonder that Jesus is called the Lion of Judah? He will not have children in His household that He has not fathered.

Do you recall how God had spoken to Abraham saying, *"Listen to the voice of your wife Sarah,"* after Sarah had demanded that Abraham expel Hagar and Ishmael from the home? The promised seed could not grow up alongside one who taunted and ridiculed him. As Paul has revealed, there is a civil war in progress inside us where the Spirit is in a continuous war with the flesh. The flesh ever ridicules and cast doubts on the dreams and

faith of the spirit man. They are vehement enemies. You may try to coax them to the peace table where they can co-exist in one accord, but one or the other must relinquish its rights. The carnal man—the offspring of Adam—cannot dwell in harmony with the Son of God.

So many Christians endure such prolonged, needless pain because they are attempting to keep the children of both families under one roof. The only way to ever experience real peace is to expel—deny—kick out the children of the Adamic man. *“No man can serve two masters.”* To be torn between two extremes of devotion will keep us in constant turmoil. Believe me when I say. When it comes to the purging of your carnal nature, God is utterly ruthless.

CHAPTER 17

THE EXPECTANCY OF LOVE

Many people reject the message of ultimate reconciliation on the grounds of “justice” or what they term as “fairness”. “These people willingly chose the path they trod; consequently, they deserve the punishment,” they say. A fourteen-year-old boy makes a stupid decision to get drunk and attempt to drive the family car. In the process, an entire family is killed in the wreck for which he was responsible. Because the boy was known as a delinquent and the slain family was well loved, the judge sends the boy to prison for life with no hope of parole. Everyone washes their hands of the whole affair. Everyone that is, except his mother. Tirelessly, throughout her lifetime, she explores every possible avenue of help in the attempt to free her son. She visits him in prison at every opportunity. Did she not know that he was guilty of this dreadful “crime”? Wasn’t she aware that he had been the explosive factor that had separated an entire family from the earth? Many loved ones were left with grieving hearts and empty dreams. There was a terrible vacuum and emptiness in the family reunions. Someone had to pay! Why would one set of people demand endless punishment while another would exhaust every means to seek his freedom? The answer is simple. One group entertains no love in their hearts for the perpetrator while the other allows no room for hate or resentment.

I have preached many funerals of rebellious renegades who had dissipated the gift of God’s beautiful life with drugs, drink and riotous living. A body of beauty and strength has been wasted until it now lies a horrible caricature of twisted limbs and expression. Yet, almost without exception, the mother will lay hold of a hope that her child’s squandered life will eventually be saved. It matters not that the young person had never called on the Lord for help nor had any inclination for things of God. The hope is still there. Buried deep in the heart of every person is a love that *“suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, does not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in inequity but rejoiceth in truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, **hopeth all things**, endureth all things.”* (1 Cor. 13:4-7) Of course, unless one has been conformed in some degree to the image of Jesus Christ, this kind of love will apply to only a small chosen few. “Me and my wife—my son John and his wife—us four and no more.”

“No Room in the Inn”

In the fifteenth chapter of Luke’s gospel is the story of the prodigal son. The familiar passage recounts how the younger son took his father’s gifts and squandered them in riotous living. Now look with me with eyes of understanding and faith. How many people believed that young man would return home? How many of the family watched expectantly for the appearing of this wandering child of rebellion? The only one who waited in watchful expectation was a father filled with love and anticipation, knowing in his heart that the son

in time, would return safely to his home. Notice the difference between the father and the elder brother. The brother was not looking for any return or restitution of his younger brother. In fact, when he did return and the father set aside a day of rejoicing, the elder brother was furious. He was angry that his younger brother was restored to his rightful place of fellowship, and he was jealous of his younger brother getting to enjoy all those sins while he was stuck with the dull and monotonous chores of family life. Do you not know that here is one of the reasons that Christians demand punishment for the disobedient? Most Christians look upon their own lives as time spent in some sort of penalty box while the sinners are having the time of their life. They do not see themselves as the one who is living in heaven on earth--or should be. In reality, they should be having the time of their lives but that's not how they're living. "I can't believe that they can "enjoy" that kind of lifestyle and yet one day be received into the Father's house as a son," is the argument. The mindset that evokes this kind of reasoning is a lack of love. I've watched brothers and sisters blot out of their love and out of their lives a sibling who had been taken captive by some sordid sin and brought shame and disgrace to the family. They were indignant to learn upon the death of the parent that the last will and testament included that same renegade child as an equal heir. They had stopped loving but the parent had not.

In reading a prayer book that we possess, I noticed that the majority of prayers expressed thanksgiving for our Father's great love for us. Men and women who have a firm belief that God will punish some of His creation forever in a fire of unquenchable torment uttered some of these prayers. As one examines this apparent dichotomy, we arrive at the conclusion that their love was housed in the company of the elder brother and not the father who waited in assured patience. I blush in shame to think that I once resided in the same camp as these unforgiving people. After I had testified to some obnoxious renegade and they refused my witness, I took the attitude, "Then just let them go to hell. I've cleared my soul." No! Actually, I had cleared my conscience that was schooled by law. There was no love involved in it at all. Is it any wonder they rejected such a sham?

Christianity is the only religion that is based on love. All the rest are based on fear. They are ever striving to find favor in the eyes of their god, either by self-punishment or by the extreme sacrifices of goods or persons. Much of Christianity moves in the same vein of self-denial or self-punishment. "For Martin Luther, the life of the church, especially the ordered life of the monastery, provided remedies for those who were troubled by their relation to the judgment of an angry God. A person could say more prayers, fast more strictly, and whip himself more mercilessly. Finally, he would achieve the certain knowledge that God regarded him favorably. Luther tried all these methods, but none worked for him. The harder he tried to please God, the more he realized that he was depending not on God, but on his own efforts." (World Book Encyclopedia)

We are all familiar with those who are unable to love more than one or two people at a time. They only have one friend at a time or one family with whom they fellowship. They even expect that friend or family to exclude all others in preference to them. This attitude carries right over into their immediate family. They love one sibling more than the other or

one child more than another. They do not have enough room in their hearts for very many to live there at one time. This flaw is rampant not only in the world but also in the Christian family. We see it displayed in street gangs and church cliques. The gang has room for only a few, yet wants to control the entire neighborhood. The church clique only has room for those few that think exactly as they but want to control the entire congregation and especially the pastor. This is what really bothered that elder brother more than the inheritance that had been squandered. There was not enough room in his heart for his younger brother. Self had crowded out everyone else. Selfishness is always the primary reason behind exclusion. Greed, love of money or things, leaves little room for any degree of expansive love.

To Jesus there came one day a young man saying, *“Good master, what good thing must I do to be saved?”* After all the legalistic maneuvering around the requirements of the Law, Jesus looked directly into his heart and said, *“One thing thou lackest. Go sell all that you have and give it to the poor, and come follow Me, and thou shalt have treasures in heaven.”* (Matt. 19:16-22) It is recorded that this young man went away in great sorrow for his possessions were many. The gospel of Mark inserts this statement, *“And Jesus looking on him, loved him.”* This young man is shocked into stunned silence that the price would be so dear, in order to have intimacy with the Lord. Jesus did not say, “Give your riches to the church, or to this pastor, or that evangelist or this TV ministry. Invest in the kingdom of God.” **No!** *“Give it to the poor.”* Well surely He meant the Christian poor—the Godly poor. That is not what He said. *“Give it to the poor?”* **Why?** Regardless of what anyone thinks, God loves all men alike. The drunkard, the prostitute, the tax collector or the wife beaters are loved with the same intensity as the noblest, most righteous saint. His great heart has room for the entire world. *“For God so loved the **world** that He gave His only begotten Son.”*

If this young man had been walking away into an eternal, tormenting hell, do you think Jesus would have let him leave so easily? Do you not think He would have pressed him with urgency to surrender his life to God? Jesus well knew that eventually that young prodigal would come home but first he had to be separated from the other gods who now ruled him.

Now I will readily admit that there are some people who are immediately likable as there are some who are automatically unlikable. Some are sweet and gracious while others are abrasive and despicable. You weren’t always so sweet and tender either. God has worked into you a part of Himself that has a greater capacity for love and embraces a greater measure of people. We can safely measure our “Christ-like-ness” by looking at the amount of people we are able to love.

God’s love reaches past all man’s unlikableness. It reaches past our anger—our hatred—our rage—our murders and adulteries. We seem to think God loves the sweet little child who goes to Sunday School more than He loves the Charles Mansons, the Hitlers and Edie Amins of the world. I have a tendency to think like that and so do you. I have not yet

enough room in my heart for these misfits of society. I will add here that He hates their sins with a greater hatred than do you or I. You see there is a direct correlation between our hatred of sin and our love for people. God saw how sin had brutalized His people so He gave the dearest thing He had to free them from their chains. We may laugh at the drunkard and his awkward staggering. We may with pious attitude pass by the prostitute with her brazen manner. We can close our homes and our hearts to the abused ones next door. We can even watch crimes and murders and shrug our shoulders with the excuse, "I don't want to get involved." Jesus said, *"The zeal for thy house hath eaten me up."* Knowing it would cost Him His life; He still became vitally involved. God hates sin with such vehemence because it pollutes and distorts everything about His creation. We permit it because "it's no big deal". **But it is a big deal.** It makes emotional, moral and spiritual dwarfs of all who allow it to find a lodging-place within.

The Shepherd of the sheep never slumbers nor sleeps but is ever aware of the whereabouts of each of His lost ones. I must here borrow from that prolific writer, J. Preston Eby.

"Where are you going Shepherd?" "To find My sheep."
 "How far will You go?" "As far as My sheep."
 "How far may that be?" "To the world's end."
 "How long will You seek it?" "Until I find it."
 "When You find it will it come to You?" "No, it will flee from Me."
 "Where will it go then?" "To the rocks and the sand."
 "When will it stop?" "When it can run no more."
 "What will You do then?" "Carry it home."

I cannot conceive of a heavenly Father being so uncaring as to watch His creation grope in darkness, blind because He has not yet opened their eyes to see, nevertheless condemn them to eternal torment without hope of reprieve. I refuse to preach a god of that nature. I will not serve one so callous and uncaring. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, will seek and seek and seek and save and save and save until everything that has breath has been brought safely into the fold. Only then will He rest. Only then will He relinquish the kingdom back to the Father. *"For as in Adam **all** die, so also in Christ **all** shall be made alive. **But each in his own order:** Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power."* (1 Cor. 15:22-24)

All of us have listened to missionary messages that proclaim "We want to save all of Africa," or "We claim this city for God." What a wonderful vision; yet when we tell them that that is exactly what God intends to do, they become violent protesters of our message and accuse us of being heretical and misleading the people. They have not yet enough room in their hearts for the world and demand eternal punishment according to their doctrinal persuasion.

CHAPTER 18

OUR FASCINATION WITH DUNG

One of the Christian's most deceptive enemies is our accumulation of things—things that steal our time and devotion to God. In his greatest of songs, Solomon penned these words of the bride as she implores her beloved, *“Catch the foxes for us, the little foxes that are ruining the vineyards, while our vineyards are in blossom.”* (Song of Songs 2:15) She recognized the peril of permitting the small things of life to prohibit the growth of any fruit. The fruit was destroyed in the blossom.

The nilgai is a bluish-gray antelope of India that gives us a beautiful picture of the teachings of God. It has one outstanding characteristic that sets it apart from other antelope, and its actions hold a mirror up to our face. The peculiar trait of this animal is that it defecates in the same exact spot daily. That in itself is not particularly strange but what is rather odd is that it will defend this pile of dung with great energy and fervor, chasing away every intruder who comes near its “treasure”.

When I first heard about this animal, the Holy Spirit whispered into my spirit, “Sounds a lot like people, doesn't it?” It had never occurred to me how God truly looks upon our accumulation of wealth or possessions as nothing more than dung. This is precisely the word that Paul uses when describing his life and belongings. Not only does he gather all his possessions into one pile, which he calls dung, but he includes all his accomplishments and successes. Everything he had labored for all his life—his wealth, his prestige, reputation and theology is stacked into one great heap, which he calls dung. His exact words were, *“But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but dung in order that I may gain Christ.”* (Phil. 3:7,8)

Families have been decimated, churches have been isolated from God and nations have been brought to the edge of extinction by unscrupulous men who coveted after another's wealth of possessions; possessions that Paul correctly calls a heap of dung. How many people do you know that have completely lost all sense of peace fretting over their pile of dung? Too many to number, I would presume. I pray that you are not one of them. Someone has foolishly said, “He who dies with the most toys wins,” but Jesus said, “He who dies with the most toys is a shortsighted fool.” (Luke 12:15-21—my version) You may substitute “dung” for “toys”. I've watched people mow it and manicure it, pull it down the highway behind their car and wear it upon their fingers and around their necks. It does not have to be; but it very often is dung.

I am a product of the Great Depression; and as such, we had no toys to occupy our time or imagination. What toys we had, we made ourselves or someone whittled them out with a

pocketknife. Our creations were quite imaginative and challenging. One of the things that fascinated me as a small farm boy was the dung beetle I found in the cow pasture. I couldn't understand why a beetle would find cow manure or horse manure so alluring. Later in life, I learned that the beetle laid an egg inside the roll of manure; and the young larva would use this as food until it matured into a beetle. We referred to this scarab as a tumblebug because of how it would cling to the ball of dung as it tumbled down some indentation in the land.

"My Pile is Higher Than Your Pile"

Looking back, I cannot not help but see the comparison between the dung beetle's fascination with that offensive substance in which it has deposited its life and our captivity to that which our Lord considers dung. Our lives are entangled in the web of possessions, and we deposit our seed into that detestable dunghill. Our children are reared feeding off the same pile of garbage we have counted precious. As someone has written of the Jews in Europe in the late thirties, "They allowed their possessions to possess them and it cost them their lives." Had they been able to flee from their possessions, they would have preserved their lives. One answered Jesus and said, *"Lord, I will follow you, only let me bury my father first."* Jesus answered him and said, *"Let the dead bury the dead."* (Matt. 8:21-22) The amassing of things is much more captivating and demanding than the burying of loved ones. Is it any wonder that Jesus said, *"How hardly shall a rich man enter the kingdom of heaven."* Now our Lord would be pleased if we all could be rich; yet how few are able to handle riches? Instead of holding them loosely, we cling to them as if they were the answer to life's every problem.

To gain Christ is infinitely more than the amassing of great knowledge concerning Him or the understanding of Scriptures pertaining to His person. It is a pressing on through the seemingly impossible maze of carnal allurements and even greater danger of spiritual deception. To have our eyes fixed on the goal of the high calling, which is Christ, is really our only assurance of becoming an overcomer who shall stand with Christ in the deliverance of this world from the quagmire of Adam's fall. God's lofty purpose for man is that he becomes an extension of His person. Only the fulfilling of that high call will satisfy our Father. The scriptures we have used above are a prelude to one of those monumental themes that Paul proposes. He continues his letter to the Philippians by saying, *"I count them but dung in order that I may gain Christ...in order that I may attain to the resurrection from (not of) the dead. Not that I have already attained it, or have already become perfect, but I **press** on in order that I may lay hold of that for which I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I **press** on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."* (Phil. 3:8-14)

We have this dangerous habit of categorizing sin. This sin is so much worse than that sin. Your sin deserves so much more punishment than does mine. There is a most remarkable scripture found in the book of Ezekiel, as the prophet rebukes Jerusalem for her sins,

“Behold, this was the sin of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had arrogance, abundant food, and careless ease, but she did not help the poor and needy. Thus they were haughty and committed abominations before Me. Therefore I removed them when I saw it.” (Ezekiel 16:49,50) If you will notice, God says nothing about homosexuality; although this was the abomination to which He referred. He directs our attention to the root cause behind the abominations. Number one was, she was arrogant. She was arrogant because she had abundant food and a substantial amount of spare time. Instead of devoting their time to the care of the poor, their spare time was given to the fulfilling of the fantasies of their minds. The soap operas and cheap novels feed the idle minds of this age continually. God has not overlooked it! It falls into the same category of sin as did Sodom’s. There is real peril in a great salary and a short workweek, and it is spending it all on the satisfying of self.

While driving down the road one day, I was praying, “Father, I just repeat that same cry of Paul, *‘Oh! That I might know You’*. ” At that moment the Spirit of God whispered into my spirit, “Paul didn’t pray that prayer.” I swallowed hard and quoted to God (out of context) the portion of scripture we have used above. God ignored my protests and ever so softly whispered to me, “Paul didn’t cry out to know Me, he was merely recounting what it cost him to know Me.” After studying again the third chapter of Philippians, I was forced to agree with God. Strange, I have yet to prove Him wrong. To know God, is available to all His children, but that privilege is so dear it will cost you all that you have.

Paul’s interest was not just going to heaven. The thrust of his life was to fulfill the high calling of God. That should be our goal, in order that we may have a part in delivering this world from the grip of Satan. The Bible is not a book of heaven or hell. It is rather a book of life or death.

CHAPTER 19

THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

We speak freely of the reconciliation of all things because the scriptures speak openly of all things being reconciled to God through the death of His Son. *“For while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.”* (Rom. 5:10) This word, “reconcile” comes from the Greek word *katallasso*, meaning to be changed thoroughly. I do not wish to burden you with an enormous load of scripture, when one would actually be sufficient. However, there are numerous arguments put forth by Paul the apostle in his letters to the churches that build such a strong case that it is impossible to ignore or deny their validity. I believe that this gospel is a part of the revelation given to Paul when he was caught up into the third heaven.

*“For it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to **reconcile all things to Himself**, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.”* (Col. 1:19,20) You can readily see that it is the Father’s intention to reconcile all things unto Himself. That little three-letter word **all** is an astonishingly inclusive word. No one or no thing is excluded. We have previously remarked how God has never been moved out of His place by man’s plight. He is not the one who needs reconciling. Man, because of his stubborn sinful nature, felt terribly perplexed and uncomfortable in the presence of God, so he distanced himself from his compassionate and caring Father. Only those who have been changed into His image will be comfortable in heaven—in the presence of God. Man needs reconciling. He needs to be changed completely. *“God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, **not counting their trespasses against them**, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; **we beg you** on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”* (2 Cor. 5:19,20) Does this sound as if God is mad at you? Does this portray a God of wrath and vengeance? Of course not! The Psalmist has written how that, *“He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.”* (Ps. 103:10)

Assuming that this theology is correct, how shall God accomplish so great a feat for a world deeply embroiled in sin and rebellion? Will He merely snap His spiritual finger and speak some incomprehensible word and everything be instantly pure and pristine? I think not! Heaven and earth were not created in a day, nor shall reconciliation be accomplished suddenly. Since the creation of man, God has deigned to express Himself through this “apple of His eye”. The gospel will not be relegated to angels, and this is the best news of all. *“Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation...He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.”* (2 Cor. 18,19)

God blessed Israel with an open invitation to become a nation of priests who would mediate between the heathen nations of the world and Him. This was their calling. As Cain regarded his birthright of no value, so they counted their calling as some cheap commodity to be carelessly cast aside. They were much more willing to let Moses relay God's words to them than listen to God themselves. Consequently, they were rejected from becoming the priestly people of God. It had nothing to do with their inheritance, for Canaan was an assured destination. There are a host of preachers who have rejected the message of reconciliation to their own loss. God will do exactly what He has programmed from the beginning, but they will miss the glorious opportunity to be an instrument of salvation to the millions. I am cognizant of the fact that millions of God's dear ones are looking for the imminent return of Jesus to rapture them to some mystical island of paradise where they can while away their eternities. David, the sweet psalmist of Israel, had other thoughts about this. *"The Lord said to my Lord: 'Sit at My right hand **until** I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet'."* (Ps. 110:1) Peter is just as adamant in his declaration. *"...That He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom the heavens must receive (retain) until the period of **restoration of all things** about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient times."* (Acts 3:20,21) This restoration of all things must be accomplished before Jesus is released from the heavens. Jesus must sit at the Father's right hand **until** He has made **all** those who resist Him a willing and worshipful son.

We have struggled through the centuries with winning this soul or that one to the kingdom, rejoicing when one dear one entered in. We have lived from one revival to the next, thirsting for a drink of fresh life or longing for the sweet breath of the Spirit to refresh our lives. Those revivals never lasted very long even when you consider those that swept nations. We have joined with the dry land in mourning for the waters of life. Like the manna from heaven, it has come in small droplets to quench our thirst for a moment; but then we discover it only made us thirstier. How we have cried for that day when God would empower us so that we may be able to accomplish those things that we know to be the fruit of the Kingdom. Our vision is clear. Our desires are pure but our ability is seriously limited. That day of limitation is almost over. These bodies of humiliation shall soon be clothed with glory and power that we may preach the gospel of the Kingdom with a mere touch—a whisper—a word of faith. Only then will we witness the powers of the enemy broken and the horrible prisons brought to ruin. Is it any wonder that *"...the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth until now"*? (Rom. 8:22)

CHAPTER 20

THE GRIEVING BRIDEGROOM

I shook the cobwebs from my head as I went to answer the knock that had awakened me. I don't think too clearly at two o'clock in the morning; so it was little wonder that he looked different standing there in the dark. He was obviously upset and concerned about something, so he didn't say much as he walked in and slumped into a chair next to the couch. I guess I must have appeared somewhat dazed from being jarred awake from such a sound sleep. So we sat in silence for awhile as each of us wondered through our maze of thoughts.

John had been my pastor for all my Christian life. He had always been there when I had needed a strong arm to lean on or a wise word of counsel. But he was more than a pastor; he was my dear friend. He had sat hours on end as I had poured out to him the intimate details of my mixed-up life. Never once had he condemned me. Never once had he expressed shock or disappointment. True, he had corrected me. He had many times, like a skilled detective who pieces together the evidence, pointed out the areas in my life where the enemy was able to enter and harass me. He had even rebuked me on occasion, but never had he condemned or belittled me. He was a rare individual who would never betray a confidence. But now, here he was looking as if he needed to have someone who would listen to the cry of his deep wounds and complaints of his heart.

John breathed out a long sigh and began to speak as if he were just thinking aloud. "She doesn't really know me nor understand my needs after all these years," he said abruptly. I was now wide-awake. I don't know what I had assumed John's problem was but I most assuredly didn't think Mary could be the cause. I didn't understand her at times and often she seemed to be caught up in her own little world; nevertheless, she was an exceptional woman. She was outstandingly beautiful for her age and seemed to be the ideally devoted wife.

I almost felt like saying, "Cheer up John! Things will look better in the daylight." However I restrained myself for this was not the first time he had come calling at an odd hour of the night. I felt honored that one of such stature would come to me but deep inside there was the unanswered question "Why does he wait until the middle of the night to want to talk? Why doesn't he come over for lunch or discuss these things over coffee or when we go fishing? Why these bizarre hours?"

There had been so many mornings when I had stumbled about with blood-shot eyes and incoherent thoughts, and my wife would remark, "You had company last night. Pastor John again?" She was used to these visits and never resented his coming; although I'm sure she also wondered why he didn't come around more during the daylight hours.

He was so busy with the huge church that he pastored that I fully expected him to share some problem he was having with the deacon board or the music department. I was caught totally off guard when he began to speak of Mary, his wife. I never expected that and I suppose he sensed my shock as we sat there in semidarkness. “Mary just doesn’t seem to understand my needs,” he continued. “She’s so energetic and compulsive. She will dive into housework or cooking with such excitement. It is amazing how much she can get accomplished. But then at night when I want quality time with her, she’s so exhausted she can’t respond. I know the children are a drain on her energy, and so many people come to her for counsel and advice that there is little time left for me. I’m hurt, I’m lonely and just a little angry.”

I sat bewildered as I listened. As yet John had not ask a question, for which I was grateful. I certainly had no answers. I was numb with shock. I could not imagine that this giant among men had problems of such magnitude that he would be so visibly moved. Finally admitting that he may have some marital complications, I could not possibly imagine how I could offer any solution. After all, John was my confidant. He had given a sympathetic ear to my perplexities and offered godly counsel to me all these years. Perhaps, he just wanted to talk. The least I could do was listen.

“Do you know when we first fell in love, she used to sing to me. She had an old beat-up guitar that she strummed as she sang love songs to me. It was always out of tune and she didn’t play well, but I loved those times.” His voice seemed to trail off into some distant memory as he continued. “Since then she’s taken voice lessons and sings much better, and uses taped background music. The congregation loves it—but I miss her off-key singing and the sound of that old guitar.”

I watched John as he seemed to slip back into one of the rooms of his memory—trying to recapture some priceless moment long past. My heart was now aching for him as I, for the first time, saw a side of him I had never seen before. He was deeply in love with Mary and she was hurting him. He felt rejected. I knew instinctively that he had not come for any answer or word of counsel that I may have. He just wanted to talk—to bare his heart. John glanced up and caught me off guard with the fierceness of his look. “I’ve always wanted a large family,” he blurted. “I love children around me.” I couldn’t believe what I was hearing. Their family was so overcrowded now that it was a joke throughout the neighborhood. I’ve never seen so many completely different children in one family. There was one or two who definitely took after John. They had his temperament and depth. The rest were like a patchwork quilt of Mary’s little quirks and compulsions. I couldn’t believe John was being critical or was hurt because of the size of his family.

With what I’m sure amplified the incredulity I was experiencing, I sputtered, “But John, you have a house full of children. They’re running over each other as it is. Mary’s not a baby factory. She’s run ragged taking care of the children you now have.” I felt a little twinge of irritation at John for his unreasonable desires.

His eyes locked onto mine and his next remark left me reeling in shock and disbelief. “Most of the children do not belong to me,” he almost whispered. “I did not father them. I love them and care for them as if they were my own, but they are not the result of our intimacy.”

I sat in stunned silence. I had known John and Mary for most of my life. Even before I had become a Christian they had been a “thing” in the neighborhood. Everyone knew that they would eventually marry. I knew something that many did not know. Mary had been married before to a very cruel and abusive husband. He had left her bruised and bleeding on more than one occasion. I could not believe that Mary was adulterous. I had seen her flirt with many men but rather than be critical, I passed it off as just being her friendly outgoing personality. There were times when she had seemed extremely friendly with me—perhaps too much so—but then, we’d known each other for a very long time.

“John, do you mean to tell me that Mary has been unfaithful? Are you saying other men fathered most of your children?” I stammered.

By this time tears were streaming down his face and I could see the deep hurt in his eyes. He nodded almost imperceptibly and softly continued, “It’s no secret that Mary has been married before. Her first marriage left her spiritually and emotionally scarred. There is within her this seductive appeal that pulls her back into that same type of situation again and again. It’s as if she’s trying to punish herself by some self-destructive action. She has come back to me in deep remorse and tears, begging me not to throw her out—not to stop loving her. Of course, I can do neither for my life is wrapped up in her.”

I walked over and put my arms about him and felt his whole body convulse with sobs. We held each other for a long while and I was glad no prying eyes were viewing this scene lest it be misunderstood. Then I asked very softly, “John, does anyone else know about this? Have you discussed this with others?”

He nodded, “Yes, there are a few who know but not many.”

“Has anyone talked with her—counseled her—admonished her?” I asked. I was hoping this wouldn’t get out of hand. What a foolish thought, for it had been out of hand for years.

Again he confirmed, “There have been many who have talked to her and warned her of the consequences of her actions. She behaves beautifully for awhile but then seems to slip back into her old pattern again. It’s worse now than it has been for a long time.”

“Would you like for me to speak to her?” I asked. I didn’t quite know what I’d say and besides I was a somewhat nettled that John had shared all these things with others before he had come to me; however, that would soon be clarified.

“Yes,” he answered. “Go tell my wife that I want her, not her services. Tell her that I am saddened by her frenzied activity. Try to convey to her how I miss her love songs and that her singing to others doesn’t bring joy to me. Most of all, beg her to stop seeing her lovers and flirting with strangers. Please, tell her for me. Perhaps, she will listen to you.”

He sighed heavily as he arose to leave; and even as he was walking out the door, I heard myself saying as I had done so many times in the past, “Please, don’t stop loving me. I’m sorry I have run after other lovers and have not been faithful to you! Please, help me to get my priorities in order.” Does that sound like something strange to say to your pastor? Well, you see my pastor was actually Jesus, and Mary was this flirtatious church with whom He is vitally concerned. This is something the Lord disclosed to me in the night hours as He revealed to me His wounded heart.

In the book of Revelation, Jesus speaks to the seven churches, commending them for their strength and faithfulness, but lovingly pointing out their failures. The first letter is to the church at Ephesus and His reproof to her was, *“But I have this against you, that you have left your first love.”* I feel sure, since this is the first letter in order, that it likely heads the list in importance.

The first complaint He shared with me was, “She doesn’t understand Me. She’s so busy she doesn’t have the energy nor the time to spend in intimacy with Me.” Most Christians believe that time spent in “God’s House” is all that is necessary for their spiritual growth and productivity. May I suggest that most of the time spent in the average church service is not only poor quality but, in many cases, actually wastes time. In the majority of cases, it has been our intellect—our soulful man—that has been fed rather than our spirit. God has gone away grieved while we depart happy in soul. Our soul-man is so restless, ever seeking some activity to bring peace and gratification. Contentment is found at only one source. *“Come unto Me all who are weary and heavy-laden, And I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, (learn Me) for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My load is light.”* (Matt. 11:28-30) Have you found His yoke burdensome? Have you found His load heavy? Then you have yet to learn Him. You have yet not learned how to put your soul to bed. I feel that most of us are still fretful and easily agitated, which is soulful activity. It is a response to the demands of the world.

Martha was so busy. I’m sure she was cooking and washing pots and pan—all the necessities that accompany having an important guest in the home. She wanted to be a proper hostess, but she received a startling shock when Jesus told her, in so many words, “Martha! With all your service, your cumbersome toil and worry, you’re still missing the precious treasure Mary has found sitting at My feet. You think it is wasted time, but it is far more precious than service or ministry.” Our heavenly Husband seeks quality time spent in His presence. There is no substitute of equal value.

His next concern was how His wife sang for others and to others but not to Him. This is one of the most deadly traps into which singers fall. To my knowledge, there is not one reference in Scripture where singers sang solos for the congregation. After their great deliverance from the oppressive Pharaoh and the host of the Egyptians, Moses and the sons of Israel sang a song unto the Lord that fills the greater portion of the fifteenth chapter of the book of Exodus. Miriam the prophetess, Moses sister, took the timbrel in her hand and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dancing. There was no solo performance, but a corporate expression of praise.

The entire fifth chapter of the book of Judges is filled with the song of Deborah and Barak who sang unto the Lord because of the great defeat of Sisera, commander of the armies of Canaan. The closest account of a man ministering in song to another person is when David ministered before King Saul when evil spirits tormented him. As the music and songs went forth, the evil spirits departed from Saul and his spirit was quieted. Notice! David did not play to Saul nor for him, but **before** him. He simply worshipped the Lord in Saul's presence, and the anointed ministry was more than the evil spirits could tolerate. I think there is a place where a person can play or sing in the presence of the congregation and the Lord is pleased and the people are blessed. However, that is extremely rare and that is not God's fault. Usually "special singing" is ministry to the "house" rather than to the Lord.

Most singers spend the bulk of their time in preparation of arrangements, enunciation, voice inflection, background music, proper microphones and amplifier systems, stage posturing and gestures. For whom is all this energy expended? Is it for our Heavenly Husband? I think not!

Ministers will spend days in the preparation of sermons. Many will start with an outline and then write in longhand or type the entire sermon. Their preaching is then delivered verbatim from the printed page. I'm not saying that this is entirely wrong. There is a place for honing the sword to a keen edge. However, the people have pressed ministers into an unnatural unscriptural, unspiritual position, until they have become sermon factories. They read the Bible with the sole purpose of wresting from its pages a new sermon. Instead of searching for the mind of the Lord and what He wishes to say to the church, the scriptures become a challenge of alliteration and word games. These sermons are usually packed with information that stirs the emotion and thrills the soul but does very little for the spirit.

I know personally that it is not only possible but an ever-present danger that he who ministers the word can become cold and indifferent to the mind of the Spirit even as he spends hours preparing messages about the Spirit. I know that we can become hateful and mean even as we are delivering a message on love. My daily prayer has become "Lord, I don't want to minister from the intellect but from the Spirit." I'm tired of ministering words without life.

We seem to not fully understand Jesus' words as He uttered this divine truth: *"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit*

and are life.” (Jn. 6:63) “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.” (Jn. 5:19) Jesus chose to become personally helpless.

Unless we are ministering by the Spirit those things we see by the Spirit—then we are ministering out of our own intellect (flesh) and it will profit nothing. All it does is convey information, and the scripture is clear, “...*knowledge puffeth up*,” or makes arrogant.

I’m sure our Lord is not only grieved but also angry with shepherds whose primary responsibility is to bring people to the true Shepherd and ever direct their affections toward Him. However, most shepherds have set themselves up as the “Vicar of Christ” or a Nicolaitan overlord who rules the people by cunning speech, overpowering personality or outright deceit. The Bride of Christ is drawn away from her true Husband by craftiness and slight of hand and is lured into a bed of adultery, where strangers seduce her. This immoral union produces illegitimate children who are assumed to be sons of God; when, in fact, they are sons of the devil. God loves them and cares for them, but they do not have the blood of Jesus Christ flowing in their veins.

We have made entrance into the Kingdom of God so effortless—so tasteless and antiseptic. Nature itself teaches us that birthing is agonizing, noisy and messy. In the modern delivery room, doctors and nurses administer painkillers, anesthetics, saddle blocks, and an increasing number of Caesarian section deliveries. Each is designed to alleviate the pain, hasten the delivery, or make the time of birth predictable.

Because of our spiritual numbing and easy birthing, we have invited numerous children into the family of God, promising them a life without pain or suffering. True, our family has increased in numbers and the ranks of our brotherhood have swollen; but our Father is grieved because so many are illegitimate. They bear His name but no blood relationship exists. The unfortunate thing is that they truly believe they are part of His family. Because of our fleshly desire to help God increase His family, we have, like Abraham, joined with a worldly system and produced an innumerable number of Ishmaels. Although there is a love in our hearts for these half-brothers, yet they are not the chosen offspring who are called Abraham’s seed.

If you listen closely, you can hear the soft sobs of a wounded Husband as He groans out His complaint. **“What more could be done than I have done? How could I have loved more completely? Surely they are not so blind or indifferent.”**

SUMMARY

Pseudo-science and heretical religion are always at odds. The religionist look with suspicion at anything that has its roots in science, and the scientists view with suspicion anyone and anything that embraces religion. In actuality, there is not one area of disagreement between true science and a religion based on the true word of God.

From the beginning, God has endeavored to elevate man to a place of wisdom, freedom and power for which he was created. Man, through ignorance and rebellion, has resisted and rebelled, ever seeking his own way. In his endless wanderings, man has listened to the voice of the enemy and believed that God was extremely angry with him. Preachers, in their zeal and ignorance, have agreed with Satan and preached God's anger and how it must be placated. Because he found himself cast out of the Garden of Eden, that place of divine fellowship, Adam assumed that he had been cast away from God's love. Nothing could have been further from the truth. It was because of our Father's great love that He exiled man to that realm of disunion. Eternity, apart from God's fellowship, is the worst hell that can be imagined. God could not allow man to eat from the tree of life with broken union. Satan, the accuser of the brethren, ever encourages man to wallow in the gutter of self-pity. "Nobody loves me. I may as well kill myself." Even after His Holy Spirit has apprehended us, we still entertain the idea that we must somehow appease an angry God. Preachers still proclaim the damnable message that on the mount of Calvary, God poured out His wrath toward man on His only beloved Son. What a monstrous lie! Our Father has never harbored anger with man.

David, the sweet singer of Israel, penned these words of our Lord; *"He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. Just as a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those that fear Him. For He himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are but dust."* (Ps. 103:10-14) It matters little in what circumstance we may find ourselves or what pit of darkness has seemingly swallowed us, He remembers that we are dust. He is aware of our weaknesses. He has, because of His holiness, been terribly angry with man's sin, this wall that has kept His sons separated from His love of abundance. Man's wretched condition as slaves of sin was openly displayed as Jesus bore our sins and took them all away. He had been persecuted, beaten, bruised, cursed and crucified. His physical appearance openly portrayed what sin had done to mankind; this is what sin does to man. He took sin and made a show of it openly, taking it down to hell with Him. Reconciliation has never been on God's part. It is man who has separated himself from God. It is man who needs

reconciling. Little wonder Paul cries, “*Be ye therefore reconciled to God.*” God has not been angry with man. Man has been and still is angry with God. We hate His restrictions. We detest His yoke. So God will lead us from Potiphar’s house to the dungeon, from the house of Pharaoh to the pigsty where we minister to pigs, waiting for our stubborn spirit to break and willingly embrace His yoke.

Man has roamed the desolate and burning deserts of his own making, chasing after some illusionary mirage of lush promises only to watch them vanish as he sought to embrace them. If only he had eyes to see, he would see hidden behind the mirage the outstretched arms of a beckoning Father. Almost without exception, every step man has taken that led him closer to God has been made because He was dragged, and through trial and circumstances forced to leave those abiding places of comfort and complacency.

Thinking to do God service, men have offered their own brothers on the altar of sacrifice. The Crusaders marched through Europe between the years of 1096 and 1272 determined to free the “Holy Land” from the Moslems. However, in their journey they wiped out entire villages of Jews, calling them Christ killers. Paradoxically, emblazoned on their shields was the cross of Jesus. They had unwittingly adopted the precise method of forced allegiance as the Moslems before them. We seem not to have learned that God’s method of conquering is through love. It is only because of this callous indifference to God’s nature that we can even entertain the idea of eternal torment. It is hardly an accident that the very representative of Father God, the express image of His person, is depicted as a lamb.

Many people entertain the idea that entrance into the kingdom of God is somewhat akin to being an immigrant in the United States. There are some similarities, yet there remains a world of difference between the two. First of all, the United States, as well as all other countries, has a set limit as to the numbers of immigrants that it can properly accommodate. The Kingdom of God has no such limitations. “*Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*” (Rev. 22:17)

First and foremost, the Kingdom of God is entered in only one fashion. One must be born into this Kingdom. This is accomplished through what Jesus termed, the “new birth” or being “born again”. This is about as close as our laws come to the Laws of God. For if a baby is born in this country, even to an illegal alien, it automatically becomes an American citizen. If you were a subject of another country, and all Christians were, that old inhabitant must be killed in order to become a heavenly citizen. That was accomplished on the cross as we all were crucified with Jesus. This is quite different than the naturalization process that is required of an alien seeking citizenship. The Kingdom of God prints no “green cards” or temporary visas. No passports are issued which will allow one to freely travel back to his old homeland. As Paul so aptly states, “*The world is crucified to me, and I to the world.*” (Gal. 6:14) In other words, he is saying, “To me that other world doesn’t even exist anymore.” To the sophisticated man of the world, the realm of the Spirit does not exist. To the spiritually minded man, the world has ceased to exist. To the world, the

Christian is a weak individual who needs a crutch for support. To the Christian, the world is a delusion—a mirage that appears for a moment then passes away.

As we study the Bible we must ever keep in mind how the truth is veiled. If Jesus was the express image of the Father, then He spoke and acted exactly as the Father would have spoken and acted. He said nothing He had not heard the Father saying. He did nothing He had not seen the Father do. If Jesus spoke in parables in order to hide the truth from the merely inquisitive, then we can rest assured that the Father acted in the same manner from the very beginning. The Father spoke in parables throughout the history of His dealings with man. Many of the events recorded in scriptures are parables God used to hide the truth from the merely inquisitive. True believers have no problem with any of them. Skeptics will doubt them all. Men are constantly discussing and debating the veracity of this Scripture or that one. The pseudo—scientist will attest to the impossibility of certain Scriptures, while the unlearned Christian will attempt to interpret each verse of the Bible from a literal standpoint. How clearly did the apostle Peter see the problem when he wrote, *“..our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and the unstable distort, as they do the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.”* (2 Peter 3:15,16)

The prophet Hosea well knew that we do not come to know the Lord by a simple introduction or a casual chat at our leisure. *“So let us know, let us **press on** to know the Lord. His going forth is as certain as the dawn; and He will come to us like the rain, like the spring rain watering the earth.”* (Hosea 6:3) The writer of Luke’s gospel concurs with Hosea. *“The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.”* (Luke 16:16) Matthew uses the term, *“..and violent men take it by force.”* (Matt. 11:12) Let me suggest that the violence is not so much a bombarding of the gates of heaven but rather a violence against those things in our own lives that hinder the growth of the Kingdom within. We must be absolutely ruthless toward all manner of sin. Every enemy in our “land” must be slaughtered. That requires violence birthed from His Spirit.

I watched with interest the unfolding episode occurring just behind my back fence. My neighbor had a small pond in which he kept a number of ducks. Over a short period of time, a fox had taken all but one of the ducks. It was winter and this lone drake took up with a flashy female decoy that floated lifelessly on the pond. If you got near enough you could hear the duck “talking” to the decoy. It was as if the Holy Spirit spoke into my spirit, *“Wait until the day that duck meets real life. It will abandon that lifeless decoy.”* On one early spring day, I happened to be watching as three or four ducks flew overhead, chattering away. This one lonely duck came up off that pond like it had been discharged from the barrel of a rifle. In minutes it had joined the other ducks as they disappeared over the horizon, making their way to the place of their vision. I never saw it again. It had embraced life in one brief instant of choice. The Holy Spirit whispered into my excited spirit, *“Shortly, there shall appear the very essence of Life. When He appears, death shall*

be exposed for what it is and millions shall desert those museums of death and joyously join the procession of life." We watch those thousands who weekly fellowship with that dead decoy, that looks beautiful and alive, but which, in reality, is as dead as the brick and stone which surrounds it. "*When He appears we shall be like Him.*" (1 John 3:2) How we long to be like Him, but the truth of the matter is, there already resides in the sons of God an exact image of Himself. It is only a matter of time until that image is revealed for the whole world to behold. Death shall then cease to reign and life shall spring forth in glorious display. It is then that earth's muddy waters will lose their hold on the multiplied millions that have been "romancing" the decoy but now embrace the scintillating light of His glory.

