

“Of His own will begat He us with the word of Truth”

-- James 1:18 --

The Word Of Truth

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IN THIS ISSUE

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Editorial: Divine Objectives	Page 2	Descriptions of Sin	Page 23
Stronger and Stronger	Page 6	The Kingdom of God	Page 25
Doctrine: Not Developed from Examples	Page 8	Bad Churches	Page 26
Christ Is Bringing Many Sons to Glory	Page 10	Come Out From Among Them	Page 29
The Magnitude of Salvation	Page 21	Jesus Speaks on the Holy Spirit	Page 33
The Brethren Speak: Aaron Hutchcraft	Page 22	Believers' Association with Abraham	Page 37

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SET FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE GOSPEL



EDITORIAL

A Commentary on the Religious Trends and Conditions of the Times

DIVINE OBJECTIVES

WHAT IS GOD DOING IN JESUS CHRIST?

These days we are hearing a lot of religious talk about man's chief purpose being to praise and worship the Lord. To the spiritually uncultured soul, and the individual who does not have a working knowledge of scripture, it all sounds pretty good – even holy. Of course, this is the kind of thrust on which religious opportunists can capitalize. We now have a category of so called *ministries* -- professions and activities that are not mentioned in the *gifts* that God Himself has placed in the body of Christ (Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12:8-10,28; Eph 4:11; 1 Pet 4:10-11). These new, humanly conceived *ministries* have been converted into religious

professions. Christian educational institutions have shaped their curriculum to produce this new breed of professionals, conferring specialized degrees in these areas. In so doing, they are meeting the demands of the churches who are feeding them their students. Thus, we now have professionals like Youth Minister, Worship Minister, Family Minister, and Counselors, to mention a few.

I understand there is a certain hallowedness associated with these church roles. However, I feel the

validity of their function has not been satisfactorily established, and their existence has not been satisfactorily justified. Additionally, the quality of the fruit that has resulted from them is open to question.

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DISCERNING DIVINE PURPOSE

The establishment and activity of any function within the body of Christ is based upon a perception of what God is doing through the Head of that body. What are His revealed objectives, and precisely how

In this editorial my aim is to focus your attention on certain statements of scripture in which divine intent is encapsulated.

do the various functions within that body address and fulfill those objectives? It is imperative that someone address those matters, for in the end, when we all “stand before the judgment seat of Christ” to receive the recompense for what we have done, the purpose of God will be the criterion for that judgment. It is on the part of wisdom to everyone to prepare for that accounting.

In this editorial my aim is to focus your attention on certain statements of scripture in which divine intent is encapsulated. These statements are not given to be archived in cold and lifeless theological statements that remain unrelated to what we are actually doing. Rather, they are intended to shape what we are doing. They provide us with a standard that allows us to assess the validity of our activity, and provide an incentive to see to it that we are meeting God’s objectives and not our own.

For those who are uninitiated in divine manners, these statements will appear somewhat irrelevant. They may even be viewed as largely theoretical, and intended only as general statements that allow for a great deal of latitude. However, those assessments are wholly erroneous, and are nothing more than the result of buying into the agenda that has been set by men. It also ought to be noted that those agendas have very much to do with building and maintaining an institutional stance among men. Rarely do any of them consider eternity, the end of the world, and that men will appear before the Lord to be judged.

However, all of the statements the Lord has provided concerning what He is doing DO take those things into consideration. That is why it is imperative that we not only be familiar with them, but that we make sure that what we are doing does not cause us to drift beyond those objectives into the unchartered sea of religious futility.

DIVINE INTENT

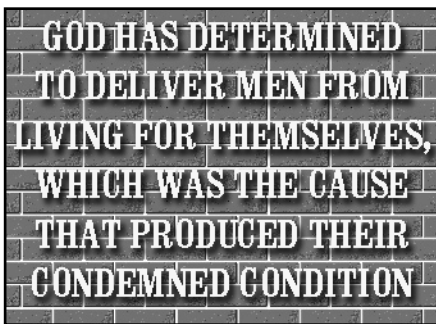
The following texts are statements of divine intent. They have a different tone than that of the words of the religious sophists of our day. This IS, however, what God has to say on the subject.

In these texts, the word “*that*” describes the purpose for the stated divine activity. It is synonymous with in order that.

1. **CONFORMITY.** “*For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be **conformed to the image of his Son, that** He might be the first-born among many brethren*” (Rom 8:29). Jesus had no fleshly progeny. He was “*cut off*” without any generation of flesh and blood (Isa 53:8). However He does have a generation -- children that the Father Himself has given to Him (Heb 2:13). Those children, according to God’s own purpose, are being conformed into the likeness of Jesus Himself. This is in order that He might have a generation who is like Him. That is, they think like Him, and their character is being changed to reflect His nature (2 Cor 3:18). Wherever this is not actually happening, the Spirit is not at work, God’s revealed objective for His people is not

being fulfilled, and the people are still enslaved to sin.

2. **BEING BLAMELESS.** “Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 1:8). The aim is for the people to be without blame “in the day of Christ” -- that is, when He appears in all of His glory. That is not when they will be made blameless, but when they will **appear** blameless before God Himself. The removal of blame is taking place in this world as men walk in the light. As it is written, “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of



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Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). Where progress toward blamelessness is not being realized, religion is only pretension.

3. **KNOWING.** “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God” (1 Cor 2:12). An ignorant church brings no glory to God! It is further a living contradiction of the new covenant itself. That covenant includes the realization of the knowledge of God.; “for they shall all know Me, from the least to the greatest” (Heb 8:10). When those professing to be Christians are fundamen-

tally ignorant of God and His ways, we are cast on the horns of a dilemma. Either they have not told the truth, or God has lied to us.

3. **LIVING UNTO JESUS.** “And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again” (2 Cor 5:15). When the church represents Jesus as the means through which they can realize their own dreams and plans, a most serious misrepresentation has taken place. God has determined to deliver men from living for themselves, which was the cause that produced their condemned state in the first place. The revealed aim of newness of life is to live for the Lord. Where this is not being done, it is simply not possible for divine acceptance to be realized. God cannot and will not accept individuals who insist on living in contradiction of His own revealed purpose.

4. **BEING MADE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD.** “For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor 5:21). If men are ever to become righteous, they must be “made” righteous. That righteousness must be as real as the sin that Jesus was made “for us.” When the iniquities of us all were laid upon Jesus, it was very real. So real, in fact, that He was “cursed” by God Himself, being “made a curse for us” (Gal 3:13). It is not possible the righteousness of God that we are said to be have been “made” is not correspondingly real. It is not theoretical, anymore than the sin that Jesus bore “in His body in the tree” was theoretical. A people who are not righteous in their manners cannot possibly be confirmed to be the people of God. Their

condition contradicts what God has declared to be the case, and that cannot possibly be pleasing to Him.

5. **BEING JUSTIFIED.** *“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we **might be justified by the faith of Christ**, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified”* (Gal 2:16; 3:24). To be justified is to be fully exonerated of all guilt (Acts 13:39). That justification is realized through our faith in Christ, not through our accomplishment of the requirements of the law. Justification is joined with washing and sanctification (1 Cor 6:11) -- with the cleansing of the conscience from guilt (Heb 9:14), and purity of life (Tit 2:11-12). These attending experiences confirm that the person has, in fact, been justified. Wherever a profession of faith is not attended by a state of justification that is confirmed by one's deeds, the claim of being a *Christian* cannot be confirmed. Further, where the claim cannot be confirmed, it is not to be accepted as though it were true.

6. **RECEIVING THE PROMISED SPIRIT.** *“That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; **that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith**”* (Gal 3:14). In the salvation of men, God's aim was not only to deliver them, but to ensure that they would be competent to run the race to glory. The Holy Spirit is given to facilitate this objective. It is through His leading that men subdue the inclinations of the flesh (Rom 8:13-14), and are strengthened in order that Christ can dwell in their hearts by faith (Eph 3:16-17). The presence of the Spirit is

confirmed by His fruit (Gal 5:22-23; Eph 5:9). If these qualities are missing, a contradicting situation exists that must be resolved.

7. **RECEIVING ADOPTION.** *“To redeem them that were under the law, **that we might receive the adoption of sons**”* (Gal 4:5). While our relationship to one another is important, our relationship to God is more important. If we have no productive identity with the living God through Jesus Christ, it really makes no difference what our association is with one another. On the other hand, if we are walking before the Lord as “dear children” (Eph 5:1), it will impact directly upon our attitudes toward others who are so walking. A person or a group of persons that do not show some signs of a prevailing interest in the Living God Himself are living in a suspicious state.

8. **BEING ABLE TO STAND.** *“Put on the whole armor of God, **that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil**”* (Eph 6:11,13). God has provided the things that are necessary to live in this world as those who are preparing to be part of “*the world to come*” (Lk 18:30; Heb 2:5). An essential part of that provision is the “*whole armor of God*,” which enables the individual to withstand the assaults of the wicked one. If what is called the church is plagued by lapses into immorality, and other manners of unacceptable conduct, there is been a public confirmation that the whole armor of God has not been put on -- which means it has been rejected.

9. **OUR HEARTS BEING ESTABLISHED.** *“And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: **To the end He may stablish your hearts**”*

unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints" (1 Thess 3:12-13). The heart, or the central and essential part of our persons, is to be established in a state of blamelessness and holiness **before God**. This is God's revealed objective! Furthermore, the time during which the condition of the heart will be made known is at *"the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints."* Where there is not marked progress in separation from sin and a state of holiness before God, any profession of identity with God through Christ is to be questioned. This matter is serious enough to demand much more attention than is common within the professing church.

10. PARTAKING OF HIS HOLINESS. *"For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, **that we might be partakers of His holiness**"* (Heb 12:10). The stated objective of the chastening of the Lord is that we *"may share His holiness."* ^{NASB} This holiness is very real, and it not merely theoretical or philosophical. It involves the ability to discern good and evil (Heb 5:14), and conduct our lives in harmony with that discernment (2 Cor 6:17-7:1). Where men do not obviously embrace this objective, showing some advancement in it, any profession of faith is empty and meaningless. Their life is at variance with Divine purpose.

11. BEING FOUND WITHOUT SPOT. *"Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent **that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless**"* (2 Pet 3:14). The purpose of God has very much to do with the condition of the people when Jesus comes again. At that time the entire natural order

will come to an abrupt end (2 Pet 3:10-13), and our moral state will be, as it were, cast in stone (Rev 22:11). The realization of a spotless condition requires *"diligence"* on our part. That necessitates a dominating personal interest in meeting the objective. Wherever there is a person or a church that is not diligent in things that lead to a spotless state when Jesus comes, variance with God is a present reality.

12. LIVING THROUGH CHRIST. *"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, **that we might live through Him**"* (1 John 4:9). The aim of God is that life might be lived *"through"* Christ. That is, that all intentions are filtered through His Person and will. The objective is to please Him, not self. When professing Christians do not live in this manner, they are in contradiction of the will of God. There is no way to dignify that condition.

These are only representative of the many Scriptural statements of the revealed purpose of God's great salvation. As you can see, they are quite different from what is being pawned off on the church of our day. These are things that cannot be accomplished by singing trite little choruses that are not accompanied by holy hearts and an affection that has been placed on things above. Thinking that is institutionally centered, having only to do with the appearance of the professing church in this world, cannot address these objectives. Also, when the main thing is to get people into the church, it is difficult to see how these divinely revealed purposes can be addressed. Just as in a race, the main thing is not to start, but to finish -- and God's objectives have to do with the conclusion of things.

The only ministries that are valid are those that contribute to these manifested objectives. The way that we know they are contributing to them is found in the fruit they bear. The moral and spiritual condition of those who submit to these ministries are the invariable commentary upon them.

When, for example, we are faced with a body of professing Christians who remain infantile in their thinking,

that condition must be seen as the direct result of their spiritual diet. Whether men wish to admit it or not, the modern day church is the result of the teaching it has followed. Whoever has captured their attention is responsible for their condition. I realize this has some rather alarming ramifications. Notwithstanding, let every person be discerning in these matters. We are dealing with things that are yielding eternal consequences.

THE TRAGEDY OF WAITING TOO LONG

"I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer." (Song of Sol 5:6)

The fifth chapter of the Song of Solomon depicts a husband coming to the place where he and his spouse can be together. He has gathered fragrances, and prepared himself for the occasion, but his spouse is not alert. She is asleep, slumbering in her bed, and unaware to his presence. Then the spouse awakens and hears her beloved knocking at her door, bidding entrance to her chamber. He has put off his coat, yet stands without in the cool of the night. He thrusts his hand through a small opening in the door, assuring his spouse that it is him. Her heart is moved, and she finally rises, anointing herself with all manner of spices. When she finally gets to the door and opens it, her beloved is gone, having withdrawn himself while she was grooming. She could not find him, even though she called out for him, seeking him aggressively and fervently.

This is a most vivid picture of the experience of many professing believers – people who have been lulled to sleep by the toils and routines of the day, so that it takes them a long time to awaken toward the Lord. When the Lord comes seeking them like He did Adam, they are at first oblivious to His presence. Finally, when they sense His voice, they rise to prepare themselves, for their sleep has left them disheveled and unsuitable. They set out to make amends in their lives, and when they are finally ready to open the door of their heart to Him, He is no longer there. They wonder why He is gone, and call out for Him to return – but all of the freshness of His presence has left. The tender conscience that sensed His presence and knew this was the time of blessing has flown away like a wounded dove. They waited too long! They spent too much time trying to make last minute impressions. Now they must return to the long and wearisome night, to spent time alone, without their Lord's inviting voice.

The people of God must learn to respond to the Lord when they sense Him calling – to rise immediately and go out to meet Him. Sometimes when you have urges to pray, read the Word, or ponder on some great facet of the truth, it is actually the Lord standing at the door and bidding admittance into the chambers of your heart. Do not thrust such moments from you in favor of sleep or some other form of inactivity. Be like Job who, unlike the sluggardly spouse, said: "Thou shalt call, and I will answer: Thou shalt have a desire to the work of Thy hands" (Job 14:15).

STRONGER - STRONGER

“They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion, appeareth before God.” Psalm 84:7

“They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.” KJV (Psa 84:7)

What a marvelous statement this is! Do you believe it? Is it confirmed in your personal life. This, the Spirit testifies, is something that “every one of them” who appear, or live before, the Lord will do. This is not the proclamation of something unusual. It is not the accomplishment of only a few distinguished souls. EVERY ONE who lives in the presence of the Lord will get stronger! Spiritual virtues will become more pronounced in them. Their faith will become stronger. Their hope will become more firm. They will be able to stand more consistently, and resist the devil with more success. They WILL go from strength to strength! Every one of them!

Here, then, is a statement with which we can measure our lives. Let us do it eagerly and honestly.

Within the realm of nature, strength dissipates. As it is written, “outwardly we are wasting away” ^{NIV} (2 Cor 4:16). Time eventually erodes our natural energies. Some manage to stay remarkable adept, even though they are old. But every one of them will tell you, their outward man is perishing! That is the disposition of our physical nature.

From the attitudes of the contemporary church, it appears that some

believe deterioration also characterizes the spiritual man. Older ministers are retired, and those of mature years are placed on the religious shelf to waste away. Their understanding is considered inappropriate for the modern times. Those thinking this way are wrong--seriously wrong! In Christ's kingdom, spiritual strength does not abate with age. With a clear prophetic note, the psalmist wrote, “They go from strength to strength, Every one of them appears before God in Zion” ^{NASB} (Psa 84:7).

When the Lord's Christ was born, He was dedicated by an old priest. Although he held an infant in his hands, Simeon knew he had seen the salvation of God. The first one to tell those waiting for redemption in Jerusalem of the Lord's Christ was an aged woman, Anna the prophetess. How unlike the modern church! Two aged people employed to see and announce the greatest birth that ever has or will take place in the earth (Lk 2:25-28). Within, they had grown stronger in the faith. With keen spir-

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itual vision, they were able to see what other seemingly qualified people were unable to see! To put it another way, this world did not distract them.

Moses stands as an example in this regard. Although he died at the age of 120, it is said of him, "his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated." (Deut 34:7). Truly, he went "from strength unto strength." Another faithful man of Moses' generation was Caleb. At the age of eighty-five, he was anything but weak. "I am still as strong today as I was in the day Moses sent me; as my strength was then, so my strength is now, for war and for going out and coming in. Now then, give me this hill country about which the LORD spoke on that day, for you heard on that day that Anakim were there, with great fortified cities; perhaps the LORD will be with me, and I shall drive them out as the LORD has spoken" (Josh 14:11-12). He stands an historical example of the spiritual reality of which we speak!

See Paul at the close of his life. He is not spiritually decrepit. He is strong in faith, giving glory to God! Having fought a good fight to the end, he was ready to be offered to his God in full vigor and strength. "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim 4:6-7).

Spiritual strength consists of a number of things, all of which increase in potency and vitality. Spiritual insight, moral strength, and the ability to labor in the Lord's harvest, do not dim as we walk in the Spirit. Those blessed with a "sound mind" will reason more soundly when they are old than when they were young! They will

see more and further in the heavenly kingdom than they did in their youth. Their spiritual energies remain remarkable, and are only handicapped by their deteriorating bodies. Their earthly tabernacles are not able to keep up with the increasing energy of their spirit! People in Christ DO go from "strength unto strength"--from one degree of strength to another increasing measure.

You will notice this strength is related to appearing before their God: "They go from strength to strength, till each appears before God in Zion." ^{NIV} The point is this: as we approach the Lord, increased strength is necessary! We must push away from the course of this world, and press into the heavenly realms. That requires spiritual strength--increasing spiritual strength! This is what Jesus referred to when He said, "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force" (Matt 11:12). Suffice it to say, without that sort of spiritual tenacity, no progress will be made in the kingdom.

How aggressively are you seizing the kingdom? Is there a cost too great for you to pay? Are you growing stronger in every aspect of your life and varied relationships? Is there some aspect of your life - any aspect - that is deteriorating? Get into the presence of the Lord, and do it quickly. That is an area where many are standing aloof from your Lord. No longer occupy the outer court! Considering your weakness, if you will come before Him in that very part of your life, you will become stronger in it. The nature of spiritual life IS to grow stronger.

DOCTRINE

CANNOT BE DEVELOPED FROM EXAMPLES AND PRECEDENTS

As Illustrated in the Matter of Miracles

“And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon’s porch.” (Acts 5:12)

It is important to establish something relating to the matter of maintaining sound doctrine. **It is never proper to found doctrine upon examples, precedents, or human interpretation.** “Sound doctrine” (1 Tim 1:10) is revelatory, not the result of interpretation. It consists of the affirmation of unalterable realities. True doctrine relates primarily to the Lord Jesus, and is therefore called “the doctrine of the Lord” (Acts 13:12), “the doctrine of Christ” (Heb 6:1; 2 John 1:9), and “the doctrine of God our Savior” (Tit 2:10). If we read of “the doctrine of baptisms,” the reference is not to a network of

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teaching developed by men. It is rather precise divine affirmations on that subject, such as are found in Romans 6:1-23 and Colossians 2:10-15. You cannot compile a valid doctrine on baptism by gathering all of the examples of baptism and piecing them together like a puzzle. It is what the Spirit has declared on the subject that constitutes the doctrine.

Those who have confused the body of Christ with their contrived teaching on miracles have harmed the people of God. They have led people to believe that miracles are common, when, with the single exception of the ministry of Jesus, this has never been the case. Even in the book of Acts, the recording of miracles being done is not an emphasis. References to them even diminish as the book progresses. The graphic on the right charts the use of the singular and plural use of the words “miracles,” “signs” and “wonders” in all the book of Acts. I have limited the references to affirmations that an individual or individuals did these might works.

The point is that there is no apostolic doctrine concerning miracles. There is no promise to believers concerning their frequency, or guarantee of their perpetual availability. They are never an apostolic emphasis. A rebuke is never administered because they are not present within the church, and a commendation is never granted because they are present in any given assembly.

When Paul was in prison with Epaphroditus, and this brother almost died, Paul did not cry out, “Where are the miracles?” He did not claim the promise that if he laid hands on Epaphroditus he would recover. Instead, he wrote that “God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest

I should have sorrow upon sorrow” (Phil 2:27). The mercy was probably an answer to prayer – the prayer of a known miracle-worker.

In view of this, when our text

lous, or make grandiose announcements about its borders or assigned time periods. It will rather be governed by what God is doing in any given generation, and whether or not there are vessels

MIRACLES, SIGNS, AND WONDERS DONE IN THE BOOK OF ACTS																														
OCCURRENCES	1	1	2																											
CHAPTERS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28		

affirms that “many signs and wonders were wrought among the people by the hands of the apostles,” we are to understand that an unusual thing was taking place – which is the whole point of the text. This marvelous working was in answer to their prayer, and it was yielding results that appropriately glorified God. We must be willing to leave the matter there, and be confident that God will continue to work in accordance with His own good pleasure. God is too holy and too powerful for men to guess about His intentions.

The frequency of such ,marvelous works will not be determined by our persuasion that they can take place. Actually, no person who has faith in God, or knows Him, has any question about the possibility of the miraculous. To develop a theological position that boldly announces that, by divine intention, miracles have ceased, is to betray the presence of unbelief. Men do not have a right to banter about the possibility of the supernatural, or assign time periods and limitations to the discretionary working of the Lord. If they are engaged in such efforts to neutralize what they conceive to be false doctrine, let them cast down such imaginations with the assigned spiritual weaponry provided for this purpose (2 Cor 10:4-5). If they are unskilled in the use of that weaponry, they should leave iconoclastic work to those with more kingdom understanding, who are able to wield the appointed weaponry effectively.

Men cannot control the miracu-

present that are “meet for the Master’s use, and prepared unto every good work” (2 Tim 2:21).

Some generations are being judged (Lk 21:20), while others are being blessed (Matt 4:16). The eyes of some are being opened (Acts 26:18), while the eyes of others are being shut (Isa 44:18). Some are being awakened (John 5:25, while others are having the spirit of deep sleep poured out upon them (Isa 29:10). For some, desires are withheld (Matt 16:4), while for others, an answer to “the prayer of faith” is promised (James 5:15). I know of no word from God that leads to the conclusion that there will ever be a time when the kingdom of Christ will continue to function without His involvement. If that seems ludicrous, consider that such would have to happen if the miraculous were ever to cease, and things functioned strictly according to nature, and within the boundaries of human power.

Should anyone care to postulate that such a supposition is right -- i.e. that miracles have ceased -- they owe us an explanation of how such an arrangement brings glory to God. It appears to me that such efforts tend to glorify the institutions of men, not God. Nor, indeed, it is necessary to establish a doctrine that attempts to explain why miracles are not as frequent as they were during other times. The truth of the matter is that there is no Scriptural doctrine concerning the miraculous -- other than the fact that such things are wrought according to the will of God.

THE EXALTED CHRIST IS BRINGING MANY SONS TO GLORY

“For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” (Heb 2:10)

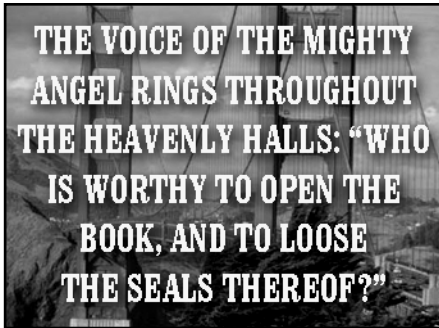
INTRODUCTION

Among the many treasures found in the book of the Revelation, there is a depiction of the profound interest the saved have in the eternal purpose of God – particularly because it relates to the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. In the fifth chapter, John had beheld a door opened in heaven. The great God of heaven was going to make Himself known in regards to the accomplishment and activities of the exalted Lamb. Immediately John is in the Spirit, and beholds the majesty of the throne of God, and the Almighty who sits upon it. After beholding the magnificence and majesty of the One upon the throne, and the glorious creatures that surround Him, John notices a book that is in the hand

of the Holy One on the throne. The book is written on the front and the back. It is a book of purpose, activity, objective, and accomplishment. We might refer to it as the encapsulation of God’s eternal purpose, which He purposed before the world began. But the book was sealed with seven seals, so that it could not be opened, and thus the contents could not be disclosed.

The voice of a mighty angel rings throughout the heavenly halls: “Who

is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?” (Rev 5:2). Sadly the report is recorded, “And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon” (Rev 5:3). Because of his intense love of the truth, and the Lord Jesus Christ who is the embodiment of truth, John was discontent with this circumstance. He testified, “And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon” (Rev 5:4). Much to his relief, one of the twenty-four elders, that are situated around the throne, spoke words of comfort to him: “Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book,



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redemption that is in Christ Jesus.***

and to loose the seven seals thereof” (Rev 5:5). That Lion was also the Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ. After fulfilling the commandment to lay down His life and take it up again, He had returned to heaven to assume the reins of the kingdom of God. He had the power and right to open the seals of the book, and disclose the outworking of divine purpose.

The people of God are still discontent with being in the dark about the working of the Lord – particularly as it regards the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. For this reason, we have been expounding what has been revealed about the current activity of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is not intended to be a novel and academic proclamation of interesting things. Rather, it is to affirm what is required in order for men to be saved. Just as surely as the fall of man was great, so his rescue is great. As scripture states it, “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (Rom 5:20).

THE TEXT

“For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings” (Heb 2:10).

This text is in the midst of a great exposition of the incarnation of the Word – when “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” It is not my purpose to go extensively into this now. It is enough to say that the enfleshment of the Word was essential to our salvation. Ultimately, this was in order to please God, for He was not

pleased with the sacrifices that had been offered until that time. That is, those sacrifices did not achieve the objective of God, even though they appeared to achieve human intentions. The point I want to make here is that Jesus was as necessary to God as He was to us. That is, God’s objective could not be realized without Him personally identifying with the human race in both form and experience. That is why my text is preceded by the words “for Whom are all things and by Whom are all things.” The “Whom” is none other than God the Father. All things are “for” Him – that is, they are advancing toward His ultimate glory and praise. They are “by Him” – that is, it is His purpose that is the source of all remedial and provisional activity. These “things” were ultimately to provide what God Himself needed to remit our sins, impute righteousness to us, and welcome us into fellowship with both Himself and the Son (1 Cor 1:9; 1 John 1:3).

This is why it is absolutely wrong to present Christ as though He was only the solution to the problems of men. Although it may sound noble and sympathetic, it is a statement that is skewed in the wrong direction. It makes man the center of divine purpose rather than God and the Lamb. To my knowledge, Jesus is never presented in this manner by God. In fact, the gospel is pointedly declared to be the “record” God “has given of HIS Son” (1 John 5:10-11) – not of our savior, but of His Son; not of our answer, but of His Son! It is ONLY because Jesus is the Son of God that He has any salvational efficacy at all.

IT BECAME HIM

“For it became Him . . .” Other versions read, “it was fitting for Him,” ^{NKJV} and “it was right.” ^{BBE} The word “became” means to stand out, be conspicuous, becoming, seemly, and fitting. The “Him” of reference is God the Father, and the idea is that what He is here said to do was in strict harmony with who He is. In other words, what is here declared to have been done is an outworking of His own person, and a revelation of His own character. In salvation, God has acted in strict comportment with His own nature. There is more of His nature in salvation than in any of His other works. In this work all of His attributes are marvelously merged, and



none are subdued or held in abeyance. Thus the Psalmist wrote, “Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other” (Psa 85:10).

For Whom Are All Things

“ . . . for whom are all things . . .” Here is a further delineation of the living God. He is the reason for everything, and the direction toward which all things are moving. This matches the expression of Paul in Romans 11:36: “For of Him, and through Him, and TO Him, are all things: to Whom be glory for ever. Amen” (Rom 11:36).

By Whom Are All Things

“ . . . and by Whom are all things . . .” Furthermore, all things find their ultimate source in the God of heaven – particularly things pertaining to His great salvation. This matches the Pauline expression, “all things are of God” (2 Cor 5:18). He is the initiator and sustainer of every valid work.

MAKE THE CAPTAIN OF THEIR SALVATION PERFECT

And what is it that is so befitting of a God like this, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things? In this text, His purpose is not declared to make US to be something. Rather, the objective was for the Son to become something – something that is specifically related to the salvation of men. What is here said to be done was an aspect of deity that was not inherent in Deity Himself. It is not that Deity was insufficient. Rather, the challenge of human sinfulness required that a means of salvation be developed in which there was a lower affiliation with those who were going to be saved.

Captain of Salvation

“ . . . to make the captain of their salvation . . .” Here we are no longer dealing with the word, but with the Word incarnate, or enfleshed. However, this is far beyond the manger in which the Holy Child was placed when He came in the fulness of time. Although it was an absolute requirement that condescension was not enough to save men. This is also something that extends beyond the cross, although founded upon it. There is an aspect of salvation that is not fulfilled on the cross – something that would have to be done following Jesus laying down His life and taking it up again.

Oh, I do not believe that the glorious complexities and thoroughness of

salvation have been perceived to any measurable degree by the professing church. I well recall my own discontent with the level of understanding I had on this matter – and now that discontent has even grown. My theology had established borders that restricted my views of Jesus – i.e. my perspective was not high enough. I had a perception of salvation itself that was altogether juvenile and gave little glory to God.

Here we are speaking of Jesus as a “captain” – a word that has to do with the process of salvation – a process in which the child of God is carried forward through time to an appointed appearance before the King of kings and Lord of lords. This is a process that requires a thorough change in the ones being saved. In the process of the modification itself, the sons of God are said to be changed from glory to glory – i.e. from one increasing stage of glory to another (2 Cor 3:18). The appointed outcome of this multi-staged glory is conformity to the image of God’s own Son (Rom 8:29).

Now, Jesus, as the “captain” of our salvation, is in charge of this process. He is, as it were, managing it, and bringing it to its appointed conclusion. As a captain, there are several things that must be achieved. First, He Himself must chart out the course from earth to glory, and from time to eternity. He must be the first to take the highway to glory – the highway of holiness that God has reared up in the desert of this world. The raising up of this highway, first traversed by the blessed Savior, fulfilled the word of Isaiah. “And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein”(Isa 35:8). This is the road we travel to glory.

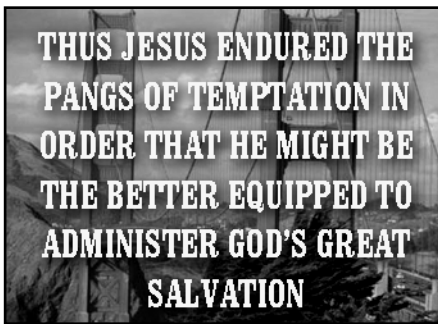
Perfect Through Sufferings

“ . . .perfect through sufferings . . .” The objective that is said to be becoming of God, has to do with something Jesus became – not something we become. That is, the appointed MEANS through which the sons will be made suitable to dwell forever with the Lord, was the matter to be achieved. This must be seen, for a salvation is no more effective that the means through which it is to be achieved. This is why men cannot be justified by law, because it is an inferior means. Thus it is written, “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom 8:3). By saying the law was “weak through the flesh,” the Spirit means that the law required that men achieve the objective themselves – but they were not equal to the task. Sin had disabled men in regard to the achievement of righteousness, so that the law now required more than they were able to do.

Therefore, the captain of their salvation – the Lord Jesus Christ – will now be the focus of attention. If men are going to be saved, there is a certain quality that must be found in Him. By saying God would “perfect” the savior, there is no suggestion that any moral imperfection existed in Him, or that He was flawed in any way. If that was the case, He could not have qualified as “the Lamb of God,” for in that capacity He must be “without spot” (Heb 9:14; 1 Pet 1:19). As used here, the word “complete” means total or thorough – i.e. able to carry the work of salvation to a satisfactory and God-honoring conclusion. This also had to do with the humanity of Jesus, for humanity had to be saved by a Man. The fall came by man, and it was necessary that the recovery of humanity

be initiated and carried out by a man as well.

Hebrews 4:15 defines the quality, or characteristic, achieved in this perfection. “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb 4:15). Note that the savior – or captain – must be able to be touched with the feeling of infirmity. Technically speaking, Jesus is not touched with the impact of the defiled conscience and convicted heart of an adulterer, thief, murderer, or some other moral transgressor. While there is mercy for the guilty, that is not the point developed in this text. This has to do with avoiding sin, not recovering



from it. It has to do with being able to resist the devil, not with be forgiven when we are deceived by him, and fall into sin. That has to do with Jesus being an advocate.

In other words, the “captain” of our salvation must be able to identify with those who are suffering when they are tempted – those who feel the tug of the flesh and the fiery darts of the wicked one, and firmly resolve not to yield to them. Their pain is caused by the temptation itself, not the defilement that comes when one yields to temptation. This is a more mature reaction to the snares of the devil – one in which the believer is so closely knit

to Jesus that the very suggestion to sin is repulsive, causing pain to the elect. This is the kind of thing Paul lamented in the seventh chapter of Romans, where the intrusion of unwanted thoughts disturbed his spirit (Rom 7:14-25). He found he could not stop the flaming arrows of the wicked one. They had to be quenched with the shield of faith (Eph 6:16). In order for this quenching to take place, grace must be obtained. The shield of faith cannot be hoisted in human strength alone. There are heavenly resources required in order to do this, for no aspect of salvation can be accomplished independently of Jesus Himself. That is one reason why God has called us into fellowship with the Son (1 Cor 1:9).

Thus Jesus endured the pangs of temptation in order that He might be the better equipped to administer God’s “great salvation.” The scriptures apprise us that Jesus “suffered being tempted” (Heb 2:18). In this way, he could have “compassion on the ignorant,” knowing what it was like to be tempted to do something outside the circumference of His will, for that is what causes temptation to induce suffering. A person who loves and prefers sin does not suffer when they are tempted.

Thus, Jesus “learned obedience by the things that He suffered,” in order that He might become the “captain,” or the “author” [from the same Greek word as ‘captain’ – ἀρχηγόν] “and finisher of our faith” (Heb 2:10; 5:8-9; 12:2). Now, because of His empathy with the tempted ones, He is able to get the required resources to them when they are needed – before sin is committed. Scripture refers to this process as obtaining mercy, and finding “grace to help in the time of need” (Heb 4:16). Once again, this is not speaking of the remission of sins, but

of the maintenance of “holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Heb 12:14).

At this point, the modern church has been very deficient. It has not presented Christ in this capacity. Instead, she is providing people with all kinds of specialists in recovering from sin and transgression. Signs advertising these specialists are found in every kind of news media. Courses are provided for them in Christian educational institutions. Their offices are scattered throughout nearly every city. They are self-professed recovery experts. While there may be some value in such professed ministries, they are certainly not where the accent is to be placed. That is not where God has placed it, and woe be to the man who is presumptuous enough to do so. I will go so far as to say that the switch of the emphasis from preaching to counseling reflects a decline in thinking that is spiritually lethal. Unless that trend is displaced by a proper emphasis, it will be nothing less than the prelude to the demise of professing Christendom.

God has made the captain of our salvation perfect in order to keep us from sin. In that capacity, Jesus is able to identify with sensitive souls who weep because they are tempted to sin, and thus seek mercy and grace to avoid it altogether. We do not need people telling us that all of us practice sin, or that we are all weak, or that none of us is perfect. Every informed soul knows this is the case. What we do need is someone proclaiming and expounding the fact that provision has been made for us to resist the devil, sin not, and work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.

I am quick to say that we also joyfully announce that “if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous One” ^{NIV} (1

John 2:1). Notwithstanding, that comforting proclamation is preceded by this word, “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not” (1 John 2:1). That is the word that is being addressed in the text with which I am dealing.

IN

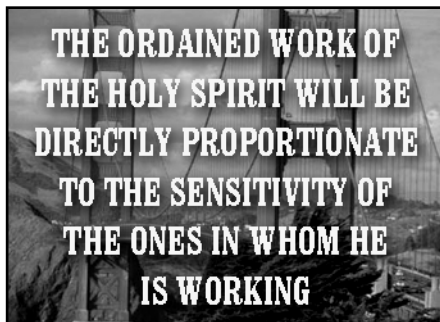
“ . . . in . . . ” The perfecting of the captain of our salvation is in order to His present ministry. This is what followed His death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and enthronement at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. It pertains to what Jesus is doing NOW – something that pertains to the finalization of salvation, for it is not yet complete. We are presently in the process of being saved (1 Cor 1:18; 2:15 ^{NKJV}). Now, we are being “changed” into the image of Christ by increasing stages (2 Cor 3:18). Our salvation, we are told, is “ready to be revealed,” and we are being kept by the power of God through faith until that appointed time (1 Pet 1:5). That salvation will be completed when Jesus appears, and we are made “like Him” (1 John 3:1-2). At that time the part of us that is presently unsaved – our bodies – will be saved. This is referred to as “the redemption of our body” (Rom 8:23), and it is something for which we long. It is also referred to as “the redemption of the purchased possession” (Eph 1:14).

BRINGING

“ . . . bringing . . . ” Until that glorious day when the work is brought to its completion, Jesus is “bringing” us to glory. He is not driving us, he is bringing us! The word “bringing” comes from the Greek word *ἀγαγόντα*. As used here, it means “to lead by laying hold of, and in this way bring to the point of destination.” ^{THAYER} This is what Paul referred to when he spoke of being apprehended by Jesus: “Not

as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:12). That apprehending was in order to bring us out of one state and into another. In this case, the other state or destination is the final one. Because He is a “merciful and faithful high priest,” He is able to do this effectively.

Our response to Jesus is to be much like that of the response God expected from the Israelites to the angel who was leading them through the wilderness to Canaan. Of that circumstance the Lord said, “Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee



in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for My name is in him. But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries” (Ex 23:20-22). I understand that the parallel is not a perfect one, for our Savior will pardon transgressions where there is godly sorrow and repentance because of them. However, having said that, God has revealed that Jesus not only loves righteousness, but hates iniquity as well. As it is written, “Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God,

hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows” (Heb 1:9). It is the height of folly to imagine that Jesus can in any way be tolerant of sin. Wherever it is found, forgiveness is to be procured, else the “bringing” will be brought to a grinding halt. The agent of change – the Holy Spirit – will not proceed with His transforming work within those who continue to quench and grieve Him. The ordained work of the Holy Spirit will be directly proportionate to the sensitivity of the ones in whom He is working. As He strives with men, pricking their conscience and convicting them of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8-11), we are to remember a most solemn word that has been spoken concerning Him. That word has come from the very One who has designed this great salvation. “My Spirit shall not always strive with man” (Gen 6:3). On the day of judgment, there will be whole bodies of people who will rise to testify to the truth of this. The world of Noah’s day will bear testimony to it. The four cities of the plain, including Sodom and Gomorrah will bear witness to its truth. The city of Jerusalem will even stand to confirm that mercy can run out, and judgment can be released against a place in which God chose to place His own name!

The absolute reality of this divine quality is what has moved the great God of heaven to provide a sure means of avoiding a descent into such a state. What that unnamed woman from Tekoah said to David finds its ultimate fulfillment in my text: “yet doth He devise means, that His banished be not expelled from Him” (2 Sam 14:14).

MANY SONS

“ . . . many sons . . . ” Now, Jesus, as “the captain of our salvation,” is bringing “many sons” to the culmination of their salvation – not a few, or a

handful, but “many.” Because men have tended to judge the effectiveness of salvation by their own generation, they have often overlooked the fact of the vast multitude that will at last stand accepted before the Lord of glory. The unlearned will raise an objection, stating that Jesus Himself said the way leading to life has a gate that is strait, and a way that is narrow, “and few there be that find it” (Matt 7:13). While that is certainly and unreservedly true, the jewel of redemption must be turned to also see another facet of this great salvation. “I was found of them that sought Me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after Me” (Rom 10:20). Before you hastily conclude that the majority of humanity will be damned, add that to your arsenal of thought!

The prophet Isaiah made a marvelous point of this. After prophesying of the suffering Savior, and of the effectiveness of His atonement in the fifty-third chapter of his prophecy, Isaiah launches into a marvelous shout of redemptive confidence. He accents the greatness of what God was going to do through the exalted Messiah. He closes that fifty-third chapter by saying, “Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He hath poured out His soul unto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors” (Isa 53:12). In other words, it is what the Savior would do after His vicarious death that would fully justify the enormous investment made in this salvation.

The next chapter speaks of the magnitude of the numbers that will be saved. “Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of

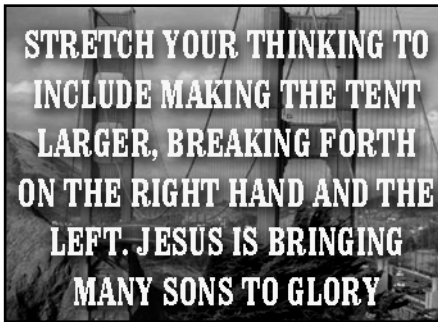
the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD” (Isa 54:1). From the standpoint of the flesh, Jesus was like a barren woman, for He was “cut off out of out of the land the living,” without any fleshly progeny, and none could declare His generation (Isa 53:8). According to the flesh, Matthew traces Jesus’ lineage back to Abraham (Matt 1:2-16). In like manner, Luke traces it all the way back to Adam, the first man (Luke 3:23-38). But there is not so much as a single fleshly generation after Jesus!

Notwithstanding, Jesus does have a generation – but it is a spiritual one in which men are “begotten of God” (1 John 5:19). They are “born again” of “incorruptible seed, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever” (1 Pet 1:23). And what does Isaiah say of this situation? He states that the children of the Messiah are “more” than those who are only born naturally! He even admonishes the people to enlarge the house, making room for more children than was expected. “Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes” (Isa 54:2). He states that the number of children will “break forth,” expanding on all sides, including vast numbers of Gentiles. “For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited” (Isa 54:3).

Isaiah spoke of the remarkable prevalence of the knowledge of God that would eventually be experienced on the earth: “for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Isa 11:9). God spoke through Isaiah of His salvation being “to the ends of the earth” (Isa 49:6).

Ah, but some cannot conceive of

such a thing happening, because it does not appear to have taken place like this in all of history. However, they forget about the latter rain, and the full harvest. When Israel was in Egypt, it is written that as the appointed time of their deliverance approached, "But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt" (Acts 7:17). And shall God do less in the matter of His great salvation? Shall Moses see a proportionately larger increase than the Prophet of whom he spoke? The Father has said to the Son, "Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost



parts of the earth for Thy possession" (Psa 2:8).

Paul spoke of a latter harvest of a great magnitude – one that would dwarf the initial historical impact of the gospel. "Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness . . . For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? (Rom 11:12,15). The Amplified Bible reads, "Now if their stumbling (their lapse, their transgression) has so enriched the world [at large], and if [Israel's] failure means such riches for the Gentiles, think what an enrichment and greater

advantage will follow their full reinstatement! . . . For if their rejection and exclusion from the benefits of salvation were [overruled] for the reconciliation of a world to God, what will their acceptance and admission mean? [It will be nothing short of] life from the dead!"

I cannot spend more time on this, although I must confess my strong inclination to do so. I am only underscoring that those Jesus is "bringing" to the appointed destination of salvation are classified as "many" – and that is not intended to be an ambiguous or restrictive word. The word "many" has a lexical definition of "multitude, many, numerous, great," ^{THAYER} "opposite of few . . . of extent or magnitude, great, large, much, many, plentiful," ^{FRIBERG} "of great crowds," ^{USB} "relatively large quantity," ^{LOUW-NIDA} "abundant," ^{LEH} "positive degree of comparison much, many." ^{GINGRICH}

But I must hasten to the appointed objective of salvation – where "the captain" is bringing the saved ones. I will only say that this day of salvation is not the time to be dominated by small and restrictive thoughts. It brings no ultimate glory to God to provide a "great salvation" that yields minuscule results. No person should presume to represent the work of the Lord in such a miserable manner! Stretch your thinking to include making the tent larger, breaking forth on the right hand and the left, and Jesus being given the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession.

TO GLORY

" . . . unto glory." There are two aspects to this revealed objective. First, it has to do with a domain, a place, a realm. Jesus said of this place, "that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:3). It is where the saints will be "gathered," parabolically

described as “My barn” (Matt 13:30). Jesus Himself referred to this when He prayed on the night of His betrayal: “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which thou hast given Me: for thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:24). It is the place where “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Rev 21:4). It is where “there shall be no more curse” and “no night.” It is the place where “the throne of God and of the Lamb” are located.

It is also a condition or state in which the saints are said to be “glorified.” Here is how it is stated in Romans 8:30: “Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified.” This is the appointed objective of it all: the glorification of those who are in Christ Jesus. This is when they will be conformed to the image of God’s Son (Rom 8:29). It is when “we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:1-2). It is when the sons of God will “appear” with Jesus “in glory” (Col 3:4). It is when Jesus will present the church to Himself as a bride “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing” (Eph 5:27). “Glory” is the domain where glorification takes place. Glorification involves the total removal of every vestige of sin – everything that had its genesis in Adam! It is where God’s name will be on our foreheads, so that our identity with Him will be obvious and unquestionable. This is when in every way, and without any distracting element, we shall “serve Him” (Rev 22:3-4). It is

where the body of Christ is described as “having the glory of God” (Rev 21:11).

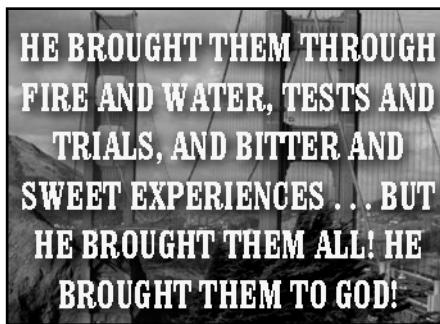
In this objective, to be “glorified” means to be fully conformed to the image of God’s Son. That means there will be nothing about us or in us that is unlike Jesus – nothing that detracts from Him, competes with Him, or is contrary to Him. Nothing about the glorified ones will fail to be perfectly harmonious with Christ, be incapable blending with Him, or be a cause of reproach to Him. Everything involved in the fall shall have been eliminated from the glorified ones, and everything intended by regeneration will have been incorporated in them. Every redeemed person, every angel, every cherub and seraph, and the four living creatures will behold these people and conclude, “These are Christ’s brethren, and the likeness to Him is clear, unmistakable, and remarkably detailed. Nothing about them will be old, defiled, or impure. Nothing will be raw, uncultured, or imperfect.

Brethren, much of the religion of our time has to do with getting Jesus down here. He is being presented as one who wants to be part of your life, and join you in your ambitions, and desiring to assist you in reaching your goals. But this is an erroneous view. Actually, Jesus comes to bring an end to your life – so that it is no longer you that live, but Christ that lives in you. He comes to sound the death-knell to self, so that for men to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Heaven’s objective is to get us there. Jesus did not say that the aim was for Him to be where we are, but for us to be where He is. That is what He said! What Jesus is doing now is bringing that glorious objective to pass!

CONCLUSION

When at last time has run its

course, and we are all standing before the throne, the redemptive purpose of God shall have been completed. With the aggregate universe assembled, the judgment shall commence. Every ear will be attentive as men give an account for the deeds done in the body, whether they are good or bad. The reasonableness of the salvation of God's elect will be made apparent. The tenability of the damnation of the wicked will be made clear. The devil and his angels, together with all of their colleagues and followers will be banished to the lake of fire, and the "why" of it all will be as clear as the crystal sea upon which the saved of God stand. God will be justified in all of His say-



ings, and will openly and undeniably overcome in every area where insolent men have dared to stand in judgment of Him.

Then, the time will come when Jesus will deliver up the kingdom to the Father. All of His foes shall have been made His footstool, and the eyes of the assembled universe, together with the holy angels, cherubim, and seraphim will be fastened upon Him.

Standing with Him, every eye will behold a vast number of people – a number no man will be able to number. They are brands plucked out of the burning. As the holy angels behold them, they perceive that they have come out of every kindred, and nation, and tongue, and tribe, and people. All of them stand faultless before the throne, and possess an exceeding joy. They are all clothed in pure white, and there is no spot or wrinkle upon them. But lest the holy gallery gaze too long upon them, there is a sudden interruption. The Lamb will speak to the Father in clear and unmistakable tones. His mighty voice will echo like a thousand cataracts throughout the chambers of the heavenly sanctuary. With waves of heavenly accent His voice will thunder: **“BEHOLD! I AND THE CHILDREN THOU HAST GIVEN ME!”**

He will have brought them **all** to glory – just as He was commissioned to do! He will have brought **“many sons to glory!”** He brought them through fire and water, tests and trials, and bitter and sweet experiences. He brought them through enemy territory, through fearful nights and days that were bright with hope. He brought them through depths and heights, through perplexity and sorrow, and through great afflictions. **But He brought them!** He brought them to glory! He brought them to God! He brought them to their inheritance! He brought them to their desired haven! He shall have triumphantly brought many sons to glory! May you be in that sacred throng!

“Through the Blood of Christ we have been remade and are profitable to Him.” -- Sister Nichole Williams

“Tares among the wheat did not compromise the nature of the wheat.” -- Sister Amanda Miller

THE GLORIOUS MAGNITUDE OF SALVATION

The salvation of man is the heartbeat of prophecy, the objective for which the law made preparation, and the quest of all truly informed individuals. The book of Genesis is no more potent than when the coming “seed” is foretold (Gen. 3:15), the blessing of “all families of the earth” (Gen. 12:1), and the “gathering of the people” unto the coming Shiloh (Gen. 49:10). The eye of faith perceived the coming Lamb of God in the paschal lambs slain the night Israel spoiled Egypt, and was brought out with a strong arm (Exod. 12). The priesthood of Leviticus shouted to man of the coming high priest, Christ Jesus (Lev. 21:10). The promise in the book of Numbers of entrance into a promised land foreshadowed a “better land” pledged in Christ (Num. 13). The emphasis upon the written law in Deuteronomy prepared men for the writing of God’s law upon the heart (Deut. 5).

The anticipation of the coming salvation erupted in Job’s longing for a “daysman” (Job 9:33), the “covert” of Isaiah (Isa. 32:2), and the “Sun of righteousness” of Malachi (Mal. 4:2). Zechariah wrote of the “Branch” of righteousness (Zech. 3:8), Haggai proclaimed the “desire of all nations” (Hag. 2:7), and Daniel declared a coming “Messiah” (Dan. 9:25). **THE SALVATION OF MAN!** The word of God is nothing without that theme!

The apostles took up the refrain in the light of the fullest revelation ever given to man. Their fundamental theme was the salvation of man. Personal deficiencies were a lament in view of this great salvation (Rom. 7).

Immorality was firmly denounced as antithetical to the salvation of Christ (I Cor. 6:9-11). The world was pronounced “evil” in view of redemption (Gal. 1:4). The zealous and personal activity of men for God was identified with working out one’s own “salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12).

Were it possible to remove the theme of salvation, the prophets and the apostles would have nothing to say, no counsel to give, no hope to offer. There would be no need for Christ, the church, or religious enterprises of any sort. It is never viewed as secondary, optional, or of no consequence. Salvation is central in the scriptures.

All of this is a perfect expression of God’s nature and demonstration of His character. More of God and His rule is comprehended in the saving of man than in any previously-known divine activity. The reconciliation of man through Jesus is not a mere accommodation to the need of man; it is an expression of the person of God. He is what He represents Himself to be in the gospel. It is not the language of hyperbole – no exaggeration – that we have in the good news of a “ransom for all” (I Tim. 2:6). Think of the terms associated with salvation. “The grace of God” (I Pet. 5:12), the “love of God” (Rom. 3:21). How the mind is stirred by the contemplation of the “longsuffering of God” (I Pet. 3:20; 2 Pet. 3:15), and the “will of God” (Col. 4:12)! It is God Himself that is reaching out for man in Christ Jesus. He does love man, and His grace and favor are toward man.

THE BRETHREN SPEAK

STATEMENTS MADE BY BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF THE
WORD OF TRUTH FELLOWSHIP DURING OUR GATHERINGS



Brother Aaron Hutchcraft

JUDGING OURSELVES

1. Starting with Adam and Eve men have had a difficult time taking responsibility for their sin.
2. The law forced our guilt by requiring more than we could give.
3. Some of the judgement of the Corinthians could have been avoided if they would have judged themselves.
4. The Law is an expression of God's nature.
5. The mirror does not lie, and neither does the Law.
6. Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, that capability is inherent in the natural man.
7. Paul gives reasons for probing introspection.
8. In self-examination, we're laboring together with God.
9. God has given us the tools to define our own condition in order that we might make a ruling about it.
10. Judging yourself involves more than beating yourself on the head. Sometimes the ruling of self-examination is, "it is not I."
11. The most profitable process is for us to judge ourselves rather than someone else doing it.
12. It is rare to find a person who directs their own way by their own choices.
13. If you have good self-esteem you will be terrible about judging yourself.
14. There is more to judging than condemning.
15. Judging involves making a decision.
16. Every person's faults will be found, it is just a matter of who finds them and when they are found.
17. God requires our involvement in the work.
18. What we are able to do is required of us to do.
19. Profitable judging of ourselves must be done in the Light of God's presence.

THE MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. The first fruit is not the same quantity as the harvest, but it is the same quality.
2. The Holy Spirit is the Custodian of the first fruits. That is not all He has, but it is what He is giving now.
3. The Spirit brings to us according to our eating or appetite.
4. The Holy Spirit is a cup bearer who brings a taste to us.
5. We are not running hopelessly, but have received the first fruits, which produces hope.
6. The first fruits produce an appetite.
7. A sustained desire is the result of tasting the first fruits.

DESCRIPTIONS
DESCRIPTIONS
DESCRIPTIONS OF SIN
DESCRIPTIONS

SIN

The nominal church has introduced a peculiar circumstance. It is perpetrating a doctrine that tends to minimize sin and transgression. Unacceptable behavior is being traced to things like physiological conditions, chemical abuse, environment, or some other influence that has nothing to do with choice or human preference. Now, there is even a trend in certain Christian circles to trace unacceptable behavior to a generational curse which must be broken before the behavior can be corrected. All of this is a smoke screen thrown out from hell to blind the eyes of the people.

The Spirit defines sin as *“the transgression of the law”* (1 John 3:4) and **“whatsoever is not of faith”** (Rom 14:23). Furthermore, the one who sins is categorically said to be *“of the devil”* (1 John 3:8). Whatever attempt may be made to explain involvement in sin, there are certain things that must be acknowledged. Jesus did not lead the person to sin, and sin is not committed as a result of looking to Jesus. The Holy Spirit

does not direct a person to sin, the promises of God offer no incentive for doing so, and the Word of God never treats sin as though it was inconsequential. A person cannot consider death or the day of judgment and sin. Pondering the coming of the Lord is certainly not conducive to sin, and considering the Gospel of Christ does not lead to sin.

The nominal church has introduced a peculiar circumstance. It is perpetrating a doctrine that tends to minimize sin and transgression.

Sin is always the result of an association with, or response to,

the devil himself. It is the outgrowth of failing to put on the whole armor of God, refusing to be taught by the grace of God, and obstinately choosing self over Christ. It results from quenching and grieving the Spirit, rejecting the tutelage of grace, and setting one’s affection on things on the earth. Those are just the facts. Sin cannot be satisfactorily explained. It is always to be confessed and abandoned, and that without exception.

THINGS ASSOCIATED WITH SIN

There are certain things that God has associated with sin – things that have been revealed. Although these are rarely mentioned in church circles, they are very much present wherever sin is found -- and that without exception. A failure to clarify the association of these things with sin has caused the people to be unable to relate them to the moral

flaws that are found within the church itself. These flaws, if acknowledged, are often traced to psychological, physiological, or circumstantial disadvantages over which the individual had no power. There are religious professionals who have specialized in such explanations.

The word of God has revealed some of the things that always accompany sin. These play a significant role in compelling the sinner to sin. Here is a sampling of those associations and conditions.

1. **REBELLIOUSNESS.** *“Because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the most High”* (Psa 107:11). To rebel is an aggressive human response against God – one in which the individual refuses to hear or obey the Lord.

2. **BLINDNESS.** *“But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes”* (1 John 2:11). This has to do with not being able to understand, perceive, or discern. Since Jesus has come, there is no justification for such a condition, for regeneration includes God shining light and knowledge into the heart, so that sin is seen and can be avoided (2 Cor 4:6).

3. **HARDNESS OF HEART.** *“And when He had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts”* (Mark 3:5). This is a deliberate hardness, where the people steel themselves against the Lord and His word. Once the Lord described Israel as *“impudent and hardhearted”* (Ezek 3:7).

4. **STIFFNECKED.** *“Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye”* (Acts 7:51). This is yet another human response in

which they refuse to turn to the Lord, choosing rather to indulge themselves in sin.

5. **DISOBEDIENCE.** *“For which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience”* (Col 3:6). Disobedience is deliberate. It takes place when one knows what God requires, yet refuses to yield the heart to Him.

6. **NOT WANTING GOD.** *“But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of Me”* (Psa 81:11). Here men prefer their own ways to those of God, and therefore do not want Him or His influence among them.

7. **UNHOLY.** *“For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy”* (2 Tim 3:2). This is being unlike God – that is, contrary to Him.

8. **REPROBATE.** *“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?”* (2 Cor 13:5). The ultimate conclusion of sin is reprobacy, or being rejected by God. If a person refuses to turn from sin, this is the inevitable result.

9. **REJECTING THE WORD.** *“The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD; and what wisdom is in them?”* (Jer 8:9). In this case, the person hears the word of the Lord, but simply refuses to receive or yield to it.

10. **IMPENITENCE.** *“But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God”* (Rom 2:5). This is a refusal to turn or repent. The soul who is impenitent is obstinate, and insists on continuing in sin, even when he knows it is wrong.

The Kingdom of God

The kingdom of God! There is something awesome about the term – something that captivates the inquiring mind! The kingdom is a reign of authority, of submission, of purpose, and of divine objective. It involves a rule and a reign that are deliberate, and that are maintained with specific objectives in mind. The kingdom of God postulates confrontation . . . a rule that exists in the midst of potential adversaries. Because it is the kingdom of God, it will ultimately overcome – obviously overcome – all contrary kingdoms, **all** opposition, **all** rebellion!

That is what was prophesied by Daniel, and is repeatedly foretold in the new covenant writings. *“And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever”* (Dan 2:44). *“That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”* (Phil 2:10-11). *“From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool”*(Heb 10:13). *“And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever”* (Rev 11:15).

Because the kingdom of God deals with the unseen, men tend to ignore it, or to distort its reality to suit their own objectives. But God’s kingdom is real,

and must be the aim of every preacher and teacher claiming identity with Christ to unveil something of its magnitude, that men may seek it *“first,”* together with God’s righteousness (Matt. 6:33). That quest is something that the King of the kingdom requires of us. No person is exempt from this requirement. However, it greatly complicates this necessity when professed leaders remain silent concerning the kingdom that is to be sought.

What is the kingdom of God? How may I perceive it? What is its relevance to me as a believer in Christ . . . or as an unbeliever living in God’s world?

God’s Specific Objectives

The kingdom of God, in its simplest implication, means the reign of the Almighty; the exercise of His authority. This is a rule maintained with **specific objectives** in mind. It is an intelligent reign, being characterized by perceptible reason. God Himself has declared that He does nothing *“without a cause”* (Ezek. 14:23). He always works with *“purpose”* in mind (Eph. 1:11). When the power or authority of God is devoted to a specific objective, **that is a revelation of His kingdom!**

In view of this circumstance, men must cease all efforts to establish their own cause, and fulfill their own purpose. The purpose for humanity has already been established. The reason for the church has been revealed and in in place. The things that they are to achieve are are made known in the scriptures, and are to be taken seriously. God will not support or condone any of the conflicting plans of men!

BAD CHURCHES

There are some people whom Jesus receives even though they are in a church that believes and does things He does not approve. The church in Ephesus was very precise about what they taught -- and Jesus commended them for it. They even tested those who said they were apostles, and found that they were not. Yet, Jesus rejected them because they had left their first love, and called upon them to repent or else be removed from His presence (Rev 2:2-5).

Sardis was a church with whom Jesus found fault. He said to that church, "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you" (Rev 3:2-3). Yet, in that church there were some who had not been contaminated with its ways. He also said, "You have a few names even in Sardis who have not

defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy" (Rev 3:4).

The church at Thyatira had a woman among them who said she was a prophetess, and had seduced Christ's servants into committing fornication and eating things offered to idols. Jesus said, "I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will

give to each one of you according to your works" (Rev 2:23). Yet, even in that miserable situation He also said, "But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden" (Rev 2:24).

The church in Laodicea was in such a terrible state that Jesus could not find a single good thing about it. He described the whole church as being "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Rev 3:17). Yet He said to them, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent" (Rev 3:18-19). This is the very church to whom He said, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if

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In all of these cases, the people were in a place that was not approved by Jesus – yet in responding to Christ, they were saved in spite of those uncomely environments.

any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me" (Rev 3:20).

The church in Pergamum had some among them who held to false doctrines -- "the doctrine of Balaam," who taught others how to make God's people stumble, and "the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes," which doctrine He Himself hated. They were like the Catholic church, holding to false doctrines. Yet Jesus said to them, "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it" (Rev 2:16-17).

In all of these cases, the people were in a place that was not approved by Jesus – yet in responding to Christ, they were saved in spite of those uncomely environments. Also, in the book of the Revelation, there is a depiction of the false church – a church Satan has raised up to seduce people and lead them away from Christ. It is called "Babylon the Great," and is portrayed as a "great whore" – or one who is unfaithful. Jesus cries out to His people, "And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities" (Rev 18:4-5). They were His people when they were in that environment, but were summoned to "come

out."

We dare not assume that no one can find the Lord unless they are in an ideal environment. That is not the case. Some people found and obeyed Christ while they in a synagogue that hated both Jesus and His Gospel (Acts 18:5-8). Also, it is not right to assume that because people are in a church that teaches false doctrines, that they all believe those doctrines, and have embraced them. Some people in Sardis had not given in to certain prideful ways. Some people in Pergamum had not believed the false doctrines that some held there.

Some reason that because Jesus did not tell the faithful ones in these churches to leave, that indicates He approved of them staying there. They conclude, therefore, that there is nothing wrong with remaining in churches where the flock of God is not fed, false teaching abounds, and all manner of lukewarmness and distinterest exist. But, is this really good reasoning? If Jesus says, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent" (Rev 2:5), does that mean it is safe to remain in such a place? If He says, "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth" (Rev 2:16)," who dares to conclude that is a safe place to stay? If Jesus declares, "And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your

works" (Rev 2:23), is that really the place to remain? If a church does not heed the words, "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God" (Rev 3:2), how absurd it is to bluster about how it is right to remain in such an environment. When Jesus shouts, "Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee" (Rev 3:3), will you remain untouched by the condition that provoked Him to declare such words? Can you really defend remaining in a group who refuses to give heed to Jesus' words, "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth" (Rev 3:16).

Lifeless churches cannot be

defended. They are rather to be rebuked, for they are living in rebellion against God. How is it possible to abide in Christ, and yet choose to remain in a religious environment in which he Himself is not welcomed? If Jesus says to purge ourselves from religious defiling influences, what kind of justification can be offered for insisting on maintaining an association with them? After Paul wrote to Timothy about certain false teachers who trafficked in doctrines that overthrew the faith of some, he counselled the young evangelist, "But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonor. If a man therefore purge himself from these [vessels of dishonor], he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (2 Tim 2:20-21). That use depends on the separation.

**2008, 19th ANNUAL
REFRESHING WATERS RENEWAL**

Theme: THE GOSPEL IN THE EPISTLES

August 12-14, 2008 - Carl Junction Missouri

Perhaps you have heard it said that the Gospel is only for the lost, and is not intended to be preached to the church. This year's Renewal is devoted to dispelling this harmful myth. The subject will not be addressed philosophically, but with the straightforward declaration of the Scriptures. It will be established that the vast majority of information related to the Gospel of Christ has been delivered to the body of Christ, with very few exceptions. Several competent preachers will expound some of the many Gospel proclamations that are addressed to those who are in Christ Jesus. Plan now to attend these edifying gatherings.

COME OUT FROM AMONG THEM!

“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,” (2 Cor 6:17)

The epistles contain writings that appeal to the “new creation” (2 Cor 5:17), the “new man” (Col 3:10), or “whatsoever is born of God” (1 John 5:4). Appointed and powerful incentives are placed before the people of God that are intended to light the candle of hope and strengthen the sinews of faith. They come in a container of divine reasoning that makes perfect sense to faith, even though it is absurd to the flesh. They are tailored to motivate the “new man,” moving him to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil 2:12).

Yet, the facts and reasoning of the Epistles have a strange sound amidst the religious jangling of our time. They neither fit into nor

One is hard-pressed to find any modern Christian convention or special series of meetings that does not EMPHASIZE methodologies, interpersonal relationships, or address contemporary trends

blend with the thrust of the religion of our time. If the “apostles’ doctrine” is a proper representation of spiritual emphasis, then much of what is flying under the banner of “Christianity” is nothing more than a miserable delusion! One is hard-pressed to find any modern Christian convention or special series of meetings that does not EMPHASIZE methodologies, interpersonal relationships, or address contemporary trends. It is as though

Christ, the gospel, and the new covenant were no longer of any fundamental relevance. This is, in my judgment, indicative of an extensive falling away that has taken place in our time. Further, it has been led by the scholastic leaders, book sellers, and lifeless institutions within the Christian community. Careers have upstaged hope, and pretentious scholarship has overshadowed faith.

If this appears a bit strong, consider that much of the apostolic doctrine concerning the posture of the believer is actually neutralized by the thrust of contemporary religion. It looks as though it has little or no relevance. Allow me to cite a few such passages.

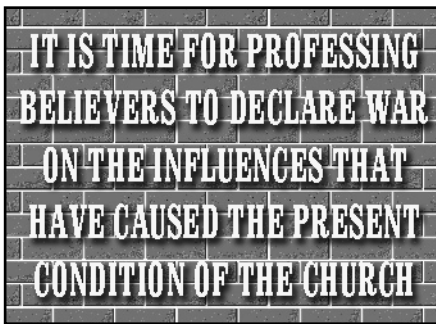
1. The crucifixion of the flesh. “And they that are Christ’s have cruci-

fied the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Gal 5:24).

2. Discontentment with our mortality. “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven” (2 Cor 5:1-2).

3. Overcoming the world. “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:4-5).

4. Worship, rejoicing, and the view of



the flesh. “For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh” (Phil 3:3).

The manner in which Christian thinking is being shaped by religious sophists has caused such texts to be beyond the reach of the average believer – and even uninteresting. However, the very tone of these texts (to say nothing of the host of similar ones) demands that they be perceived as things that can and must be grasped – things that are common to all believers. When we are confronted with such things as the crucifixion of the flesh, the inevitable decay of our

bodies, the appointed confrontation of the Lord Jesus, and the putting on of immortality, we cannot afford to remain in the dark. Overcoming the world must not be viewed as a melancholy wish, but as a present reality in Christ Jesus. The worship of God, rejoicing in Christ, and having no confidence in the flesh is not an idealistic goal, but things that “accompany salvation.” They are matters that relate to salvation itself. They are not the pointless speculations of high minded and impractical theologians, and they must not be treated as though they were.

When we are in an environment that makes it difficult to grasp the truth, we are not in a proper place. When it comes to setting our affection on things above (Col 3:1-2), competing influences are confirmation that our adversary is near and at work – perhaps even in a “church” environment. When other thoughts and desires surface, inviting us to ignore the things of God in preference for other things, the “fiery darts” of the evil one have been hurled at us. Only “the shield of faith” will “quench” those “darts,” stopping them from infecting our thoughts (Eph 6:16).

It is time for professing believers to declare war on the influences that have caused the present condition of the church. This is not a time for reform, but for coming away from those who have a “form of godliness, but deny the power thereof.” That is what we are, by the Spirit, admonished to do: “from such, turn away” (2 Tim 3:5). Do you imagine that you can ignore this call and still remain identified with the Lord, for Jesus cannot be joined to Belial, and righteousness and unrighteousness cannot be mingled (3 Cor 6:14-18).

If you are in a place where ignorance of the things of God is being

cultured, and where professing believers remain in a state of perpetual infancy, you need to leave. God is not at work in such a place, and there is no need for you to be deceived about the matter. In the divine economy, the Holy Spirit is changing the constituents of the new covenant “from glory to glory” (2 Cor 3:18). That is not what ought to be done, but what IS being done. Where conformity to the image of God’s Son is not taking place, God Himself is not present, for that is what He has predetermined for all of His sons (Rom 8:29). Whatever reasons may be adduced for as lack of spiritual growth, it is totally unacceptable. The solemn word of the Spirit is, “Let us go on unto perfection,” or “to maturity” ^{NIV} (Heb 6:1). Such a word cannot be ignored with impunity. In fact, salvation itself is at stake in this matter (Heb 6:4-8).

In view of the obvious divine emphasis on growing up into Christ, being conformed to the image of His Son, and going on unto perfection, precisely from whence has the contemporary emphasis on “evangelism” arisen? Mind you, this is by no means intended to suggest that making disciples of all nations and preaching the gospel to every creature is not integral to the divine agenda. But to say this is the heart and core, or fundamental objective, of Jesus Christ is an absurdity unworthy any person possessing soundness mind. Is beginning the race the main thing, or is it finishing that race? Is being “born again” the primary experience, or being “conformed to the image” of His Son (Rom 8:29)? Is it more important to be “begotten,” or to go on to perfection (Heb 6:1)? Is God more glorified by repentance and contrition, or by walking in the light, by faith, and in the Spirit? Precisely who is it to whom God will make

Himself known, opening the eyes of their understanding and strengthening them with might by His Spirit in the inner man? Is it those who initially come to Christ, or those who are “in” Him, having been washed, sanctified, and justified (1 Cor 6:11)? Precisely where is the divine emphasis placed? Is it on being “delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God’s Son (Col 1:13), or is it on being brought to glory (Heb 2:10), and being presented “faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 1:24-25). And, why is it that Jesus ever lives to intercede? Is it in order for the conversion of sinners, or it is to “save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him” (Heb 7:25). And for whom does the Spirit intercede? Is it for those who remain “dead in trespasses and sins,” or for those who are, in Christ, patiently waiting for the realization of the hope by which they are being saved (Rom 8:24-27)? Why is it that “all scripture is profitable?” Is the focus upon winning the lost, or that “the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work” (2 Tim 3:16-17)?

Let those who say that “evangelism” is the fundamental work of the church step forward with the word of God in their hands, and show us where God has said any such thing. Let them produce a single word of God that was written exclusively to the heathen, or the unsaved. Let them lay out before us a single word addressed to any church in scripture that states such a thing, or refers to what they call “the great commission”; let them produce a word of rebuke to any believer or any church for not reaching the lost with the gospel of Christ; or, let them bring forward one solitary instance of a church that was commended for its evangelistic endeavors!

Where was any church rebuked for anything other than not measuring up to the life that is in Christ Jesus, for not growing, or for lapsing into some form of immortality or dependency on anything other than Christ? Where was any person or church challenged to do anything than grow up into Christ, live by faith, walk in the Spirit, or seek the things that are above?

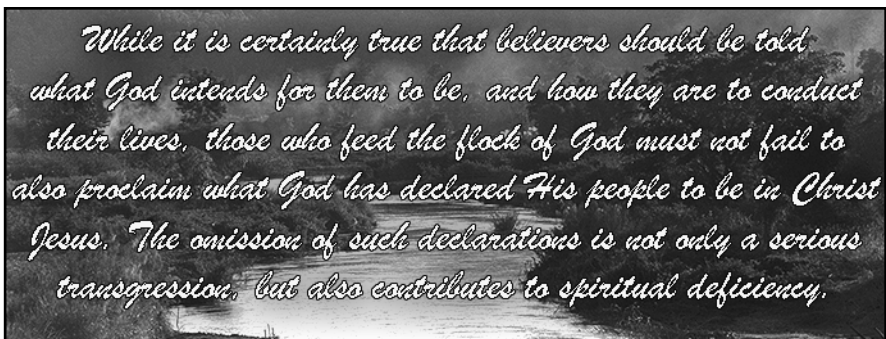
The surface thinker will imagine that all of this will cause every effort of the church to reach the lost to wither and die. But this is a most foolish notion. If Jesus came to “seek and save the lost” (Luke 19:10), will those who fellowship with Him (1 Cor 1:9) cease to do so? If Jesus “came into the world to save sinners” (1 Tim, 1:15), will those who “walk in the light as He is in the light” (1 John 1:7) fail to do the same? If the Lord “came to call sinners to repentance” (Matt 9:13), will those who “grow up into” Him “in all things” (Eph 4:15) draw back from such a work?

An emphasis on “evangelism” postulates a dead church! Where the church is vibrant and alive, they will “go everywhere preaching the word,” even if they are scattered by relentless persecution (Acts 8:4). Faith – genuine faith (and there is no other kind) – will move a person or persons to be “laborers together with God” (1 Cor 3:9). If such an activity is not happening, the

problem is not lack of knowledge, but unbelief! If there is no heart for the lost, a lack of evangelistic fervor is not the problem, but a lack of affinity with the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is precisely why the Holy Spirit consistently, and without fail, stresses the maturity of the saints of God. Every spiritual gift has been given for this purpose – and that even included “evangelists” (Eph 4:11-16; 1 Cor 12:1-7). This is why Jesus has been made “head over all things” – “for the church” (Eph 1:22-23). This is why the Holy Spirit has been given to us (Rom 8:13-17). The church is constituted of the people whom Jesus is presently nourishing and cherishing (Eph 5:29). These are the people in whom, God is working, “both to will and to do” (Phil 2:13). These are the people who are preparing themselves to “ever be with the Lord” (1 Thess 4:16-17; Rev 19:7).

It may very well be that the modern church is powerless because it is not doing what God has plainly declared that He Himself, the Lord Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are doing. Divine power cannot be prostituted for purely human objectives. Any attempt to do so is nothing more than vanity. In my judgment, the rush of the modern church to adopt methodologies and programs that have been spawned in the minds of men is incontrovertible evidence that God is **not** in it. This is simply not the way He works.



While it is certainly true that believers should be told what God intends for them to be, and how they are to conduct their lives, those who feed the flock of God must not fail to also proclaim what God has declared His people to be in Christ Jesus. The omission of such declarations is not only a serious transgression, but also contributes to spiritual deficiency.

JESUS CHRIST SPEAKS CONCERNING THE HOLY SPIRIT

I begin with two preliminary observations. First, engaging in discussions of who was empowered by the Spirit to *do miracles* is a purely human issue. It is driven by a sectarian spirit, and promotes the same. This is not the manner in which the Lord addresses the subject of the Holy Spirit. Secondly, God does not speak with a mind to human conceptions of the Holy Spirit, whether originating with Jew or Gentile. The ideas of men are not the locus for divine command, promise, or exposition. Jesus and those whom He sent spoke within the context of God's eternal purpose. It is the business of men to elevate their thinking into that realm, else God's word will make no sense to them.

One other thing about the words of Jesus -- particularly as they regard God and His purpose. His words are "*spirit and they are life*" (John 6:63). They are, as Peter confessed, "*words of eternal life*" (John 6:68). They are not mere academic words, but words through which life is realized. His words, Jesus said, "*will never pass away*" (Matt 24:35). They

One other thing about the words of Jesus -- particularly as they regard God and His purpose. His words are "spirit and they are life":

are so pivotal that Jesus says of the person who is ashamed of them, "*the Son of man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory*" (Lk 9:26). I say these things to encourage every soul to take seriously what Jesus says, and not attempt to stuff any of His words to a sectarian mold.

LUKE 11:11-13

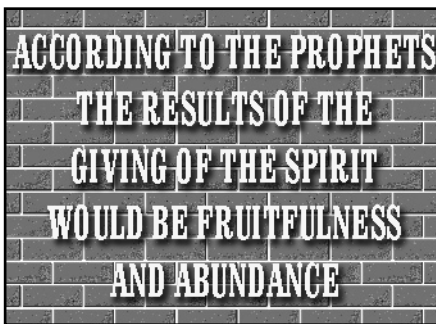
"If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

The backdrop for Jesus' words on the Holy Spirit were the promises of God regarding the Spirit, not the Jewish notions of the Spirit. Through the prophets, God has spoken frequently concerning the Holy Spirit being given to men.

1. The Spirit would be poured out from on high (Isa 32:15).
2. The Spirit would be poured out upon Israel's "*offspring*" (Isa 44:3).
3. He spoke of putting a "*new spirit*" within the people (Ezek 11:19).
4. God associated His covenant with the giving of His Spirit (Isa 59:21).
5. God said He would put His Spirit within His people (Ezek 36:27; 37:14).
6. He spoke of pouring out the Spirit upon the "*house of Israel*" (Ezek 39:29).

7. He promised He would pour out His Spirit upon all people (Joel 2:28).
8. He promised He would pour out His Spirit indiscriminately, upon both men and women (Joel 2:29).
9. He spoke of pouring out “a spirit of grace and supplication” on the inhabitants of Jerusalem (Zech 12:10).

According to the prophets, the result of the giving of Spirit would be fruitfulness and abundance (Isa 32:15); vibrant life (Isa 44:3-4); God’s words would not depart out the mouths of the people (Isa 59:21); the people would live consistently with what God required (Ezek 36:27); life and the knowledge of God (Ezek 37:14); God would no longer be obscure (Ezek



39:29); spiritual understanding and speaking (Joel 2:28-29); and looking upon their redeemer; (Zech 12:10). These promises were mingled with some things unique to Israel – like dwelling in their own land. However, there was a high tone or promise in them that would come upon all who embraced “the Lord’s Christ.”

None of these were accompanied by extensive exposition. They were introductory words that spoke of a new era in which God and man would be more closely associated. The old covenant did not speak of these things, but focused on the human condition, accentuating the absolute need for a relation to God that was driven by

what God accomplishes, not what man does.

Until Jesus, God had never unveiled any human role in the matter of receiving His Holy Spirit. He said He would *pour out* the Spirit, and *put* His Spirit in people -- but that was the extent of His revelation under the prophets.

When Jesus came, He elevated the revelation of this whole matter. He taught that those who engaged in a fervent quest for God would not be disappointed. He told them to ask, seek, and knock, and affirmed, “*For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened*” (Luke 11:9-10). And what was to be the object of this asking, seeking, and knocking? Was it to be houses, lands, possessions, etc? This is precisely where the teaching of our text comes into view.

First, Jesus set the context of this quest within the framework of what was needed -- like bread, fish, and an egg (11:11-12). The idea is that man’s relationship to and identity with the living God supercedes all other quests. Behind His words there was a certain insinuation that sensitive hearts could grasp. There are needs for the inner man just as surely as there are for the outward man, and they are to be sought. In Jesus’ time (and, unfortunately, in ours as well), there was a deplorable poverty within religious leaders. Jesus likened their inward condition to being “*full of dead men’s bones and everything unclean*” (Matt 23:27), and being “*full of hypocrisy and wickedness*” (Matt 23:28). This was a wholly unacceptable condition, and it would be immediately and successfully addressed by the Son of God.

Matthew’s account of this saying accentuates “*good things*” (Matt 7:9-11) whereas Luke says “the Holy Spirit” would be given. Matthew

emphasizes the effects – “*good things*,” and Luke, the means by which they are ministered – “*the Holy Spirit*.” The human involvement in the whole process is not that of working, but of asking, seeking and knocking – of engaging in a fervent quest for what God is giving.

The point in both Matthew and Luke is the **pursuit** of the blessing, and not the blessing itself. This is critical to an understanding of the text. Jesus is not speaking to clarify whether or not those who are baptized would receive the Holy Spirit. His aim was not to delineate precisely when the Spirit is given, or exactly how He would be received after He had accomplished His death and been enthroned in heaven.

The apostles elaborated on the giving of the Spirit, expounding, as it were, the words of Jesus. Peter associated the giving of the Spirit with repentance and baptism – both of which are ordained forms of seeking, or calling, upon the name of the Lord (Acts 2:38). Paul associated the receiving of the Holy Spirit with sonship, affirming “*Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, ‘Abba, Father’*”^{NIV} Gal 4:6). He also says the Spirit is a deposit, or guarantee, of what is to come (2 Cor 5:5). What Jesus called “*good things*” in Matthew are more fully expounded following Christ’s enthronement as “*the fruit of the Spirit*” (Gal 5:22-23), the Spirit’s intercessory work (Rom 8:26-27), strengthening the inner man so Christ can dwell in our hearts by faith (Eph 3:16-17), pouring the love of God out into our hearts (Rom 5:5), abounding in hope (Rom 15:13), and many other wonderful things. There is also the leading of the Spirit in putting to death the deeds of the body (Rom 8:13). And there is also the Spirit’s marvelous

witness with our spirit, that “*we are the children of God*” (Rom 8:16). Our induction into Christ is also said to be accompanied by the Spirit’s work of washing, sanctification and justification (1 Cor 6:11). The knowledge of possessing the Holy Spirit is also said to be our evidence that Jesus Christ dwells in us (1 John 3:23-24).

Christ’s words in Matthew and Luke cracked the door of divine purpose so men could catch a glimpse of the magnitude of the salvation that would be realized in Him. They were not intended to be an exhaustive commentary of the wonderfully extensive details of that *great salvation*.

On one occasion, Jesus spoke of the outworking of the Holy Spirit, when He would be given to men – men who were in quest of good things from God. His words are given by John, who, in turn, told us what they meant – which meaning was withheld from those who heard them. “*In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water*” (John 7:37-38). John confirms that this was not speaking of something people would experience before Jesus died, was raised, and was glorified. “*By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified*”^{NIV} (John 7:39). Now, however, Jesus has been glorified. As Peter proclaimed, God “*has glorified His Servant Jesus*” (Acts 3:13). Now, then, the Spirit is being given, and He, as a refreshing river of life, is flowing out from those who have received Him.

The words of Jesus in Luke 11:11-13 alerted His listeners to the fact that the time was at hand--when God was

going to do precisely what He had promised through the prophets – pour out and give His Spirit. They also confirmed that this would be done within the context of a fervent quest for the Lord and His blessing. This kind of quest began in the days of John the Baptist, when people became aware that something more was to be had than the religious monotony of the day: *“And from the days of John the Baptist until the present time, the kingdom of heaven has endured violent assault, and violent men seize it by force [as a precious prize—a share in the heavenly kingdom is sought with most ardent zeal and intense exertion]”* ^{AMPLIFIED} (Matt 11:12). When John began ministering *“the people were waiting expectantly”* (Lk 3:15), realizing the kind of pursuit of which Jesus had spoken in Luke 11:13. Thirty years earlier, when the Christ was born, there were people who sensed the times, and were *“looking forward to redemption”* (Lk 2:38).

Men will raise the question whether or not it is proper to ask the Lord for the Holy Spirit now. They posit that we automatically receive the Spirit, and therefore have no need to ask the Father for Him, as Jesus said in Luke 11:13. But they have oversimplified the matter. We are told to be *“filled with the Spirit”* – and that is to people who have already received Him (Eph 5:18). Some seek to neutralize the words by saying Paul referred to this as

letting *“the word of Christ dwell”* in us *“richly”* (Col 3:16) – as though that were divorced from the Spirit, or the Spirit was divorced from the word. They also overlook that Paul prayed for those who are already in Christ, *“I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being”* ^{NIV} (Eph 3:16). There are also exhortations like *“grieve not the Holy Spirit of God”* (Eph 4:30), and *“Do not quench the Spirit”* ^{NASB} (1 Thess 5:19). There is also having a mind that is *“set on what the Spirit desires”* ^{NIV} (Rom 8:5), and *“the mind controlled by the Spirit”* ^{NIV} (Rom 8:6). There is also a continual change taking place in the believing ones, who *“are being transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit”* ^{NIV} (2 Cor 3:18).

A tender heart does not want to be deficient in any of these areas. How is it that such marvelous things can be realized, or experienced. They are found in the wonderful words of Jesus in Luke 11:13. Concerning such unparalleled benefits, men will realize them by asking, seeking, and knocking. If, on the other hand, the Holy Spirit is sought in order to realize things that God has not promised, the people are not seeking *“good things,”* no matter what they say. Our asking is to be in strict harmony with what the prophets promised, and Jesus has said.

THOUGHTS ON PHILIPPIANS BY JEREMY WILLIAMS

1. Whether by living or dying, Paul knew things would turn out for his salvation.
2. This is a time when more is expected than when we were in ignorance. Ignorance is not acceptable with God.
3. To be acceptable to God one must be able to see beyond trouble.
4. Life will not be easy, but through faith you can be victorious.
5. The closer you live to Jesus Christ the clearer things become.
6. I do not want to make the trouble of the brethren small, but to assure them it is all working out.

JESUS' WORD TO A SUFFERING CHURCH

"And unto the angel of the church in . . . write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." (Rev 2:8-11)

DEMAND THE TRUTH!

The time has come for those who have received the love of the truth to demand that it be spoken consistently and frequently by preachers and teachers. Let them declare war on religious froth and simplicity, and call for the exposition of the word of God. Let them dismiss staff members who have neither the knowledge nor the love of the truth, and demand that what is said in the name of the Lord be for the edification of the body and the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry (Eph 4:12-16). No longer be tolerant of congregational leaders who cannot handle the word of God correctly. Insist that the singing fulfill the admonition to do so from a heart in which the word of Christ is dwelling richly, teaching and admonishing one another (Col 3:16). Withhold your resources from those who do not contribute to your faith, and give them to those who fulfill the mandate to feed Christ's sheep. Insist that the gospel be declared and expounded, the promises proclaimed, and sinners rebuked. No one has a right to ignore the mandates of the King!

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SPIRITUAL MATURITY IS A NECESSITY

Nearly everyone with a modicum of understanding knows that spiritual maturity is good, and that growth in Christ is something important. However, the religious climate of our time has led people to perceive such growth as a sort of luxury instead of a necessity. The program of the average church confirms that growing up into Christ is really not considered to be essential. There are too much novelty, distraction, and trivia present – too little of the word of God, teaching, expounding, and exhortation. As a rule, professed believers are too uninformed, too uninvolved, and too occupied with things that are perishing. They are not conversant with things pertaining to life and godliness, and their spiritual appetites are too small. Those who are exposed to the word of God are only given quick, simplistic, and shallow views that lack depth and require little or no extended thought. In the words of James, "My brethren, these things ought not to be this way" ^{NASB} (James 3:10). When Jesus was exalted, leading "captivity captive," He gave "gifts to men." They included "apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers." The purpose for these gifts is clearly stated, and there is no reason for any confusion on the matter: "for the perfecting of the saints." This included "edifying the body of Christ," coming into "the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God," being "no more children," and growing "up into Christ in all things" (Eph 4:12-15). This was the objective of apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers. Functions that do not contribute to that end are not from God, and thus cannot possibly receive His blessing. There is no place for perpetual juvenility and spiritual childhood – none whatsoever. Nothing about salvation encourages or promotes spiritual immaturity, ignorance, weakness, or a lack of understanding – nothing. If these things continue to exist in professed believers, it is not because of Jesus. It is not because of the work of the Holy Spirit. It is not because of the working of the word of the Lord. It is not because of prayer, or diligence, or purity, or an honest and good heart. Christ's intercession promotes spiritual growth. The Holy Spirit is leading us in this holy activity. The holy angels are ministering with this in mind. The word of God has been given to us for this purpose. The body of Christ contributes to this objective. In Christ Jesus, growth is normal – it is what happens when the Spirit is not grieved or quenched, when the word is ingested, and when fellowship with Christ is realized.