

DEAN AND LINDA CHICQUETTE

Love Your Neighbor

AS YOU LOVE YOURSELF



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By Dean & Linda Chicquette

DLC Press

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This book includes stories in which people's names and some details of their situations have been changed.

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DISCLAIMER

I apologize up front for often using the emotionally laden word '*hate*' in this work. So let me define its intended use.

Hate is the pushing away or the disowning of things, people or events to which we prefer not to be associated. Sometimes that is even God. Therefore you might find me saying that we can hate God.

We dedicate this book to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Also to all the readers of our other books.

*We pray that you will find inspiration to
allow Holy Spirit to love your neighbor through you.*

HE LOVES YOU!

PREFACE

Ever since Dean and I met Jesus as the Way, the Truth and the Life in the summer of 1974, He has been using every experience in our lives to reveal to us His character and essence of love. For some reason He often found us to be hard headed and stiff necked. It wasn't a revelation that we immediately embraced completely. As always Jesus was long-suffering and merciful with us.

The more we studied His word and were willing to listen to the Holy Spirit, we realized that if God is love which He has told us He is, love is His message. Love is not something we can manufacture or work at. Love is that spring of living water that bubbles up and flows out of us as we drink from the well of Living Water. That is why Jesus said that the world would know his disciples by the love they have for one another.

If we think of Jesus' story of the good Samaritan, we remember that loving our neighbor is simply loving that

one in front of us who is in need. That need can manifest in any number of ways, but if our spiritual eyes and ears are open we will see those needs and be drawn to fill them. It becomes more evident every day that love is the most powerful force in the universe. It is truly the only thing which can make a true and lasting change in anyone's life.

As we come to know Jesus better, we can't help but let His love pour out from us to everyone we meet. I pray that this little book will be an inspiration for each of us to go out into the world and let the love of Jesus flow out and bless every neighbor that we meet each day.

Linda

INTRODUCTION

A QUALIFIED YES

“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” And He said to him, “‘YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’ This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF’ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”

— MATTHEW 22:36 - 40 NAS

Just because Jesus said it, a confessing Christian will immediately say, ‘yes’ to their need to love God and their neighbor as their self. But it is a qualified ‘yes’. The qualification is often dressed in a cogent, rehearsed set of

reasoning that not only diminishes Jesus' teaching to a guideline but effectually and functionally reduces it to being inaccurate or even a falsehood.

We are all indoctrinated from birth to believe that we are more important than anyone else. Because of this, we have transformed God's mandate to love our neighbors into a statement that reads something like, "We can and should love our neighbors as long as they do not interfere with our self-defined highest good."

At the heart of this reasoning are the unspoken thoughts, 'reaching my highest good is more important than me helping you to reach your highest good' or 'I'll love you as long as you love me better'. Accepting this reasoning gives birth to a right to abhor those who do not love us the way we want them to love us. If we do not like what they say or do, we claim they have offended us. This right to decide who offends us is taken as a God-given right to detest them, to hurt them, and to offend them back and without recourse. Loving your neighbor becomes, "Say what!"

In the end, we carry this philosophy to the extreme and treat God with the same hate and contempt that we treat each other.

Then there is this command to love God, to love Him with all you are. This command to love God is transformed into, "I'll love all the good that God will do for me and everything else is evil and should be cast out." We want to be loved more than to love. Our need to be emotionally satiated overrides God's command to

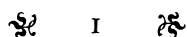
love Him in whatever condition we find ourselves and to love the other in whatever condition we find them.

If we do not like our life and the circumstances in which we find ourselves, we believe we have the right, at some level, to reject God for not completing us in the way we want to be completed. In the end, we love Him as long as we believe He is loving us better than anything or anyone else. Our love for God becomes conditional. Because of this and in the same way, we think His love for us is conditional.

God's right to make a charge against our plans has been transformed, by our self-for-self seeking souls, into our right to make a charge against God's plans for us.

Also, we think God's highest good, afforded in Christ's death, is to give us the ability to set Him aside and openly rebel against His declared desire. God gifted us with a will (desire), with which to harmonize with His desire. When we disagree with God's desire and exercise our own desire, we think grace allows us to receive forgiveness for not doing His desire. This type of living makes grace a license for disobedience.

"And Samuel said, 'Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams.'"



GOD, SERVANT OF THE HUMAN HEART

*Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil,
but use it as bondslaves of God.*

— 1 PETER 2:16 NAS

In short, we love freedom more than God. Many, reject the idea of being God's slave. Humanity would disown an eternal vocation for a temporary experience called freedom. Yet God's desire is to so own us that we can equally say we own Him. God's desire to live His life through us by our submission and obedience to His desire is His greatest good for us. This has always has been and always will be our best good.

WHAT ABOUT FREE WILL?

The belief in the freedom to exercise 'free will' ends

up our right to damn our own souls. Everyone who steps out of God's will is a sinner and no sinner graduates into the next *life* experience. God is holy and the highest good. We are invited to say yes to His desires. Yet we desire to override His desires and define our lives as we see fit. This is evil itself. Though we are gifted with the ability to agree with what He is doing we worship and love the ability to disagree. This is idolatry.

When we perceive God as a non-interfering gentleman, He becomes a servant to our desires. We transform Him into the foundation upon which our idol of freedom will stand. We are willing to bow as long as 'He' performs for us the highest good we have determined for ourselves which is to uphold our right to be wrong and get away with it. Otherwise, if He fails to uphold our idols, we throw Him into an everlasting pit of human rage, into the fire of our scathing souls. The very soul created to humble itself to God, or be damned, has damned this God who will not humble Himself to our behavior. Christ's invitation for us to obey Him becomes our invitation for God to obey us.

"Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

— MATTHEW 5:48 NAS

Jesus said we were to be like His Father and love everyone equally. He went on to define such behavior as

being as perfect as His Father is perfect. Obviously, this perfection cannot be declaring God sinless because He loves all equally but that He is complete and that complete love is expressed indiscriminately. His call for us is not a call to sinless perfection but to indiscriminate loving. Therefore, He did not say that we were to try to be perfect, but He said we were going to be as perfect as each moment needed, just like the Father is complete in each moment of need. We are promised everything needed to be like Father yet we continue to doubt and quickly turn to reason as the god needed to solve life's problems.

“...seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.”

— 2 PETER 1:3 NAS

THE HOPE OF GLORY

“...to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

— COLOSSIANS 1:27 NAS

Mr. Love has promised to take residence in us and never leave us nor forsake us. What an awesome promise. He is looking for a home in which to reside and from and through which to declare His love. His Son proved to all in heaven and on earth that obedience is the road to life from the dead. He also declares, by His Spirit resident within us, that we too can shine forth His obedience to Father even now while we live in this flesh which is bent on arguing with the Spirit. The Spirit and flesh may be warring, but each battle is the Lord's.

Yet we often look to ourselves and to our desires,

including our desire to serve Him, and demand He submit to our efforts to make the flesh behave. Our efforts in and of themselves become our way to justify failure. For us, our desire to love Him becomes sufficient. Our desire to love others becomes sufficient. Trying becomes our god in whom we trust. Every effort to perform proves us bankrupt in the flesh of any means to love others. As we live believing our identity is that of our spirit joined to the flesh, we justify our failures to obey love's desires. As we try our trying becomes our god. We call upon effort to overcome the last bit of effort that failed us.

PREFERENCES

When we prefer this person over another, we are not raining God's love equally upon each soul we meet. Worse, we glorify our preferences, even our willful choices, and justify those actions which are boldly contrary to Father's will. Father has not called us to love those who love back but to love those who will take advantage of us. Instead, and not shockingly, we call Christ to our side to judge those we hate and punish those who take advantage of us. In short, we ask the Christ of Love to hate the world He so loved that He died to save it.

We can conclude that Jesus is a good friend to have

in a fight. We reason, He is God and cannot be defeated. He died once and now lives forever. He Cannot be defeated. He might as well hate those we hate or He could at least let us be the ambassadors of His wrath poured out on them. Living from this paradigm, we cannot begin to enter into God's plan, purpose, or process. We stand outside God's will, right beside Satan himself. Our flesh efforts always do sin's bidding.

When we, as Christians, embrace the spirit of self-for-self, we disengage from Jesus' self-for-others and His call for us to enter into eternal communion with love and light. Oddly, we might have perfect doctrine but we end up with imperfect behavior and ungodly results. The result of Christ's teaching is that God continues to love His world through His children. The unfortunate end to a person's 'perfect doctrine' can end up having a God-given right to hate those who disagree with their perfect doctrine.

At the core of all this misbehaving is a deep seated belief that God, right now, has shorted us. He has not given us all we need for life nor godliness. We look at the flesh and find it wanting, then look to the flesh to complete us. This is what we can call 'divine insanity'.

DIVINE INSANITY EXPLORED

Our desire to acquire something other than what we have has damned the call to love God and to experience God in us loving our fellow human being. Trying to be

godly by using the flesh to accomplish a perceived shortage is insane. Calling the process of trying, failing, and trying again God's best for us until we graduate from this life is also insanity. It is like Adam and Eve who believed God had shorted them, then they shorted God by trying to make up the difference with self effort.

NEW TESTAMENT VICTORY

*“For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh,
God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and
as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,”*

— ROMANS 8:3 NAS

It is well to remember that the New Testament teachings of Jesus have transcended the Old Testament rules. An eye for an eye has been transformed in the command to “Love those that hate you and pray for those who spitefully use you.” Yet some, to justify hate, see God as set in concrete, like some statue we can measure, weigh, or replicate. God becomes a foundation upon which we tread instead of the life we get to live. His creation becomes a set of measurable laws at work instead of a loving Father loving His creation to a new wholeness we cannot imagine. We may celebrate our

freedom from the 613 laws of the Old Testament but drown in the 1050 New Testament imperatives. Because we get lost in our freedom, we give credence to our inevitable failure. We miss the simple truth that God has no illusions. He both initiates and performs His desires.

We have yet to see Him as He is. The heart of God's person is a VERB, not a noun. The 'I AM What I AM' is also 'I AM What I WILL BE'. Now that is dynamic, not static. Rules are static. Living the heart of rules is dynamic. We, in union with Him, are dynamic in His dynamo. We are not inert in Him, but we are called to live His loving others through us as He loves others. We become His human beings doing His being. We are, through trust, transformed into sons of obedience.

God took time out to take away humanity's guilt for hating Him. This is dynamic. This realization should spark us on to living His rule of dynamic order. Right now, any hate we may have for our life is forgiven. We are challenged to agree with God and forgive ourselves and every other person. We are to pray for ourselves and them. The challenge is not for us to gain God's power and force God behavior on ourselves or others but to flow in and with His loving through us to others. His ability to be what is needed becomes our ability to do what He is doing.

WHAT CAN STOP US

What we have deemed impossible, remains impossible for us. But it is God's gift to us that results in our loving Him, ourselves, and others. We have been transformed into those mirroring His love for others. This is an impossible call, but when we face this 'impossibility' we learn that all things are possible in God. Let me make it plain. God lives in you and He has not changed, He is loving them, all of them just like He did on Calvary.

We know God best when we love. To watch one soul die should cause us to weep. When the lights go out, God goes out. To force God out of His temple is called murder. Killing is destroying the temple in which God dwells. It is evicting God from His well-purchased home. That was never to be. That behavior, no matter the excuses, is sin. He has not called us to sin.

THE DEMAND FOR JUSTICE

*“For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point,
he has become guilty of all.”*

— JAMES 2:10 NAS

WE, LIKE GOD, DEMAND JUSTICE

Love is not opposed to justice, but it must be exact and equal to all who have committed the same sin. James reports through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that it only takes one sin and that is that. Which one? Any. How about...have you ever cooked food between Friday at sunset and Saturday at sunset? Or as a child said ‘no’ to your parents? Or after Jesus upped the anti, simply entertained an un-godlike desire? Any one of these is enough. Yet consider this as well. Humanity was born attached to the flesh whose god was not God.

God's plan was and is to dissolve the union of our spirit and flesh with that god and join us to Himself through one person, His Son Jesus Christ. Yah!

Then too, God went out of His way to create a set of laws that even if followed did not have the power to transform our union with the flesh into union with His Spirit. Why? So all who stand before Him could stand complete in that one Person who without our permission took our sin-selves to an eternal timeout and offered to all of us a bridge, *the way, the truth and the life*, by which we can all cross over to His glorious next for us all.

For love to be victorious there has to be a way of preserving life past God's righteous judgment which results in inevitable death. Redemption has to be at the heart of judgment. Redemption is purchasing back what was once yours, but now belongs to another. Because of this, God's justice has been executed upon all humanity in Christ Jesus. Not a single person ever conceived has escaped His inclusion. He has purchased us back into fellowship with Him. Not will, but has.

God's passion was poured out upon His Son on the Cross. We, when viewing Jesus' suffering in a play, title it the 'Passion Play'. That very word 'passion' is often translated in the New Testament as wrath. Because of this, we can see the passion of God in Christ as redemptive. When we see it as the wrath of God, we see God as punitive and ourselves as objects of His wrath. The truth of this is just the opposite.

It is the passion of God shining on us in the face of

Jesus that frees us from our wrath against God for ever having created us. We are transformed into union with His eternal love for His Son. In our spirit union with His Spirit we have been judged, redeemed, and become a children of God Himself. Here then we can see that God's 'wrath against sin' was never punitive but redemptive. His act of love was His Passion and our wrath against Him has no grounds for expression.

NOT ONE ESCAPED THEIR DUE

Every sin has met its equal recompense. All anyone had to do was to sin once, either in ignorance or deliberately. That one sin then sealed both their eternal doom and redemption. Why so inescapable? Because love designed a way so that not one would have to live outside Him.



THE NEXT EDEN

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.”

— REVELATION 21:1 NAS

His next Eden will not have the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil within. The question of obedience has been settled. In His Son, in whom we live, move, and have our being, we do His obedience. The effort to do good has been transformed into the person of obedience or what is called the Law of Life in Christ Jesus. The need to be better than we are is gone and the ability to obey is effortless. His yoke is His and He carries it. We in Him are both the ones carrying the yoke and those carried within Him upon which the yoke rests.

Without the proclamation of this good news, we can

miss the completed work of justice already executed on the Cross of Christ. We can think that it has yet to be exacted. But it has been exacted. Jesus declared the justice He came to give as well as the method by which He would save the world from sin itself. It has been finished. He accomplished it and it is complete. There is nothing to be added. No human effort has been invited to help complete what He has done on the cross.

All have died in Christ Jesus. All sinners went down to their eternal home but only one rose from the grave. Only this One has the right to enter heaven and stand before God. But we who believe He died and rose for us are found in Him and sit with Him right now in the heavens. We joyfully lose our life to gain Him.

*⁸ “But yes! I consider these all to be loss, because of the surpassing greatness of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, through whom I have been **made to forfeit all things** and consider them as garbage in order to gain Christ, ⁹ and having been found in Him, not having my own righteousness according to the Law, but through the faith of Christ which is from God, a righteousness based on faith.”*

— PHILIPPIANS 3:8-9 DLT (EMPHASIS
MINE)

We do not crucify Christ anew when we receive Him as our LORD, we only come to agree that all justice has been executed on us in Him and upon every sinning soul that was ever conceived. God has finished the work of judgment and forever has the right to judge our eternal condition. All who are not found in Him get to wake up to judgment, the judgment which has already been executed on them in Christ.

All who walked out of that eternal time out, have joined Him. They have not only been judged but made whole, complete, filled to overflowing, put in right relationship with God, and saved in every way for His divine intentions. His blood is His signature. The Holy Spirit birthed within is His seal.

All the judgment crying out against us was laid on Christ. Because of this, the noun 'law' has been replaced with the verb 'to love'. We have been taken to the place of right standing before the God in our minds, hearts, souls, and strength. We can love Him there. When we agree with God's verdict upon us, we can do His impossible command, "Love your neighbor as your self."

We have not felt the hell He suffered, but we were there with Him. We now enjoy His resurrected life which by that death is divorced from sin and death itself. Only those who reject the resurrected One get to enjoy the hell from which He was raised.

THIS STORY WAS JUST SHARED WITH ME:

A young boy packed two lunches. His mother asked what he was doing. He said he was going to have lunch with God. In the park, he sat down with a homeless woman and gave her the extra lunch. They giggled, laughed, and enjoyed each other. Then he left for home. The homeless woman was singing and dancing down the street and met another homeless woman who asked, “Why are you so happy?” She replied, “I just had lunch with God.”

Let us have lunch with God. No, let us have such a life with God that we become everyone else’s lunch.

DEFINITION OF LOVE

“Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails;”

— 1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-8A NAS

The Apostle John tell us, God is love. He does not have love, but His very nature and character is love. That means:

- God is patient.
- God is kind.
- God is not jealous.
- God does not brag.

- God is not arrogant.
- God does not act unbecomingly.
- God does not seek His own.
- God is not provoked.
- God does not take into account a wrong suffered.
- God does not rejoice in unrighteousness.
- God rejoices with the truth.
- God bears all things.
- God believes all things.
- God hopes all things.
- God endures all things.
- God never fails.

We were created in the image of God. We are created to be the container-expressers of love and specifically the expressions of love listed above. If this is true, which it is, then we can say the following in confidence.

I am patient and kind. I am not jealous. I do not brag nor am I arrogant. I do not act unbecomingly nor seek my own. I am not provoked nor take into account a wrong suffered. I do not rejoice in unrighteousness, but I do rejoice with the truth. I bear all things, believe all things, hope all things and endure all things. I, in Christ, never fail.

Now that is supernatural kingdom-kind living. Accepting this as specifically true for us, right now, we come to realize even though we do not have transformed bodies, God is in us and we are in God through Christ Jesus, the perfect being. We are perfect at our spirit-union with the person who desires to express Himself through us. Yes, His will was designed to rule our flesh. When can He do this? When we believe and remain, by faith, united to Him. Our fruit is God's Son and His expression of love through our flesh.

“The one who says he is in the light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now.”

— 1 JOHN 2:9 NAS

In 1 John, we are told that if we hate our brother, we do not have the truth. My belief is that fear and fear alone gives birth to hate and from that, we all suffer.

However, Holy Spirit through the Apostle John declares, *“Perfect Love casts out all fear.”* The word ‘perfect’ is a grand word. It means perfect as in the word complete (to which nothing can be added).

Once we accept that God is love, like the ocean is water, we can begin to live and swim in love all the day, every day. Living from the realization that we are surrounded by Mr. Love and that Holy Spirit in us is the breath of love, we can begin to live His fearless life.

Let me quote a friend of mine from her book, *The Glory Years* page 106.

“We war with the divine love of God. Nothing can defeat God’s love. If you are filled with His love, no force can defeat you.”

— JOYCE EUREN

Then too, there is this revelation: we cannot add to love by loving, any more than we can add to gravity by jumping off a roof. We will demonstrate gravity when jumping off a roof and we will demonstrate love when we cling to ‘it’ as if our lives depend on it. We cannot complete love by loving, but we can continue loving as Christ continues loving through our love for others at the expense of ourselves.

Love is both available and complete in its very existence. God is love. He does not become better at loving by loving. We too do not become better by letting His love, love through us. Expressing any amount of love is really He Himself loving through us. Our loving others is the world’s window to viewing God’s Person.

NO MORE PUNISHMENT

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.”

— 1 JOHN 4:18 NAS

We cannot squelch sin by personal effort, but we can put away the fear that we will sin. We can remove our identities from that of sin-soaked souls hidden from God’s wrath by Christ’s blood to being perfect vessels for Him to live out His love to our world.

We can abide in LOVE and ‘do love’. This is both our call and privilege. More than this, it is our inescapable destiny in Christ. His completed love was made visible by the cross Father made for Him. The Father’s passion placed on Christ at the cross has also become His passion for us after His resurrection. He

now enjoys His Son in His many sons and daughters. He enjoys our ability to be love to one another and to all we meet.

THE WAY IT WAS

Prior to swimming in the ocean of love, we all swam in the ocean of fear. Even the most brilliant people fear they are not the most brilliant. The most self-absorbed person cannot produce enough self-love to satiate their vacant soul, but only express self-hate covered in an endless train of self-validation. Apart from Christ, everyone swims in an ocean of discontent. Yet John said, "Perfect love casts out all fear." Be content!

The distrust of love is fear, the root of all fear. Fear breeds transient acts of hate, while love is complete in every part and breeds more love. When we fear to love or be a 'self-for-others,' we choose not to act from our core which is Christ. At those times we act from fearful flesh.

WHATSOEVER IS NOT OF FAITH IS SIN

If we have never surrendered our whole beings to the possession and control of God's love through Jesus Christ His Son, we cannot help but be a self-for-self. Any effort to be a self-for-others will fail. Effort is not love. We cannot choose to love or hate, but we can choose to have faith or fear. Fear breeds hate and hate death. Faith breeds love and LOVE breeds life everlasting.

Adam was mud until God breathed into him His breath. The product of breath and mud is called a soul. Take away the breath and you have mud, not a bodiless soul. Christ's light is the life in us. Since our birth by breath, our souls are slaves to the sin of being attached to Adam's mud. We grow up thinking we are the mud. That mud thinks itself independent, an entity unto itself. It thinks it can become a better mud expression by being a better mud expression.

Effort is its own god while trust and rest are declared the enemy of mud. Effort works by a determination to change things, not many things, but a few things. If by some miracle one thing is changed, people throw a party and celebrate the fact that their efforts actually worked. There would be no celebration if everything mud wanted, mud accomplished.

Sin is the desire to be the author of every outcome, the desire for freedom over and against God's rule. Our plan over His plan and purposes has the victory of expanding our emptiness. In Christ, we become slaves to His plan and purpose, just as Christ, by putting aside His desire for a different plan than Calvary, put Himself into God's plan and purpose. His 'yes' at Calvary is our 'yes' today, if and when we rest in what He has done and what He is doing through us.

WHAT IS OUR PART?

“And I say to you, ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you.”

— LUKE 11:9 NAS

Our part is to pray. Do we plan? Of course, we do, but, what do we plan? In all our planning, we plan to let God love others through us even at personal expense. Father has determined that in Christ we can all share that one seed of life. Our eternal living began the moment Holy Spirit blasted us into the kingdom of His love. Before that, at best, we were listening to the fading echo of His truth.

We now live from and through Christ. The two of us are one in our union with love. Every time we bump into someone, we, like the young boy with the lunch, have enough to share. Only after emptying our lunch bucket,

it is again full to overflowing, complete and ready to have another picnic.

BAM! WE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD

Once we are transformed from the kingdom of self-for-self we take up permanent residence, by faith, in Jesus Christ. We are now children of Mr. Self-for-others. Our purpose is His purpose. God loves everyone without discrimination.

We have been saved, are being saved and will be saved, not from something *but for something*. We no longer have to be the author and finisher of our faith. Trust in His arm. He saves us in, by, for and through absolutely every situation. He is closer than our hands or feet. He is bigger than any addiction. He is bigger than Satan. He is bigger than us!

Every situation is purposed of God. Our ‘yes’ to His purpose is our cross. Our cross is our opportunity to remain in Him and lose ourselves for others. We might have a life full of pain, confusion, and sadness but these things do not define nor detract from our union with Christ. Nothing we experience enhances our union while all those smashing into the Christ of love are transformed into those who know they are the children of God.

Salvation makes us whole. Salvation is not a get out of hell or Sheol card. Salvation is not just a historical act at Calvary. Salvation is both the finished product of having been made whole and the making whole of that which has yet to give way to God's plan. Giving way to God's plan is our collective, as well as our individual salvation.

Christ is God's plan in action. Salvation is the eternal living blood of Christ, the eternal testimony of God's acceptance of us living now in the heavens with Jesus. Salvation means we are whole and complete. We, right now with God and with all of humanity, stand complete.

Some want to *grow* into trustworthy sons and daughters of God by exercising faith or whatever. They may have begun by trusting Holy Spirit but soon think they are going to become better by and through efforts and correct information. Really, they want God at bay and under control, their control. Their minds and hearts devise ways to judge themselves as more mature than others, able to teach and be more obedient than others. By the way, being complete does not mean we never sin, but it means we are complete and filled to overflowing with Holy Spirit.

When Jesus plainly disclosed to His disciples how He was going to be in the hands of evil men and crucified, Peter seemingly concluded that Jesus was creating a bad

outcome through His words. He politely took Jesus aside to rebuke His negative discourse. He virtually reminded Jesus, “You have to watch Your words. You create Your future by what You say.” To this Jesus said, “Get behind me, Satan.”

Jesus went on to explain that man’s ways are not God’s ways and if we want to be in God’s will, we not only have to accept the crucifixion of Christ, but accept that crucifixion as ours as well.

MIKE DROP!

HOW TO PLEASE GOD

“...and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”

— ROMANS 8:8 NAS

What on earth can it mean when Paul says that those in the flesh cannot please God? Are we not all dressed in flesh while we live? Are we all damned from being able to please God while we live in this flesh? The answer is both ‘yes and no’. The ‘yes’ is best understood when we understand what he means when he says ‘in the flesh’. To get clear on this subject we must first destroy a myth. Here is the myth:

*“You are an independent self
with the capability of doing good or evil.”*

What do I mean by an independent self? Picture it

this way. We have the devil, God, and the 'I'. This 'I' is caught in the middle. God says to do one thing, but the devil says something else. I, being caught in the middle, must step up, resist the devil's temptation and with effort do what God wants me to do. By living like this, I become the author of my destiny. This is the myth, that we are independent selves.

This supposed 'independent self' is beholden to none, but able to do the works of either God or the devil through a human agency called 'free will'. We must admit we have a chooser, but we cannot always make what we choose happen. (See Romans 7) But we have idolized 'free will' considering it to be the bedrock of our Christian position. We have concluded that God's best for us is to give us the ability to damn ourselves. It is something like a father who lets his children play in the street to see which ones deserve the 'Darwin Award'.

THOSE WHO FALL SHORT GET SHORTED

When I was about 20 years of age living in Salt lake City, Utah, many an LDS Missionary dawned my door. After listening a while, I realized that their Jesus died so we could try really hard to please God, and those that did it best got the best. After coming to Christ and visiting several other church organizations I discovered that they all, with their own twist, believed the same. Each had a Jesus-plus theology. I have a Jesus is sufficient theology. My faith excludes me, while their faith includes

an independent 'I' called upon to be godly from some resource or another and with a huge dose of self-effort.

Jesus sees this all a bit differently. He pointed out that we WERE of our father the devil and the works of that liar we did. We were not in the middle choosing to do evil, but Mr. Evil was doing us. Yes, the devil made us do it, but we are still accountable. Jesus also declared that those trusting Him were born anew into His Father's family and they *will* do the works their Father is doing. Nothing has changed but the one who lives out through us.

THIS MYTH IS BROKEN BY SCRIPTURE

In the scriptures there are only two possible natures that relate to people, which are represented in various ways such as:

- 2 trees (Genesis 2:16-17),
- 2 nations (Jews and all the others),
- 2 fathers (John 8:42-44),
- 2 vines (John 15:1),
- 2 slaves of either one or the other of two masters (Romans 6:16-18),
- 2 husbands (Romans 7:1-4),

- 2 olive trees (Romans 11:16-18),
- 2 temples (2 Corinthians 6:16),
- 2 sons (Galatians 4:21-23, 1 Thessalonians 5:5),
- 2 kingdoms (Colossians 1:13),
- 2 vessels (2 Timothy 2:20),
- 2 children (1 John 3:10),
- 2 spirits (1 Corinthians 2:12, 1 John 4:4-6).

We are either one or the other, but never both at the same time. In fact, when we were children of darkness we were only children of darkness. We were not children of a lot of darkness and some light. Now as children of light, we have no darkness. To believe or act differently is the lie that binds humanity to the trying tree.

Faith binds us to the tree of life, the cross of Christ that has separated us from Mr. Sin, flesh, and the world. We please God by believing in His son, not in our efforts.

ONE OR THE OTHER

“Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

— GALATIANS 5:19-21 NAS

We are either expressing Sin or God, hate or love, ignorance or wisdom, there is no third choice. Our self consciousness is not a third choice. Just because we know what we are doing does not mean we are capable of doing what we want to do.

Repentance means changing our minds from disagreeing with God to agreeing with God. When we

say the same thing God is saying we see God-sized results. When we say what we want we see flesh results.

Expressing Sin now and expressing God later is an impossibility. We express Sin until we are transformed by the faith of God birthed within and Holy Spirit taking residence within as we trust Jesus' death and resurrection. After that we reflect God. (I John 3:9)

HOW THEN DO WE SIN?

For those in Christ, sin in is the effort to be good. Why? The moment we think, at some level, we need to be good we have already believed we are not good. Like Adam and Eve, we have already believed God is holding out on us. Worse, God wants us to do this or that thing, but He has not supplied us with what is needed to accomplish the task.

With that thought (a non-union thought) we go to the only resource we have, the flesh. Flesh, even without Mr. Sin owning it, is only capable of producing death. It does not take Mr. Sin's ownership to do what isn't Spirit. He can only tempt us through the flesh. Flesh is not Spirit. It is that simple. It cannot do Spirit stuff unless it is being controlled by the Spirit. But the second we agree with a thought that we have been shorted by God concerning what it takes to live life in a godly way, the flesh steps up and offers a hand.

We already know that each time we try to do good, evil is present and our efforts do not have what it takes to

be good. We can remember and agree with God that we are in union with Christ and we are as good as we can get. When we know to do good, we let Him have His way. Every deed done by God is redemptive, truth, and life, but it is done by God. Trusting God is practicing this truth.

“But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.”

— JOHN 3:21 NAS

CONCLUSION FOR THE BELIEVER:
THE DEVIL IS OUT AND GOD IS IN!

This reminds me of a time Linda came walking into the entertainment room where I was watching a favorite weekly with the boys. She looked frightened and she was holding the middle finger of her right hand wrapped in a paper towel. She said, “I’ve really done it this time!” Apparently, she had been cleaning the stove’s filter and looking up at the fan wondered if it was dirty too. Reaching up to see, she discovered it was moving. In one split second the top of her middle finger was nearly cut to the bone. With medical attention it healed.

We may think God cannot rule us, nor that He has

the desire to do so. We may think the devil is at best an influence, but if you give yourself over to the swirling fan of evil, evil instantly wins and there are consequences.

Our sinning is not failing to do good, but failing to let God 'do us'. Reach up with your finger, touch God and see the results!

WHAT ABOUT THE FLESH

“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.”

— JOHN 6:63 NAS

We have concluded the flesh is but an instrument of one god or the other. Flesh also has the ability to draw us out of union thinking and entice us to give ourselves to the law of sin and death with sin results and consequences.

That law of sin and death says, “I can do it.”

The law of life is God saying, “**I** can do it.”

About now you are scratching your head asking something like, “If I’m not this independent ‘I’ caught in the middle of two opposing I’s, then ‘who am I?’ ” Really, this is a question of what is an ‘I’?

Scripture says the one joined to the Lord is one

Spirit. The flesh is but a vessel. We are not the flesh. We were flesh-I selves, but are now Spirit-spirit selves with a flesh. Before, the father of lies used the flesh's struggle with issues like what is good and what is evil.

The fruit of the garden gave us the knowledge that there was a difference, but it did not supply a checklist with checkmarks next to each possibility saying good or sin. We know there is good, but until we meet Jesus we think good is what we do, not who we are. We not only changed fathers, but addresses. We no longer identify with the flesh.

We once lived in union with flesh and did the dictates of our previous father who had nothing to work with but the flesh. Now we do our Father's bidding by first entering into His rest and from this rest we do His purposes through this same flesh. Flesh trying is flesh putting God aside. Flesh submitted to God, does what God is doing. In both cases we are not the flesh, but we have flesh. In a similar way, I am not my cap, but I have one.

Many think that they are their thoughts and when they start losing some, they panic and think themselves less. Some lose limbs, but they are still just as much themselves as before. We have flesh, but we never were the flesh. It has always and only been an expression of who ruled it. In the hands of God it might even die

for one who hates His love. Left in the hands of the spirit of self-for-self, it will do its thing and express every evil work.

LET US SUM IT UP

We are either children of Sin or children of God. We have no 'I' apart from being a child of one or the other.

Jesus, speaking said:

"You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies."

— JOHN 8:44 NAS

We were all born with an 'I' which was a slave to Sin.

"Jesus answered them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.'"

— JOHN 8:34 NAS

IT IS AN EITHER OR SITUATION

“No one can be a slave to two owners. For he will hate one and love the other or be devoted to one and the other despise. You are not able to be God’s slave and a slave to wealth.”

— MATTHEW 6:24 DLT

We are called to present ourselves as slaves to God.

“Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?”

— ROMANS 6:16 NAS

When the flesh initiates, we can only serve the law of sin.

“Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.”

— ROMANS 7:25 NAS

FREE AT LAST!

“And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ.”

— COLOSSIANS 1:28 NAS

We who trust Christ are complete in Him. We are free from submitting to Sin, urging us to be better. We are free from thinking we are less than perfect and complete. We are free to love God with all we are and our neighbors with the same. We are free from believing that the flesh in God’s hands will not obey. We are free to do good. We are free to obey our Master and LORD.

God is good, the only good in the universe. He does not need to try to be Himself.

Those who think they are their flesh might try to do

good, but they cannot perform the good they want to do. Their behavior is slave to their father and master, Mr. Sin, who wants every human to try to do good. Why? For trying to do the things of God keeps them separated from God.

“I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.”

Romans 7:21 KJV

In Christ we are free from the law of sin and death. We please God by agreeing with His wants, desires, and will. Letting Him love through us is one way to let the world see that what we do has been done in God. It is the best way. We never have to try to be good again. Agree with God. We will do the good He is doing through us to our world right in front of us. He is capable of doing His good through our flesh, without our flesh having to try to do the good He desires. Here then is the answer to our first question. The flesh-i combination cannot do righteousness. The Spirit-i does not have to try to do righteousness. He is righteous.

When we are in Him and He is in us, our very lives declare that we are right with Him, ourselves, and our brothers. We are free to love them. There is no law against loving them. We are free at last from having to judge them. We are free at last.

CONTRADICTIONS

HUMANITY IS AN OCEAN OF CONTRADICTIONS

Well, I'm glad we already know that. Now, what are we going to do with that knowledge? God said, "Don't eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil or you will die." They ate, and we can continue to eat that fruit by trying to be better. They died and we who try to be better are wrestling with death and against the Spirit of God. Ian Thomas asked "Are you prepared to be all that God in you is prepared to be?" He is saying, "Are you ready to do only what He is doing in and through you and not one smidgen more or less?"

God said, "Eat of the tree of life, My Son Jesus, and live." They, in His day said, "No thank you." Most today say, "No thank you." God said, "Kill my enemies." They said no, You are love. God said, "Love your enemies." They said no, You are just and must damn them, where's

my sword?" It seems humanity is obedient to disobedience.

Some who call themselves Christians say they have eaten of the tree of life and go about producing death, literally. Jesus told us not to listen to their words but to look at their fruit. Bad fruit? They are branches of the bad tree. Good fruit? They are branches of the tree of life, Jesus. This is not rocket science. Love or hate? God or Satan? Life or death!

THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY TO PLEASE GOD AND THAT IS TO
OBEY HIM

Let God define us as His success. He has completed us. We are perfect. I did not say sinless, I said perfect which means complete. We no longer are bond servants to sin, but hallelujah, we are bond servants to righteousness. Let's get on with our slavery which also transforms us into being friends of God, children of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. How can this be? It is because we who believe are in union with Him. Those who do not believe, limit their resources to the flesh. Believers know they are Spirit-spirit people whose flesh must obey the truth.

The limits are gone and the shackles have fallen to the ground. Here, there is only God's plan for us in every situation into which He walks us. As we remain, by faith in Him, our flesh is His resource. Flesh in our hands produces death. Flesh in His hands produces life.

Living from the attitude that we need to protect ourselves from God produces death. Jesus was accepted by the Father even after all the sins of the world had been placed on Him. He has accepted us in the nail-scarred hands of Jesus. Our calloused hands do not impress God. Really!

Let me digress a moment. I have had the privilege of knowing several people who became very rich. Just as soon as they moved from paying bills to trying to figure out how to keep what they had worked so hard to gain, their insides changed. Many became arrogant, thinking God's blessings on them were the product of their efforts. They thought the sweat they had capitalized on, by the working of others instead of themselves, made them candidates for more power over many other people. Some really think they are better than other people and the proof is their riches. My most friendly question to them is, "If your riches define you, what will you have to impress God with after your death?"

GOD'S PLAN REVEALED

God's plan is not only to save us but to share Himself with us in union with Himself. He desires to bury us in Himself and raise us in Him. Like fish in the ocean, He wants to be all we need now and for eternity. Therefore,

He energizes us to do what He is doing. When our wants are His wants, we fall in line with God's purpose and process. We become His image of Love when loving others. The evidence that we love God and our neighbors is especially seen in 3D when we love our enemies.

Some have been so rejected so many times and in so many ways, they can get exhausted and collapse before our unconditional acceptance. There they learn that they are accepted by the One who accepted us.

Though all reject us, He has accepted us.

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

“You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR, and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil, and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

— MATTHEW 5:43-48 NAS

This scripture is a call to resemble our Father’s very Person and character. Jesus’ eternal love instantly turns our enemies into our friends and neighbors by His ‘whiting out’ the Old Testament injunction to hate your

enemy and typing in, “Love them!” We who claim to follow Christ are to join Him in what He is always doing; reconciling the world to Himself.

In the Old Testament, we were asked to annihilate His enemies. In the New Testament, we are asked to love His enemies, especially those who prove to be our enemies. What’s up? We are simply asked to be perfect, just as our Heavenly Father is perfect. How this works is a mystery. It took no effort to be a child of our Adamic parents. It is the same with those who have recognized that their lives are hidden with Christ in God. Trust Jesus and love.

Note that in the above quote our Father indiscriminately pours out His loving acts on both the good and evil. Jesus defines perfection as behaving like His Father who rains both His blessings as well as His judgments equally, without respect to the person. We are not asked to judge, but to love indiscriminately. In Christ, He has already judged everyone indiscriminately on the cross. Any judgment to come is but a reminder that we were all put to death in Christ. Those who cling to Him, have Him. We have His living for eternity. We have what Father has, His Son Jesus.

This is the perfection of Father, the very perfection to which He has designed us to live from and walk in. We are to love at any cost, right down to our nakedness, right down to our crucifixion. Our daily cross is not to relinquish nor overcome those things that block us from achieving our personal goals, but to submit to God’s

loving those ready to consume us. Being submitted to God, we submit to Love's loving.

The call to Christ is not a call to a better life but to a crucified life. We are called to surrender to all He is prepared to be in and through us in love to and for others.

I have a friend who lives in a very negative environment. His coming to faith in Christ did not change the environment. I might say, it made it worse. The most confusing part of this story is that the person causing the most pain in his life is a person who also claims to be a believer in Christ. Their negative way of living challenges every effort my friend has to show forth love. In fact, every act of love comes face to face with a judgment by the other saying that they are not a genuine Christian. This friend is at the gym exercising 'loving muscles'. Outside the detritus relationship, a strange thing occurs. He exhibits more love than most.

So it is with Jesus. He is slandered and blocked every day in countless ways, but His love is stronger and sweeter for the conflict. There is but one question, "Are we prepared to be all that Christ in us is prepared to be through us?"

MOSES VS JESUS

“You have heard that it was said, AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH.’ But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.”

— MATTHEW 5:38-42 NAS

SAY WHAT?

We cannot begin to believe this teaching is achievable unless we know that our union with God through Jesus His Son has placed us into an ocean of plenty. His completeness becomes our infinite source of possibilities. Jesus is the door through which we freely

walk back and forth from the storehouse of God's riches. He is for us the new Jerusalem. In Him, we can take time to gather His treasures from Father's Loving and Holy coffers. After we have harvested a few treasures we can exit the gate of safety, return to those living in fear and give what was never ours to hoard. We are created to be a conduit of God's Love, loving. Our going in and out carries healing for the nations.

Here we can see the ability of God to change how we participate in His desired goal. We see His desire for His images (you and me) to reflect Him, doing love as well as being love. Even if all is stolen from us, God's abundance has not diminished. In fact, His opportunities abound even more. We in Him have been enriched to share and in sharing are enriched again.

GRACE IS SUFFICIENT

This is not meant to be a formula nor a call for us to gather riches to ourselves. On the contrary, this is the immediate way in which God shares all His riches with others. We are all in the river which is flowing from the throne of God. We are all meant to be food for the hungry and shelter for our enemies. We are to drop every pretense concerning them and be the declaration of our Father who says to all, "Come! In no way will I cast you out. Come and find rest."

I am of the belief that just as we tried to live the Law and failed, we will also fail at trying to live Grace. The

very effort of trying to ‘be good’ equally fails. Trying especially fails for us who know we are born again. Of course, those of us who are still dead in our sins know no other way but to try. Our trying falls miserably short of God’s intention. We, who are His, are called to praise and thanksgiving. We are given the power to overcome evil with good. We have what it takes, His faith!

We have no need to try to be good. His call is for us to do what He is doing, not gain the ability to do His stuff so well that one of us becomes unnecessary. His dance of life flows out from His throne. We are not asked to scoop up some love and run back to the Throne of God to offer it up as some sacrifice. We are asked to scoop up some of the river of life and share it with everyone close to us.

“If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.”

— 1 JOHN 4:20 NAS

Our loving God with all we are is accomplished by obeying His heart’s desire. Right now, through us, His desire remains the same, ‘Love one another.’ If we find a way to justify hate, we prove the love of God is not ruling our hearts. We are still living from fear. If love

is but an idea or some universal element, we will always come up short and once again have to face the void and emptiness of our souls.

Love, when first experienced, is indescribably full and abounding in comforts. Once we become lovers with that love-to-others, we experience it as so vast and immeasurable we can confuse it for the void. The vastness of love may look like a void but it fills every nook and cranny of existence with His Person and purpose. Even Jesus, facing God's doorway into Father's expressing His total Love was perceived by Jesus as too much. Jesus looked for plan 'B' but accepted plan 'A'. The death of emptiness was swallowed up by the life of fullness and overflowing.

Look at this situation this way. Plan 'A' takes all we are and have and feeds it to the wolves. Plan 'B' is anything but plan 'A'. Jesus was at a choice point, His way or Father's way. We, every day, face that same choice, His way or our way. Jesus played into Father's plan by being what Father was doing when He was doing it. Jesus did the good of Father when Father expressed Himself through Him. Jesus took a hike up a hill or across the water when Father was going up a hill or over the water. Just as the Israelites followed the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, Jesus followed Father and continues to follow Father. When we follow Jesus we follow Father. Right now, our Father through Jesus loves you and everyone equally.

Our being available to Love is all that is necessary. It is too easy. Jesus made Himself available to all that His Father in Him was doing. Doing Father's doings always produces His desired end. To what end is His plan for us? Father has called us to be His sheep ready for the slaughter. Not some morbid introspective effort to 'die to self' but joyfully receiving the displeasure of humans faced with God's love for them through your loving them.

Pastors who feed themselves off the flock are not keepers of the flocks, but the very wolves from which the flock needs protection. Even in this, we are called to be like Jesus and love them, being totally and only available to what Father has prepared for us.

It is not for us to behave like other people. God's plan for us is the same as Jesus' but how He works it out through our lives' experiences is different for each of us. By now we know that godliness does not come from the practice of doing things that look good. It is not our calling to try to be like the historical Jesus. Our union with His divine nature is our opportunity to stay in union with what He is doing.

We know He loves everyone in such a way as to birth more sons and daughters. How this works for each one of us will be different from any other person ever born. We like Gabriel are called to face individuals and proclaim, "If you allow the Spirit to overshadow you,

you will become united with Him and produce eternal life.”

I have a friend, who for a time, often stood out on the busiest intersection of our town waving a sign during morning rush hour reading ‘Jesus loves you!’ I write articles and attend Christian Bible Studies. My friend follows Jesus the evangelist. I follow Jesus the teacher. God in my friend is the same Jesus in me, yet dynamically different.

Just a moment ago another friend showed up and told me how one of his customers was so disappointed with his service yesterday that they spat at him. Presently, his decision is to never serve them again. He has every right to protect himself. But I know the Jesus He knows, and given time he will come to know the love the Father has for those who attacked him verbally and with spit. In the end, he will do what Father wants him to do so the Jesus in Him with all His love, compassion, and forgiveness can be seen and they can fall to their face in humble adoration for the Christ that lives in His believers and receive not only my friend’s forgiveness but God’s forgiveness found in His Son.

CITIZENS OF ANOTHER KINGDOM

“Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm.’ ”

— JOHN 18:36 NASB

His kingdom (reign) is at hand (in His hand), but not of this world. His kingdom is here right now. Every time we allow ourselves to accept our identity from this world, its resources and methods, we dis-identify ourselves from being children of God and heirs of the kingdom of His rule and order. When Jesus was faced with Satan’s temptations in the wilderness, Jesus openly declared that His kingdom is submission and obedience to His Father over Satan. The way the world

works is through self-effort. The way His kingdom works is through obedience to God.

We too have the same opportunity every moment of every day. We can live from a sense of not having or from a know-so state of being God's very child. As His child, I also am in His kingdom. Do I struggle for His rule to be expressed in the here and now, just as it is right now in heaven? Yes, but I do not war with guns and money against the evils of this earth. Instead, I present Christ and Him crucified, buried, and risen. There is a front line where we face the enemy of God and there are casualties. However, this harvest of souls stands victorious with those who stand with unwavering submission to Christ and to Father.

The war of LOVE against a self-willed universe was waged and won by the loss of the life of His only begotten Son. We are called to proclaim that victory! Our struggle is not to make it happen but declare it has happened.

Let us reinvestigate His reign. Father's reign, through Jesus, rules the hearts of men in the here and the now. Not by force, but by the union of our will with His will. Justice is not our goal but our tool wielded by love. We have been justified. Tell them they have been justified.

My father-in-law found himself walking the empty streets of Hiroshima within a couple of weeks after it

had been bombed during WWII. The war was over, but the reconstruction had just begun. The power of that event never left him. How much more should the power of the cross never leave us. The reconstruction of a bombed out universe has just begun.

We walk in a universe where the cross of Christ has devastated the principalities and powers of evil. We are on the reconstruction side of a victory yet to be fully recognized. We are the ambassadors of love reconciling the world to the truth that the kingdom of God has come, is coming, and will come. Each heart that embraces LOVE is free to love. Every heart trying to make good happen has not submitted to the truth that the ultimate good has happened.

Love is not an event, but our person in union with His person. When we recognize who we are through Jesus Christ, we become an event worth sharing. We are His event being shared.

I do not know how to say it plainer than this...

*“By this, **love is perfected with us**, that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world.”*

— 1 JOHN 4:17 NAS (EMPHASIS MINE)

WHAT ABOUT SWORDS

“Then Jesus said to him, ‘Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels? How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way?’ ”

— MATTHEW 26:52-54 NASB

The problem with the sword wielded by human hands is that its fruit is the manufacturing of more swords for more hands to carry them. The exhaustion or the end of waging war is not peace. Never being a threat to anyone again is peace. Peace has never been birthed by war, only a war-weariness or inability to wage war leads to an absence of hostilities. What remains is a

seething hate waiting for the right moment to exact revenge.

This was true for the Jews who constantly sought and finally found their moment to strike Jesus. Jesus' disciples were ready to fight until Jesus said no, this is not how my soldiers win. This is how you will lose. Jesus was and is about the restoration of human hearts not the lopping off of human heads. His Spirit was about breathing life into humanity not the removal of breath by human hands.

Today, in 2017, Christians worldwide are being tortured and killed for their faith in Jesus as the Son of God. Many gladly lay down their lives as sheep to the slaughter. They have seen and testify that their shed blood actually evangelizes souls. The ones taking their lives see their faith in God's promised eternity, the very faith their murderers want. They see their victims' assurance of a loving Father who is just one breath away.

While they, the murderers, believe they are doing God a service by killing Christians and gaining for themselves a right to enter eternity through their obedience in killing infidels, they are left with one big fact: they have no more assurance of an eternal life after killing these people than they did before. Yet the people they kill, even children, are sure of God's love and acceptance. Loving those who torture and kill them

transforms their empty hearts into vessels ready to receive the God of love. By this many persecutors are humbled, and they find the Christ they cannot kill, ready to birth peace and purpose in their hearts.

There really is nothing that is more shameful than God's sheep pledged to revenge and raising the sword out of fear or any other reason. In contrast, nothing proves Jesus' love to the unbeliever more than a Jesus accepting them through the eyes of those they hate.

Even though Jesus' kingdom is here and now, it has nothing to do with fighting for lower taxes, greater freedom, nor any other such thing. Helping to birth His kingdom ruling another human heart is worth dying for.

The way to die is God's way—through freely giving our lives to better those who hate the love we try to share. Many receive love in the form of free meals, money, helping with household chores, and such things. When those things are done in, by, through, and for the Son of God, and so declared, it personifies the heart of God.

But in Christ, the human race was executed (crucified). The ultimate judgment has been executed. No one has escaped their right dues. The payday for sin was executed in and on Christ at Calvary. Three days later He arose and spiritually we rose in Him.

THE GREATEST ACT OF LOVE

“Greater love has no one than this that one lays down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you.”

— JOHN 15:13-14 NASB

Let’s review humanity’s never-ending success at rebellion. In the Garden of Eden, humanity was asked, and for their own safety, to obey God. They chose not to obey. They had some good reasoning behind their rebellion, but it was rebellion.

God said for His people to follow Abraham’s example and believe God’s ability where man’s ability falls short. Later, they chose to worship the law and not the law giver. Then God sent His Son and simply asked us all to call on His name and submit to His desire to love everyone equally. So much for that!

To this day He declares we should lay down our lives

for one another, not lay down the other's life for ourselves. This injunction is not to be twisted into saying that we should take the bad person's life to save the innocent. If our Father is prepared to let our lives be spilled out to His glory, then who are we to withstand His will?

With humanity's record of rebellion, I often wish Father had used reverse psychology and commanded us all to pick up swords and put down everyone we think is worthy of death. We would have rebelled, just as we are in this moment rebelling against His command to turn around and love each other. But of course, our rebellion today is evidence of a deep distrust of God's wisdom and evidence that many believe they have a license to sin. There is no peace in rebellion. There is no reason nor license to sin.

Please, do not think that I am suggesting we love other people to prove we are Christians. I am saying Christians love other people because Father by His Spirit in them is doing just that. It is spontaneous. We, who have died in Christ, are not called to do the impossible as much as to live out the One who can perform the impossible.

Many people see God as hateful, spiteful, arrogant, demanding, and even cruel. That god is the enemy of God. That god has always been the enemy of God. That god commands people to hate God's ways. That god does not want us to gain peace with the God of love. He wants us to perceive God as being 'an angry god.'

Rebellion breeds fear, fear breeds hate, hate breeds murder. Murder breeds fear that leads to more murder. Murder is more of an addiction than an act. Self-for-self love is the road to this cycle of death.

EVERY LIE HAS SOME TRUTH IN IT

God wanting to separate us, for eternity, from having to be ruled by this flesh, crucified our union to the flesh when we were crucified in Christ Jesus. We have been crucified in Christ. (Gal. 2:20) No one asked to join Him before He accomplished this act and now it is finished. In His resurrection we find the hope that the self-for-self remained in the pit and His self-for-others is joined to us who put our trust in Him.

If He had stayed dead we would have stayed dead. The whole world has been judged and offered an eternal separation from flesh-life. Everyone has already faced ‘the angry God’, who without our permission, placed us in Christ Jesus to both die to flesh-directed living and be married to the One who lives by the Spirit of God.

We have experienced a real death and real separation from our old god of hate, fear, sin, and rebellion. We are now joined to the God who so loves us that He gives us His Son who has taken our Satan-flesh union to the eternal garbage dump and virtually said, “Leave all that behind. Follow Me, my friends. I’m out of here!”

A FRIEND OF GOD

“...and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,’ and he was called the friend of God.”

— JAMES 2:23 NAS

Do we want to be God’s friend and do what He is prepared in us to do, LOVE? We simply join Him in leaving our identity to sinful-flesh union behind, then join Him by faith and remain in Jesus Christ God’s Son. He lives forever obedient unto Father. To receive Him is to have life eternal. He is life eternal. Obedient forever.

A couple years ago a stranger prayed for me in the name of Abraham. That was uncomfortably different. In the prayer he asked Abraham to let me know that I too was God’s friend. In an instant I knew it was true. That too was different, but very comfortable. I cried.

Now, living in that obedience of faith, we too have what it takes to do God stuff. We have a God who has us. We are friends. As a friend of mine stated often, "Once caught, no escape!"

We were once in a marriage with Mister Sin. Then we died. He no longer has a hold on us. But there is a problem. Apart from becoming married to Christ Jesus, we remain dead. But, we can receive what God has given, His life. We can join the Son. That is His gift to us. Receive Him. Trust it is true. When we have Jesus, we have eternal life. We have the Jesus who has us!

I do not know why it is so difficult to realize we have to die to our marriage with sin, to be freed and raised to a new life by being joined to another. God through Christ Jesus is our eternal adhesive to life eternal. I do realize this message is astounding.

My advice is to do what God desires, take His Gift, His Son. Let Him rule our hearts. Abide in His love. Indiscriminately love one another. Humble ourselves before God and receive Jesus and in an instant that which possessed us will vanish and the only other person who can possess us will possess us. There is no middle ground. We know we are either attached to Mr. Sin and his selfish flesh or to God through Jesus His Son.

It is time to bow before God and pray something like,

“Father, I accept the Son. Thank you for dealing with all my sins. Thank you for rescuing me from a bad marriage with Mr. Sin. I gladly give you everything I thought I was and all the sin and rebellion I have had or might have in the future. Take control of my life. Cause me to abide in You. Let this be my YES and I DO! I submit.”

When we accept God’s Gift, Jesus, and put our trust in Him, we have eternal life. Jesus is eternal Life. We have what it takes to embrace living while here on earth, Jesus. We have entered His kingdom, rule and reign.

We can rest by trusting His promise. We have begun to walk by trust. We can continue to live by that same trust. We could not save ourselves by effort, nor can we stay saved by effort. Trust is the first and last thing we can do. Obedience is born out of trust, not effort. We obey His Spirit of obedience in us.

LISTEN TO HIS INVITATION TO LOVE.

THE NEW COMMANDMENT

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

— JOHN 13:34-35 NASB

What is a disciple other than the student of a teacher and a specific teaching? If we do what the teacher teaches us, we prove that we are disciples of that teacher. Jesus, as our teacher, said the world would know Him by our love for one another. Astounding! Jesus is known now by our being safe! He is safe in us, nurturing through us, preferring the other over us, and preempting our safety for theirs. He calls us to His heavenly calling, ready to step out through us to a war-

torn world, hugging it back to sanity, and carrying that world into His eternal rule.

This is His commandment, love! This is our teacher, Mr. LOVE. He practiced what He preached. He submitted to His Father's purpose and process even unto death. God raised Him from the grave promising to all who are disciples of Jesus the same experience, death, resurrection, and an eternal life of loving.

Jesus calls us to love at the cost of everything: comfort, self-identity, even our highest desired end. This call is anti-intuitive. How can we gain the world by losing it? What value is one puny life? Well, in Jesus, it was worth the universe reconciled to God. In us, it is worth one more reconciled to Father. By our ministry of reconciliation, it will be worth much to many.

Let me digress for a moment. Many think our loving others is the beginning and in our maturity, we become ambassadors of a greater truth. That truth is never well defined. The going on from the fundamentals of the gospel is often taught to be something other than love. They declare the meat to be suffering and they cannot wait for you to suffer with them. It is a modern-day cry for circumcision. It is a desire to create perfection by overcoming the flesh by flesh effort. It is a regression. It is the dog returning to its vomit.

For Christ, His submission unto death is His glory before Father. Our glory before Father is not much different, except that our obedience unto death is Christ's continual obedience to the death we all suffer at the hands of one another. His ability to live as us turns our living into His life reaching out to others. The meat is allowing ourselves to be consumed by others.

Just today, I had a chance to share Jesus with a young man whom I had seen many times. He declared that it was God's timing. He is very interested in turning to God through Jesus the Christ, but like us all, that is scary. Really, giving Jesus our life to do with as He pleases is scary. His designs might be just what we have been doing or something really different. Even if we continue doing what we were doing, we are now energized, directed by the result of His very person living in us. He still loves His enemies. Do we allow Him to love His enemies, us, and His enemies through us?

After discussion with some very dear friends who said they hate this and that about Christians, I concluded they hated me. That night, as I wrestled with the emotional pain, I realized they did not hate me but hated the name of the person of unconditional love. By morning I realized they hated the person of love in me. I just happened to be along for the suffering of their hate.

Christ's earthly experience was all about loving those who hated Him. We are to love everyone while expecting

God's generosity in, by, and through us to spark faith, hope, and love in others.

To shine Christ's love is to burn, but not be consumed.

GREATEST COMMANDMENT

“The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.”

— 1 JOHN 2:9-11 NASB

The answer to, ‘How do I **not** hate?’ is to stop trying not to hate. Once born in the light, it spontaneously shines through us to the world, we will not hate our brother. If God cannot live His love and shine His light out through us, what makes us think some special behavior of a pile of mud can?

Darkness has always been hate evidenced in killing. Not just the stealing of life, but also of its hopes, desires,

and sense of purpose. If we, right now, hate anyone for anything they have done to us, we walk in darkness. We are not doing truth. Jesus said while dying, 'Forgive them Father, for they do not know what they are doing.' Who are the they? You, me, and them!

Here is a lesson on how not to hate. Love yourself!

Simply put, one way to know our light is out is when we let fear give us justification to hate ourselves and our neighbor. Fear breeds fear, faith breeds faith, love breeds love. This is a 'no-brainer.'

Hate produces hate. Hate is not just the far side of some continuum of love. Neither is love the least amount of hate possible. Love is LOVE and hate is hate. The two have nothing in common. Self-for-self is not the dark side of self-for-others. Sorry, Star Wars is not the embodiment of truth. The 'force' in Star Wars is just shades of hate.

Jesus has no shade of hate. He never did, nor will He in the future. All the evil rule on our persons went on a one-way picnic with Him from which only He returned, and our new Spirit-spirit is in Him. Evil is still animating those who think they are independent selves living their independent lives.

You may shout out right now, 'I'm not a robot!' To which I suggest that you, by your will, determine that you will earn ten million dollars today by midnight and

not have to pay taxes. Some may inherit a tax-free million, but we cannot will that without wanting someone dead. Or, try never to pass gas again. Tell me how that works out? Our control is limited, very, very limited. Now back to the subject.

Living light is not about doing right or wrong, good or evil, doing this over doing that. The LIGHT is right and that is that. LIGHT loves. There are no God rules against loving. Light shines on hate and hate hates Light for doing what it does, shine. The fire of hell is the total brightness of God blasting in on every cell of those who hate the light. After death and without flesh to protect them, the love of that Eternal One shines on them without a shadow of turning. For us who have been disciples of LOVE, that same light and intensity is our reward. For the one doing the lie, it is seen as God's consuming wrath.

This sounds up side down, but it must be said. Trying not to hate is trying to do good. Trying to do good is trying to do God. Trying to do God is saying we have God stuff intrinsic in us and by our independent willing, we can do God. That is the same lie Adam and Eve fell for. In Christ, the whole thing works through trust, rest, and obedience.

Here is how the law of sin works. We only try to be

good after we have believed the lie that says, “You are not perfect.”

“For by one offering He **has** perfected for all time those who are sanctified.”

— HEBREWS 10:14 NAS EMPHASIS
MINE

This is how the law of life in Christ Jesus works. If we have sinned (disbelieved or disobeyed God) we simply turn back to Jesus and admit that was but one of the reasons He had to die. We must admit we tried to do good and submit to His willing in us.

AMEN!

IMITATE LOVE

“But the Lord said to him, ‘Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name’s sake.’”

— ACTS 9:15-16 NASB

“Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God.”

— 3 JOHN 1:11 NASB

I have a friend who, after a serious auto accident met Jesus. Now, some 40 years later, when speaking of what he saw, you know he is seeing that Jesus again and afresh. When I listen to His testimony I am, by proxy,

transported to the throne of God. I find myself transported to the only place I really want to be. I find that rest I have always sought.

What has been the price for such a gift? My friend has spent the last 40 years with half a brain, partially paralyzed right side and crippling arthritis. At this time he needs help with almost everything. His greatest pain is seeing Jesus' face and still being cognizant of his own flesh. For me, it is a chance to see God's Glory through his flesh.

We have all been called to carry His name to the ends of the earth. First, I am to carry it from my head to my heart and then from everyone else's head to their heart. Only those born of the Spirit of God have what it takes to do that kind of life.

If I come across someone who is not sure of their eternity nor their relationship with Christ, I know I have just met a person who has not accepted the One whom the Father has sent. Holy Spirit has not yet convinced that one of their one and only sin, the rejection of Christ Jesus.

I never have to guess at those who know Him. I do not have to ask, they tell me of their faith, hope, and love. Even if their mouths are not moving, I know them by their love. If someone should say their faith in God is a private matter, I suspect it is so private even God does not know about it.

On the flip side, there are those who claim they know Him and do His will by raising the dead, casting out

demons, etc. Yet, many of these cannot say with certainty that Jesus is alive in their flesh. They know His ways, and they know the power that resides in His name, but they do not know Him. Knowing Him is good, glowing Him is better.

Isn't it interesting that a vegan knows they are a vegan and lets everyone else know they are, especially if they are headed for a restaurant. In contrast, how many people headed to church can unequivocally declare they are eternally alive because of what Christ has done?

More so—how many can declare their very life is Jesus' life being lived out through them?

CLEANSING EACH OTHER

“So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined at the table again, He said to them, ‘Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. I gave you an example that you should also do as I did to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him.’”

— JOHN 13:12-16 NASB

To really wash each other’s feet we must first learn whose feet we wash. Last year, while at a meeting with some Christians, I felt ‘compelled’ to wash this one person’s feet. I found a rag and a basin. I then put some water in it and went to this sister who was returning to the mission field the next week. She was worshipping God

as I knelt down and took off her sandals and began to wash her feet. Somewhere in the process, I realized that the person, whose feet I was washing, was Jesus. I was so humbled to have that opportunity I wept.

The year before, Linda and I met a man whose truck was stuck deep in some mud. He had removed his shoes and walked out through the mud to the road. His feet were covered to his knees with mud made up mainly of clay. I chatted with him asking if there was someone he could call for help.

In short, I was not going to help. He called his wife who was in Washington D.C. while we were in Northwest Arizona. I knew I should take him to town, but there was no way he was climbing into my brand new truck with those feet! After his call to his wife, I drove away praying he would get the help he needed.

Of course, Holy Spirit said I was the help he needed. I turned the truck around and after finding him, sat him on the tailgate of our truck. Using the last bottles of water we had, Linda and I washed his feet. That time, I did not see Jesus. I just saw a way to keep my truck clean and get this man home or wherever. The wherever ended up in the parking lot of a Christian church.

Holy Spirit had nudged me an hour earlier to pick up a gallon of water saying that I'd need it very soon, but I had ignored Him. If I had listened and obeyed, I would have felt very good about helping the man. As I thought and prayed about the event I was humbled to

realize that I had just had a chance to wash Jesus' feet, but washed only my ego.

Washing His disciples' feet proclaimed Jesus' total humanity, at the same time revealing His and their divine union. He declared the Master is servant of all. How much more should His disciples serve all they meet?

CHRISTOLOGY

“But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.”

— MARK 13:32 NAS

Let’s explore some ‘theology.’ There are virtually two extreme ways to view Christ, either as human or as God. The first is what can be called low Christology. The other way is to view Christ as God which is called high Christology. Being fixed on one view creates a tension with the other view. There is a dynamic worth exploring when trying to hold both as absolute truth at the same time, it creates a paradox. The ability to embrace both extremes of this paradox, while accepting every other possible view within the paradox is what we will call total Christology.

The ability to embrace both at the same time and every other expression on this continuum produces the ability to see the man Jesus as perfect Man, man behaving the way man was created to behave, totally embraced by the Spirit of God and animated by the faith of God.

To embrace His divinity joined to flesh allows the divine to be human without loss of the divine. Not limited in purpose, though limited in design, Jesus lived His life as a perfect human. God was living Him. He lived as a slave to the Father's will. Yes as God, He obeyed His own will, the higher will, while His lower self, wrestled with the higher will. We who believe do not live much different.

Ouch! That hurt. Let us use the above and say a few things that help us as we walk out this life. First, the godly life is totally up to God and equally totally up to us. We are the knowers of our life choices, the ones who prefer this over that, and the ones who choose. In the midst of every choice is the ability to choose God's will. Here is an example. We are called to no other choice.

Say I know there is a book out on butterflies I have wanted to purchase. Say it is also a few days before my anniversary. I might reason that Linda likes reading books too. I prefer to purchase the butterfly book and please both of us. Before I choose, I check in on Father's want. Right then I remember Barry, who needs money to be put towards some false teeth. I check in with Linda,

tell her my thoughts and ask her what she would like to do.

Knowing Linda, she would much more prefer to bless someone else than herself. I'm out a book, she's blessed. Barry is headed to a mouth full of teeth.

Was it God's will to bless another at a personal cost? Of course, that is the good news of Jesus Christ. Did I do the human thing first, yes. In the end, did we do the divine thing, yes! How do I know? I know by word and by faith. Word says to love Barry like I'd love myself. I'd want teeth before a book. Faith sounds like Holy Spirit saying, "Thanks for participating."

Faith that God loves those worth loving is easy. Even calling us to love those who are only on the fringe of unlovable is 'easy.' But how about those who are out looking to gun you down? When our skin is in the game, God's will is a bit fuzzy. We think that He must want what we want, to escape all harm. God always wants us to survive, right? Well, not always.

Not too long ago I counted up how many times people were out gunning for me, literally. I think there were nine times people thought they would feel better if I were dead. Some of them have passed on. Others have come to Christ. Others have simply disappeared from my life experience. What is my point? If you should read

that someone succeeded in releasing God's Spirit from me, Father willed it. Till now He hasn't.

Faith is not only our ability to agree with Father's will, but to be Spirit directed to do His will, even 'forced' to do His will. It is evidenced by both His Word and the faith that wells up within us to do His will.

OVERCOME EVIL

“Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,’ says the Lord. ‘BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

— ROMANS 12:17-21 NASB

When I was young I had a friend who could hit you seven times in the face before your dropped book would hit the ground. I watched him do it. Oh, it was not my face!

As we walked through the school hallways together I noticed people treating me differently than usual. Dare I call it respect? If so, they respected me because of their fear of my friend. If I were alone and tried to force that sort of respect out of them, they would have just pounded on me a bit and moved on. Physically, I was a “runt” in school and not that strong. When they saw me, there was no respect. When I walked with my friend they saw my friend and respected me with the respect they had for him.

This is how it is for us who rely on Father. As we walk His walk we get respect. It is a funny type of respect. It is the same respect Jesus received and you know how that worked out. It is sort of upside down respect. When I walk the halls with Jesus they see two runts and even go out of their way to at least verbally pound on us for a while. But God had a plan then and He has a plan for ‘us’ now.

Jesus died so His wrath could separate humanity from having to live as if they were flesh trying to be divine. He separated us from having to be flesh-selves. As Spirit-spirit selves in Christ Jesus, we are a divine-flesh union living ‘our’ spirit through our flesh as totally human. We not only do what He is doing, but get what He gets. Right now we may get some abuse. But that abuse works life in the abusers. When they ‘dis’ Him in us, Christ is seen on His cross forgiving them as we ‘miraculously’ do His loving of those who hate Him.

They have an immediate encounter with our forgiveness of them as they 'dis' us.

Our immediate forgiving of their hate for us is our immediate forgiving of them for hating our friend Jesus. Christ is upside down on this issue. He does not call us to defend Him, but to express His readiness to suffer again and again. Our overcoming is when we take a 'leap of faith' and bless those who curse us, which ends up that He is blessing those who curse Him.

We could not make up this call to duty. We cannot, as independent selves, conduct such a life.

A CALL TO OBEY

“Samuel said, ‘Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from being king.’ ”

— I SAMUEL 15:22-23 NASB

“But Peter and the apostles answered, ‘We must obey God rather than men.’ ”

— ACTS 5:29 NASB

“And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said to them, ‘Whether it is right in the sight of

God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.’ ”

— ACTS 4:18-20 NASB

“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,”

— 2 CORINTHIANS 10:3-5 NASB

WHAT IS OUR CALL?

We are called to obey the truth, Jesus Christ is LORD and in Him we find rest, a rest that is so dynamic we cannot help but change the world in which we live. We obey Holy Spirit and become genuine, even congruent in each situation. If we shine the light that is within we are seen as authentic. When we learn to walk out the walkings of the Jesus within, we obey, do, and witness to Him Who is the Truth.

Our methods and weapons are more powerful than all the weapons of hate and fear we can imagine. The seed of Christ planted in every soul by His death, resurrection and assertion define the power in which we live and out from which come un-definable lives.

No program, cause, coalition, movement or legislation can touch one of faith's elements. All is dark on the outside of Christ. Darkness has no ability to apprehend the Light we shine, no power to chase it down, block it, stop it, postpone it, prevent it, hinder it in any way, nor dilute it nor pollute it. It cannot be arrested nor detained. It has been sent on its way and we with it.

THE ARMOR OF GOD

*“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, **HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH**, and **HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS**, and having shod **YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE**; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take **THE HELMET OF SALVATION**, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the*

alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”

— EPHESIANS 6:10-20 NASB

Putting on the Armor of God is not difficult nor time-consuming. Jumping into Jesus' skin is easy and immediate. He owns our skin too. What then is the armor to us and how do we put on that which has been placed on us?

- *The loins of truth:* Our loins are girded with the person of Truth, Jesus the Christ. The promised seed is protected. His seed has always been protected and productive.
- *The breastplate of righteousness:* Our breast is full of sustenance, we are right with God, humanity, and our very self. Our heart and breath are protected in His purposes.
- *Our feet carrying the good news of peace:* Our feet ready to bless not harm, love not hate, bind up the wounded not despise the needy.
- *Our shield of faith:* We have the ability to deflect every blow of the enemy and press on while under fire.
- *The helmet of salvation:* Our right to stand firm

in that we have been, are being, and forever will be saved by the mighty hand of God. Our head covered with His salvation remains captured by His will, shielding us from the blows of human reasoning.

- *Sword of the Spirit:* The sword is the word God has given us, both written and the living Word within us. We never have to be unsure of God, ourselves, or even those we meet. He has it all under control. Strike with His word of love.

GOD CAN

“Then the nations that are left round about you will know that I, the LORD, have rebuilt the ruined places and planted that which was desolate; I, the LORD, have spoken and will do it.”

— EZEKIEL 36:36 NAS

If you have concluded that this book has instructed you to do anything other than submit to God by accepting His Son Jesus as the One who possesses your soul, is united with your spirit, and is more than prepared to animate your life, please re-read this work again in a few days.

The second we bow to His will, God has called us to the front lines of love. Though the enemy has been defeated, people cling so strongly to their false flesh-self identity that they still act out hate. We who are joined to the LORD act out love. It is that simple. God is not

calling us to be scholars of His Word, but doers of the Word. We should have imbibed the Word as though our lives depended on it.

Father has saved us already by giving us His Son. What we could not do, He has done. We can receive His finished work and join in His rest, or continue to try without victory. If we believe in the name of Jesus we have eternal life. It is that simple. If we continue to let the flesh rule, it is because of one of two things.

First, we may have never given our flesh-life to Christ for Him to possess us so completely that we directly live His living through us. P. S. That is salvation. We are whole in His wholeness. We are complete in His completeness. We are eternal in His eternity. That is the deal.

Second, we are trying to do good. Our spirit united to Him does not try to do good. But it does all the specific acts of good which God in us is prepared to do. Trying is easy and yet takes a tremendous amount of effort. Trusting is hard, and yet at the same time it is effortless, because He provides the ability to trust.

Ruling the day and pressing on with human effort is demonic. All we ever need to do is His will, in each moment, to be what He in us is willing to be. Specifically then, are we willing to be all and only what God in us is willing to be? If so, rest, then do, stand firm and then rest again.

Many people love doing. We are called to join in with the God who has done it all. It is a paradox. We are

called to His rest, and in His rest we do His will. In our trying to change things we have already declared God weak and in need of our strength. That thinking says God lacks something and needs us and our doing.

REALLY?

God is out to share Himself with you, but not out of need. He is willing to have you join with Him in loving every person you meet without preference. He lacks nothing.

When we are Christ's, we both say and do those things that reflect that truth. I never really have to ask if a person has put their faith in God through Christ Jesus, I just watch their life.

THE BEGINNING

INVITATION

We invite you to receive God's testimony concerning His Son.

⁹ *“If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for the witness of God is this, that He has borne witness concerning His Son. ¹⁰ The one who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the witness that God has borne concerning His Son. ¹¹ And the witness is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ¹² He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. ¹³ These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life.”*



We invite you to obey.

“As soon as they hear, they obey me; Foreigners submit to me.”

— PSALMS 118:44 NAS

We invite you to trust.

*“Trust in Him at all times,
O people;
Pour out your heart before Him;
God is a refuge for us. Selah.”*

— PSALMS 62:8 NAS

We invite you to give.

*“Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down,
and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your
bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be
measured to you again.”*

— LUKE 6:38 KJV

We invite you to rest.

‘Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue exulted; moreover my flesh also will abide in hope;

— ACTS 2:26 NAS

We invite you to do what is pleasing in His sight.

“and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.”

— 1 JOHN 3:22 NAS

We invite you to know His everlasting loving kindness for you.

“The LORD appeared to him from afar, *saying*, ‘I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness.’ ”

— JEREMIAH 31:3 NAS

We invite you to offer your life as a living sacrifice.

“I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship.”

— ROMANS 12:1 NAS

We invite you join all who walk out this life of Christ and learn what it means to obey.

“according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in fullest measure.”

— 1 PETER 1:2 NAS

We invite you to do what He is doing through you.

“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

— MATTHEW 5:16 NAS

We invite you to fulfill the royal law, to love indiscriminately.

“Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled *the* law.”

— ROMANS 13:8 NAS

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