

The Joy of Being Nothing

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2003
(Revised 2013)

Table of Contents

| <i>Chapter</i> | <i>Page</i> |
|---|-------------|
| Introduction | 7 |
| Submitted Unto Death | 15 |
| Knowing Who We Are | 19 |
| Does Being Nothing Mean Accepting Defeat | 22 |
| The Importance of Being Nothing | 25 |
| The Baptism of the Holy Ghost | 37 |
| How Does God Do It? | 42 |
| The Blessings of Trials and Joys of Persecution | 47 |
| To Love Your Enemies | 52 |
| Your Feelings, and How To Overcome Them | 56 |
| How Sin Separates Us From God's Love | 73 |
| The Blessing In Being Chastised | 77 |
| The Victory In Saying I Can't | 81 |
| When Who and What You Are Doesn't Matter | 83 |
| Who Is Your Lord? | 91 |
| How To Love | 97 |
| Closing | 105 |

The Joy Of Being Nothing
Introduction

I originally wrote this book back in 2003. Recently, in 2013, God laid it on my heart to get it out and revise it. This came after some soul searching for some time about many issues in the church world today. The Lord began to show me the issue of *spiritual pride*. We work with many different church organizations in over 17 different countries. Over and over I see this problem of spiritual pride over and over, especially with pastors and ministers. The problem comes from their allowing the people in their congregation to set them up on a pedestal. They shower gifts and offerings on them. They emulate, copy, them. They give them more of a spiritual hold over their lives than they deserve. This makes all this worse. As these leaders are lifted up, they get more self righteous, more lifted up in themselves. They insist on being called reverend. There is none reverend but Jesus. By that title they insist that they are above others, and by using this title, they show that others are far beneath them. They show their ignorance of God's Word and their own spiritual pride. They forget Christ's warnings against the Pharisees and Sadducees and they become like them, going about establishing their own righteousness, and they know nothing about the righteousness of Jesus. They become what Jesus referred to as being "whited sepulchres full of dead men's bones". They have nothing real, nothing substantial,

nothing Godly to give the people. They watch them die a spiritual death little by little. One day, they will know that they have missed the coming again of the Lord, and they will look around at their congregation that they deceived, and they will realize that through their own pride, they led astray those people God entrusted to them. What a terrible thing to experience. I have written this book in the hopes that many pastors, teachers, workers in the kingdom, and many others will realize the dangers of spiritual pride, and will find instead that there is a greater joy in being nothing.

To know if this little book will be helpful to you and to know if you need to read it, to find out if you have already discovered the joy of being nothing, crucified with Christ and surrendered to Him, ask yourself these questions (to be answered *honestly*-do some serious soul searching). Can you leap for joy when you are persecuted? When someone talks about you, are you able to count it all worthy of the cause of Christ, or does something rise up in you that says-how dare they put down your abilities and gifts in Christ, nobody has a right to do that? When you are persecuted, do you stand squarely in your position in God or do you stand offensive and totally in the flesh? When someone tells you to do something and they aren't routinely in charge of you, do you get upset? Do you get upset when anyone tells you to do something? Can you handle chastisement? Do you fall apart when someone corrects you? How well do you handle the

mistakes you make? Do you honestly serve Christ and do things out of love for Him, or do you do the things you do to make you feel better about yourself? Do you do the things you do because you feel a certain measure of pride at your success, or do you do them to sit at the feet of your Master and serve Him? Can you rejoice when others are being lifted up and are blessed in their efforts without letting jealousy creep in? Can you sit in the back of the room and be content, or do you need the limelight either through a show of attention or a show of seeking pity? Do you enjoy people putting you in the front, in charge, up on a pedestal? Do you enjoy people calling you reverend as a title? Do you enjoy people lifting you up and honoring you in the midst of the congregation? These are all signs that you may have not yet found the *Joys of Being Nothing*.

Why, you may ask, are we supposed to want to be nothing, doesn't God's Word teach us that we are to be all that we can be, (or is that the army)? Doesn't it teach us that we are to stand up and do our best so that God can bless us? Doesn't it teach us to fight our own battles? The answer to all the above is, no. Throughout the scripture it is taught that we cannot fight our own battles, face our giants, go through the fiery furnaces of our life, or calm our own storms. We must have God's help. Our own efforts, our fleshly efforts, often can only bring disaster. Our best plans in our own minds often bring failure. Our flesh is at enmity, or an enemy against God and our best efforts in our

flesh alone can only fail. Our righteousness is only filthy rags in the eyes of a perfect God. The best of what we can do is often not good enough.

In today's Christian circles we often put a lot of emphasis on what we do--either the action that we take, or the lack of it. We concentrate on what we do and what we appear to be. We become totally condemned when it seems we fail to do what others expect of us. We condemn others for what they do or don't do. We look at the outside of ourselves and those around us. We concentrate on the superficial outside traits we see evidenced by what we think people are doing, and we judge them. We live our whole life doing what we think others expect us to do, but it's not in our heart. We become critical of ourselves and we think we are being right in our own condemnation. We may even judge our own selves into a spiritual death. When we do all these things, we become a people that are caught up in the flesh and we fail to see the spirit or heart in those around us or even in our own selves. We fix up the outside to what we think the standards are, but we miss the whole point. What we need to concentrate on is *who we are in our hearts and how much do we love God*. When we stand before Christ at judgment, He will not ask how smart we were, how much or who we knew, He will not ask what our ideas of right or wrong were. He will know the answer to the two main questions that He will ask long before we stand before Him. Those two things? *Who we are*

inside our hearts, and how well we know and love Him. You might say, wait, what about God's judging our actions in Romans 2:6, where it speaks about God being "who will render to every man according to his deeds". God will judge our actions and what we do, but this will be seen in the light of who we are inside our hearts and our relationship with Him. He will look at our motives. So you might say, if I just want to do good and I don't obey Him or I do things that are wrong, then is that OK? No!! We know that without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). We also know in James 2:17 "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead..." And we see in Galatians 5:6, that "faith worketh by love". So how will we show God what our real motivation is and how much we love Him? We will show Him by what we do. But what we do in our life really down deep depends on who we are in our hearts and how much we love Him. Maybe it's time that we get back to basics. What are you like in your heart? Standing with your heart completely naked before God with no walls up and nothing to hide behind, *with no excuses allowed*, what are you like in your heart? Have you consistently let God shake all the dirt out of you? Have you let go of those things in you that are not right? Is your relationship with Jesus what it should be? Is He number one in your life? If He isn't first on the throne of your life now, He won't be when you stand before His throne, unless you change. Where are your priorities? Do you love Him with all your heart? Do you accept

and submit to the wonderful love He has for you? Have you even found that love? No matter what else you do, until you fix these two things in your life-- what you are inside and how much you love Him--you will not enter heaven!!

You might ask me what right do I have to say that. Read this section of scripture, Matthew 7:21-23. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name; and in thy name have cast out devils; and in thy name done many wonderful works: And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." These verses are not speaking about sinners. These are people busy doing things in the name of Jesus. They stand before Him saying all that they have done for Him, and the things that they have done for Him are not small. It takes faith to cast out demons. It takes faith to pray for the sick and see them healed. But we can tell by the very things these people say as they stand before Him that there is something wrong. They don't bow at His feet rejoicing in finally getting to see the One they have longed to see. They don't thank Him and praise Him for keeping them through the battles and the heartaches. They don't wipe His feet with their tears. They stand and say, I am worthy to come in. Look at all I have done for you. But He is only interested in the love they

had and do have for Him. He says simply the truth, "Depart from me for I never knew you". How much we love Jesus and how much we let Him love us--how important is it?? I would say very important indeed. Are your hearts right? Do you stand confessed up and forgiven and clean before Him so that you can love Him with a whole heart, not half-heartedly because of the guilt you hide? Are there things in your heart that keep you from being able to receive the love He has for you? How important is it to fix these things in our lives?? I would say--very important indeed.

But I can't be perfect, you cry. Well neither can I, neither can any of us, until that day when we will become like Him. How much we love Him has nothing to do with our own ideas of what perfect is. Keeping our hearts open and pure before Him has nothing to do with anyone's idea of what is perfect. Perfect has nothing to do with our walk with Him. When the Bible speaks of perfect it means to be perfectly whole in our hearts, single minded in our relationship with Him. Loving Him with all our heart and making Him number 1, the center of our lives, and giving Him 100% because we love Him is what it is all about. Receiving His love and submitting our flesh, hearts, and minds to Him and letting Him live through us is what it is all about. When we do this, we will stand before Him one day and hear Him say, "Enter in good and faithful servant". This little book was written to help you to find that love and to guide you to the place you can let Christ live in

you. I pray that it encourages you and helps you in your walk with Him.

To live a Christ-centered life does not mean to live a life where we feel that we are above people-saints or sinners. Sometimes we try in ourselves to live holy before God, and we set ourselves up as better than others. That's like many with a lot of education, who set themselves up to be better than others. Then they meet the simple grandmother down the street who only went to the sixth grade, but has the wisdom taught from 90 years of perseverance in a faith that not only kept her, but her children, grand-children, and great grand-children as well. This pride is a stink in God's nose. We can only be filthy rags in His sight no matter how hard we try. The only way we can live this life is to submit to Him, let Him break our will through trials, persecutions, and battles. Then when we are broken, Jesus will be able to live in us and through us. When we do this, we won't be above people, but we will have His love--the love that made Him to submit to flesh, and this earth to love a world full of sin. That's the same love we will have when we find this life filled with Him. Let His love and His Word change how you think, who you are inside, and the direction of your life. Dare to be nothing so that He can be everything through you.

Chapter 1
Submitted Unto Death

To discover the *joys of being nothing* and what that can bring to our lives, let's look at two people who had found the blessing of being totally submitted to God and look at how they have influenced the lives of those around them at their time, and even our own lives today. No one can deny the fact that "no greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends". (John 15:13) This would take complete and total submission to God. This is not something we could do in the flesh. Nowhere is this found plainer than in the life and death of Jesus Himself. Jesus, "being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death; even the death of the cross..." (Phillipians 2:7&8). Where would we be if Jesus had refused to submit to the place where He would come to earth and be born as a baby only to die? What difference would He have made in the world if He had refused to submit all He had to God's will and accept the cross? If He had refused to lose everything, what would He have gained? (In this light let's also consider the people around us that have made the most difference in our lives. Where would we be if certain people had not submitted themselves to God in reaching to

us?) Let's also consider Stephen.

His story is told in Acts chapters 6&7. Here was a man who was martyred for his faith. Here we find only 2 chapters in the Bible that tell his story (if some of us were to be martyred, we would probably require a book), but look at the impact it had on the lives of those around him as well as the impact it has on our own lives, thousands of years later. One example of that impact we see in the beginning of chapter 8, "and Saul was consenting to his death". God used the death of Stephen to touch Saul's life. Would Saul have submitted to becoming one of the greatest soul winners of all time if Stephen had not submitted to his death?

When we study Stephen's story, we see many evidences of his having learned to be nothing and submitted to God's will:

1. He had given himself continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word. He had denied his wants and he denied himself to serve God and His people. (Verse 4)
2. He was full of the Holy Ghost and faith--not full of himself. (Verse 5)
3. He did great wonders and miracles. God cannot use us in a supernatural way until we give up the natural, our flesh, and submit it to Him. (Verse 8)
4. Even in the face of his enemies' attacks, he forgot about himself, was filled with God, and preached to even the hearts of his enemies. He was able to be effective and full of God in the face of persecution, even to his death. (Verse 1-53)

5. In the face of persecution and death, his countenance was like an angel's, not like the devil's. Not full of anger, bitterness, or other things that creep in with persecution. He was filled with joy. (Verse Chapter 6, verse 15)

6. In the face of death he saw only the glory of God. (Chapters 7:55&56)

7. He forgave those that stoned him. (Verse 60)

8. He made a life changing impact on those around him. Only when we are able to let God work through us to crucify our self-will and our flesh, will we be able to touch the lives of those around us enough to change them.

What do I mean when I say the joys of being nothing? Being nothing means to totally submit to God, to let Him take control of our flesh, our hearts, minds, and wills. It means to let Him be the center of our life. It means to become nothing so that He can be everything in us. We cannot even know the depths of the love God has for us until we let go of ourselves, our hang ups, our failures, our sins, our past, who we think we ought to be, other people in our lives that we have before Him--in short-- we need to give up everything we are to be able to really let Him love us and to be able to love Him the way He deserves. We cannot really love those around us and reach out to them in an effective way until we learn to be nothing. We cannot even worship Him in the way He should be worshipped, as Lord of everything, if He is not really Lord of all we are. We cannot accept His Word as complete truth until we submit our self-will and accept His will. If we never submit

our self-will, His Word will only be telling us what we want to know, and not what He has for us in His wonderful truth. We cannot accept His purpose for our lives until we become willing to let Him have His way in our lives. In Philippians 2:9-11, we see that we can never be exalted into the place that God has for us in His blessings and gifts, until we become nothing. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name..." This could only come after verses 7&8, which declare that Jesus submitted and became nothing. Jesus Himself could not have been exalted if He had not been willing to submit it all. Reread verses 7&8 at the beginning of this chapter and see just what He gave up.

These two individuals who gave up everything gained so much more than they gave up. What did they accomplish? What has their life meant to you? Are you willing to submit yourself so that you can truly serve God in His fullness and make a difference to those around you? If you are, read on.

Chapter 2
Knowing Who We Are

Strangely enough we can never really submit ourselves totally to God until we know who we are in Him. Jesus in Philippians 2:6 knew who He was. He was in the form of God and thought it not robbery to be equal with God. This is what He submitted to God. True security comes from knowing our place in God and in His love. You can only find out who you are by looking in the mirror of God's Word. You also must let go of your flesh and who you are in the natural to find who you are in God. So in that sense, you have to submit yourself to even find out who you are in God. If you want to stubbornly hold onto who you are in the flesh, you will never know who you can be in God. The Bible tells us that we are these things when we walk in the Spirit:

1. Sons of God (I John 3:1)
2. Beloved of God (Song of Solomon 2:16)
3. Kings and Priests (Revelations 1:6)
4. Victorious (I Corinthians 15:57)
5. Full of joy unspeakable (I Peter 1:8)
6. Eternally blessed of God (I Corinthians: 2:9)
7. Called out for a purpose-chosen by God Himself (Isaiah 43:1)
8. Complete in Christ and lacking nothing (Colossian 2:10)

These are only a few of the verses that describe the children of God. What have you thought

about yourself today? Do you know if it wasn't along the same lines as what I listed above that it was a lie? Isn't God's Word true and aren't we supposed to agree with what it says? Now reread these things above and begin to agree with it. If you don't, then aren't you calling God a liar? When all is said and done, our opinion of our own selves does not matter at all, unless it is the thing that binds us into defeat. What you think about yourself, your abilities, or anything about you is not the thing that will make any difference to you or even make any difference to what you can accomplish in God. You have to learn to see yourself through God's eyes, not your own eyes. You have little to do with becoming who you are in Christ (except in the matter of your self will, you have to give that to God and want Him to control your life). Jesus is everything. He is the reason that you are and He is the reason you will become who you will become. His Word and His Spirit will work in you to cause you to grow into His likeness and one day, when you see Him, you will be just like Him. That is as sure in your future as tomorrow is (I John 3:2). That is, if you continue to walk in His love and in obedience to His Word. We just have to want it bad enough to give up everything that might interfere with it happening. The thing that can interfere is everything that we are, our flesh. We have to submit that to God completely and obey Him. That's how we show Him what the intentions of our heart really are. When we do that, when we realize who we are, and we let

Him be number one in us, we can have a security in God that nothing will shake. When we really know who we are and see ourselves in that way, when that knowledge really becomes a part of us, then we can let ourselves go and be filled up with Christ. (Galatians 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith **of** the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.") When we become crucified in Him, we are filled up with Him; He will rise up in us to be that new man, that new creation. We can then live this life through **His** faith-not our own, but the faith He has as He lives inside us. It will be His victory, not our own. And praise God, oh what a victory that will be!!!

Chapter 3
Does Being Nothing Mean
Accepting Defeat

I recently heard someone who had his own business and whose business was falling apart say, "I'll let God take care of it. It's in His hands". Then he proceeded to do his own thing. God tried to direct his actions, but he refused to listen, and kept saying, "I'll just leave it to God". There were many responsibilities that he neglected to take care of. He wound up losing his business. Then he blamed it on God, because He didn't take care of it. Being nothing does not mean to cop out and settle for defeat. Being nothing does not mean that we take advantage of God and refuse to obey Him in the circumstance or in our lives. Being nothing does not mean taking the easy way out, propping our feet up, and taking the easy chair. When you make up your mind that you want to be totally submitted, that you want to crucify your flesh and your will and let Jesus be number one inside of you, your battle will only just begin. You will definitely get Satan's attention, because people who do this are dangerous to his kingdom. You will also get God's attention. Your battles and persecutions will increase. God will also begin to lead you into more circumstances. All this will chip away at your self will to break it. This is not the easy way out, but if you will let God have His perfect work in you and just hang in there, you will start to understand what it means to say

that this is not your battle. It's His. You will start to understand that since it is His battle, if you rest it in His hands and not make it yours in the flesh, there is no way to lose. You will start to understand the verse that says there is a rest to God's people--the rest that comes when you submit yourself to Him and let Him do the fighting. There is a rest that comes when your will is totally submitted to His and you know that you are completely in the center of His will. When Jesus starts to rise up inside you, unchained from the bondages that you have put around Him in your flesh, and you can feel Him and know that He is in full control of your life, and all of your weaknesses just fall away, then you will really know that it doesn't matter who you are, just who He is inside of you. The Spirit man rises up inside of you and stands tall--Lord of all. This isn't giving up in defeat--this is just beginning to win.

Through this you can see more of what I mean when I say "being nothing". Being nothing definitely does not mean that we "whimp out" in defeat. It does not mean that we sit around and fluff ourselves up because we are so great while we do nothing. It does not mean that we become spiritually proud because we are nothing. It means that we commit and submit and we allow Jesus to rise up and be strong.

When I first heard people talking about how we need to be nothing so that Christ could be everything in us I received it as truth. Then I started to watch the people who believed this

and taught it. Many of them had problems in their lives that were caused by wrong attitudes. Many of them had an attitude that they were spiritually better than others because they had come to this great truth. They took on an attitude that God was totally in charge of their flesh and that was all there was to it. Then when the devil brought bad spirits and attitudes against them, they simply let him. After all, God was doing the work in them, so they did absolutely nothing. If we take this attitude, it won't be long before we let the devil oppress us. We have to consciously guard against satan. We have to guard against our flesh. We will have a battle. We cannot put our effort on hold and win. But when we fight, we will no longer fight in the flesh, but we will fight in the spirit. When we guard against wrong attitudes, we will do so because we are allowing the Spirit of God to convict us, we allow His Spirit to rise up in us submitting our flesh to God, and we take on the fruits of the Spirit. All of this takes effort, but the focus is no longer on us but on the Holy Ghost, and God's Word that is at work in us.

*Chapter 4**The Importance of Being Nothing*

Another of the important benefits of being nothing, totally committing and submitting our flesh to God, is to be able to fight against satan and win. The battle is real. Many fall away from God even after having been a Christian for years. Those that fall have not allowed God to break them. They have not learned to submit totally to Him and His love. In some corner of their life there was a weakness or a fault that satan used to destroy them. When God breaks us, when we surrender everything to Him, there is nothing there that satan can use to destroy us. We are completely in the hand of God, molded, with no rough edges sticking out for satan to grab. Surrender to God gives us endurance. Our human strength wears thin. This Christian life is a battle that we can't fight in our own strength. If we do not allow God to break us, we will not find out what it means to be able to rely on His strength and not our own. His strength is enough to see us through. But we have to come to the end of what we can do to find out what He can do through us. It is definitely human nature to want to do it by ourselves. One problem--we can't. It is also impossible for our flesh to walk a supernatural walk with God and survive a supernatural battle for our souls. Only Christ can win thru us. "But thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (I Corinthians 15:57) It's not a victory

that *we* have to win. It's Christ's victory in and for us. He can fight a supernatural fight against satan. Our flesh can only fight a flesh fight and that won't get it done. If we submit our flesh to God's Spirit, then He can win for and in us. Does this mean that we sit back and let God fight for us? NO. What does this mean when say we fight in the Spirit and not in the flesh? It means that we have to fight the battle by actively choosing that satan will not defeat us, by withstanding him, by choosing to walk in the Spirit and obeying God, by standing until God's victory comes.

Let's look at more benefits of submitting and surrendering. We know that this is important, not only because God's Word says so, but also because the world teaches the opposite. This is the "be yourself" generation. It declares, "Don't inhibit yourself and certainly don't let anyone else". We know that the flesh is at enmity, or an enemy to God. So we know that what everyone else is doing is the opposite that we need to do to be able to make it and survive until we see heaven. So many times Christians try to be better at the world's games than the world is, so that they can show them that they are just as good. What kind of thinking is that? Aren't you a lot better by keeping God's ways? Think of all the people in the Bible that refused to go the way the rest of the world was going and changed their world around. Daniel, Joseph, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jesus, all served God with all their heart and changed the world around them. If you are trying to be

like the world, they will not even notice that you are there (except for a slight stink). Most people live in the world with one constant goal--trying to prove that they are somebody. They try to do it by how much they have or who they know, or even how much they do for God. We will never be happy until we find that we are somebody in God (and not somebody in the world). We will never be happy until we find that relationship with Him and we finally see that, by itself, it is enough. Until we find a place in His love, we will feel worthless and out of place, because the place we were created to be in is right in the center of His love, not in the center of the world. So what the world teaches is death to us. (That's why it is so important not to listen to its preachers--music, television, magazines, and people that aren't committed to God. Don't let yourself be a sponge for all of these things.) The Bible says to come out from among them and be a separate people. A few years ago this was condemned as being self-righteousness, but by now the world has gotten so evil that everybody sees we need to get out of it. I wonder how much better the world might have been by now if the church had stayed out of it all along, instead of joining it in the way that it did. Anyway, I said all of that to say this. The world says that we should pamper ourselves and do what feels good. The world says that nobody should intimidate us. It says that we should submit to as few people as we can get by with. Be all that we can be. So we can tell from this that it must be God saying,

"Submit it all and be nothing so that I can be everything in you." As a footnote to this subject, what does it mean when we say that the church is to be separate from the world? It means that we are not to take part in all the stuff the world concentrates on. It means that we are to be centered in Jesus and in His Word instead of in the things of the world. It doesn't mean, however, that we are to come apart from the world to the extent that we no longer are a light to the world, reaching out to it. At the same time many Christians use being a part of the world to be able to reach out to those that are lost as an excuse to act like the world, because they really don't want to separate themselves. They run a high risk of having to partake of a similar judgment that is coming to those that they are trying to reach out to.

Another reason we should be yielded totally to God is so that we can obey. We are created to obey, serve, love, and praise God. Whether we like it or not, that is our "reason for being" and we can only find complete fulfillment and peace when we do obey Him. Until we get our self out of the way, we cannot obey. We cannot submit our will completely to God's will, and God's will for our life is the only one guaranteed not to fail. Obedience is not just a one-time action. It is a way of life. It is not an occasional occurrence, but a state of mind and a state of being. It cannot come about in our lives until we fully submit our will to Him, allow Him to break us, and let Him be in control. It does not happen until we let His

Spirit control the flesh man inside of us. It does not happen until we walk with Him every step we take and continuously seek His face for direction. It comes about when we have fallen so much in love with God that He is number one in our lives and pleasing Him is our number one priority. Until we make serving God the main goal in our life we will not be complete. We will feel an empty, meaningless, feeling, an empty spot in our lives. Even though we are children of God, until we begin to live a life of listening to His voice and obeying Him, we will never know the true meaning of being His child. Obedience is the outcome of having a real relationship with Him. I grew up not really knowing the wonderful feeling of knowing that my earthly Father was proud of me. The day I discovered the joy of what it was like to know my heavenly Father was pleased with me is one I will ever forget. Earthly parent's pride in us is wonderful, but not near the feeling we get when we know we have listened to our heavenly Father and obeyed Him, and He is pleased with what we have done.

The next several paragraphs will concentrate on obedience and why we must be as nothing to be able to be obedient. The Bible states that many blessings are for the obedient (and many curses for the disobedient) Isaiah 1:19-20 tells us, "If ye be willing and obedient ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." One of the greatest blessings that we can

receive from our obedience is heaven itself. I Peter 4:17 says, "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" This verse tells us plainly that God's children will face a judgment. I don't want to stand there as a disobedient child. As a teacher I see such a difference in today's children as compared to those of 15 years ago. Their self-will is so strong, because they often have not had discipline in their lives. When they lack discipline they become self-centered manipulators of people to get their way. They often begin to try to manipulate God and His Word for their own purpose. These kinds of people can never find a purpose or victory in their life because they want only their own way. An unbroken colt is worthless until it learns the joy of obedience and can be loved and used by its master for a purpose. Obedience helps to break our self-will, bringing us into subjection to our Master who gave His life for us. Until we learn to obey we can never really know His love. Our children, when they are disobedient, don't know our love. Disobedience shuts us away from love because of the guilt that we have. Until we receive forgiveness and make up our minds that we aren't doing that any more, we will be shut away from God's great love.

The Bible tells us that "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He delighteth in His way" (Psalm 37:23). God will

often lead us into circumstances that can totally change who we are and our lives. These times might not be totally earth shaking to those around us, but they are specifically designed to change us. Sometimes they will be over a period of time, but God can even use one instance to change us. These are things that God can use to break our wills. It may be a time when He calls us aside and speaks to our hearts just the very words that we need to hear to encourage us and to break loose from us bonds that satan may have around us. It may be an experience of His love. It may be being at the right place at the right time to see or hear something He wants us to know. It may be His using us to reach out through so that He can touch the lives of others. All of these things can change us. But if we are so full of our own selves, our schedules, our thoughts, our lives, we may never hear that still small voice that wants to lead us aside into these supernatural experiences. If we do not have an obedient heart and spirit, we will not be at the right place at the right time and God cannot use these things to influence our lives.

Obedience is also important for many other reasons. I Peter 1:22 tells us it can purify our soul, "Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth..." It can even lengthen our lives. How many times have we heard of disobedient people losing their lives? Proverbs 3:1-2 "My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments; for length of days, and long life, and peace, shall

they add to thee". It can also lead us into a supernatural life.

We have to submit, completely yielded to God, to be able to be obedient. Another reason we must submit is to be able to have a supernatural life. God is not a natural God. He is a supernatural God and His ways and the things He can do for you are supernatural. That means that they are far above our ways and our understanding. Isaiah 55:8-9 tells us, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. " If we only settle for our thoughts and our feelings, we will settle for far short of what God has for us. So often His blessings are hindered because we only accept what we think is possible. Think for one minute about the creation of the earth. God created all things. He just spoke everything into existence. Can you even understand in your mind how such a thing could take place? God is so beyond us. A baby would not be expected to understand the complexities of things you might understand. We are simpler than a baby in the understanding of God and what He can do. Yet we refuse to believe and accept a lot of what He says He will do just because we don't understand how it could be. We need to let go of our own understanding and just let Him perform the supernatural in our lives. We also need to let go of our own understanding of what we think we are capable of doing, and let God

use us to perform the supernatural. Peter and John passed by the blind man. The blind man in his natural understanding was begging for money. Peter and John in their supernatural understanding prayed for him and God gave the man his sight. Acts 3:6, "Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." If Peter would have gone by his natural understanding he would have just told the man, "I have nothing". But he had come to the place where he had become nothing, he had submitted himself to God's Spirit and his own limitations didn't matter to him. So he didn't think in the natural or see what he had in the natural. He thought about what God was and what God could do, and the man got up and walked. You may look at yourself and see only your limitations. Give them to God and let Him work in and through you, and watch the lame walk, and the mountains move in your life. Watch the supernatural work that God has for you.

God also has for us supernatural blessings beyond our own understanding. He waits and longs to pour these out in our lives. We often sit and consider our weaknesses and failures and fail to reach out to receive His blessings. Picture a very poor and destitute man standing before the King of a very rich country. The King, out of love for the man, offers him anything in his kingdom. The beggar says, "No, I cannot receive anything from you, because I am too poor for you to give me anything."

Sounds ridiculous. Not as ridiculous as you standing before the King of all glory Who gave His Son to die for you because He loves you so much and saying, "I can't receive these blessings you have for me because I am not worthy of your love. I have made too many mistakes. I am not perfect." We have to get beyond our own understanding to even be able to let Him love us.

The purpose of God's love is be able to come into unity with Christ as He is in unity with God, to become one with them. Christ's prayer in John Chapter 17 illustrates this. (Read it for a blessing. These verses are only a part of this section.) "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also, which shall believe on me through their word (*this means you*); That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them as thou hast loved me." That is our purpose--to be one with Jesus, to reach out when He reaches out, to talk when He wants to speak and say what He wants to say. The world doesn't need another Christian, it needs Christ. It needs Jesus. And the best way that He can reach out is through you. You submitting to Him, being broken and letting Him be everything in you. Heaven will be wonderful.

No flesh--just everyone being filled with Him and us living and breathing and having our being in Him. This is what we need to have as our goal and we need to start working on that way of life now, being nothing so that Christ can be everything in us.

Being submitted and broken also enables us to receive God's supernatural blessings and gifts that He wants to pour out on us. We must be broken before we can receive them and be exalted in Him. "But many that are first shall be last and the last shall be first" (Matthew 19:30). I have watched many times God start to bless those that are not broken. They become self-righteous and proud because He is doing a work in their lives. He has to stop blessing them and start breaking them. When they are broken He can start blessing them again. God has for us showers of blessings, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who *hath* blessed us with all spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ". (Ephesians 1:3). We cannot receive everything He has until we allow Him to break our self-will so that we won't exalt ourselves. Even Jesus had to become as nothing to be exalted. Philippians 2:5-11 tells us, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus; who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...." If Jesus Himself had to be broken and give up everything, even to His death, should we give less? Unfortunately, we aren't like Jesus. We can't humble ourselves. It is impossible for human nature to humble itself to the point of total submission. The harder we try, the more of a mess we'll make. We have to desire it with all our heart, then God will do the work in us. How does God do it? Read the next chapter.

*Chapter 5**The Baptism of The Holy Ghost*

The most used and most powerful tool God uses to break people's will, deliver them from their flesh, and conform them into His likeness is the Baptism of the Holy Ghost. The Baptism of the Holy Ghost and the filling of the Holy Ghost or Spirit are two phrases in the Bible that refer to the same experience. When studied out they both refer to an experience separate from conversion, which gives believers spiritual power for obedience, help in prayer, power for witnessing, and gifts needed to overcome in our lives. The Baptism of the Spirit also gives a needed filling of the Holy Ghost Who provides all these things in our lives. Believers, as a vessel for God's use, need to be washed and filled to the brim - not half-full, but filled to the overflowing with God's Spirit to be able to be overcomers of their flesh as well as to be able to meet the needs of a lost and dying world in these last days. God supplies this power through the Baptism of the Holy Ghost. We must submit completely to be completely filled up with God's Spirit. We see so many Christians falling today and failing God. They lack the extra power they need to overcome their flesh, satan, and the world. Without the Baptism of the Holy Ghost it will be impossible to make it as a powerful, filled with God, reaching out and changing lives, saint in these last days. It is the supernatural strength and power that God has supplied to you for the

victory that you need.

The Baptism is mentioned first in the New Testament in the Gospels. It is mentioned several times in referring to Jesus as being the One Who will "...baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire", as declared by John the Baptist in Luke 3:16 and John 1:33. The first experiences of the Baptism of the Holy Ghost are found recorded in Acts. Jesus, before returning to heaven to be seated with God, told His disciples in Luke 24:49 "And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you, but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high". The disciples obeyed and the Day of Pentecost found them in prayer and in one mind and one accord in Acts 1:14: "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethern." Acts 2:4: And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." This was in keeping with God's Word as was prophesied by the prophet Joel in Joel 2:28 and written in Acts 2:17-18: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams." The entire second chapter of Acts tells of God's fulfilling this promise. Three thousand souls were added to the church on that day (Acts 2:41). God chose to begin His work in His church in this way and to continue it today.

How do I know? Because God has baptized me with His Spirit and many others that I personally know, but only those who believe it is real and seek it.

Up until this time in the scriptures the disciples had not been used as participants in God's miracle working, only witnesses of the miracles of Jesus. After receiving the Baptism of the Holy Ghost, Peter and John had something to give the lame man that was even greater than silver and gold. Their prayer of power in the Holy Ghost healed him. (Acts 3:6-7). The disciples could also speak the Word of God with boldness (in Acts 4:31) something they had not been able to do before, especially Peter who was known for his denial of Christ.

The Baptism of the Holy Ghost is mentioned again in Acts 8:14-17. This experience happened to those who had received Jesus as Savior and were already baptized in His name. "Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he has fallen upon none of them; only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them and they received the Holy Ghost". This scripture defines the Baptism of the Holy Ghost as being an experience separate from conversion or water baptism. These people had been saved, but received something more.

We need more of the Spirit of God than

the portion we receive at salvation. We need to be filled. God has not changed in His promise today.

You might ask, I thought that the Baptism was just for these men in Bible days to have power? Aren't we in more need of that power today in the last days than they were in the beginning? God wouldn't give them something to make them more powerful and deny it to us when we need it too. Let's get real. Acts 2:39 tells us, "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call". Aren't you someone that the Lord our God has called? Isn't this gift one that you need in your life too? You might ask, why haven't I received it? Just like any gift from God you have to ask for it and really want to receive it. Too often people get afraid of the Baptism of the Holy Ghost and the gifts that go with it, including speaking in tongues. It is not the ordinary thing to do. But isn't God an extraordinary God. Isn't this battle that we fight and the forces that we fight against extraordinary? God has given us this supernatural gift to help us fight this supernatural battle, but we have to believe in it, ask Him to give it to us and submit ourselves to Him to receive it. The Baptism of the Holy Ghost helps us to win the battle with the flesh that we have inside of us. It gives us spiritual understanding. It is necessary to have before we can totally submit our flesh to God.

The Baptism of the Holy Ghost gives us the added power we need, but we still see those

that are filled with the Baptism of the Holy Ghost fall and fail God. The power of the Holy Ghost is real. We have to submit to God even in our understanding to accept it. All too often, many people submit enough to receive it, but they fail to let the Spirit of God be in control of their lives. They have the power they need to overcome, but they are too full of themselves, their own will, and their way of thinking, their emotions and thoughts, to allow the Spirit to work in their lives. The Baptism of the Holy Ghost is only the beginning of allowing God's power to overcome us so that He can do His full work in our lives. It is a tool. Just like any tool, if we don't understand it or its use, we will fail to use it. If we don't use the tool or use it only halfway, it can't help us very much. To allow the Baptism of the Holy Ghost to work fully in our lives we have to submit fully to God and submit our flesh to the power of God inside us.

For more information about the Baptism of the Holy Ghost, read my book entitled *The Baptism of the Holy Ghost*. It is available free to download on the internet through my website at www.freechristianonlinebooks.com, and or on hard copy through www.amazon.com.

Chapter 6
How Does God Do It?

It has already been said that this breaking of ourselves is not something we can do, but something God will do. We must desire it with all of our heart for Him do be able to do this. God has all power. He created the heavens and the earth just by speaking. He rules everything and in the end will control it all. Satan and all of his demons cannot stop anything that God has planned. There is one thing that can stop Him. That is our own will. You see God created us with a free will to choose to serve Him. He does not want puppets that echo everything He says and does, but He wants to test and try us to see if we will serve Him with a whole heart. He wants us to serve and obey Him because we love Him and we want to do our best for Him because of that love. He cannot go against the free will that He gave us. If we do not want Him to break us and make us into what He wants us to be, then He can't.

When we first begin to desire this work in our lives, He will test and try our hearts to make sure that this is what we want. When He knows that we have made up our minds 100% then He will start to work. Until He does, we cannot do it on our own. We will just make a mess. As in everything that we request of Him to do, we must make our request known to Him, keep it before Him and yell it out everyday so that He knows we really mean it. Then we have to go through the time of testing and trials so

that He knows we have a made-up mind and faith to believe in Him. Then He will work. The key to having Him work in your life is faith and trust in Him. "But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead" (II Corinthians 1:9). "And the Lord shall help them...and save them because they trust in Him" (Psalm 37:40). "They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever" (Psalm 125:1). If we come to a real and right relationship with God, to the place that we love Him and with all our heart, and we are convinced that we can trust Him, then nothing can move us. We have to get to know Him to come to that place. We have to build a relationship with Him, spend time with Him, try Him and see that He is what He says He is. His love is real. The price He paid to love us was a great one. Do you trust God to be who He says He is? Do you really trust His love for you? Do you really love Him with your whole heart? Do you love Him enough to want to make Him the Lord and center of your life? If you are not sure, then you need to get to know Him. Ask Him to show you His love and prove Himself to you. Ask Him to bring you to that place where you can feast at the sweet table of His love. "He brought me to the banqueting house and His banner over me was love" (Song of Solomon 2:4). He wants to draw you aside to Himself, away from this world and its cares, away from the heartbreaks and disappointments. He wants

to pour out His love and His blessings on you. He calls us His bride. He wants to be our bridegroom. When you begin to really get to know Him, there is nothing that can compare. Nothing you can give up that will be great enough. Nothing you can lay down at His feet that you will regret. Every plan, every purpose you have for your life, you will give up for His. He is that wonderful. His love can break your will. His love can renew you. His love can in itself make you want to be nothing so that you can be filled up with Him. Love is the whole reason for our creation. Sometimes in our form and fashion we forget that. We do what we should because we should do it. The generation before us lived by a list of rigid rules. Instead of serving Him in the heart they superficially lived for Him doing all "the right" things on the outside by making their flesh keep these rules, but so many times since it wasn't in their heart, they grew to resent having to keep these rules. If you don't serve God out of love, it is worthless and it will not keep you. It will be as a "tinkling brass and a sounding cymbal" (I Corinthians 13:1). (When you find this love with God, you will also fall in love all over again with those that are around you. When you love God you will love those around you with His love.)

The next generation after the rule-followers mentioned above became a generation filled with rebellion, just echoing outwardly the rebellion that their parents had in their hearts against rules. I see so many of this generation

becoming self righteous in doing what they know to do is wrong, excusing sin and wrong attitudes, blaming it on not wanting to be like the generation before them. Both are so wrong. You cannot have God in your life and truly know Him without wanting to do what is right to please Him. Love is the only real motivation for all we do in serving Him. If our motivation is not that, then we are living a lie and we will not survive in the battle. We don't give up sin or a way of life because others tell us that is what we are supposed to do. We don't give up anything because that is what we think we should do to be a Christian and that is what we have made up our mind to be. We do all that we do out of love for the One who deserves so much more than we could ever give Him, even after we give Him all that we are and all that we hope to be. We don't serve God so that others will see us. What benefit is that? We serve Him because we know Him and we love Him. If you do not know this kind of love, ask God to reveal it to you and to bring it into your life. Revelations 2:4 says, "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." Revelations 3:16 says, "So then because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." God's love cannot be taken halfway. We have to either be cold or hot, totally in love with Him or not. Matthew 21:44 says, "Whosoever shall fall on this stone (meaning Jesus) shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder". Jesus love must be accepted

one way or another. It is so powerful that we have to either accept it fully and completely or reject it. A half way acceptance is not enough. If we don't fall on His love and become broken by it, it will fall on us and crush us. The beginning of the process of His breaking us comes when we find a real relationship with Him and we allow Him to reveal Himself to us and love us and we begin to love Him with all of our hearts. The beginning comes when, because of His love, we want to be completely surrendered to Him. This is the beginning of being laid on the potter's wheel to be shaped in His likeness. Another way that He breaks us is through trials and persecutions.

Chapter 7
The Blessing of Trials and the
Joy of Persecution

When we come into trials or we are persecuted, our first fleshly instinct is to say, "Oh God, why me, why do I deserve this. I can't take it. Please deliver me out of this". Then we will tear loose on the devil who certainly had to be the cause of all we go through because why would God want us to go through anything. We read in Matthew 5:10-12, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven...." Romans 5:3-5 tells us, "...But we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." After we read these verses, can we be so sure that God does not want us to go through any heartaches or hardships? Is there a purpose for everything that we go through? Can we believe that this verse is true, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28)? But maybe we don't consider ourselves to be called according to His

purpose? My question in reply to that one is, aren't we all called to some purpose if we are God's children? What can God accomplish in our lives by hardships and persecution? Patience, experience, and hope and much more.

We live in a world where character is lacking. Strength of purpose, dedication and commitment are almost things of the past. Most live for the purpose of their own pleasure and refuse to do anything but that. (The first chapter of Romans tells what is the end of the generation that chooses this way of life.) Living for Christ is not easy. Obedience to God has not been shown to be the easy thing to do all the way through history. Isn't that what has enabled Christians to make the impact on the world that they have? This thing called Christianity started with one man and a handful of disciples and it has swept the world down through time. When we read accounts of those in the Bible who were persecuted, we find people of character and strength. Without persecution would God's people have stood out throughout history? Would they have made the impact they did on those around them?

I am reminded of two cousins that I taught in the first grade. The family of one little boy was well to do. He was pampered and spoiled and didn't have to do anything or go through anything that he didn't want to. The other little boy's family was not as well off. Even though their Dad's were brothers, this family was almost what you would call poor. He had to work hard doing chores outside on

their farm. He had to go on whether he was sick or tired or whatever. He was just the opposite of the other child. He had a lot of responsibility put on him even when he was young. I was privileged to watch these two boys grow up. Today the one who had to go through the hard times is the one that is making a success of his life. The one who didn't know what it was like to have to go through anything is not able to handle reality. He isn't able to make decisions on his own. He has a total lack of character. What if God let us be like the first little boy, never having to face trials or battles. What kind of character would we have? Would we have character, or just be one? What kind of impact would we have on the lives of those around us? Would they see anything in our lives that they need for their own? God has a purpose for trials and persecutions in our lives.

Persecution and trials are some of the tools God uses to bring us into submitting our will and chipping away at our flesh. If your flesh rises up against these things and you don't allow God to use them to break you, you will eventually become bitter and it will cause you to rise up in self-righteousness. In trying to prove yourself to be right you will prove yourself to be very wrong. It doesn't mean that we become pitiful in our own false humility either. That isn't being broken. That's just being full of ourselves. We have to let God do it in us. As time comes to an end, we will have to separate ourselves from the world even more so. That means being able to be different from

the world--set apart for a purpose. That means being persecuted by the world and lot of people calling themselves Christians, but who aren't willing to let God break them. That means you will have to allow Jesus to use them to chip away at your flesh and still love them as they persecute you. Sometimes those that yell against you the loudest are the ones that are closer to accepting Christ, but they want to try you, to see if the love you profess to have (and His love) is real. We have to be able to withstand persecution, leap for joy, and return and love the ones who persecute us to be able to shine as a light in this world. Only if we deny our flesh and ourselves and let the love of God rise up in us will we be able to do this. Persecution is guaranteed to pull out of you any remaining spots and blemishes you might have, attitudes that are buried down in that you might not realize are still there. Especially when God tells us not only to overcome them, but also to forgive and love them.

Trials are another blessing in disguise that God uses to break us. When we begin to serve God we quickly learn that the rain falls on the just and the unjust (Matthew 5:45). We think at first that to serve God means having everything perfect, just like His love for us. His love for us is too perfect to allow that to happen. Through our trials, He teaches us what is important, and what isn't. He teaches us what it really means to be helpless and what it means to be able to totally trust Him, because at the time there is nothing else that we can do. Until

all we have left is God, we will never really know just what God can do, or what He will do for us. He uses each trial and battle to break us and shape us. Just like the potter has to purify and beat the clay into being soft before he can make a worthy vessel, God has to send trials and persecutions to purify us and break our self wills so that we can be molded into His likeness.

How are we supposed to react to persecutions and trials and battles? Especially when it seems like they are going to kill us? Leap for joy and praise God for what He is working in your life. Ask Him to show you what He is molding you to be. Our trials themselves are a tribute of His love for us. If you praise Him for them, the devil definitely can't get you down, and you will get God's attention.

Chapter 8
To Love Your Enemies

Read Matthew 5:43-48. Verses 43-44 tell us, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you: that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven...." If we have to do this to be the children of our Father, what does it mean if we don't do this? Doesn't it stand to reason that if we don't do this, we cannot be the children of our Father? Why did God put so much emphasis on loving our enemies? One of the hardest things for our human nature to do is to forgive someone who has wronged us. Bitterness is one of the main problems today's church world faces (that and jealous spirits). It not only can cause spiritual problems and eventually spiritual death, but it can even cause emotional and physical problems. Doctors today link it to physical problems such as hardening of the arteries, heart disease, and even cancer. All too often bitterness not only inflicts the person with it, but others around them. Hebrews 12:15 tells us, "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled". One bitter person or jealous person in a congregation can do much damage and cause many to be turned away from the love of God.

So often if we fail to completely forgive, we inflict others around us with bitterness that can damage their souls. However, it is true that our bitterness and unforgiveness will probably not damage the person that we are bitter toward, but it will always damage us and many others and ourselves as well. One of the reasons God requires us to forgive is because of the problem it can cause others and us around us when we don't. Another reason is the breaking of our own self will when we do.

We will never really be broken before God until we can face the wrong others have done to us, no matter how severe that wrong may be and forgive them completely, and love them. We have to absolutely and with no strings or holds, forgive them and love them, not with our own love, because that is impossible, but with the love of Christ that is inside of our hearts. Our self-will, that flesh nature inside of us that wants to drag us to hell, has to die away. We have to crucify it. One of the ways we can is by forgiving and loving. Whether or not we can love our enemies and those that persecute us with the love of God can be a test to see if we are really submitting our flesh to God and His will. We know then that Christ and His love have truly become the center of who we are.

Forgiveness is the beginning of our own deliverance. When we hold things against others we will hold ourselves in bondage to the spirits of hell that have probably created the entire situation causing your hurt in the first

place. Forgiveness (forgiving others as well as your own forgiveness from God) can release you from any spiritual bondage that satan has against you. That's a big reason why bitterness can cause affliction, it causes bondage to spirits that can bring illness against you. Forgiving others can also release us to be forgiven of God. Matthew 6:14 says, "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you." You will not know the complete forgiveness of God until you forgive *everyone* who has wronged you. You might say, "I don't care, this hurt is too bad, I won't forgive." What is the price you will have to pay for your unforgiving attitude or spirit? If you don't fix this area of your life, you will eventually lose your eternal salvation, because this unforgiveness you have will block God's forgiveness for you. Is refusing to forgive this person who has hurt you worth going to hell for? Do you really want them to have that much control of your life? Unforgiveness is a bondage and only forgiveness can set you free.

There is a forgiveness that is genuine that can only come from God. I don't mean the forgiveness we have when we push down inside of us the pain we feel and we refuse to deal with it because we think that is what we are supposed to do (facing our hurt is the first step of forgiveness). I don't mean the forgiveness we have when we constantly excuse those that have hurt us nor do I mean the kind of forgiveness we have when we excuse our own unforgiving attitude (God does not operate in

the area of excuses but in complete truth). I don't mean the kind of forgiveness and love we have when we grit our teeth to put a good front on for everyone and say, "Yes, I forgive this idiot who has hurt me because I am a better person". Not the kind of forgiveness that we have when we show forgiveness on the outside and rage inside our hearts. But the real true-blue-through-and-through forgiveness and love that only can come from God. Then we know that the Jesus is really becoming the Lord of our lives for real. Then we know that we are really beginning to submit to His Spirit inside of us—the first step in beginning to be like Him. (Luke 23:34, "Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.")

Chapter 9.
Your Feelings, the Damage
They Can Cause
And How To Overcome Them

We all know the dangers of negative emotions. We have all learned, often through pain, what giving in to these at the wrong time and place can cause. We may have experienced loss we could never, except by the grace of God, regain. Part of the submitting our flesh is being able to step back from our emotions, identify those that are caused by our flesh or traps that satan has set for us, give them to Jesus and let Him be the feelings that we need to have. Let's look at some of these negative emotions, why they come, and how to deal with them. (When I speak of negative emotions it's not in the sense as the world defines negative which is sadness, anger, etc. We will have these as part of being human and they aren't bad when they are not to the degree of being destructive. I mean negative as being emotions that satan has attached himself to with the purpose of bringing destruction to your life, your heart, your relationship with God and others, and your soul.)

Hate is one of the most destructive. It comes because of hurt. Hurt is often caused when we don't get what we want or things don't turn out the way we think they should, or the people around us in their imperfection don't do or act in a way we think they should. We can even get hurt at God. This is one of the worst

emotions that we can have. It is the hardest to face and the hardest to deal with. Hate can come out of this destructive disappointment--disappointment that leads to destruction if we don't get to the root of it, face the problem and let God heal us. As with any hurt we have to identify it and face the problem that it is bringing into our lives. We have to forgive those that have hurt us before God is able to set us free. We have to admit any "yuk" that we have in our hearts and be careful not to hold grudges. We are not surrounded by perfect people or a perfect world and because of that we will be hurt. To hold grudges and unforgiveness against those that hurt us leads to a path of destruction for ourselves-not them.

Another destructive emotion is sadness to the place that it becomes depression. Joy is important. Philippians 4:4 tells us to "rejoice in the Lord **always** and again I say rejoice." The Bible tells us that "the joy of the Lord is our strength". Notice that it says "of the Lord". I think this means two things. It means submitting ourselves so that His joy inside of us shines through regardless of how we feel or the circumstances around us. I think it also means His joy being how He feels about us. If we are submitting to Him, obeying Him and He is delighting in us and we bring Him joy, then we will also have His strength. (If satan can steal our joy, he has our strength to fight and overcome.) Loosing our joy and depression can also be caused when we feel that our life, our selves, our circumstances, people around us, are

not what we feel like they should be. This causes us to feel defeated. Satan attaches himself to these feelings and adds a critical spirit that causes us to constantly find fault with others and ourselves around us so that nothing looks even worth fighting for. He brings in negative thinking that causes us not to be able to see hope or anything good. He blinds us through all these from being able to see God's love for us, or the love of others around us, from seeing any good that is in our lives or those around us, and catches us in a web of despair. Another thing that can bring depression is feeling that there is no purpose in your life and you are not being fulfilled in who you are and what you do. Proverbs 29:18 says, "Where there is no vision the people perish..." If you have no vision, nothing to look forward to in your life, nothing that you feel you are accomplishing, you will feel there is no use, and this will lead to depression. In understanding depression, we have to realize that sometimes the world and the world's doctors will start emphasizing certain physical or emotional ailments to make money. They will diagnose everybody with certain ailments. Depression is one of these. Everybody is depressed any more. It is a popular ailment. We have to realize what it is. You can look at it in the physical, like doctors who are not spiritual in their understanding, or you can look at it in the spiritual realm. Depression is an oppression out of hell. It is one of the devil's biggest tools to destroy the body of Christ. If you are depressed

you need to get deliverance from this. God can deliver you. Seek His face. Find strength in Him. Get prayer from others. Knock this devil off. Understand that it is something that you can stand against.

One of the joys of submitting your flesh with all these negative emotions is being able to submit to God letting Him show you the problem that is there. You can recognize it as an attack from satan and accept God's leading in overcoming it. If we have submitted ourselves to God, we know, too, that our own opinion of ourselves, the people around us, our circumstances, matters little. It is God's opinion that matters and we learn to hear what He has to say and see things in His viewpoint, and that viewpoint is always victorious. We learn to let God have control of the things in our lives that are less than perfect and rejoice in Him. This brings joy into our lives to replace sadness and depression. Depression comes, too, when we try to make our lives and our situations better on our own, and fail. We often give up and think what is the use. We need to realize we can't make our life better, submit it to God and His control. Let go and let Him become Lord of our lives. Obey His leading and He will help us right what is wrong. Then every day will bring victory, not our defeat.

Another bad emotion is nerves. All too frequently we say-that gets on my nerves, that makes me nervous. "Nerves" is just a modern way to say that we lack peace in our lives. We can get so caught up in this that we guzzle pills

by the boatloads, see psychiatrists and eventually commit ourselves to an institution. Often it comes simply from a lack of understanding God's Word, failure to trust Him and His love for us and the love of those around us and failure to obey Him and put Him as a number one priority in our lives so that there are no breaches in our trust. We need to get a right and prayed up relationship with God (a become nothing relationship-totally surrendered to Him) so that we know that He is in control. Then we can find His perfect peace. A guaranteed cure for the worst case of the nerves is getting wrapped up in God's love and His Word and the promises it brings, and letting the warm blanket of peace that this brings cover every part of your soul, letting it soothe the torment that satan brings into your mind by worry and fear. His presence calmed the winds and the storm and when He said "peace be still", the storm stopped. Read Mark 4:39. His presence can still the storms in your heart and mind if you will let Him.

Another cause for nervous tension comes when we run away from submitting ourselves totally to God or when we run from letting Him deal with things in our lives that are wrong. This can cause unbearable nervous tension that drives people to run headlong into destruction. Don't run from God.

Another negative emotion that prevails in today's world is a lack of self-control. This causes people to have no control over their lives, what they do, or their habits. They aren't

able to control the circumstances around them and not be defeated by them because they cannot control themselves. They are constantly caught in traps of satan because he can easily entice them to the side by appealing to their appetites or lusts (this doesn't just mean lust that is sex, but any thing that can destroy from a lack of self control: food, TV, spending money, habits like smoking, anything that satan can dangle in front of you that you can't control yourself and not go after it.) Just as dangerous is our letting an easy chair control what we do for God, letting anything our flesh wants to do keep us from obeying Him in prayer, Bible study, visiting, calling on the sick, or obeying Him in anything. How do we overcome this? We let God show us the weakness we have. We have to want to overcome this. We rely on His strength to do so. Submitting these things to God and giving Him control does not mean that we say, well I can't do anything about it so I will just let God take care of this problem. It means letting God have control and obeying Him in whatever He gives you to do that will help you overcome this weakness. It may mean fasting either a total fast or just depriving yourself of your favorite things. It may mean setting aside an afternoon to visit. It may mean cutting off the TV. It may mean letting God set your schedule. It does not mean giving up but just beginning to fight. This time when you fight you know that the Spirit of God inside of you will win the battle.

Another negative emotion is stress,

which is just a modern day word for a combination of fear, doubt, worry, and a rat race life that is controlled by flesh, satan, and everyone and everything but God, His Spirit and His Word. (To cure a rat race life, submit to God and let Him be in control of your life. Become nothing in your daily plans and let Him replace the confusion in your life with His divine order. Don't let others or the world control what you do by thinking you need do these things to look good or fit in, or to have your children look good and fit in. If you let this happen to them they will learn early the bondage this way of life can bring-running here and there in a rat race to please others.)

Fear doubt and worry are listed in the sins that can cause us to be cast into hell. Revelations 21:8 tells us, "But the fearful, and unbelieving....shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone...." Worry is one of the sneakiest emotions of them all. Worry means simply going over and over in your mind the thoughts that are negative. Constantly thinking what if this or what if that or studying all the things that are bad or wrong in your life, circumstances, or the people around you. This brings doubt. Doubt brings fear. Fear can separate us from the love of God, which gives us stability in our lives. God is love and truth. II Timothy tells us, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and a sound mind." Knowing and trusting God's love drives fear away. When we don't see Him as loving us and

taking care of us because we are looking at circumstance or others around us to be there, then we don't see Him at all. If we can't accept His love because we think He has let us down, and bottom line, truthfully, we don't trust Him and are hurt at Him, or we have let others hurt us to the place we can't accept love, God's or anybody else's, then we don't have God at all. God is love. If we can't accept His love then we can't see Him. We have to admit this, commit it to Him, and let Him heal us. Fear and doubt can destroy a relationship with God completely, especially if that relationship is weak to start with. I have walked with God in a relationship most of my life. There were times when I walked away from it, but I knew that it was there when I returned. The rocky times the battles the heartaches through the years, have all helped to build that relationship, not tear it down, just like hardships can cement a relationship between husband or wife or close friends. But just like any relationship, if we let fear and doubt creep in to cause us to doubt that relationship, if it isn't strong it can be torn down. To fight this in our relationship with God, as well as in any relationship, we have to keep the lines of communication open. When I don't understand something God has done, I ask Him. I don't question His goodness or His power but I ask for understanding. In His love He lets me know, or if it is something beyond my understanding, He gives the peace I need. Relationships are broken when we hold things in until we get a bad attitude and try to

communicate with a bad attitude. That never works. God is a person, and we need to treat Him with the same understanding we use with those that are dearest to our hearts. Communicate.

Relationships can also crumble when we doubt ourselves and what we bring into that relationship. Our relationship with God is the same. Satan attacks us, making us doubt ourselves. He points out all our imperfections and says God can't love you. You aren't perfect, look at your failures. That is just as dangerous as doubting God. Communicate. When you fail God, get forgiveness right then. Don't accept condemnation. His Word tells us not to. Romans 8:1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." If you have confessed your sin and turned away from it, if you have submitted your flesh to God and are walking in His Spirit then you have no condemnation. When you feel satan trying this, go to God and let Him love it away. Remember if God only loved perfect people He would be really lonely. It's people that have submitted themselves to Him and who are striving for His perfection that He loves.

Another negative emotion is strife and dissension. The Bible says in Proverbs 6:19 in a list of things the Lord hates, "he that soweth discord among brethren." The world is so full of people in conflict with one another. Jealousy, bitterness, hurt feelings all cause a flurry of people up in arms about something, against

someone. The day of Pentecost fell because people were in one mind and accord. We can't even get our churches to get together in one mind and agree, let alone to be in accord and have peace with one another. We are in a time of people being filled with more of themselves, what they want, and how they think it should be more than filled with God's Spirit and His love. People are even taught that they should stand up for themselves and cause conflict if things aren't their way. People become so filled with causing strife that it is a way of life to them and their life becomes filled with conflict they reap back from others. Meekness, gentleness, goodness, and long suffering are a lost art and even scoffed at a weakness. It is not weak to stand in the truth of God's Word and live how it says for us to live. It takes a strength that has to come beyond any strength we humanly have. It has to come when we submit our will to God and control of our lives into His hands and accept His leading. Then when we have conflict it will be because God doesn't get His way. We can stand toe to toe with those around us, even against satan himself, and know that after the conflict, we will win.

How To Fight Against These Emotions

How do we fight against these emotions we've discussed? First we have to identify them. This takes submission. We have to look at ourselves as God sees us, not as we want to see ourselves. We have to admit the "yuk" we

have inside us. We have to do this every day until the day we become like Jesus, which will either be the day we die, or the day we see Him in the clouds. This hurts, it is not easy to let God reveal ourselves as we really are. To do this, we have to grab onto God's love and fight condemnation of the devil. To start, we have to get our eyes off of everyone else, and their problems and failures, and look at ourselves. Repent means not only being sorry, but sick and tired of the mess and ready to do whatever God says to do to change. Then we have to obey what He says. This shows Him that we really mean business. He may have us to ask forgiveness of someone (even if at the time we may not mean it). That act of obedience can break loose a forgiveness that comes from Him, which starts a chain of deliverance and healing from the hurt that was caused. During this process of deliverance and healing we have to be real. We cannot talk ourselves into thinking the problem is not there or not as bad as it is. Sometimes bad emotions come from a deeper problem that we have in our hearts. We have to face these deeper problems and deal with them to be able to fully get rid of the emotions that have become attached to them. We have to know that we cannot fix these things ourselves, but we have to submit them to God and let Him.

Overcoming bad emotions does not mean having self control and making ourselves not feel the things we shouldn't feel. Self-control just temporarily fixes the outward appearance, how we act outside. You can only

try to make yourself be good for so long. We have to let God fix the root of the problem. When we do this, then what we are on the outside and the emotions we have will be fixed. For example, we can know that we shouldn't cause conflict and strife. We can make ourselves be good, but that will only last for a while until we let God fix what in our heart causes us to be that way. Then we will no longer do those things. Christians all too often try to correct outward things and fail to get to the heart root of the problem. That's why so many that put on an outward appearance of doing fall and give up in their relationship with Christ. They failed to deal with what was inside their hearts and fixed only the outside.

Here is one example of what can happen. We get hurt. This is to be expected. We live in a world controlled by people who are not controlled by God and are controlled by satan. These are sinners and Christians who aren't submitted and letting God's Spirit control their lives. We are also surrounded by circumstances that we can't control. We are vulnerable and we will be hurt. It's what we do with this hurt that shapes us or destroys us. If we aren't careful we will allow the problem to stay and fail to fix it because we become bitter and hold grudges, or because we get wrapped up in self pity, or because we become afraid of being hurt again and wrap ourselves in a wall of defensiveness so that God can't reach us. If we do any of these things, God with all His power to heal and deliver, can't help us. We have to decide of our

own will that we do not want these things in our lives and submit them to Him. God can only do the things in our lives that we submit to Him because He created us with a free will. He cannot go against that. (That is why it is important to constantly have an attitude of submission to Him and giving our problems and battles and the people around us to Him, not trying to control them ourselves. Our control stops God from being able to work in our lives in the areas we try to control. When we fail to let God heal our hearts this feeds out forming a cloud of bitterness, doubt, fear, anger, hate, strife, and all these negative emotions that we talked about. We then have guilt and self-condemnation to add to that cloud because we aren't doing and being what we know that we should. This cloud distorts our view of our lives and those around us, which leads to mistrust, and fear. This cloud shapes how we act and how we treat others. We are so wrapped in it we don't see ourselves as we really act to others. This drives those around us away and we become isolated not only from God's love, but also from those around us that love us and are reaching out to us. We often blame this on everyone else and see it as everyone else's problem, which causes us to fear being hurt even more. We become isolated. We know in our mind that God loves us, but we can only feel the love that can filter down through the cloud like the sun on a completely cloudy day. We try to fix the outward things. We try to be nice, we try not to

do or be a way that we know by God's Word we shouldn't, but this only works for so long. By doing this we only cut off one of the cords connecting the cloud to us, but more of the same filters out. We feel like we are drowning and don't know why. We often feel like quitting because we try and try and it doesn't work, so why try any more. We have to deal with the heart. We have to submit our will to God, admit our mess, and let Him show us the problem. He shows us what He will do, and what He wants us to do. Let Him break you so that you no longer want your will and your way and want His. He will give you things to do to try you to see if you really mean business and want to be free. If you do, He will fix your heart. You can't do it on your own any more than you can heal a gash on the outside of your body. He will take you through a time of healing and delivering you from the outside clouds. It won't be easy. You will have to face the truth of your pain that you've hidden from, but God's love will hold you. Be yielded to His Holy Ghost. Pray in the Spirit. Let His Spirit and His Word heal and deliver you. Get prayed for as often as you can, but don't rely on that alone. Go to God frequently and let His Spirit bless you, even in your own house. God will deliver you.

The Fruits of the Spirit

The positive alternative to the negative emotions that we have discussed is found in the

scriptures about the fruits of the spirit. If you read these you'll find that they are the direct opposites of all those things we mentioned. By that, you know that if you have them, you will overcome the bad. How do we get these to operate in our lives? We know we can't do it on our own. We know that we can't make ourselves be this way. But God tells us we have to. How? The Bible talks about the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22. They are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. Too often when we read these, we read it as a list of how we should act and a guide of things we shouldn't do. We see it as something we are supposed to make ourselves do. We try, but we can't and this leads to self-condemnation. Instead of the strength these passages are supposed to bring us, they wind up bringing defeat. We fail to notice the key Words--the fruits **of the Spirit**. These are the characteristics of God's Spirit. These are the traits of Jesus. We have inside of us God's Spirit and Jesus. If we submit our flesh to these and let them be in control of our lives, then they will shine out. We will become like them. Instead of a battle of trying to act a certain way, it is our becoming that way. This will still bring a battle, but a different kind of one. It takes a battle to control your flesh and submit your self will to God, but it is one that you can win. God heals and delivers you from the inside things that caused the outside emotions. As we submit to His Spirit, the control you allow Him to have

grows. As you read His Word, pray in His Spirit, fellowship with His people who are doing the same, you will become a reflection of Him. Let Him fill you up with His Spirit and have control. Stay away from people and things that would take away from His influence. Let Him show you what and who to stay away from and obey Him. Don't let anything or anyone else control your life. Be filled with the fruits of His Spirit.

The Sin Of Defensiveness

I have mentioned this before, but this is so important that I want to cover it again. When we become hurt, it is easy to get defensive. We put up a wall to prevent ourselves from being hurt again. We get defensive in our actions and attitudes. This drives others away and isolates us from God's love and from His being able to fix those areas in our heart that we need help with. We act in a defensive way, often without realizing we are. This brings reactions from the people around us. We only see their reactions, not what we have done to cause them. Satan says, see there, you can't trust anybody. This causes you to further shut yourself away. Defensiveness is a sin. We have to realize that we are vulnerable, but that in our weakness God will be made stronger. We have to realize we will be hurt, but through faith in God we know that the hurt we have will be turned into a greater victory. When we break a bone the bone eventually gets stronger at the

break. Pain, adversity, problems, brings strength into our lives that nothing else can. Romans 5:3-5 tells us, "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts...." Even the worst tribulation, if handled right, can bring strength into our relationship with God. I have gone through terrible pain and later thanked God for what He built in my life through it. Romans 8:28 tells us that **all** things work together for the good of those that love the Lord. Everything, no matter how bad, can be used for our good if we trust God. Pain and heartache themselves can become beautiful things in the hands of God.

*Chapter 10.**How Sin Separates Us From God's Love*

It is so easy for Christians to get caught up in appearances and even in judging their own heart by appearances. We think to ourselves, I'm not doing anything wrong so my heart must be right. We make it a priority in making sure that we are doing what we should so that we look holy to others. We can be so caught up in this that we never take time to ask God to show us what our hearts really look like to Him. We don't allow God's Word or His Spirit to convict us. That is why so many that have been Christians for a lot of years wind up turning away from God. The Bible says in Song of Solomon 2:15 that it is the little foxes that spoil the vines. It's not the big sins, like murder, lust, adultery, stealing, etc. that causes people to fall. It is the little things inside their heart that they fail to deal with, and let God fix that eventually grow into problems so big they cause defeat in our lives. I have seen many Christians turn away from God. I knew that there were areas in their life that they weren't submitting to God. For example, I knew a girl who was so filled with pride. She was proud of all she was doing for God and with how right she was. God tells us that we need to humble ourselves before Him, because after all He is Lord. She would never fulfill the things that she was asked to do because her will ruled her life, if she didn't feel like doing something she didn't, whether it was anyone or God that asked her. Today she is out

in the world and in sin; her family and her life fell apart. She served God for many years without submitting to Him and letting Him fix these things that were wrong in her heart. We can only last so long and then these things will cause us to be defeated. We have to be real with God and let Him fix what is wrong.

When I define sin I define it as something that separates us from God. Anything that comes between you and God or that causes you to doubt His love for you is a sin to you. When we find that right relationship, that "in love" relationship with Jesus, we don't want anything to hinder it. But we often treat Him as less than a person with no feelings at all. We treat Him in a way that lacks respect. We don't make Him Lord of our flesh and go to Him only when we feel like it or when we need Him. We don't listen to His voice when He warns us to stay away from things that can destroy our lives. We don't hear Him when He asks us to do something for Him. We continue to do the things that we know He doesn't want us to do. Then we begin to feel isolated from Him and wonder why. We may blame it on the devil. We may blame it on superficial things like not praying enough or not reading our Bible (these are very important, but if we have sin in our life or our hearts are not right with Jesus, all the Bible reading and prayer in the world won't fix the division between you and Him, only repentance.) We blame it on the people around us and how they are. We have to identify the problem. We can

only do this by asking God to show us how we really are and letting Him deliver us. We have to repent. To repent means to be so sorry that we can't stand our sin. In the Old Testament when people repented they wrapped themselves in sackcloth and ashes to represent their filth and how they felt about their sin. (Today we look at it and excuse it away. Excuses don't work with God. You have no excuse for the sin and for the wrong things in your life. If you continue to excuse it away you will never fix it and it will take you to hell.) Repentance means that you get as real as real can be with yourself and with God. You become very sorry for the wrong not just that you do, but also the wrong that is in your heart. You actually hate it and become willing to do anything it takes to get it fixed. All this takes becoming nothing and submitting to God.

Then when you have repented, God will do the work of deliverance in your life to set you free. We'll cover more about this in a later chapter. When you have repented then you have to guard against satan causing you to feel condemnation. Condemnation is the feeling that you can't be forgiven. Satan constantly reminds you of your past, your sins, and your failures. He says, look what you have done; there is no reason to think you can serve God. He constantly causes your sin to be put into your mind, but you have been forgiven. Your sins have been as separated from you as the east is from the west-and the two will never meet. When satan reminds you of them tell him to go

away and leave you alone in the name of Jesus, that you are forgiven and he has no right to remind you about what you have done. God has forgiven you then you must forgive yourself. If you don't forgive yourself for your wrongdoing then satan can gain access to be able to accuse you. When Jesus died on the cross He took all your sins. Don't make His blood cheap by failing to accept the work that He did there.

*Chapter 11**The Blessing in Being Chastised*

Hebrews 12:5-13 contains much insight into the chastising (correction or punishment) of the Lord. Some verses of that passage are: "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons: for what son is He whom the father chasteneth not.... Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby". We live in a world where very few people can admit that they are wrong. Whether it be because of their insecurities (they try too hard to be right), or whether they are too proud to admit they are wrong, this is a big problem. Making that even worse is the teaching that what might be right for you might not be right for me. That there are no absolute truths or values as far as morals are concerned. This leaves a generation of people that honestly do not know right from wrong and are far away from the correction of God. The first chapter of Romans speaks about the people who fall into this way of thinking and their end result. This makes a people that will be far from the forgiveness of the Lord. Until we acknowledge our wrong and admit it to ourselves we can never be forgiven. Until we can be forgiven, we will have things separating us from God's love. We will never know the joy of His chastising us

as sons.

For us to live in God's ways in reality, we have to know right from wrong. We have to know His Word. We have to know what is expected of us. We need guidelines. We cannot function without them. I see this as a teacher. Children who lack discipline and guidelines in their families grow up to have many mental and emotional problems. Not just because they weren't taught and don't know how to act and what is expected of them, but also because they lack knowing that someone has loved them enough to set guidelines for them in their lives. Children as well as we adults need this love and discipline. When we are disciplined we know we are loved. "Whom the Lord loveth He chastens, Hebrews 12:6. Hebrews 12:8, "If ye be without chastisement.. then are ye *not* sons."

Before we can even receive discipline from the Lord, we have to allow our will to be broken enough to admit that we are wrong. People who have a hard time admitting their faults have a hard time letting God or anyone else really love them. They will always try to put on a front, hide away behind a wall. They will not be real with God, others, or even themselves. The greatest relief they can find is realizing that they don't have to be perfect to be loved. That no one is perfect. That God doesn't expect them to be perfect. He wants them to be real and empty out all their imperfections so that He can fill them with His perfection. God has to change us. We can't do that ourselves.

We have to be real with Him before He can start. He can only keep what we honestly give to Him. II Timothy 1:12, "...for I know whom I have believe, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

Some people on the other hand dwell on their weaknesses and never really think that they can fix them. They get attention from those around them by self-pity. This can destroy them. We have to be willing to change before God can do the work in us to bring us to victory in Him. Self-pity and self-condemnation are both tools that the devil knows well how to use against us. For example, God may be convicting us about an area in our life. The devil sees this and begins to cause us to feel condemned. He will cause us to feel condemned in an area of our life that may be a parallel area that isn't the root problem that we have. He causes us to concentrate on this area and feel so condemned that we stop working on anything. When we are condemned, we are so bound in negative feelings that we can't receive God's conviction or chastening with victory. Then instead of feeling conviction and rising above that weakness, we sink in it to our defeat. This is how our flesh can hinder us so even in the area of conviction. We have to submit ourselves to God and come to the place we can admit our sins quickly to Him. Then we can receive our forgiveness. If He chastises us, then we learn from it. Then we can rise up in victory.

If He never corrected us, we would never really know that He loved us enough to teach us His ways. We would never learn the right path that He has for our lives or the right attitudes and thoughts and feelings we need to be overcomers. We would definitely never make it to heaven. Praise God for His conviction. Never, Never, Never turn it off. Never hide from it and turn away from the truth. It is God's truth that will keep us. Many times, when people refuse to allow God to convict them of their sin, they will turn away from the whole truth of God's Word into a false hood. This is so dangerous. The Bible tells us that the truth will set us free. Not some dim reflection of the truth.

Chapter 12
The Victory In Saying I Can't

II Timothy 1:12 tells us, "...for I know whom I believe, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." Completely committing something comes only when we can totally trust, totally submit to God, and let Him have complete control of the situation. Until we can completely commit it to God, He cannot fix it. God cannot work in a circumstance until our wills have let go of it, and His will is allowed to have free rein. That only comes when we let go. God created us with a free will and gave us the freedom to choose. He can in no way trespass against that free will until judgment, when He will judge us for what we did with our wills. Until we completely commit everything to Him, we have it surrounded by our own will. When we let go and say, "I can't", then God can, and He will and He does. Sometimes we think we do God a favor by striving with something, carrying the load, trying to make it work out by our sheer will if nothing else. All we manage to do when we get that "I can do it myself" attitude is to completely tie the hands of God so that He can't work. When we realize how small our efforts really are and how big the battle is with satan and all his forces coming against every move we make, then we are in reality. Yes, we have power to stand against them, but not power in ourselves, but power in the name of Jesus, power in His Word, power in

His Spirit inside us that we must let control the situation. When we realize we can't fight the battle, that we can't of our own selves be good, we can't do the things on our own we need to do, we can't carry the load of those around us that aren't serving God, as soon as we realize that we can't, we are well on the way to total victory. That's when we give it to God completely and totally, and He takes control. God doesn't want us to be strong and show Him what we can do. He wants us to rely on his strength and trust Him to do what He does so well.

We have a never-ending strength that is like a well inside of us. We have everlasting joy in spite of circumstances. We have a limitless supply of love and every resource we need, if we would just rely on God's supply instead of our own. We can only do this when we say, "I can't". Human nature, this flesh nature of ours that is an enemy to God and His ways and even to ourselves, wants to say I can do it myself, I don't want to even hear anyone suggest I can't. The true spirit man inside us says, "Jesus I praise you for being the strength in my weakness. Jesus I give the battle to you. I can't fight it myself. I give control of the situation to You". The spirit man inside trusts God completely and surrenders to Him. How wonderful it is when we say, "Lord I can't" and we hear Him say, "Child, I know. That's why I can".

Chapter 13
When Who and What You Are
Really Doesn't Matter--
What Can Stop You?

God calls us to work for Him. Many times I watch people fail that God has set aside to do a certain work. I see that God has put it in their hearts to desire to serve Him in an extraordinary way, and they are giving themselves to Him more than others around them. The desire to serve Him often turns to defeat and they accomplish little. I believe this is because they have failed to become nothing, submit their weaknesses and failures, unbelief and doubt, their past, and everything they are and aren't to God.

We come to God with a great load of many things that can cause us to fail. In this chapter we will talk about this load and how it can hinder us and how we can be delivered from these things. If a man tries to run a race with a load of bricks on his back he will not be able to finish. There are many things that can be a greater load to us than a load of bricks that can become a weight to us and hinder us from being able to finish the race that is set before us. Let's talk about some of those things.

Past Sins

We often come to God with a load of past sin. These sins cause scars that can trap us away from totally trusting God's love. It is hard

to accept forgiveness and forgive ourselves and let God totally and unconditionally love us. Until we do, we won't be able to love Him. To really love God, we have to be able to receive His love. A one-sided relationship is really no relationship at all. These scars can also cause us not to trust ourselves. Satan will constantly remind us of our failures. Commit them all to God. When satan accuses you, remind him that those failures and past sins are no longer there. God has them and He will keep them. They are forgiven and all you see now is who you are in God, and a vision of what you will one day do for Him. When you commit the past to God and trust in His forgiveness those past sins become nothing and satan can no longer use them against you.

Scars of Hurt

Another load we carry is the hurt caused from what others do to us. The devil is a master of discouragement. He knows if he can cause scars in our heart, these scars can turn into bitterness and rebellion. He can, through these, destroy our self-worth to the place that we no longer try or care. He will line up people to hurt us. I wish I could say that he can only use sinners to hurt us, but the greatest pain often comes from our brothers and sisters in Christ. The devil uses those that allow themselves to be used. Christians get careless with their emotions, tongues, and flesh as a whole, and the devil can step in and use them against the

family of God. When he does this, these accusations can echo in our minds and defeat us, destroying our confidence in our relationship with God. We have to identify these as satan's tools and refuse to accept them as truth. We have to give these weak places to God and ask Him to heal our minds and hearts. When satan comes back with them, either echoing them in our minds or using others around us, we have to identify him and say, "satan, that is an old battle. I have committed that to God. It is His. You cannot accuse me any longer."

Another hurt that is hard to overcome is abuse of any kind. In this age of self-centered, Godless people verbal, emotional, and sexual abuse is rampant. When this happens we are often made to feel that it is our fault. We are victims of the person who abused us, but the devil is a master at victimizing us with this abuse, and making us feel as if we are the one to blame. This abuse may be as simple as being ridiculed as a child, having other children or someone in your family make fun of you, or as complicated as sexual abuse by another family member. Whatever it is, often satan is the author of it. I believe that satan can see a limited view of the future, (not as extensively as God can, because God rules the future). Satan can see enough to spot those that will one day serve God in a great way, even when they are young. His best tool to stop them is to bring spirits against them to harass them their whole life long, to keep them bound from God's love

and deliverance, so that they never can fully operate in His love to serve Him. One way satan does this is to send people to cause abuse. This abuse can trap us into a tunnel of defeat, self-destruction, and self-hate before we can find the release of God's love. This can also cause us to be very self-destructive in our judgment of ourselves. We will constantly nit-pick every fault we have and we can judge ourselves into hell if we don't commit this to God. If we commit all this to Him, God can take it all, deliver us and even change the worst abuse into something for our good. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28). I have watched this happen in the lives of abuse victims. God used even the worst experiences by allowing them to work good in their lives and the lives of others, and they actually thanked God for it happening. A key in coming to that place is forgiveness. To be delivered from these scars and the spirits that satan can bring against you because of them, you have to forgive everyone that has hurt you. That is not easy, "but with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26). To be able to forgive we have to really want to forgive them, and ask God to help us. He has a great love. Great enough even to forgive those that nailed Him on the cross. He lives in your heart. Trust in His love to work inside you, when you know your love won't be enough. When you forgive them, you must also forgive yourself. You must also

forgive yourself and let go of any feelings you have against yourself. Abuse can cause us to condemn ourselves. It often cause feelings that we are stupid and everyone thinks so, we are to blame for anything that happens wrong, we are no good and only the devil can use us, we will never amount to anything, we are mentally unstable, we are asking for hurt and only deserve that, we are total failures. All these feelings can come from abuse. We have to identify these lies and refuse to accept them. God can help you identify the things that are satan's lies. Refuse to accept satan's way of thinking. Commit this to God. Don't dwell on these thoughts. As you begin to fight this, satan will be anxious to keep this hold on you. He will increase his battle against your mind and he will send those around you to join in his accusing with him. Keep on rebuking him and not accepting what he says. In a way, he will be doing you a favor. As you consistently stand against him, you will become stronger and you will come to the place that you will automatically, without thought, block out what he says and you will learn to accept what God's Word has to say about who and what you are.

Our Failures and Weaknesses

Another part of the load we carry is our past failures and our present weaknesses. The Bible says, "As it is written, there is none righteous, no not one" (Romans 3:10). We know this, but when we judge ourselves (which

we have no business doing because only God can judge a righteous judgment), we forget it. Everyone makes mistakes and fails. Is there anyone that God used in the Bible that was perfect? Some people would say 2, Enoch and Elijah, because they didn't have to die. But James 5:17 tells us that "Elias was a man of like passions as we are...." Elijah was just a man. He got afraid, ran and pouted. God didn't take him because he was perfect, but because he walked with Him and pleased Him. We don't have to be perfect to please God. God doesn't expect us to be perfect. He expects us to love Him with a whole heart and walk with Him. He'll do the perfecting we need. Many times we hide from walking with Him because we feel that we can't be perfect enough to do it. God just wants our love.

When we learn how to handle our failures, we can learn from them, and they can be building blocks in our faith and our walk with God. The problem with our failures comes either when we hide them from ourselves or God and fail to receive forgiveness, or when satan arrives to accuse us. Satan is the accuser of the brethren both day and night. He will say, "Look at you, why are you trying to do anything for God. Look at what you did in the past." Moses ran into this battle. While living at Pharaoh's palace, he lost his temper, and killed an Egyptian taskmaster in Exodus 2:11-15. The next day, he tried to help an Israelite. The devil spoke through the man and said, "Intendest thou to kill me as thou killedst the Egyptian". Moses

had miserably failed. Not many of us have failed God to the place of killing someone. The man's accusations caused Moses to run. Moses may have had great plans for his future in Pharaoh's palace as Pharaoh's son. Satan's accusations brought an end to these plans and his life as he knew it. He didn't realize that God had a better plan. Satan's accusations drove Moses right into the plan God had for his life--leaving and coming back later as the leader of God's chosen people. Satan's accusations can destroy us, or we can let God use them to bring great victory into our lives. We have to commit the weaknesses we have to God, become as nothing so that these accusations cannot rankle our flesh, lay down our pride, and Satan's accusations can even bring great victory. Luke 6:23 tells us to "Rejoice in that day and leap for joy...." Why leap for joy? We can leap for joy because God can even use persecution to bring victory into our lives.

As humans, we have many weaknesses. Satan can jump and shake his fingers at these. It is important to know your weaknesses, commit them to God and trust Him to turn them into strengths. II Corinthians 12:9 tells us And He said unto me, ***My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness***". Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me". Verse 10 closes with "For when I am weak, then am I strong." Paul said I thank God for weaknesses that I may glory in strength of God. When we are the weakest, we

finally rely, trust, and totally depend on God's strength. Only then can we be really truly strong. Our strength is not enough even when we think it is. When we become nothing in our own strength then we can rely on the supernatural strength of God. When we recognize this, how can satan use our weaknesses against us?

Chapter 14.
Who Is Your Lord?

If we aren't careful it is easy to let the people around us become the Lord of our life. We get wrapped up in the way of thinking that causes us constantly to wonder "what does this person think about me"? We can fall into the trap of basing whether or not we have a relationship with Christ on what we think people think of us. We start living this way, basing what we do on trying to please the people around us. In short, the people around us become our Lord. We spend more time thinking about what others think than in being with Jesus. Satan can use this way of life very easily. He causes the people around us to react to something we have done in a negative way, which they may not consciously realize they are doing. He creates circumstances to cause us to feel like we have failed these people. Because we have set people up as Lord, we begin to feel like failures not only with people but also in our relationship with Jesus. We get a chip on our shoulder, which causes us to become defensive in our relationship with others, which can even cause us to become defensive and eventually rebellious with God. We begin to think, what's the use, we can't please everybody so why try any more. And we quit trying to do the things we do, quit serving God in the church, and eventually quit in our relationship with God and we never even realize that it is all a trap of satan.

What causes these things to happen? We have to put a number one priority on our relationship with God and building it. We cannot let anyone be number one in our lives. He is Lord and Him only can we serve. Our love for Him has to be the main and foremost motivation for what we do. If we do the things we do for anyone or for any other reason they will fail. They will also be superficial. Many people serve God for being able to feel good about themselves and what they are doing. Many serve God for recognition from others around them. They do what they do on the surface. If we are not doing what we do because we love God with all our heart, and we desire to please Him, then the things we do will not matter. We will not be obeying Him, but obeying what we think we should do. The things we do will not be the will of God and only God is wise enough to know when, where, and what we should do. Even though we may give it our best effort it will all be flesh and not in the spirit. Because of this, the things we do will turn out wrong. Because the flesh is at enmity with the Spirit of God the things we do will turn out to be an enemy of what God is trying to do. We will impress the people who are walking in the flesh, but we will be a hindrance to those that are seeking God's face, trying to please Him, and obeying Him. This will make our battle greater and eventually we will think, why keep trying. We can't do anything right. But we will have missed the whole issue. Jesus is Lord. Not the people

around us. We have to seek His face and obey Him. Many times this won't be easy, but it is the only way to make it to heaven. We can do what everybody wants us to do, put on the appearance of being the best people around because of what we do, and still miss heaven because Jesus isn't the Lord of our life. If we don't submit our flesh to Him and let Him control our lives and become nothing in His love, then He is not Lord of all.

It is important to fall in love with Jesus and let Him fall in love with You. Know where You stand in His love. This has nothing to do with putting on a front of being perfect. It's just being loved. When we get wrapped up in His love, we know who we are. We do what we do because of that love. We are able to do what we do because His love gives us the strength and the love to be able to do what we do. Love becomes the motivation we have, not just our love for Him, and His love for us, but also the love He has for those around us. When we do things for those around us and serve Him, we are serving Him out of a motivation of the love He has for those around us and His desire to reach out to them. When we do things for others based in this love, then it comes out right. Those we help will become a blessing, because His people will love us back with that love and the motivation of flesh will be gone. If we lack love, everything we do will be as a tinkling brass and clanging cymbal, just empty music coming out of an empty life. I Corinthians 13:1 says, "Though I speak with the

tongues of men and of angels and have not charity (love), I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."

If we let the people around us, our relationships with people and our appearance to others become the Lord of our life, then it will become important whether or not we have or lack people in our lives. We will start to think if we don't have people around constantly and look like we are the center of a great happening, then we are nothing. We will start to think like teenagers. Young people think that if they aren't the center of the crowd they are nothing. If they aren't in with the in thing they aren't in themselves. If they aren't doing what the in thing is to do they aren't anybody. This puts incredible pressure on people. People actually spend time studying what it is that they should do, how they should dress, how they should wear their hair, how they should act, so that they appear to be in. They lack no identity in themselves. Insecure people travel in packs. The problem with this way of thinking that it is the most insecure people that feel they have to hang with someone hang together. The people who do this are those who do not have a strong relationship with God and have not established their identity with Him. If they stay in groups they will wind up bringing each other down because nobody is strong enough to hold everybody up. Get a relationship with God, then you can reach out in His love to the people you love. God's love doesn't cause people to bunch up in a little pack. It causes you to be the

center of everyone around you, loving everyone the same, not excluding some because they don't measure up to your expectation (and this kind of attitude follows pack people). God's love causes you to reach out to everyone the same, saints and sinners alike. It enables you to have a security with who you are that sets you free from thinking if you don't have your group you are nobody. You won't be a bondage to those you love but you'll lift them up to the place they find security in their relationship with God and their place in His kingdom. You can help those around you be strengthened in making heaven their eternal home. What better group can you belong to than the real family of God?

We also can be trapped into thinking, if we are single, that we are not going to be able to make it on our own. We can be trapped into thinking we are nothing because we don't have that special someone to be a part of. We need to get a real relationship with Jesus and then we realize that He is that special someone to be a part of. We all feel empty inside if our relationship with Him is not strong. We were created to have that relationship with Him. We were created with an empty space for Him to fill. If He isn't feeling that empty space we are not complete and we will feel empty and incomplete. No one else can fill that emptiness. If we have that emptiness and we meet that special someone we will probably blow that relationship because we are still empty and this will be reflected in our relationship with them.

Let Jesus be Lord of your lives. You will then be complete. Because you are, you will add to the lives of those around you instead of your emptiness stealing things away from them.

Chapter 15.
How to Love

As we discussed before, we live in a world full of hurt. Especially this can be said of anyone involved in any ministry of any type. God's purpose for ministries is found in Luke 4:18. Why does God anoint us? "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised..." Nowhere in this section does it mention our purpose is to help those who are together and don't need help. Mainly this is true because our purpose is to let God do these things for us, gain our liberty, and get into the mainstream of the work force and do these things for others. One of the things to overcome in the ministry that is the hardest to overcome, is that when dealing with the poor (not only the poor in pocketbook but the poor in Spirit), the brokenhearted, the bound that need deliverance, the blind (in physical and spiritual sight), and those that need liberty, you are at great risk in being hurt. This is not only true for those in the ministry, but anyone that reaches out and loves others around them, family members that aren't saved or aren't in an obedient relationship with God, or others that we try to witness to. I have seen people who have worked in the ministry faithfully for years give up on their ministry and their relationship

with God because of the problems of people and the hurt it has caused them. What is the remedy for this? We have to become as nothing, then we are submitted in our hearts to Jesus. He knows how to deal with this. He hasn't quit, and look what He had to put up with in loving you before you completely accepted His love. Multiply this several quadrillion times over. No one understands the definition of hurt until we see God's hurt. Or the hurt Jesus has as He watches His children fail and fall toward hell, seeing them through the love He has and the price He paid for them on the cross.

It's hard for us to comprehend the love of Jesus, not only for us but also for others. His love sees our faults completely. I think that this sums up God's love for us. "I see their past and their future, whether or not they will serve me. I see their hearts completely without anything hidden. I see when they honor me and when they fail me in a way that is completely honest and without wrong judgment. I understand their hearts desire in a way no one else can, often not even they themselves. Even when those hearts desires are far from me. Yet my love for them is total and complete. I would move mountains for my people, yet they often cannot see my love. They are blinded by their hurt, by the chains the world wraps around their mind, by their disobedience, by the bondage satan puts around their minds and hearts distorting how they perceive my love. All these things cause them to be separated by my love, but my love does not fade or fail." What does He ask of us?

To love those around us with no less a love than He has. How can we do this? We can't. Only He can. We have to commit our hearts totally and completely to Him. Let Him love us until we are brimful and overflowing, then we can love those around us with **His** love. We have to completely commit ourselves to this and submit our flesh. Our flesh is what causes us not to be able to love those around us. We become critical because people fail and don't do what we think they should. We judge their mistakes, which only further pushes them down. We build walls around to keep ourselves from being hurt by their imperfections that separates us from the hands that are groping out for us and Jesus inside of us. Only a real vision of hell and those that we love sliding into it can shake us free of our petty love. Only hearing the screams of eternal torment and knowing that the voices may be someone we failed to reach out to can shake us out of our selfish hearts that care more about ourselves than others. So what if we are hurt. Jesus knows well how to heal the scars. He understands better than we ever will. Keep loving. Every time you are hurt, go to Him, commit it to Him, let Him heal. Let Him dig out past hurts and heal and deliver you from the problems those scars have caused you. Each time He does this there will be a little more of His love filtering in and a lot less of you. Don't turtle up in a shell when you are hurt. Don't think you are strong and your self-control can overcome this. Don't resent it. Consider it as a badge of honor that makes you

less of you and more of Him. Let go of your selfish pettiness and judgmental ways and dare to let God love through you. Nothing else will bring you closer to Him. Nothing else will strengthen you for obedience like His love for others. Ask Him to show you His love. It will break you in to and you can be filled with Him. Come to a place in God's love that He can count on you to even be His hands outreached to those no one can love. I was at one time someone that no one could love. People would try to reach out to me but it was so difficult, soon no one tried. Only God didn't quit. If He would not have been as faithful in His love, you wouldn't be reading this book that I pray has blessed your life. If others had loved me with His love and not quit, I often wonder how that could have changed my life. Let God bring you to the place in His love where you are broken and completely nothing so that He can use you to reach out to those no one will reach out to. Sometimes we try to be strong and think our love is strong enough. We keep being hurt and because we think we are strong we use "self control" and push the hurt down in and keep going. This will catch up with us. When we love this way, we will begin to see those around us as failures or ready to fall. Satan puts on us the attitude that everyone is going to mess up because we have been so hurt by those that have been. We become bitter. Because we take an attitude no one is good enough and everyone is a failure, we protrude this attitude to others. Others feel this and those around us begin to

think that they aren't good enough and are only failures and they can even give up. Loving others and reaching out to them in the flesh is dangerous. It is a very foolish way to serve God. It isn't genuine and it won't last. Our love is not good enough. We short change people when it is all we give them. Submit your heart and mind totally to God and let Him love through you, then when you are hurt it will be His heart that is hurting and He will heal.

All too often we take the burdens of those around us onto ourselves. When we watch those we love failing and falling and hurting because they are not committing their lives to God, we carry these burdens as a load on our own shoulder. If we continue to do this the, load will overcome us. Because we can't carry a burden as big as the responsibility of someone's soul, we can only help a very few people and then we become wore out spiritually and can collapse. We carry someone that we watch go into hell and we cannot endure this and this causes us to give up in our relationship with God. We watch the pain of those around us and the problems that they have. We think what we feel is love, though it may only be pity or a feeling that is motivated by the way we think we should feel. Or what we may feel may be love, but our own flesh centered love. We become so wrapped up in their lives that their problems become ours. Because they fail to seek God, (and they can't because we have planted ourselves in between Him and them and they can't see His hand outreached because we

are in the way), they do not submit their heart or circumstances to Him. He cannot help them. Their lives fall apart and if they fail to seek God, through this they plummet toward hell. Because we were helping them in the flesh, we see this as God failing to help them or our failure to help them even though in our minds we did our very best (which will never be enough in dealing with people's souls). We may never realize that their own self-will and our blundering tie God's hands. Our own fleshly love and burdens can only bring failure. Helping others and reaching out to them in the flesh can not only bring their destruction but ultimately ours. Carrying the load of souls is not one you are strong enough to bear. You cannot carry people or their problems or correct all their circumstances. You have to have a committed and submitted heart, mind and life to God, and then you can reach out flowing in the Spirit, reaching out as He reaches out, doing what He leads you to do, loving with His love. This will change the lives of those around you. It won't be your burden, it will be His load and He can carry it a lot more easily than you can. Give the burden to Him. Matthew 11:28-30, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Go to Him when you labor and become heavy laden. Let Him give you the rest that comes when you place the burden you carry on

His shoulders. Pray through for those you love. Don't pray until the burden is greater then quit. Take time to pray through until you know that He has heard you and that He will answer your prayers and the burden becomes His. This may take 15 minutes, this may take 2 hours, this may take 2 days or a month, and this may even take prayer and fasting. Pray until you know you have His peace about what you are burdened for. Give the load to Him. This doesn't mean that you take an attitude of looking at the pain of those around you and saying, "I can't do anything about it, it is Jesus' problem any way, I'll give the load to Him". The key to this kind of reaching out comes when you first ask God to be able to love those around you with His love. When you have done this and mean it, you'll never have the attitude of who cares, because He definitely does.

If you have been hurt, and especially if you are in the ministry, you will be, it is so important to release this pain to God and let Him carry it. Self-control is not the answer. Pushing it down in only lasts for a while. He has seen your hurt and will reward it. It is not a small thing in His eyes. He has seen the pain of rejection when those around you failed Him. He has seen the pain of those that have mocked you in your efforts. He has seen the pain that the battle of satan has brought into your life. Commit these things to Him and let Him keep them. Concentrating on them, going over and over them, will only bring you scars that will never heal. Let Him have this pain completely.

Let Him be the judge, convicter, and sentencer. Only He can do it righteously. Honor this. Let Him heal and deliver you from the bondages that satan puts around our heart, because it is the thing he uses the most frequently to attach his mess to, which can destroy us. Let it go. Let go of it all. Then love with His love.

Closing

If you are really tired of yourself, your weaknesses, your failures, your past, let God take them all away. Submit them all to Him. Let Him take control of your thoughts, your heart, and your life. Let Him make you into nothing so that He can take complete control of your life. Are you tired of the battle you're fighting and think you can't go on? Let God take over and win the battle for you. Are you tired of feeling like everything you try to do for Him is not working right? Let Him take control of you and let Him reach out through you. Let Him reduce you to nothing so that He can be all in all in you. In summary, I have enclosed something that I wrote to illustrate what it means to come to that submissive life in God. Maybe this could be a prayer for you.

Crowns

Jesus, when I first read of how we will cast the crowns we've won in our service at Your feet, I didn't understand. I first thought, after all I've went through and the accomplishments I've made, I wondered why You would ask for them back. I couldn't understand why such a hard-earned prize would mean so little that I would just throw it down. Then You brought me through a time in my life when everyday battles were harder than the strength I had to stand. Standing was hard enough, forget fighting and winning. There in that time You broke my will and taught me that just to rely on You was

enough. I learned what it meant to trust You blindly. I learned what You meant when You told Paul, "My strength is made perfect in Your weakness." You brought me through a time when I couldn't even see my own way, and the only way I could see with my own senses was the wrong way. Then I began to understand what to me was the mystery of the crowns. I thought I knew why we would cast them at Your feet. Without your guidance, Your strength, Your joy, Your love, Your victory, we would never have won the crowns at all. So they were really yours.

Then You led me into a deeper valley. Far away from the mountaintops of victory. There with just You and I, no one and nothing else to lean on, You drew me closer to You. I could finally see You, who You were, and how You loved. I could see those scars on Your forehead and hands and feet, those scars that You suffered for me. I could see the love that put them there. I could look back and see all my wrongs in my life, my self-security (instead of my trust in You), my determination to serve You because it was the right thing to do (not because I loved you and knew Your love for me), my determination to go on through the battle and win (instead of my determination to lean on you and accept Your strength), my desire to do my best for You (instead of my desire to accept Your best for me). I saw how all these things were all so wrong. I knew then that my determination and my desires were not enough. That all You wanted me to do was to

let go of all of those, everything I was and am, everyone else, and everything, so that I could trust You and lean entirely on You, and open my heart to You. So that You could become me. So that I could lean not on my own understanding, but lean on Yours. Only then could I understand that all the battles, all the heartaches every tear, everything I have done, everything I own, all my possessions, all those I know, all I am, when I stand before You with that love You hold so sacred, they will be nothing. In the light of Your greatness and your precious love, they won't even cast a shadow. And those crowns, where will they belong, well they will be there where I have laid them, at Your feet.

That is the joy of being nothing.

About The Author

The author, Sandy Haga, is a part of **New Life Church and Ministries**. Check out website for **New Life Church and Ministries** at www.nlcm.net for information about *International Church and Ministry Association, Online Gospel Radio, Home School program, Bible College, Accreditation Association, Teacher Certification Program.*

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