

Salvation That Sticks

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Chapter 1. Introduction

One of the things that you really need to learn about is salvation. That is something that, when you learn more about it, can change your life, and even the lives of those around you. I have known young people who got saved, and because they changed then the lives of those around them changed. Nothing else can change you as much as salvation.

If we are honest though, you may know people who say that they have been saved, but they go back to their old ways. Or you may know people who say that they have been saved, but they never even change at all. So what gives? How can this be so? It may be that they received the gift of salvation, but never figured out just what they had in their package. That is why I wrote this book. I wrote it so that people can understand what salvation means, so that they can receive all that God has for them.

When we are saved it is the beginning of a whole new life, a new you. You can find victory and you can win over the things that have gotten you down in the past. It is like you step into a whole new world. God brings you into it. It takes a while to figure out all the changes that are there for you. This book will help you understand some of them. I won't be telling you my opinion of what I think. At least,

if I do, I will tell you it is my opinion. But I will be sharing with you a lot of verses right from the Bible.

So many people don't understand what salvation is. When you ask them if they are saved, they pause a minute with a strained look on their face, then they say, "I'm not sure. I think that I am". They haven't learned what salvation is. They haven't learned that they can definitely know whether or not they are saved. Some people even say that they don't think that you can be sure until you die. I just want to add here, that is a bad time to find out. They don't know what salvation means.

Some people are constantly back and forth in their experience with God. They fall back into their old ways, then pull themselves out, then they go back. They constantly mess up. They are in then out again. They haven't learned what salvation really is.

Some people are afraid that they might lose their salvation. They are afraid that the devil and the world will cause them to lose it. They haven't learned what salvation really is. We don't have to be afraid that something can steal our walk with God.

Some people are so afraid that every time they make a mistake that God no longer loves them. They haven't learned what salvation really is. It is my prayer that this book will help you to find salvation that sticks.

Have you found yourself sliding away from what you once had in your relationship with God? Have you found yourself doing things that at one time, you never thought of doing? Have you gone back on a lot of promises that you once made God? Have you wished that you had something in your life that you once had?

Do you constantly feel that there is something missing in your life, and at one time you never had that feeling? Do you see a concerned look in the eye of those that love you because they are worried about you, but you aren't sure why they should be? Are you confident in your salvation experience, or have you had doubts lately because of the way things were going? I pray that this book helps you through these things.

I wasn't taught about the Holy Ghost until I was in my early twenties. Then I first heard about it. I hadn't even heard the word "anointing" until then. Religion was not to be taken too seriously. We didn't want to become fanatical. I didn't know when I was young that you could know God and He could know you. I didn't really know that He could walk with you as close as those around you and be your best friend.

I didn't really know His love, not personally. I didn't know His Spirit the way that He can pour it out in a Holy Ghost filled service. I didn't know that He could fill me up

to the brim with His Spirit so that I could barely stand it, a touch of heaven.

I thought that you did your plans and God helped you to work them out. I didn't understand how to submit to God so that He was Lord of my life. I didn't know that He could move through me to work in the lives of others. I missed out on so much.

We have lots of promises in God's Word, but if we can't see that they are for us, they won't ever be ours. We can have a close relationship with our heavenly Father that is as real as our relationship with those around us, but if we can't see that is for us, we will never find it. We can be filled with the Spirit of God so much that He pours through us and splashes out on everyone we come into contact with, but if we don't believe that we can ever have that experience, we never will. How we have been taught and how we see ourselves can hinder us from experiencing the wonderful treasures that God has for us.

I know someone who grew up in a household that was really dogmatic. They had a lot of rigid rules. These were a doctrine, part of the teaching of their church. They were taught if they did this or that, they would go to hell. These rules were man made and not God made from His Word. She grew up in fear of God and in rebellion against Him because she didn't

like His rules. Sad thing was, they weren't even His rules.

It took a long time for her to figure out God's love and it took even longer for her to open up her heart to accept it. She grew up in church and in a Christian family, but she didn't understand salvation. Knowing God's love is the first key to unlock salvation. Until she got hold of God's love she couldn't rest and trust in her salvation and in her relationship with God.

I knew someone else who grew up in church. In their church, they learned that there was no right or wrong. They learned that everybody got to choose what they wanted to do. There were no rules. Until she got hold of God's truth of His Word, His righteousness, and until she found that He could help her to do things that were right, and that were the best for her to do, she was constantly getting in out of messes in her life. When she learned that God could lead her into things that made life so much better, she was able to really understand His love for her. She understood that He loved her too much to let her get by, and she could trust in that love. She found out that He would help her to do the things she needed to do, and because of that she found out she didn't need to make excuses for the mess in her life. She learned that with God's help she could fix the mess.

Salvation is a lot like an ocean. So is God's love. You can't understand one without the other. We can stand with one toe in the water and everything else out. We can go from there and tell everyone what that experience is like, and think that we know everything there is to know about the ocean. Someone else may walk in to where they are standing knee deep. And go out and tell everyone that they know all about that ocean.

Then there are those blessed ones who say, "I am not quitting until I find about the depths of this experience." They walk on in until they are completely in it, completely covered up in it. They are the ones who know what it is all about. We may think that we know all there is to know, but we are only standing there with our ankles wet. Or we may be running chasing the waves trying to keep from getting wet while we are fooling ourselves into thinking that we are all the way under.

Until we get all the way out into it, we don't know fully what it is all about. Until we experience it ourselves, we won't know what it is all about. We need to get so curious and hungry for this thing called salvation that we go all the way. Until we do, we won't even know what we are missing.

This book is written with my prayer that you find out what you are missing. If there is an empty spot that you feel in regards to your

salvation, I pray that empty spot be filled. If you have a hunger for something more, then I pray that you be filled. This book is written to help you to dive all the way into God's love so that you can discover what salvation is all about.

I won't be going outside of God's Word for any of this. Matter of fact, just thumb through this book before you start reading it. Most pages have scripture references. More often than not there are several to a page. When we go to God's Word, we can find out what salvation is all about. God's Word will change your life.

You don't have to be afraid. God is your Shepherd. He'll lead you. He'll help you to understand things in a right way. A lot of times people are so afraid that they will learn something wrong that they don't learn anything at all. God promises that He will lead us into a right understanding of things. We don't have to be afraid to learn.

As I said earlier, most of what I say is in the Bible. Plus, I pray that God uses me before I write every chapter. I pray that His Spirit flows through me and helps me to write what I need to write. I know I am just flesh, but what a difference His Spirit can make when He uses us. No, I am not perfect, but God can use the imperfect too. It is the willing, not the perfect, that He wants to use.

Be hungry for God's Word. That is where you find all about salvation. That is where you find freedom, and life. That is where you find strength to overcome things around you so that they won't get you down. That is where you find an abundant life.

No kidding. God promised that His Word will help you to find a life full of good things. Check it out. One of the things I hope this book does is to make you hungry to find out what is in the Bible. God's Word can change your life. It is my prayer that when you read this book, you find the depths of what salvation means. And that you find salvation that sticks.

Chapter 2. What Does It Mean to Be Saved

I was first saved in a church service when I was about in the fifth grade. An altar call was given and I knew that people expected me to go. You could say that the pressure was on. I went up to the altar and did what they told me to do. I prayed what they told me to pray. I confessed my salvation before the church. I really didn't know anything about what I had done. I kind of knew. But I didn't have a salvation that sticks.

How do I know? Several years later I went away to college. Boy, did I learn a lot. It all wasn't in the books either. I got into everything bad that there was to get into. I totally wrecked my life in just a matter of a couple of years.

What happened to my salvation? I forgot about it for the most part. Except for those times when the Lord dealt with my heart. I never forgot the Word of God that I had been exposed to. The sin that I was doing caused me to get God's Word all twisted though. I had so long made excuses for what I was doing that I had a weird way of looking at God's Word. I had so long self-justified myself that I had a weird version of the scripture.

That is what we do when we excuse our sin. We often start "rewriting" the Bible and we start changing it to be what we want it to be. The truth that I learned didn't leave me though.

Proverbs 22:6 tells us, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” I never forgot the Word of God that I had been exposed to as a child. That is one promise that my mother and mothers down through time have held close to their hearts as they watched their children take off down the wrong road.

God’s Word didn’t leave my heart. My salvation, though, just didn’t stick. Yes, I was a son of God because of my confession as a child. But I was a disobedient son. I’m saying it this way because the Bible talks a lot about disobedient sons and how that can end. (No, I’m not a boy, but the Bible calls us all “sons”. Like it calls us all “mankind”).

Would I have gone to heaven if during that time in my life I had wrapped my car around a tree in one of my drunken stupors? I’m not here to argue about that. Some say yes. Some say no. I am saying that you are a fool if you gamble that way with your eternal soul, taking the chance that you can do whatever you want to after you have been saved and still make it to heaven. You have to agree with me on that.

Praise God, I don’t have a definite answer for that one myself. Why do I say it that way? Because I didn’t have to find out. By His mercy God protected me until the day when I turned around and stopped running. That day salvation became real to me. I met the One

whose nail pierced hands reached out for me. I found that love so rich and real.

I learned that He died for me as much as He died for the whole world. I found salvation, and praise God this time it stuck. I got filled up and baptized with the Holy Ghost. I found the victory this brought to my life. It is still sticking after 40 years. It will be sticking for the next 40. It won't rub off.

Now if I turn my back on God and I choose to disobey Him. If I do not repent of my sin, and die in that unrepented sin, (that means that I refuse to be sorry for the wrong things that I do, and I don't ask God for forgiveness because I choose to continue in that sin) then I walk away from my salvation. As long as I have a hold of God, He will surely hold onto me.

So what was the difference between those two times of my life? Some may argue that I really didn't get saved the first time. I believed. I confessed. That is what the Bible says to do in Romans 10:9-10 tells us, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Didn't I confess and believe. Yes, I did.

Was my salvation real that first time? It was as real as I knew how to make it. I walked in

the light that I had, but it wasn't light enough to light up my life and heart. Why didn't it stick? Haven't you wondered why it seems some people's salvation just doesn't stick? This book is about finding a salvation that sticks, a relationship with God that will stick through the thick and through the thin. It is about how to find an experience with God that will last through the fire and the flood. It will last through the battles. It will out last the storms of life.

You can find this same salvation. The experience that never says quit. Read on. We are going to find more about God's amazing love for you.

Now you can't jump all the way into something that you can't see. Why weren't you saved before you were saved? Have you ever wondered about that? Because you didn't see what salvation was until then. When you really understood it, you hungered for it. God opened it up to you and it became real. We can't understand salvation or any of the things of God until the Spirit of God reveals it to us. We can't see it because it is not a natural thing. It is a spiritual thing. We can't see it unless God shows us by His Spirit.

Do you remember how it was when you tried to read God's Word before you got saved, and it just didn't make any sense to you. All those thee's and thou's. But it was more than

that. The whole thing seemed so confusing. You just couldn't understand it at all. Then you got saved. God's Spirit came into your heart. Then you read it. All of the sudden things started making sense. I John 2:27 tells us, "But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him." This verse is not saying that we don't need any man to teach us. There are too many other scriptures that say that God anoints preachers, and teachers to teach us. What then is it saying?

The anointing means God's Spirit. It says that God's Spirit will help you to understand God's Word. After you are saved, you start to find out that many times when you open up the Bible a particular verse to encourage your faith jumps off the page to strengthen you. You will find that many times when you need guidance you'll pick up the Bible and a section of scripture will open up your eyes to the direction you need to go in. You will find that sometimes you will open the Bible and verses about God's love will just jump off the pages, and you will feel His love reaching to you through those.

God will open up His Word and help you to understand it. The Spirit of God will open His Word up to you. When the Spirit of God is

moving in our lives, we call it the anointing of God. When the anointing is flowing, or moving, you can definitely feel it.

Salvation is such a wonderful experience. When you get it, something about it makes you want to share it with everybody. I know I was that way. There was a group of us that started a revival everywhere we went. We had a group of teens that hung around Hardees on the weekend. We'd witness to people out in the parking lot.

Hardees was the big hangout spot in our town for all the young people. We'd pass out tracts. We'd kneel right down at the booths to lead people to the Lord. Young people would come through the drive-through and yell out for us to pass them some more tracts. They wanted to pass them on to their buddies so that they could find what they had found. The police that was stationed at that Hardees (it had been a really rough Hardees) told us that they had never seen such a change in a place. The whole atmosphere changed. They asked us to keep on coming.

I had found a salvation that stuck and boy had it stuck this time around. It was so rich and real and full of love and joy that I wanted to share it with everyone. We never had a thought like, "What if someone rejects this? What if they make fun of us? What if it takes up a lot of my time? I have such a busy schedule. What if

we run into an uncomfortable situation? What if it takes time away from some of my other activities? What if it costs me something?" We didn't even think any of that. We didn't have a thought of not having time to do this. It was the joy of our lives and the focus of our being, to be able to reach out for the One Who had reached out to us.

God's love is the basis of salvation. John 3:16-17 tells us the foundation of salvation. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." That salvation that sticks is built on love, your love for God and His love for you. It is a relationship with God that lasts.

After you are saved, you will still have things that you have to go through. That doesn't mean that God doesn't love you. It does mean, praise the Lord, that you will have someone to hold you and keep you through whatever this old world throws at you. It means that you can be a winner in spite of it all.

Without God, all you will find in life will be sure defeat. He loves you even though He has seen your ugliest. He has waited when you had your priorities all out of whack until you got it together enough to focus on Him. He has been the anchor that held you even when

you sailed way off course. He loves you. He will keep you.

My how He loves you. Jeremiah 31:3 says, "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." I John 3:1 tells us, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not."

You are very, very, very loved. Here is a prayer that we all need to pray. It is found in Ephesians 3:17-19, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God." How big is His love? What can separate you from it? Romans 8:35 and 37-39 tells us, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us

from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

God loves you. God loves you. God loves you. That is the key to understanding what salvation is all about. Without knowing that, how can we find confidence in our salvation? We need to wrap ourselves in that great big love. Get all the junk out that separates us from God and the stuff that gets us tied up and tangled up in other things and bound up to the place where we can't feel His love.

What does God expect from us in return for that love? Deuteronomy 6:5 tells us, “And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.” Deuteronomy 10:12 tells us, “And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul.” Fall in love with the One who loves you so much. That is how salvation sticks.

And, hey, this is a 2 way street. Let Him love you. Salvation is finding that personal relationship with God and wrapping yourself in His love. When you do, your salvation will stick.

Chapter 3. Knowing the Shepherd's Love

Here is more about God's love. First John 4:16 tells us, "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." This is only one of the many scriptures that tell about God's love.

John 17 is one of the most beautiful scriptures about God's love. Please read the whole chapter. I won't put it all here. This is Jesus' prayer that He prayed before His crucifixion. He knew what He was about to face. He would face the torment and beating, the crown of thorns, the pain and shame of the cross. He had to go through that and more.

The worst thing though that He had to go through was when His Father rejected Him. You see, He actually carried all of our sins to the cross so that you could be forgiven. When He was on the cross carrying our sins, God couldn't even look upon Him because of those sins. He turned His back on Him. He also had the shame of our sins. He didn't have any of His own. That is why He could take ours.

He also faced a death that was crueler than any we will ever have to face. Why did

He do all these things? Read why in John chapter 17, in His own words. I will sum it up by writing here verses 22-23, “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 what salvation is all about.

God’s love is the rock that our relationship with Him is built on. It is hard to follow God at a distance, yet so many of us try to do that. The further away from God we are, the easier it is for the devil to pluck us away from His love.

Just like with a shepherd and his sheep. The sheep that aren’t close to the shepherd, listening and obeying His voice, are the ones that are easy prey to the wolves. The ones that are watching everything that is going on outside of His love, with all the people who are not following Him are the ones who will easily get distracted and drawn away from Him. We have to stay close to Him.

God is love. We established that at the beginning of this chapter and earlier in the previous chapter. We can know that with our head, but we have to do more than that to receive it. To follow a shepherd, the sheep have to do more than think that the

shepherd is a good shepherd. They have to trust the shepherd's love. They have to yield to the shepherd so that they follow him.

You see, a shepherd doesn't go behind them and drive the sheep. Sheep herding is a lot different than cattle herding. Cattle herders drive the cattle. Shepherds lead the sheep. They go before them. They will pick out the green pastures and still waters. They go first so that they know they aren't driving them into dangerous territory, or over rocky cliffs. The shepherd leads them.

Jesus is our Shepherd. He leads us. He doesn't drive us. His love for us leads us. It beckons us to follow. If we can't see His love, then it is very hard to follow Him.

In a natural flock of sheep there are often shepherd pets. Those are the sheep that love the shepherd so much that they are always under his feet. Every shepherd has those few precious little sheep that soak up love like a sponge.

Then there are those sheep who are independent. They don't want to submit to the shepherd. They want to prove to the shepherd what they can do. They wander away just to show that they can do it.

Then there are those poor little sheep that in the past have had a bad shepherd. Maybe they had followed the wrong shepherd.

They had learned not to trust the shepherd. They are afraid to follow him up close.

Then there are the dumb sheep, the dull-witted ones. They are too slow minded to follow the shepherd. They can't catch on to where he is going. Why? Because their eyes and minds are on everything else but the shepherd. Half the time they don't even see the shepherd, they are so occupied with everything else around them.

Which of these sheep are the most protected? Is that the fault of the Shepherd? Now stop for just a minute and think about this question. Answer it honestly? Which of those sheep are you?

The devil's main job is to blind us from seeing the shepherd and His love. He wants us to fall behind Him so that he can destroy us. He wants us to become so occupied with everything else that we can't even see Him to follow Him. Then he can destroy us.

When we can't see love, we can't see it. The enemy will bring all kinds of circumstances, people, hurt, and battles against us. He will do all this to convince us that we aren't loved at all. He will cause us to fail so that we see ourselves as a failure. Then we fall into condemnation and forget that God could love us.

He will do anything he can to separate us from God's love. He will do everything he

can to cause us to be separated from the love of God's people, too. He specializes in getting us separated from the rest of the folks at the church. He will cause us to imagine offenses that they are doing. He will cause us to have hurt feelings, and really rub salt in the wound.

He will cause us to have a bitter spirit so that we don't forgive, and in so doing drive a wedge that can last for years. He will cause you to think all kinds of things that people are doing, when they really are wondering what is going on with you that you are distancing themselves from them. He can stand between two people and cause a fight between them that will wind up dividing an entire congregation.

He is a master in causing us to be separated from the shepherd and from the rest of the flock. There is safety in numbers. It is a lot harder for the wolves to get to the sheep when they are all clustered together in the flock. When that lone little sheep gets off to the side, though, there can be trouble.

The church should be a picture of the love of God. It is supposed to be the bride. Sometimes the church isn't a bride, in love with Jesus and in love with one another in His love, as far as the world's churches go. What do I mean by that? There are churches that are just there. Then there are churches

that are doing their best to let God's Spirit move, teaching God's Word. They are trying with all their hearts to fit the scriptural accounts of what a church is supposed to be. In the true bride of Christ, the Spirit-walking, Spirit-led church worldwide, there is a unity there that gets stronger and stronger as the day of our groom's appearing draws nearer.

The real bride of Christ is uniting in Spirit in God's love as the wedding date approaches. You can feel it when you meet someone who is born again, filled with the Spirit of God, obedient and spirit walking. You can feel it in the way that you hate to leave their fellowship when it is time to go. God is drawing His people together.

God's love is the power that brings His people together. God's love is the glue that sticks His church together. God's love is the force that draws us to the Shepherd in unity following Him, flowing together. If we can't submit to the love of the rest of the sheep, it is hard to be a part of the flock. If we can't be in the flock, we can't be under the Shepherd's care. Don't let the devil separate you from the flock.

What do we find when we follow the shepherd, and walk in His love? David, the shepherd, knew more than most about his heavenly Shepherd's love. Why? Because

he knew what it was like to be a shepherd himself. Psalms is filled with glimpses of a Shepherd's love. One of the most famous is Psalm 23. Please go back and read it now after having read this chapter about a Shepherd's love. Let's go back and make a list of what we can find when we are in our Shepherd's care.

1. We will have all we need.
2. We will lie down and rest in peace.
3. We will find those green pastures. The best pastures.
4. The Shepherd will lead us.
5. Our thirst will be satisfied.
6. Our soul will be restored.
7. We will be led in the right paths, the upright way, the righteous paths. We will be led in the paths that we need to walk in.
8. Even when we face death we won't have to fear.
9. We won't have to fear any evil.
10. God will be with us.
11. We will be comforted.
12. Even when enemies come we can feast in God's goodness.
13. We can be anointed.
14. Our cup will run over.
15. Goodness and mercy will follow us all of the days of our lives.

16. We will dwell in God's house forever.

Praise God! Praise God! What a wonderful shepherd. Let the great Shepherd love you. Run to His love. Don't let anything or anyone separate you from His love. Get sin out of the way. Sin separates us from His love. You can't open up your arms wide to love someone when your arms are full of things that the person you are reaching out to doesn't want. You can't open your arms wide to love Jesus when you are holding on to other things you shouldn't be holding on to.

Don't let this world keep you from following the Shepherd. It is so easy to get caught up in everything else that we neglect the One who died to love us. If you have started drifting away from the Shepherd, let Him draw you back to Calvary. Back to His precious love. You need to stay close to Him and in His fold. The wolves out there are many and they are all around you to destroy not only your life, but also your soul, and the lives and souls of those you love. Stay in His love. Stay in His care.

When we know the Shepherd's love we can know His voice. He can lead us. We can trust Him enough to submit our will to Him and do it His way instead of our own way. Then we can obey Him. There is no

greater and joy and peace than knowing that you are walking in obedience to the Lord.

When you find His love and get filled up with it, then you want to do all you can to please Him. You want to make a difference to others lives by doing what He leads you to do. It will become more and more important to you to hear the Shepherd's voice.

Chapter 4. Hearing the Voice of the Shepherd

I had a battle that I had gone through for some time. I have had times when the devil would come against me and put a fear against me saying, this is what you are. He would say to me that this is what people think you are. People don't really trust you.

Now when the devil is lying to you, you might not realize it at first. It seems like it is just thoughts in your head. For a long time I listened to those thoughts. Then God started delivering me from this bondage. I was able to pull back from these thoughts and identify that this wasn't me. This was the devil.

The devil had brought this spirit of fear against me that was making me not only hear his lies, but fall for what he was saying. Then I heard the voice of my Shepherd. He told me that this was not Him. I knew then that these things were not true. They weren't even real.

This was bondage from the enemy. If I would not have identified this, would have continued to listen to those lies, and receive them in my spirit as true, I would have taken all that on for real. When I heard the voice of the Shepherd, I was set free from all this.

It took me a while to hear Jesus through the rest of the voices: the enemies, and my own

condemnation and doubt. Then I was able to put the devil in his place and rise up above him. To be able to overcome the enemy is just one reason why we need to hear God's voice.

We need constant direction. Any more, it is dangerous to even go out of our homes without God's direction. Especially when you live in dangerous places like what is happening more and more in our country and abroad. We have friends in India in the region that was hit by the Tsunami. They later told me that they had intended to go to the coast that day. The Lord had spoken to them not to go. They heard and obeyed His voice.

Later when they went and saw the devastation there, they knew that He had spared their lives. How many of those folks killed in that destruction were in a listening and obedient relationship with the Lord? How many of them heard God's voice, but let flesh take over and went on any way? How many did God try to warn, but they were so out of practice with hearing His voice that they ignored it, just like they had the day before, and the day before that? How many didn't even know Him enough to hear His voice, even though they said they were His children? We need to hear and obey the voice of the Shepherd.

If my friend had not been in the practice of hearing and obeying, what would have happened to him and all of his family? Their

dead bodies would have joined the thousands of bodies floating up on that beach line. That sounds abrupt, but life and death, and reality often are. We need to let God speak and tell us when and where we need to go. If He says don't, then we need to stop. If we constantly let flesh have the rule in our life, then when that time comes when it is crucial that we hear God's voice, flesh will get in the way. Our families' bodies flesh or spiritual, will be washing up on the beaches of this life. We need to practice hearing the voice of the Shepherd. Here are some more reasons why.

One of the most amazing testimonies that I heard that came out of the 9-11 crisis was this. There was a woman who had spent time praying before she went to work that day. She was prayed up as we call it here at the ministry. She was already in tune with the Lord and had taken Him to work that morning. She worked in one of the twin tower buildings. When the first plane hit, she naturally prayed. That was what she was in the habit of doing. She didn't just go off on her own with her own thoughts. She didn't just follow whoever was going wherever. She didn't just fall apart. She prayed. She asked God's direction. She did what she was in the habit of doing every day of her life.

God answered her prayer for guidance, just like He had every day before. He spoke to her and told her which direction to go in. She ran

off in that direction. She didn't analyze it. She listened to Her Lord and she moved. And fast. People saw her determination, and asked her where she was going. She answered them that the Lord had told her to run in that direction and so she was. They got behind her and followed her.

She ran out of the building safely in the midst of all the hundreds that perished. Not only was she safe, but 30 people who followed her were safe as well. If we hear and obey the voice of the Lord, we will make a difference to those around us. Especially to those we love. We will lead them in the right directions. We will make a difference in the lives of those around us.

We need to follow God and hear His voice. Yes, His Word speaks to us. And it is important. But we also need to hear His voice as He speaks to our hearts. Jesus told us about the voice of the Shepherd in John 10:1-5, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth: and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not

follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.”

There are a lot of strangers in our life that we can follow. If we aren't careful, it is easy to listen to everything but God. When we are facing critical decisions that we need to make, who do we go to? Often we go to our parents, or our friends, to those people who aren't led by the Lord in their own decisions. We will ask people whose personal lives are a wreck how to fix our own situations. We need to go to the Shepherd and not to people that we really can't count on to give us sound advice.

I am amazed at the number of Christians that are getting caught up in false doctrines. They deny the very core of our beliefs. I've heard some churches even deny the virgin birth. Some deny the blood of Christ. Some deny a need for repentance. Some say that everybody goes to heaven whether they accept God or not. Some say that the rapture will not take place. Others say that it already has happened.

All kinds of nonsense is going on in the name of the church. When I hear of people getting carried away into things that are not true according to God's Word, I know that they are not hearing the voice of their Shepherd. Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice. Another they won't follow".

I know a lady that used to go to church with me. She knocked on my door not long ago

visiting with a Jehovah Witness visiting team. I just looked at her and she saw a lot in my look. Then I asked her what she was doing in that. I reminded her that she knew what it was like to shout and rejoice in the power of God in Holy Ghost filled services.

She answered me, “We’ve learned about all that stuff, how it isn’t real. It is just a trick.” That was her first mistake. She let somebody tell her that something that she possessed wasn’t real. If you have something, then no one should be able to tell you that isn’t real.

Her other mistake was not listening to the voice of the Shepherd. I know God has told her to come away from that false doctrine, but for some reason she has her fingers stuck in her spiritual ears. We all need to get our fingers out of our ears so that we can hear the truth. The Bible says that many in the last days would be deceived. We need to hear the voice of the Shepherd.

I knew a lady who decided to move to a new area. She didn’t pray through on her decision. She just decided to do it, and did it regardless of any feelings that she had to the contrary. She didn’t hear the Shepherd’s voice. She decided what to do. Her husband and kids finally agreed. They moved to a new place. This new place had a terrible drug problem. Both her son and her husband wound up addicted to drugs. We need to listen before we move.

I had a friend who was looking for a job. The Lord led them to pray for a list of specific things that they wanted as qualities of this job. They asked for a certain number of hours, working with Christians, when they would work, what they wanted as their specific duties. She listened to the voice of the Shepherd.

God told her to go to this certain business and put in an application. There was a job available at that location that had just opened up that very day. The company hadn't even publicly posted the position. She had the perfect qualifications for it. They hired her on the spot. Did the job match her list she had made? Sure did. Listen to God's voice. Sometimes we fuss because God blesses others more than He blesses us. It may be because when God tells us to go, we don't go.

I didn't get married until I was in my late twenties. I had come to the place where I had stopped looking for Mr. Right as I used to call my future husband. I gave it to God and let Him look. I even eventually gave up on the idea of marriage.

God told me one day that I was going to meet my husband. At that same exact time, He told my husband that He was going to meet his wife to be. We listened and there we were. We have been married now for over 30 years. We have had our ups and downs, but we both know that God has put us together. That has helped

hold us together with a glue that stuck for all those years. We have got a lot of friends whose marriages didn't make it. Maybe they were so busy looking for themselves that they forgot to hear their Shepherd. We need to listen. It will keep us from a lot of pain.

My grandmother had a saying. "There is only one way and that is God's way." She was right. She knew. She had served God for most of her 96 years. That is so true. I don't care what aspect of our life it is. There is only one way that will always work. That is doing it God's way. We think sometimes that being led by God's Spirit is just for church time. Then the rest of the time we know better than God what we should do. We don't know a thing. The quicker that we can admit this, the quicker we can hear God's voice.

We need His direction in everything in our lives, in every decision we make, in our relationships with those we love, in the direction that we choose to take, in when we leave our house to go to town. We need to hear God's voice. Think about it. How many times have you heard God's voice and it protected you? How many times did you refuse to hear and you faced a struggle? God's way works.

I know someone who really hears God's voice. They have refused to listen and obey for so though long that they have almost silenced Him. Why? They are very rebellious. They

don't want it to be anyway but they're way. They are also more than just a little bit spoiled. They only hear God's voice when He is telling them to do something that they want to do.

When God is dealing with them to stop something that they want to do, or to repent of some area in their life, they refuse to hear. God is dealing with their heart to get them to repent of some areas. They do what the Bible calls "stiffening their neck". It means like it sounds. They set their head in the direction they want to go in, and they go regardless of what anybody thinks or says, even God. They refuse to hear.

What will happen if they never repent? If they die will they go to heaven while they are rebelling against God? If the Lord comes back today, will they go? If they face a catastrophe tomorrow, how can God lead them away from disaster? How can God use them to reach out to others? How can God use them to protect the ones that they love? How can they really give his best to his family?

Who loves you like Jesus does? Run to Him. Maybe while reading this chapter you have realized that this is a weak area of your life. It is time to fix it. Run to the Shepherd. He loves you so much. He can renew and restore your relationship with Him. You can find a new walk with Him that is closer than it has ever been before.

God wants to fellowship with you. He wants to draw you into the circle of His care. Let Him love you and take care of you. Let His voice be as precious and dear to you as your voice is to Him. What a wonderful Shepherd he is.

What does hearing the voice of the Shepherd have to do with finding salvation that sticks? God will keep us. He will guard our souls. He will tell us what we need to hear to be safe. If we don't hear His voice, how can He lead us in those green pastures beside those still water?

When we hear the voice of the Shepherd, we need to obey. Obedience is the key that unlocks not only God's Word, but also His presence in our lives. We need to practice listening and obeying God.

Chapter 5. Obedience and God's Love

What does obedience have to do with God's love? What does all this have to do with salvation? Remember back just a minute to the last time that you got in trouble with your parents. For me it was during my wild college days I mentioned earlier. I was doing my own little thing, busily destroying my life. At first I thought that I had hidden it pretty well from my Mom. How many know that you don't hide things from mothers? Mothers know. Amen?

All this time, my Mom was praying for me. My life style, though, was driving a wedge between us. I was guilty and I knew it. I was not doing what I was supposed to do. I was doing a lot I wasn't supposed to do. I could not feel the love from my parents that I could feel before I got off on this wrong track. There was definitely a divide in our relationship. We didn't talk about it, but it was there all the same.

Now there were others in my family that weren't going through the mess that I was going through. They didn't have the problems in their relationship with my parents that I had. They had their favor. My parents didn't love them more and me less, but it was a whole lot easier to love them. We had a split in our relationship but they didn't.

If I would have died before I made things right, I would have been a disobedient child and

I would have died outside of that circle of their favor. Outside of that circle of their love. Not because they didn't love me, but because I had separated myself from their love. Do you see where I am going?

While I was out of favor with my parents, I was also out of favor with God. I had turned my back on His love and His will and His way for my life. I had wiped my feet on His Word and was walking in disobedience to Him doing my own thing. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Hebrews 10:26 tells us, "For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." I was sinning constantly. I had no repentance. There was no forgiveness because I refused to admit my sin, repent, and stop doing it.

Why should we ever take it for granted that we can get by with doing whatever that we want to and still get to heaven? Why should we ever take the attitude that we don't need to repent, because God has already forgiven us? Why do we need to feel bad for our sin?

Some people take the attitude that their flesh made them sin, so it is OK to do that. It wasn't their spirit that sinned. This makes little sense. I've heard people even use that excuse to try to get by with their sin. I Peter 2:16 talks about a cloke that we try to use to hide our sins and

warns against this. “As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.” Jesus said about Himself in John 15:22, “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloke for their sin.” A cloke is a coat like thing that covers people up.

Jesus took away the excuses. He took away all the clokes that can hide our sin. He ripped up the rugs that we try to sweep our sin under. There is now no more excuses, clokes, rugs, or whatever we try to hide behind. Isn't that wonderful?

Isn't it wonderful that we don't have anything to hide behind? How could we ever be set free if we were allowed to get by? If God excused our sin how would we ever be able to get set free from it? God doesn't wink at our sin because He has made a way for us to be forgiven, delivered, set free, made new, and victorious. Why do we need to hide it? God made a way for us to overcome it. We just have to be willing to be obedient.

We don't have to live a life that is hiding from God. We can't hide from Him anyway. Just like when you were small and you were hiding something that you were doing from your parents. You really almost wished that it could be over and you could be welcome again in the circle of their love. Run to the Lord like you did to you parents. He will accept you.

No, He won't excuse you. He will forgive you though. He will restore you. He will love you. Be real with Him. Repent. Ask forgiveness. He died to forgive you. Then after forgiveness, He will help you to overcome the thing that got you down. He won't leave you there to drown.

Now let's go back to my story. If I had died before I had made things right with my heavenly Father would I have been outside His circle? Outside, not because He didn't love me, but because I had chosen to walk away? Even though I had been saved at an earlier age, would I have gone to heaven if I had died without making things right? Without repenting and asking God to forgive me? The forgiven sin is a sin that has been repented of. Would my salvation have stuck while I was standing between the gates of hell and heaven if I had never repented? Whose fault would that have been?

It is important here to talk more about what repentance means. I have been a teacher for many years. If two kids in my class were in the habit of fussing and feuding, I would have them to come up front. They would have to apologize and shake hands. They would have to work it out. Sometimes this would work. Sometimes it wouldn't. It depended on how sincere their repentance was. How sorry they were for what they had done. If they weren't

very sorry, they would turn around and do it again.

Have you ever had anyone to say I'm sorry, but do it again in the next little while? How sincere was their repentance? Sometimes we do God the same way. When we say, I'm sorry, then turn around and do it again, over and over, how sincere is our repentance? When we love God with all our heart, we won't do that. We will be so sorry when we do wrong that it tears our heart out because we have let God down. It will crush our heart. We certainly won't go out and do that same thing again. Not willingly.

The motive behind our obedience is important. You can't separate love and obedience. Love brings about submission. Submission brings about obedience. You can't hide from the fact though that God also has a side that is judgment. You can't separate the two.

The God who called the fire down on Sodom and Gomorrah is the same God that sent His Son to die for our sins. That doesn't make Him a schizoid, a split personality. It makes Him a just and a righteous God. God doesn't take any junk. He is upright and righteous. God doesn't wink at our sin. If He did, where would the world be now? A part of His righteousness is His judgment. Psalm 119:137 tell us, "Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments." Jeremiah 23:5 tells us,

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.”

I think of those teachers who had no backbone. They weren’t able to control their class. You never knew where you stood, because they let anything go. Praise God, God isn’t like that. His judgments are true and righteous, settled forever in heaven. We want to obey Him because He loves us, yes. We want to submit to that love. But we also know that if we don’t obey Him, we will have to face His righteous judgment.

All too often today we have lost the fear of God. We have lost the respect of God as being the righteous judge. We only want to talk about His love, but not His wrath. God is both. We’ll talk more in a chapter coming up about God’s righteousness and how that fits with His love.

Obedience isn’t just something we do every once in a while. It is a way of life. We can’t be obedient and once in a while listen to God, doing what He says. It doesn’t work that way. Obedience is a total attitude. It shows our submission to God’s Spirit. It shows we have chosen to lay down our own self-will and do it God’s way. If we want salvation to stick, both of these are important, submitting to God’s will and obedience. What does the Bible say about obedience?

A lot of the promises we find in the Bible are given with the condition of obedience. For example, how do we become prosperous? You obey God. Joshua 1:8. Read it. How can we bring a blessing to our children? You obey God. Deuteronomy 5:29. Read it. How do we abide in God's love? Obey God. John 15:10. How do we build a house on the rock that will stand through the storms? Obey God.

Now let's get down to where the rubber meets the road. What exactly does obedience have to do with salvation? Let's read a couple of scriptures. Matthew 7:21 tells us, "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."

Revelations 22:14 tells us, "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." So where does that leave the disobedient? Seems like to me it would leave them outside of the city. It is very important to be obedient.

I heard someone preaching. They said that salvation is not based on what we do. God's grace is sufficient. They went on to say that what we do doesn't matter. It is all grace. We don't have to work to earn our salvation. Now all that sounds good. Especially if you want a spiritual life that is an easy breeze without any commitment or labor involved. Especially if

you want to be able to get by without doing certain things and you want to get to do some things that you aren't supposed to do. But is this the truth?

What does the Bible have to say about it? First let's look closely at what this guy was saying. I have to admit a part of it is right. That is what makes it so dangerous. We can fall into a doctrine that the devil has come up with to confuse us. That doctrine can destroy our soul if we aren't careful.

How does the devil trap people? In much the same way that someone traps animals. You can't set a trap that stands out brightly. You have to blend it in with the environment. It was to be hidden. Then the unsuspecting animal falls or steps right in. That is the way the enemy operates. He blends in enough of the truth so that we get caught up in the doctrine or idea. What this trap can catch is our eternal soul.

Let's go back and look again at what that preacher was saying and take it to God's Word. He said that salvation is not based on what we do, but on grace. God's grace is sufficient. Now God's grace is sufficient. That is true. Where would we be without God's grace? The price that Jesus paid at Calvary is enough. When He said, "It is finished", it was done. However, we have to look at this thing a little

closer before we get stuck in something that can destroy us.

Here is one way to look at this. I can build a perfect interstate highway between two cities. I can sacrifice my labor and blood and backbone to build this road. I can make it an easy straight road. I can even make it free to travel. But if someone refuses to follow the signs and keep on the highway, and they get lost, whose problem is that? My work was done, and done right. Through disobedience they chose the wrong road, and chose not to reach home. That is how it is with salvation.

If we don't do it God's way following the road He mapped out for us, we will be eternally lost. We want to do our own thing and then come up with all the scriptures we can find that we can twist around to justify ourselves. We want to live on the edge of our experience with God and in our relationship with Him. We want to do as little as we can to get by. We don't really want to hear His voice because He might be telling us not to do something that we have already made up our mind that we are going to do. We halfway listen so that we can hear what we want to hear. This leads to us walking in a half way truth that is very dangerous.

John 7:16-17 tells us, "Jesus answered them and said; My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me. If any man will do His will he shall

know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.”

If we aren’t doing God’s will, we aren’t going to know the truth. The devil can hand us anything and we’ll swallow it. He will do just that. We’ll totally justify ourselves as we swallow his lies, knowing all the time deep down in that it isn’t the truth. But we are secretly looking for a way out of truth. So we settle for a half-truth.

The root of this whole scene is rebellion. That will cause us to want to do whatever it is that we shouldn’t do, and it will make us hard headed to go and do what it is that we are told not to do. If God doesn’t show us this, we may not realize what is going on. We can’t live for God until we submit to Him. We have to lay our will down and have it God’s Way.

Obedience is what keeps us on the right road. If we don’t stay on the right road, we won’t reach our destination. Where is grace in all this? Yes, that preacher was right. God’s grace is sufficient. Grace is God’s favor when we don’t deserve it. It is God’s help and love when we don’t deserve it. We can’t go on without God’s grace.

It is rough down here on earth. Without God’s grace we’d never make it. Yes, we need God’s grace to make it. Oh, how we need it every day. It is God’s grace that causes Him to reach down when we are so weary that we can’t

go on. It is God's grace that reaches down and gets us out of the pit we slide into when we disobeyed Him. It is His grace that sets us on that solid rock when it feels like the bottom is sinking out of the place where we're standing. It is His grace that leads us everyday and keeps us in His love. But that doesn't mean that we don't have to follow. Does it mean that it is all up to Him and we do nothing except what we jolly well want to?

I was trying to reach out to someone who had fallen into this "seem right" way of thinking. I call it that because of the scripture in Proverbs 14:12, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." There were some major areas in his life that he needed to get right with God. There were some things that he needed to quit doing. He went along fine for a while and it seemed like it was OK to do these things.

For a while, he heard God's voice in his spirit telling him not to do those things, convicting him. He went on by these road signs. I watched God try to get his attention. Rebelliously he rammed on past those road signs. It has been a while since God has dealt with his heart. He is sidetracked on a road going nowhere, refusing to heed the signs that point him toward home.

This person is close to my heart and this is a fearful thing to see happening in his life. I

couldn't make it without God's Spirit to bring me back in line when I go to the side of God's will. We can continuously go our own way, and silence the voice of God by refusing to hear it. We can come to the place that we no longer hear him.

Romans 1:17-32 talks about the outcome of this. Please read this. I didn't write it out here. Hey, it is really important enough to get your Bible out and read it, even though I didn't write it out. This is the outcome of refusing to do it God's way. This is the outcome of people who have the truth and walk in disobedience, in unrighteousness. Zephaniah 3:2 talks about some people like this. "She obeyed not the voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in the Lord; she drew not near to her God."

What about this person that I was talking about? Right now the "lord" is talking to him. He hasn't changed in his disobedience. He still refuses to line up to God's will for his life. The things that God has told him not to do he is still doing. But he feels that he can hear the voice of God. My question? Is it really God that he is hearing? If it isn't, then who is it? A combination of flesh and the devil? He is making life-changing decisions based on those voices.

He is beginning to be discouraged because things aren't working out right. He has had bouts with depression and has even from

time to time become suicidal. He goes to church every Sunday, but he only hears what part of God's Word he wants to hear. If conviction comes, he quickly runs away. Yes, God can help him, but only when he decides to do it God's way instead of his own way. Only if he starts following the signs and gets back on the right road.

He ignores both God's Word and His Spirit that tries to direct him, I wonder where it all will end. If the Lord returns while he is this way, do you think that he will get to go? Is there hope? Yes, there is hope. It is my prayer that his eyes be opened. That he faces something that is so hard, so rough, that it brings him to his knees begging for God to have his way. There he can find a relationship with the Lord that is real. When he finally does, he will be so on fire for God that nothing will be able to stop him.

There are two kinds of obedience. One is obeying the Word of God. We have talked about lots of scripture for that one already. Also, throughout the scriptures we see that we have to obey the leading of God's Spirit in our hearts. Where would Joseph have been had he not heard God's voice in prison. Where would Paul have been had he not heard God's voice on the road to Damascus? All throughout the scripture people obeyed God's voice and His Spirit. Both are important. It is important to

know, however, that both God's Word and His Spirit will always agree. His Spirit will never lead you in a direction His Word says not to go in.

I know a pastor who had a lady to tell him, "The Lord has told me that we are to get married." What is the problem with this? He was already happily married. Was that the Lord's voice? It surely didn't line up with the Word of God. God's Spirit speaking to you in your heart will always agree with His Word. What about the advise of those people who are not Spirit led? You know the answer to that already. Yet so many times we'll listen to the advise of others, or to flesh, and we'll go that direction, even when it is not lining up with the Word of God. Remember that you always need to seek God's direction, His voice, His Word, and obey.

One of the things that hinders a lot of people from obeying is that they are afraid that they can't do what God is telling them to do. God may be leading them to do something for Him. They don't obey because they are afraid that they can't.

Many times it is easy to answer God with an "I can't. I'm not big enough, strong enough in God, wise enough, perfect enough, holy enough, righteous enough, smart enough, or educated enough to obey You, God." We forget that when God asks us to do something, no

matter how small or great, He does so knowing that we can do it, either because we already have the abilities we need, or because He is getting ready to give them to us.

God knows us better than we do ourselves. He knows our innermost weaknesses and strengths. He will not require us to do something we would only fail at. Why would He do that? As a teacher, I would never give one of the Kindergartners Algebra tests and fail them because they couldn't do it.

God is wiser than we are. He would never require you to do something you can't do. He will push you to your limits to cause you to grow. He will add talents and gifts so that you can do far more than you would naturally. He will give you the ability to do what He asks. But He would never, never ask you to do something you can't do, just to see you fail. He loves you. It is wonderful to be able to trust this great love that He has for you. Many times people hurt us, and the devil sees to it that we are hurt. If we allow it to, these hurts cause us to have things inside of us that separate us from trusting God's love.

Also many times, because we have failed to obey God, there is a barrier that causes us to be separated from Him. I can remember many times as a child at home, we would do something wrong. We would cover it all up carefully hoping our parents wouldn't find out

so that we wouldn't get in trouble. But then that guilt came. It was worse than a punishment. Punishments just lasted for a short time then they were over. This guilt went on until we were found out and forgiven and everything was made right. This may sound strange, but it was a real relief when we were found out.

Sin and disobedience can cause these kinds of barriers to separate us from being able to know God's love. We need to ask Him to tear away anything in our life that stops us from being able to receive His love. When we do receive it, and we understand its depths we will know that nothing can separate us from His love. Only our own sin and desires of our heart can separate us. And these can't do it if we repent and ask God to forgive us, and we set our heart not to do that again. When we know this about His love for sure, then we can begin to trust Him. That trust allows us to know that whatever He asks us to do, we can do, if we try with all our hearts.

Some of my best spiritual teachers have pushed me to every ounce of my strength. They always had new things for me to try, new heights to climb in God. I would have never been able to reach for those heights if I had never trusted their guidance and their knowledge that I would be able to do what they asked. I knew when they asked me to do

something, that it was something that I could do. It may be that it would be a great challenge, but they knew ultimately that I could do it. I could trust them in that. We can trust God in that, also. He doesn't put on us more than we can bear or handle. He is wise. He loves us. We can trust Him with our very soul's salvation. Don't hesitate to do what He asks you to do.

Never say God, I can't. Never come up with excuses with why you can't. If He asks you to, you can, and you will, if you try with all your might. He already knew the outcome before He asked you. He will answer a multitude of excuses with just a few words. He will simply say, "I am with Thee." There are many stories of people in the Bible that had all kinds of excuses. They had all kinds of reasons where seemingly they couldn't do what God asked them to do. God said that they could. They did. These are also the stories of what they accomplished when they stepped out and obeyed.

Jeremiah is one such person. We don't know exactly how old he was when the Word of the Lord came to Him, but Jeremiah 1:4-5 tells us, "Then the Word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." God told him how

well He knew him. God said, “Even before you were formed in your mother’s womb I knew all about you.”

When God asks you to do something, how well does He know you, your weaknesses and abilities? Even before He formed you, He knew you. God isn’t looking for perfect people to serve Him. Jeremiah thought of his greatest weakness (at least in his opinion). He answered God in verse 6, “Behold I cannot speak: for I am but a child.” God answered Him in verse 7, “Say not I am a child; for thou shalt go to all that I send thee and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.”

It didn’t matter about his weaknesses, he was just to go where God sent him and speak what God gave him to speak. Then in verse 9 God added the finishing touch. “Then the Lord put forth His hand and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, behold I have put my Words in thy mouth.” What happened to Jeremiah’s excuse? What happened to his weakness?

When we listen to God and obey Him, we can do things that are far greater than anything we can even imagine. We can do great things. We may not even understand the impact they will have on those around us. We just follow the Leader, the One whose very thoughts are so far above ours that we can’t comprehend them. 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.” He makes a way where there seemeth none. If we walk in the paths He makes for us, do what He says, speak what He puts in our mouths, it will astonish us what we can accomplish in Him. Where are our excuses? Where are our weaknesses?

How about Jeremiah? What did God use him to accomplish, just by getting him to follow what He said to do? Jeremiah 1:10 tells us, “I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant.” God used Jeremiah to change the course of whole nations. Verse 18 and 19 says, “For behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land, and they shall fight against thee; but they shalt not prevail against thee; for I am with thee saith the Lord to deliver thee.”

In the course of one conversation with a child, God changed the history of nations. He spoke and gave Jeremiah His Word, which had the power to make happen what was spoken. Then He touched Jeremiah’s lips and gave him

the words that he would need. He spoke the victory Jeremiah would have, that his enemies would not prevail against him.

Throughout Jeremiah's life he would have many enemies, but not one prevailed against him. This child, because of God's plan and His Word, became a miracle man. What can you do for God when He asks you? Can you stand before Him and tell Him that you can't do what He has asked?

Don't look at the circumstances and think that you can't. Don't look at your weaknesses and fail to ever try. If God says you can conquer the land, get ready to conquer it. Don't look at the fact that you may be the only one that hears God and wants to obey. Don't think no one will hear what you have to say. If God says do it and you know this beyond any shadow of any doubt, do it, no matter if the entire world around you says you can't. If God gives you a Word, let His Word cause you to win.

Get a vision from God. His Word says if we fail to have a vision, something to do, something to keep going for, something to believe in, something to drive us and press us on, then we will perish. What is the difference in Jeremiah and you? Only you can decide whether you will say yes to God, or "No, God, I can't."

We see that it is important to obey God. We can't find victory in our salvation until we learn to obey. Maybe when you read this chapter you begin to feel that there are some areas in your life that need to be fixed. Maybe you have started to feel that you need to come clean. With God's help, we can clean our house. We'll talk more about that coming up. Next, we'll talk about God's righteousness and how it fits with His love. We need to do the things that God commands. We need to obey Him, because we love Him. We also need to obey Him because we know and fear His righteousness with an awesome respect.

Chapter 6. The Righteousness of God

Psalm 48: 10, “According to Thy name, O God, so is Thy praise unto the ends of the earth: Thy right hand is full of righteousness.” Psalm 97:2, “Clouds and darkness are round about Him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne.” Psalm 119:137, “Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments.” Psalm 145:17, “The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works.”

What does it mean when the Bible talks about the righteousness of God? It is a hard for our human minds to understand such a thing. We can't be perfect. We can't even understand perfection and what brings it about. Because of that, we tend to run away from anything that seems righteous. We think that if it is something righteous, then what would it want to do with us? We talked in earlier chapters about the love the Shepherd has for us. That is what draws us to God. His love. We often fail to see that without God's righteousness we couldn't have His love. Let me illustrate by a human example.

I work a lot with kids and their parents. I never will forget the day that I heard two teenagers discussing their parents. The girl was saying how her parents were so strict. She was complaining because she had to let them know

where she was going every time that she went out. She had to be where she told them she was going to be because often they would check on her to be sure she was there. She wasn't allowed to hang with certain friends who were in a certain crowd. There was a boy that she liked who wasn't a good influence at all. She knew it, but wouldn't admit it to her parents. She wasn't allowed to date him. He was into drugs and the parents knew that. She went on and on talking to this other teen.

He took as much as he could take then he jumped up with tears in his eyes. I never will forget what he told her. "My mother put me out of the house when I was only 14 years old. Her boyfriend didn't want me around. So it turned out my mother didn't want me either. I have had to live wherever I could. My mom doesn't care about where I go or when I come in. She doesn't even know."

He went on to say, "She found out that I was on drugs and hasn't even talked to me about it. She doesn't care who I am hanging around with even though she knows some of my friends have gotten me into trouble. She just doesn't want me to make any trouble for her. She doesn't care."

Then he told her, "Your parents love you enough to care about where you are going, who you are with, and what you are doing. Don't

you complain to me about them again. I would give anything if I could have parents like that.” By the look on his face when he said that, I doubt that she ever did complain to him again. I think that day changed her life as to how she saw her parents.

That is one of the best pictures of God’s righteousness and how it fits with His love that I have ever seen. Sometimes just like teens we adults can be pretty spoiled to get our way. We want to do what we want to do even if it is the opposite of what is best for us. We want God there in our life, but we want Him to be like a permissive parent, one who lets us get by with sin.

We want Him to take care of us when we are in trouble, but we want Him to leave us alone as far as His demanding commitments and priorities. We don’t want to hear about a righteous God that has an upright, right standard, who expects us to live by those same standards. We only want to hear about His love.

We don’t want to hear about a God who demands obedience because He knows what is best for us. We don’t want to hear about a God who calls sin sin, who says right is right and wrong is wrong. A God who says there are no gray areas. We don’t want to hear of the absolutes that are there in His Word because He is an absolute righteous God.

Human nature wants to slide by on half-truths. Church, there is a lesson to learn from this young man. If God were to be that kind of parent that some of us want him to be, the kind of parent that girl wanted hers to be, would He love us at all? How can you separate God's righteousness from His love?

I don't need a God who is so busy wavering between right and wrong that I don't even know which is which. I don't need a God who changes His rules like the wind to fit His mood. I don't want a God who has a separate set of rules for each set of people. What was right hundreds of years ago when David lived is still right for you now. Right and wrong hasn't changed. It is settled forever. As settled as God is. Malachi 3:6 tells us, "For I am the Lord, I change not..."

God has never changed. Neither has His Word or His truth. There is no modern truth that is better suited to us today. There is no modern church that has that modern Bible being taught with that modern God. All that is fake. It isn't real.

I read a sign on the front of a church that said, "Not your parent's church." God hasn't changed. His standards are the same as they were for our parents. If a church thinks that it needs to have something more modern to draw the young people, then they are sadly missing

out on giving them the truth. The truth will not change.

God is older than time. He knows what is best. That has never changed. He will be the same all throughout eternity as He is now. He is perfect. After all, how can you improve on perfection? As a footnote, I have worked with teens for a lot of years. I have found that they don't want permissiveness. They are smart enough to figure out that doesn't work, just like the girl at the first of this story. Most of them want something that will hold them through the hellish places they have to walk in. Something that will hold them through what they have to face in life. Give them the truth anointed with the Holy Ghost. Lead them to a right and real relationship with God. Let God do the rest. His Spirit will draw in the crowds. Then when they come, they will find something that is a lot better than a cheap imitation.

David went through a lot. Most of the hard times that he went through was because of his sin. He lusted after a married woman. Laid with her. Got her pregnant. Sent her husband to the battlefield so he would be killed to cover up his sin. He married the woman. He lost that child.

Things were rough through all that. It got even worse. Later his son rose up against him in his kingdom to take it from him. He tried to connive and take David's throne from

him. Through all that, his son was killed. David knew about sin. He knew how easy it was to get caught up in it. He also knew the pain of the price we have to pay when we allow sin to rule our lives. He knew how important it was to serve a righteous God- a God that would convict him when he sinned so that he knew he had sinned. There was no doubt in his mind about this after God sent His prophet Nathan to tell him that he had sinned.

Read II Samuel 12. Nathan was a righteous man. There was no hiding from the truth with him. God sent him as a messenger to tell David of his sin. What was the price for David's sin? II Samuel 12:11 tells us, "Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbor, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun." We read in verse 14, "Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die."

Sin has an awful price. Romans 6:23 tells us, "For the wages of sin is death..." There is no way to white wash that. There is no way to think it away. It is true and it is the Word of God. When we forget that, then is when we wish that God wasn't a righteous God. What kind of God would be One who knew this

fact, and still allowed His people to get by when they sinned? One who allowed them to make up their own rules as they go along? How much would He love them? This verse is true especially with young people today. The wages of sin is death. I see it when young girls get out of church, get involved with drugs, get pregnant and lose that child because of complications caused by the drugs. I have seen these too many times.

Then there were the times when young people get out and get drunk. They drive and kill themselves, or they kill their friends. They get sexually permissive and contract aids and carry it to others. They get depressed because of all the turmoil in their lives and they take a gun and blow their brains out.

The wages of sin is death. Just like David knew, there is a price to be paid for sin. How fair would God be if He winked at sin and let us continue in our disobedience destroying our lives and the lives of those we love.

David knew the wrath of God against sin. He knew he wasn't going to get by. He knew that he would pay the price that God's righteousness demanded. How did he feel about God's righteousness? You might think after he had suffered through all that punishment that he would be angry at God's righteousness. Go back and read the beginning of this chapter. What book of the Bible is all

those verse from that refer to God's righteousness? Who wrote that book? David himself. What might have happened in David's life if Nathan would never have carried God's Word to him? How might his story have ended if God had never punished his sin so that he never did it again? As human nature has it, he probably would have returned to that sin, and it would have been easier the next time. Then even easier the time after that.

What kind of king would he have been then? He had just seen the fall of Saul, because of Saul's disobedience. The outcome of that was that Saul had lost his kingdom. David did not want to do the same. He loved the righteousness of God because that righteousness was his anchor. How much did he honor Nathan who God sent to warn him? He named one of his own sons Nathan.

God called David a man after his own heart. How could that be? Go back and reread the punishment that God gave him. How could he be a man after God's heart? Surely the Lord couldn't do that to someone and love them. Could He?

God never did hate David. He punished him because He loved him. My mother used to say this to me when she was ready to spank me for something I had done wrong, (and when she did that I deserved it). She would say these words that most of us have heard from our

mothers. “This will hurt me a lot worse than it will hurt you. But I love you and you have to be punished.” You know what. After that punishment, most times I didn’t do that again. It took me a while to get the part about it hurting her. Now on the adult side of things, I have heard some others say that to their children. Now I know what that means. Also, I know that the wages of sin is death, but I also know the rest of that verse in Romans 6:23. “...but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

I know about God’s love. Yes, there is punishment, but praise God there is also grace. Sin brings about death, but there is still hope. There is a gift. God is love. Eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. David had found that gift. He looked past the punishment into the eyes of His Savior and found there that there was hope. He was forgiven. He could go on in God’s love.

You might say, “But Jesus hadn’t been born yet. How could David know his Savior’s love?” Prophecies are things that were written in the Bible about certain events, telling that these things would happen. The neat thing about prophecies is that often they were written hundreds or even thousands of years before they happened. I have a little Bible that has marked all the prophecies about Jesus’ birth, his death, His resurrection, and His ministry. Have you

ever seen one of those? They are a neat study tool. You would be amazed at all the verses in Psalms that are marked. David lived one thousand years before Jesus was born. He wrote in the book of Psalms many details that about Jesus, the history of his time, and events that happened. These all came true.

David had certainly been given an understanding about Jesus. Maybe it was because he needed that glimpse of God's mercy. He knew that the wages of sin was death, but he knew there was more. He trusted in God. He loved God's righteousness. When you look up how many times David used the word "righteousness" in the Psalms, you know it was an important topic to him. Read some of these verses. David revered God's righteousness.

Yes we sin. Yes, we have a nature to sin. But there is no excuse for our sin. There is nothing that will make God wink at our sin. We will face judgment and punishment for our sins unless we repent of them and turn from them. Yes, we will be forgiven, but there is a price that we will pay. Sin always carries a price. Something that we have to pay. It always brings about bad things in our life whether we want to admit it or not.

Jesus did not die to excuse us from our sins, but to forgive us. He died to reinstate us as sons of God. David knew the blessing of being restored to God's favor after his punishment

was over. God's love remained with him until his death. And beyond that. How do we know? Read his final Psalm that he wrote. It is recorded in II Samuel in 22:1-51. Please read it. It closes with these two verses. "He is the tower of salvation for His king: and sheweth mercy to His anointed, unto David, and to his seed for ever more." Praise God. David had found salvation that stuck. It stuck past his sin, past his mistakes, past his failures. It stuck all the way to eternity.

So, what does all this have to do with us? We need to remember, before we pay the ultimate price, that the wages of sin is death. Then after we allow God's Spirit to convict us we need to repent. We need to fall on our faces at the altar and let God clean our hearts out. We need to clean our house. Then we can find His love once again, like David.

How can we do this house cleaning that is needed so badly. The next chapter talks about Cleaning Our House.

Chapter 7. Cleaning My House

I have seen some of the worst house cleaners in the world. I have been known to pull a few house cleaning tricks myself. I admit that I started out young. My mom would say, “You can’t go until you clean your room.” Well, you can dump things under the bed and in the closet in a whole lot less time than it takes to put them away. Just don’t open the closet door when you clean that way after you put it all in there. This all worked of course until my mom caught on. (Now admit it. How many of you have done this same thing? Remember those days.) Even today I am guilty of being so busy that I don’t have time to clean really good.

I admit I am one of those house cleaners who clean the dirt out of the middle of the floor. I clean up the things that you can see and pray that the things that you don’t see, those things that are not right there out in the open in plain sight, don’t overtake you. Like the cobwebs in the closet corners. Now mind you, I don’t live in filth, but I don’t live in total cleanliness either. Just don’t open my closets and for heaven’s sake don’t look under my bed.

Do you remember when you first got saved? I remember a little boy about middle school age that described his salvation like this. He put it about as right as anybody that I have heard describe salvation. When he described how he

felt, he didn't use big words. He put it very plainly and very nicely. He said, "I feel like Jesus took me by the heels and shook me upside down until He shook all the dirt out." Can you put it any better than that? Then he said, "I feel like Jell-O inside. I feel all light and fluffy".

Remember when Jesus first shook you by the heels until all the dirt fell out. I remember that everything looked different. Everything was so much brighter. My load rolled over onto His shoulders and He carried it so much better than I did. I was ready to tell the whole world. Praise God, that is not the only time that we can come clean. Every day, I need to come clean. God can shake the dirt out everyday. We have to just let Him.

I had a precious aunt who used to say, "People are chunks. They just chunk in so much stuff until that they are walking chunks. You can tell because some people can't even hug you. They can't even love you because they are so chunked up inside." That is so true.

It is so easy to stuff things down inside instead of letting Jesus have it. We get hurt. We stuff it inside instead of running to Jesus and giving it to Him. Instead of letting Him heal it, we just chunk it down in and let it fester. We get offended and we let it become a sore that turns into a chip on our shoulders instead of giving it to Jesus and coming free. We mess up and the devil rides our failure like a saddle

horse. We don't run to Jesus and repent, receiving His wonderful forgiveness. We sin. We chunk it down in and run in self-condemnation instead of wrapping our arms around Jesus and receiving His forgiveness.

We struggle with our battles until we get defensive with everyone instead of putting it on the shoulders of the one Who'll carry our every load. We get attitudes and hang on to them if it is the last thing that we do because we are determined to show them. Show them what a big chunk we can be. We sleep in our clothes refusing to take off our dirty garments because we don't want to take the time to change. (I am just giving you an illustration here.) Then we wonder why everybody acts like we have something wrong with us.

We don't bother to look in the mirror of God's Word because we might have to fix up a little. All we can see is everyone else's problems. How dare they look like that at us, we think. God wants to make us without spot or blemish, but we won't submit to His Holy Ghost. We just keep chunking it on down in.

We clean up our house by making it look tidy in the middle of the room, but heaven help the poor soul who dares to look in the closet. For one thing, if they do, all that junk will likely dump on their head. For another thing, we might jump all over them, telling them to stay

out of there. It isn't any of their business. Then we chew them up for supper.

We have forgotten the day when Jesus took us by the heels and shook the dirt out. We become so accustomed to chunking things in that we forgot the freedom that we once had. God sets us free. We don't have to be tangled in all that mess. We need to let the Holy Ghost clean our house. He will do it right. There won't be any cobwebs in the closet with creeping things crawling there when the Lord gets through. Just a new life in Him. We can be made new every day.

God promises that we can be cleansed. Psalm 65: 3 tells us, "Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away." Isaiah 1:18 tells us, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Malachi 3:2-3 says, "But who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap; and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and He shall purify the sons of Levi and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." Hebrews 9:14 tells us, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself

without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

We can have our conscience purged from dead works. Isn't that wonderful. All the old things of our past, when we have repented, asked for forgiveness and received it, they are all gone. All the old is gone and new is beginning. When you give them to Jesus they are gone. Done with. Over. Dead. Buried. Then you are resurrected in a new life in Christ.

Galatians 2:20 tells us, “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.” The old man, the old sins, the old ways are dead, crucified with Christ. You live now, but the way that you live is in faith of the One Who gave Himself for you. That is powerful. You don't have to worry about the old, the dirty places that you let God clean up. You can go on from there in victory because of that One Who shed His precious blood to cover it all so that you could be made new in Him. Each and every day of your life. Praise God, you don't have to be a chunk.

How can you get rid of the things that you have chunked down in? Those things that you have stored in those closet corners. You have to be willing to give them up. You can't hold on to them and get rid of them. It won't work that

way. You have to repent. You have to turn away from it all and be willing for the Lord to reveal it all to you. Anything you keep will be like a fish hook in your jaw tied to the devil's fishing pole.

If you aren't careful, one of the reasons that we keep things chunked down is because we are not willing to forgive someone. If you hold things against people and refuse to forgive someone, then that blocks up being forgiven. Be careful to let that go. If you hold onto it you in bitterness, you won't ever be able to be free from it. Then the person who caused the situation will be the one who wins.

Let God clean you up. Inside and out. I don't just mean when you first get saved. Do this everyday. If you want victory in your salvation, if you want salvation that sticks, let God clean you up. Let His Spirit get in to the closet. Let it dissolve the chunks. Give them to Him. He can take them, and set you free.

There was a student at school who had gone through a lot abuse from his dad from the time he was small. He was all stuck in his life with all kinds of issues because of that. I told him one day that if he would give this to God that God could set him free from all the baggage that he carried around. He looked at me like he could have chewed my head off because number one he didn't believe me, and number two he wasn't ready to forgive his dad at all.

Just a few months later I brought up the same subject again. This time I reminded him of something that had come up in that last conversation. Instead of bitterness and an ill look, I got a shake of the head, and he said, "Wow, I didn't even know that was gone. God did take it away." This was at a time when to keep the victory in his life he had to react in the right way to some situations. He had the victory, and came out on top. God had set him free and he hadn't even realized it until it came up. It all started with him wanting to be free from it, and asking God to help him.

Let His Word work in your life renewing your mind bringing right thinking. Then you have to accept the work that He has done in you. One sure way to undo the conviction, repentance, forgiving, and cleaning process in your life is to allow condemnation to stop you. Condemnation is that feeling that you are worthless and no matter how you try you will never be good enough. Condemnation comes in when you allow the devil to beat you up. Condemnation will creep in and choke the life out of you. It will cause you to think, what is the use, I can't get free from this. I don't deserve God's victorious life. Who do I think that I am to try?

The enemy specializes in condemnation. God's Word says in Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which

are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Accept God’s forgiveness. Don’t accept the condemnation of the devil who wants to separate you from God’s love.

I am not saying here that we need to get saved everyday. I am not saying that a one-time salvation experience isn’t good enough to last. I am not saying that at all. But for heaven’s sake don’t get saved, then stop letting God purge you and cleaning you up. Some people do. That is why they never have victory in their relationship with God. Too many things get between them and God.

Malachi 3:3 tells us that God will purify us. God will refine us. Not just once, but He will polish us up as much as we’ll let Him. As much as we’ll yield to Him. We not only can have a clean house, but one that shines with the presence of the Lord. When we are cleaned up and all the dirt is removed, we’ll have more room for the Spirit of God. There won’t be as many things to interfere with His wonderful work that He will do in our lives. We can then begin to walk in the Spirit. We will talk about what that means coming up.

Chapter 8. Walking in the Spirit

The Bible talks a lot about something called walking in the Spirit. What does it mean to walk in the Spirit? Here is an example of what it means. I was praising the Lord the other day on my way to work. I was caught up in His Holy Spirit. I was thanking Him for answering some of the prayers about some bad situations that were coming against me.

What was the different thing about that? Those situations hadn't changed. They were still there. Matter of fact they were actually getting worse. In my heart, I knew that God was working on the situation and that it was just as good as done. I refused to go by what I saw in the natural, but I pressed on to find what God had to say about it. God always brings victory into situations. I felt a feeling of victory come over me that had nothing to do with the situation as it was in the natural. It had a lot to do with my praying through to the victory. That is an example of not walking in the flesh and seeing things as they were, but connecting with God to hear what He had to say, and allowing Him to bring a feeling of victory.

It didn't matter in my flesh what I saw in the natural. God's praises poured from my heart. It was a beautiful morning filled with His praise. Then I stopped praising God for a moment and

looked at the sky in the natural. It was definitely not a beautiful morning. The sky was so black it was almost night. The wind had gotten up and the rain was pouring down sideways. I was already at work before I noticed the storm that I was driving through. I had been so caught up in praising the Lord that all I had seen was His glory. When we are in the Spirit, the dark skies that we pass through won't hinder us.

That morning had actually started with me being very aggravated at something someone had done the day before. I made a choice not to stay aggravated at that person. Instead I gave it to God. I yielded my bad attitude to Him. I started praising God instead. Almost in spite of myself, I felt a wave of victory. I felt a love flowing through me for that person. That is another example of walking in the Spirit. I chose to yield my stinking attitude to God, and let Him change it. If I had not chosen to get out of my grumbling and murmuring state I would never have had that beautiful glorious morning in spite of the storm.

I was also worried at that time about a financial thing that was happening. You know how those things crop up to worry the fire out of you. This was really a big problem. I chose not to dwell on that situation, but before I left the house that morning, I prayed about it, gave it to God, and left it there trusting Him to take

care of it. Instead of getting bogged down by what was going on the natural I prayed, gave it to God, trusted Him, and praised Him. That is how we walk in the Spirit.

I also had some physical problems that crop up now and again to ruin my day. I gave them to the Lord. When I left that morning, I was praising the Lord for what He was doing, for how he had taken care of all those situations, even though I didn't see anything different at that moment. It was a beautiful day in spite of the storm.

I had been praying for direction on some things that I needed to do that day that I had put off for some time because I wasn't sure which way to go with them. I knew different people's opinions on what I needed to do. But I hadn't heard from God. I didn't have peace about which way He wanted me to go. Listening to all those opinions had gotten me into a confused state as to which way I needed to go. I had been walking in the flesh by listening to everyone around me who were not led by God. But as I praised the Lord that morning, it came to me clear as a bell what I needed to do. Along with it came the strength that I needed to get the job done.

If you are like me, anytime you go through a battle, the number one place the devil will jump on to pester you will be your own self confidence. I don't mean by saying this that I

looked in the mirror while getting ready that morning and I was totally disgusted with what I saw there in the flesh. I mean that I know my weaknesses. When you've been hanging around with yourself as long as I have, you will know your weaknesses. Or you should. Because then, you know the areas that you need to watch and be sure to commit them to God when they crop up. There were a billion things that I wanted to get done for the Lord that day. The devil was driving in my face all the reasons why spiritually, mentally, physically I was not up to getting it done. He was well on his way to discouraging me from even starting. Hey, what can I say? It was a really long morning.

I finally just got tired of his mental harassing and put my foot down. I told him that according to God's Word I was able to do all things. I told Him that I was able to possess my land because it was mine. God had said that I could walk there. I reminded him that according to God's Word, the devil's place was under my feet. I was definitely smarter than he was because I had the sense to know that. I told him that by the Word of God, the blood of Jesus, and the power of the Holy Ghost within me he was to shut up and leave me alone. I refused to hear him any longer. I stood up and resisted him. It took a while, but he did what the Bible said he had to do in James 4:7. Flee. He shut up and left me alone.

When we walk in the Spirit we can identify the devil when he starts his stuff, and we can rise up above him with the victory that God's Word promises us. That was when I got in my car and got caught up in praising the Lord. The devil couldn't get a word in edge wise. My mind was off of his junk and on Jesus.

What happened to the rest of my day? The person that I had been aggravated at came to me and made peace. In my financial problem, God gave me a direction to go in and in just a couple of weeks that situation turned around completely. The direction with the project that I had been working on was completed and the project is underway with victory. It is wonderful. By the way, believe it or not when I went back outside later on in the day and we had summer skies and sixty-degree weather in January. What about the devil that had pestered me so? Don't know. Didn't look for him the rest of the day. All of this happened because I walked in the Spirit instead of the flesh.

So what am I saying here? Am I saying that every morning I have starts out this glorious. Hey, I am just flesh like everybody else, just like you. I am not writing the books that I write because in my godliness I am willing to share a tiny spark of my greatness with all those poor people beneath me. I am

writing because we all struggle. We all fight the same flesh. We all fight the same devil. If you go back and reread this part of this chapter you'll know for sure that every morning hadn't been this way. I had been going through a time where it seemed I was being hit on all sides. The battle with the hard to get along person and my hard to get along self had been going on for a long time. The devil getting in my face about my finances had been an old battle. My not knowing what direction to head in because the devil had confused the direction that I needed to go in had been going on for a while. Do you get my point? What made this day so different? It was God's timing for me to stand at my promised land and go in.

I woke up determined in my heart to hear God's Word. I chose not to hear the devil. I chose not to give in to flesh. I chose not to hear my flesh or the flesh of anyone else. I chose to walk in the Spirit. I got determined that this was my promised land, and nobody and nothing was going to stand in my way. Instead of continuing to see things in the flesh, I put my eyes on God's Word, and His promises.

I started praising Him for what He had done by faith. I knew in my heart that it was done. All those situations fell to the side like the river of Jordan and I just walked in and possessed my land. You too can do the same. There is one thing here that is important to

consider. If I had not been walking in the Spirit on a regular day-to-day basis in my life, would I have been tuned in to God's Spirit this day? Would I have been ready for this day of victory? What if I had not been praying daily? I would have gone on defeated.

What does the Bible have to say about walking in the Spirit? The book of the Bible that tells the most about walking in the Spirit is the book written to the worst flesh walking people in the Bible, probably some of the worst flesh walking people who ever lived. It was written to the church at Rome. Now I am sure that the church people weren't quite as bad as the rest of that society, but we all know how the society in Rome had become before its fall.

Paul started this book with Romans chapter 1. Read it please. This was his introduction. Wow. It is pretty strong. You can tell from what he wrote that these people he was writing to knew about walking in the flesh to the highest degree.

Doesn't this sound a lot like a letter that could have been written to the United States? In Romans 8 there is a whole chapter about walking in the Spirit. Please read it. It starts with an all time favorite, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit."

Believe you me, if we don't walk in the Spirit, we'll have to suffer the condemnation that the flesh brings. Let's instant replay my morning back to the time when the devil was beating me up with all my weaknesses. He did this to discourage me from making my stand in God. If I would have swallowed his lies that morning, and I would have allowed them to make me feel defeated, how different would my day have been? When we walk in the Spirit, we can discern the devil's lies. When we walk in the Spirit we know what to do with those lies. We don't allow them to become a part of us. We don't accept them. If we do, God shows us what is going on and He'll set us free, deliver us from the damage done.

Tuning into His voice comes when we walk in the Spirit. It isn't something that we can hear with our physical ears. It is something that we have to hear in our heart, hear in our spirit. We have to fill our mind up with the things of the Spirit. That means God's Word, His praise, His music, His thoughts. If we have our mind on other things, then no wonder the devil can slip in. When we are so caught up with this world, this life, what we see and hear in the natural, what things seem or appear to be on face value, how we feel in our mind or body, what everyone else is saying, what the devil is slipping into our minds, how can we win?

Romans 8:5-6 tells us, "For they that are

after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.” How can we walk in victory when we are in the flesh constantly?

Think of a battle or situation that you are going through. Are you in the flesh or Spirit regarding this situation? How can you change it? Are you reacting to this situation in your flesh or in the Spirit? What does God say about the situation? What does God’s Word say? Pray. Seek His face. Ask Him to show you. Ask Him what you need to do. Start praising Him for the victory He has already done even though you don’t yet see it. All of this is part of walking in the Spirit.

Now if you read all this and just go on your way to the next paragraph it won’t do you any good. You’ll wake up tomorrow in the same old battle. It may even seem worse tomorrow. Take this to heart. Take it in to your spirit. Let it change your life.

In Romans 8:7-8 God gets down to what I call the nitty gritty of things. He gets down to business. “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” If you fail to walk in the Spirit, or if you continually on a day-to-day basis are stuck in the flesh, you will

be an enemy to God. You may not want to be. You may not intend to be. But you will be. Also, God will not be pleased with you.

There have been times in my life that the devil has used even my best intentions to hinder. In weak moments in my flesh I would say just exactly the wrong thing. Or I would do just the thing that the devil was waiting for to turn and use against someone. Hey, before you get disgusted at me, what about you? Have you ever been there?

One of the worst examples of this was something that happened to someone that I know. He had been traveling and stopped at a gas station. There was another man at the pumps. God told him to witness to that man. It was cold. The man was a total stranger. It was late and he was in a hurry. Flesh ruled and he didn't obey God. He left the station.

The man hadn't traveled too very far down the road after leaving the station when a fire truck, police, and ambulance came toward him on the highway heading toward the station. In his heart he knew that he needed to turn around and follow them. Not far from the station he saw the car that had been at the pumps at the station. It was over the bank and in flames. What about the fellow he was to have witnessed to? He had died instantly.

When we walk in the flesh and not in the Spirit, we will not obey God. Our flesh is

spoiled. It will shrink back when we are called to brave the cold and the unfamiliar people. When our schedule is changed, flesh can't handle it. We need to get out of the flesh and obey God. That is what walking in the Spirit means.

This is confession time here. I have had my times of disobedience. One came when a student came into my office. I had gone through a bad day. Very hectic. Everything happening at once and things flying lose at all ends. I was totally aggravated. I was feeling pushed and in a hurry. That is just what the devil does when he wants to cause you to miss something that God is trying to do. Well, I was in line that day.

This young man came in who had really been going through a battle. The devil had been condemning him making him feel worthless. The Lord told me to speak to him. In my aggravated state, I halfway talked with him the things that the Lord had led me to discuss with him. I threw it at him like a bomb. I didn't finish what the Lord had led me to talk with him about because the phone started ringing and other people came in.

Before I left that day, God showed me that I needed to call him. I was late for an appointment and thought that I would do it later. One thing led to another and it was late by the time I got home. When I walked in the door, the phone was ringing. It was this young

man's mother. She said to me, "What did you talk about today. My son had been going through a battle. Whatever you said made him feel like there was no hope for him." He had taken what I had said out of context because of the tone of voice I had used, and because I hadn't finished what I had started.

Usually I make sure who I talk with has a clear understanding. God knew what had happened. I had ignored Him when He tried to tell me that I needed to call and fix it. Because of my flesh and my hurry, that young man had left that day in a helpless and hopeless state because I took away the last thread of hope that he had been holding onto. I had done it all with the best of intentions.

We can't serve God in the flesh. We can't reach out to one another in the flesh. We can't even know or love God in the flesh because He is a Spirit. We certainly can't have a relationship with Him in the flesh. Many people struggle in their relationship with God and in their work for Him because they fail to walk in the Spirit.

Many people fail to be able to serve God even though they have the very best of intentions, because they won't walk in the Spirit. All this leads to a defeated life. Many people allow the devil to destroy them because they don't walk in the Spirit. They can't discern what he is stealing from them. They

can't fight against him. They can't fight what they can't see. Ephesians 6:11-12 tells us, "Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, and against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." How can we see the unseen in the flesh? How can we put on spiritual armor in the flesh? We can go to a museum and put on a metal suit of armor. How can that protect us in the spirit?

To live a victorious walk in God we have to walk in the Spirit. To overcome satan we have to walk in the Spirit. To obey God, we have to walk in the Spirit. To please God, guess what? We have to walk in the Spirit.

How will God present a church that is without spot or blemish as Ephesians 5:26-27 tells us. "That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, That He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." He can only cleanse us when we walk in the Spirit. That cleansing is a spiritual cleansing. It doesn't involve water and soap and an iron to get out those wrinkles. When the rapture takes place you might be in the dirt digging out a sewer system. No matter about all that physical dirt that you may have on. But if you have

spiritual dirt collected from all the times that you have refused to obey God and failed to repent, then that will keep you out of the skies. We have to come clean in the spirit. Confess up and repent. That is how we get that spiritual cleansing.

Let's rewind here just a bit to the young man who came into my office. God is a God of grace and another chance. Praise God. He is a God of redemption even redeeming you from your mistakes. Not long ago that young man happened to be in my office. He was there at just the right time and place for God to miraculously use him to reach out to another student. He left that day encouraged tremendously. How did it happen? The Lord showed me what He was going to do. This time I stopped being in a hurry and aggravated at all the details of that day which had been just as hectic as the other day. I put a priority on walking in the Spirit. The thing that God was doing was of the utmost importance. I tuned in.

God moved and He set up the situation. I obeyed God. This young man obeyed God. God used that young man to literally loose another young person from chains that the devil was using to destroy her with. God is good. Can I in the flesh take credit for that wonderful thing that God did that day? I had already blundered in the flesh. I know about flesh. God sent the time, the place, the coming together of

who was there, and the circumstances. We obeyed. He blessed. Spirit and not flesh ruled that day.

Remember the story of Joshua, Caleb and the other ten spies in Canaan. Please read their story in Numbers 14. The children of Israel had been slaves in Egypt. God sent a man, Moses, to get them out of slavery and to get them to freedom. God led them through the desert to the place that He had promised would be theirs. (By the way, this is where the nation of Israel still is today.) There was believed to be over 2 million men, women, and children who were traveling with them.

When they were crossing the desert, God did some amazing things to get them out of slavery and into the place He had promised would be their home. He led them by a huge, and I do mean huge cloud in the day that shielded them from the desert sun. Then He led them by a huge, huge, huge pillar of fire that warmed them at night. Can you imagine what it took to feed that crowd? Every morning they would go out and find manna that had come from heaven. They would pick it up off the ground. It tasted like cakes baked in oil and flavored with honey. Sounds good.

They were a complaining bunch of people. They started complaining because they wanted meat. God was giving them what they needed in a miracle, but they wanted something

different. Sound spoiled don't they? He started sending them meat as well. Huge flocks of quails would fly over and fall from the sky.

When there wasn't any water He sent water out of rocks, and other ways. He parted seas, and rivers, and let them walk across them on the bottom of them. The water in them would just pile up in a huge mountain on either side, and they would walk across on the bottom.

You would think that having been through all this that they would know that He could do anything, and that they could do anything with His help. Read on to learn how that wasn't true. When they finally got to the place that He had promised them, they sent in spies to scope out the territory.

The spies found that the land was an abundant land filled with good things. They found clusters of grapes that took 2 people to carry. But there was a problem. There were giants in the land (like 10 feet tall people). When the spies got back and told all they had found, the people got afraid. Matter of fact they were so afraid that they wanted to turn around and run back to Egypt where they had been slaves.

After God had taken care of them with all those huge miracles, they were too scared to go in and take the land He had given them. You could say that there was a battle between their spirit side that was telling them that they could

do anything with God, and their flesh side which was shaking in their boots. There was definitely a battle going on there between those that lined up with the flesh and those that lined up with the Spirit. They had crossed the desert and were ready to enter in to the Promised Land. They had sent in the spies to see what the land was like. In Numbers 13 and 14, we find the story of the first time around. Please get out your Bible and read this section of scripture. Please get out you Bible and read this section of scripture. Hey, I'm saying this twice so that it registers and you pause and get out your Bible. (☺)

The children of Israel had arrived at their promised land. Can you imagine how they felt after all that time wandering in the desert? They were there. They were finally there. Remember the last time that you went on a long trip, the excitement you felt at arriving at your destination. Multiply that by over 100 times and you'll get an idea of how they must have felt that day. The Lord told Moses to choose a man from every tribe to go on what today we might call a "recon mission". They were to scout out two things. They were to tell about the land that was theirs. They were also to tell about the people that were there.

For 40 days the children of Israel waited for the verdict. I have always wondered what went on in the home camp while the spies were

spying out the land. How positive was their talk? How positive were their attitudes? The Bible doesn't say. The focus here in this section of scripture is on the spies. However, if you remember their general attitude up to that point in their journey, it had been filled with what we at the ministry call "stinking thinking". You know what I mean by that. That kind of thinking that leads to murmuring and complaining. That negative attitude filled with doubt. I really believe that if the home camp had stayed positive, full of faith, walking in the Spirit and not in the flesh and praising God, the outcome that day would have been very different. Instead, this is what happened.

The 12 spies returned to give their report. In verse 27, they talk about the land and its wonderful fruit. Verse 23 tells us that they brought back one grape cluster that took two men to carry. Can you imagine what the melons were like? What a land. In verse 28-33 the 10 spies gave a negative report. Matter of fact verse 32 called it an evil report. We can read that report in Numbers 13:27-29, "And they told him, and said We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with mild and honey and this is the fruit of it. Nevertheless the people are strong that dwell in the land and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there. The Amalekites dwell in the land

of the south and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan.”

The devil certainly was there that day and so was a lot of flesh. Flesh will always give a negative report. It will be the one to say, “Now let’s stop and think about this. Let’s reason this out. Look at the negative things here.” Flesh will always come up with a list of why we can’t do something instead of why we can.

Here the flesh talkers outnumbered the Holy Ghost walking spies. There were only 2 men out of 2.4 million people who were listening to God, and walking in faith, walking in His Spirit while everyone else were walking in the flesh. Joshua and Caleb were positive Spirit walking, led by God. Caleb said in Numbers 13:30, “And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.”

The negative reporters immediately shot him down. Verse 31-32 tells us, “But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we. And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that

eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature.”

Well, things went from bad to worse. Here they go again in Numbers 14:2, murmuring against Moses, Aaron, and finally against God. “And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would God we had died in this wilderness!” (This is an interesting thought. They got their desire. This was the generation that died in the desert. Sometimes God will allow us to be destroyed by giving us the desires of our own hearts.)

Joshua and Caleb still tried in verses 6-9 to still the crowd and change the direction that they were going in. “And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes: and they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us: a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defense is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not.” These two

were speaking wisdom from the Lord. They were speaking in the Spirit and not in the flesh. They weren't speaking from what they saw in the natural. They weren't speaking from what they thought or felt in the flesh. They were reminding everyone what God had spoken. They were reminding them of His Word to them. What He had promised them.

How did the flesh crowd react to this? Read verse 10. "But all the congregation bade stone them with stones...." Things were getting bad. But God came on the scene to speak in their behalf. When you stand in the Holy Ghost in obedience to God's Word, things may get ugly with the flesh crowd. The devil may have his say, and he may roar really loud. Just remember. You aren't standing alone. Just hold on and stand there. God will come on the scene.

Ephesians 6:13 tells us, "Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." When you have done all to stand, then just keep standing. God will come and stand with you. He certainly did that day. The Lord had an interesting conversation with Moses. Even after having missed out on being able to set foot in the promised land because he had been so provoked with these rebellious people to the point that he disobeyed God, Moses still took up for these people. Read

Numbers 14:11-25. In summary we'll put here these verses 11-12 and 18-19. "And the Lord said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? And how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them? I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they."

This conversation goes on. Here is part of Moses reply in verse 18-19, "Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now." God's reply to Moses' plea for pardon is found in verses 20-25. To sum this up, the Lord consented and pardoned them and did not disinherit them. We know that because Israel is there today.

There was a punishment though, and that punishment was dear. Flesh carries with it a punishment. When we walk in the flesh we are enemies with God and we are against His Word. Whether we mean to do so or not. Romans 8:7-8 tells us, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

What was their punishment? We read in Numbers 14:23-24 and 29-33. "Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their

fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it: But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereunto he went; and his seed shall possess it. Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me, Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I sware to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun. But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised. But as for you, your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness. And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness.” What then happened to the ten spies that gave the evil report? Numbers 14:37 tells us, “Even those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the Lord.”

What about Joshua and Caleb who stood for the Lord and walked in the Spirit? Verse 38 tells us, “But Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh which were of the men that went to search the land, lived still.” They were the only two from this generation that were able to go in and possess their land. In

verses 14 you'll see one outcome of what happens when people fail to walk in the Spirit. The report of the enemy will cause you to weep. Numbers 14:1 tells us, "Then the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and all the people wept that night." The report of the flesh, without God, will cause mourning, murmuring, doubt and fear. Verse 2 tells us, "And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would god we had died in this wilderness."

Walking in the flesh will cause us to run back to bondage instead of pressing on in the Spirit to victory. Verse 3 tells us, "And wherefore hath the Lord brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? Were it not better for us to return into Egypt?" Most of all it will cause strife. We read about this in verse 10, "But all the congregation bade stone them with stones...." It will bring God's displeasure. We read this in verse 12, "I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they."

So we have talked a lot about how important it is to walk in the Spirit, how do you do that? The Holy Ghost is a part of God. He is a Spirit the same as God. (Jesus is also a part

of God.) When we are saved, we ask the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit (2 names for the same part of God) to come into us. He really does. That is the beginning of a huge change in us. But we also have our flesh, the regular you part of you inside along with God's Spirit. We have to yield the flesh part of us to the God's Spirit. If we are spoiled and we always want to get our way, if we don't want to yield to anybody or anything it will be really hard for us to let God control us. But until we do, we will just keep right on being the mess that we are (even if we don't like to admit we are one). Coming up we will talk more about how to allow God to be strong in us.

Chapter 9.

The Holy Ghost

I want to talk a little bit here about something that we can receive called the Baptism of the Holy Ghost. Now I am a firm believer that when we are saved we receive a measure of the Holy Ghost. But there is more to receive. There is the Baptism of the Holy Ghost or the filling of the Spirit. How have I come to that conclusion? It talks about it in the Bible. Also, I know it is true because it has happened to me. Many other people have received it. Those people who asked God for it have received it.

When I first heard about the Baptism of the Holy Ghost, I went to God and trusted Him to lead me. He led me in understanding about it and led me to receive it. Thirdly-I received it for myself. No one can tell me that it isn't real. When you possess something, you know that it is real. I know what a change it made in my life. I can also say that without the Baptism of the Holy Ghost I would not be here today. It gave me the power that I needed to stand. There is no need for anyone to try to hint that it isn't real. So how can you argue with all of that?

Through the Holy Ghost, God can come right into your heart to live. The Bible says that

you are the temple (like a church) where the God through His Spirit lives. That is powerful. If we can really get hold of knowing that, it will set you free from all those feelings you get when you think that you are worthless. Think about this for a moment. You have in you God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost. You have God's Word for that. Now what about that self-condemnation when you beat yourself up for every little mistake? What about that fear of failure you have that stops you from doing things for God? What about the fear of the devil and his destruction?

What about that fear of sickness? What about those circumstances that you can't rise above? What about those people who try to control or destroy you? What about that thing that God has told you to do but you don't because you say you can't? What about that scared little child in you that stays huddled up in the corner instead of jumping right in the middle of all God has for you? What about those days when you feel like a certain failure? What about those situations that you just don't have the wisdom to know how to handle? What about those weaknesses that keep pulling you back?

Now before you get all bogged down headed in the wrong direction, let's go back and reread these thinking about this idea that we talked about before we started the questions:

the knowledge that the Holy Ghost of God is in you. Now go back and read those questions again. At the risk of seeming very foolish, reread those questions. Are you catching a glimpse of what I am saying? You have the Spirit of God within you. You have Jesus Christ in you through the power of the Holy Ghost and God's Word. What have you to fear? What have you to fear? Do you ever need to put yourself down again, or let the devil condemn you by telling you how worthless you are?

I want to take a minute or two here to talk about the Baptism of the Holy Ghost again. Now hold on a minute. You may be someone who does not understand what that is all about. You may have even been taught that it isn't real. It is not something to be scared of. It is just simply God's Word. I understand where you are if you haven't been taught about it. I did not even hear about the Baptism of the Holy Ghost until I was in my 20's. When I was young, I only knew a little about it, and just knowing a little wasn't good. If we only know enough about something to cause us to fear it, then the little we know is dangerous.

I was saved when I was a young girl. In my older teenage days, I rebelled against God and got tangled up in drugs and alcohol, and you name it. By the time I was in my early 20's, I had totally destroyed my life. When I

rededicated my heart and life to God, He was my only hope. I needed help and fast. I needed power to withstand my past. I needed the power to stand against the enemy who was trying to destroy me. I needed all I could get.

Praise God. When I heard about the Baptism of the Holy Ghost I definitely didn't run away from it. I was hungry to receive anything that I could, and I opened up my arms and ran toward it. If you haven't received the power of the Baptism of the Holy Ghost, remember that it is for you. I pray that through these pages you run to it just like I did.

I have put here a chapter from my book, **Walking in the Spirit**. It is titled "The Baptism of the Holy Ghost". By the way, it is a good book if I do say so myself. It will help in learning more about walking in the Spirit.

Trying to walk in the Spirit without having the Baptism of the Holy Ghost is like trying to race a 2006 sports car with a model T engine. You just won't have the power to win the race. I grew up not hearing about the Baptism of the Holy Ghost. I grew up in an area that had been blinded and bound to think that this gift of the Spirit was not real. I was taught that when you were saved, you got all of God's Spirit that was available to you. I was taught that after salvation, you had it all. I grew up not knowing a thing at all about the Baptism of the Holy Ghost.

Through a miracle, God brought me into contact with a church that believed in the Baptism of the Spirit. After I received it for myself, no one could tell me that it wasn't real. It was the key that brought me victory over a life that had been bound by sin, drugs, and alcohol. The devil had worked overtime in much of my life to destroy me because he knew that I would one day serve God.

Maybe you are going through the same thing. Maybe it seems like every time you try to get up, you get knocked back down. You know in your heart that you should walk upright before God, but every time you take one step forward it seems you get knocked three back. You may be about to give up in defeat, which is exactly what the devil wants you to do. It may be that he sees that up ahead, you will bust his little kingdom wide open in some area. You may be sitting there thinking that it is hopeless. That there is no use to keep trying. Thinking that you won't make it. The devil has you where he wants you.

You think that you are going through all of this because you are worthless. It may be because you are getting ready to rise up and be what God has chosen for you to be. It is your choice. If you give up now, you will never know.

Maybe the key for you to overcome is the same as it was for me-the Baptism of the

Holy Ghost. When I first learned about it, I got it. I grabbed hold and didn't let go. I didn't have to think about it, I knew I wanted it. I knew that this was the key for a victorious life and I turned it. Even though I had grown up not learning much about it, when it came time for me to accept it, I knew I needed it. That settled that. Don't read about this and talk yourself out of thinking that it is real, and that it is not for you. God said it is, so let that be the end of that.

Now over 40 years later, I can say that no wonder the devil tried to keep me blinded. I have been working full time for God for over 35 years, and will continue to do so. I do it, not in my own power, but in the power of God's Spirit. I had to be hungry enough to submit myself to allow God to do things His way. I had to take Him and His Word at face value. I had to receive the gift that He had for me. I have never regretted it.

God will allow His Spirit to control only the things that we allow Him to control. When we say, "God, I have decided to do it your way. Come and fill me up to the brim", then we are ready for the Baptism of God's Spirit. He fills us up all the way with His Spirit. That is what the Baptism of God's Spirit is all about.

Here is what God has to say about it in His Word. We first read about it in Acts Chapter 2. Here we read that the disciples were all gathered in one mind and accord. In verse 4

it tells us, “And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” What was the outcome of this? Those few who were hiding in fear after the crucifixion, became bold enough and so full of God’s Spirit that they turned the world upside down. Without the Baptism, they would not have endured to start the church, and keep the Gospel that was committed to us today. Verse 41 tells of the outcome of that day, “Then they that gladly received His word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”

This didn’t stop here. We read about this throughout Acts. In Chapter 8, verses 14-17, these men received the gifts of the Holy Ghost. In Chapter 10, verses 44-48, the Holy Ghost is again on the scene filling the Gentiles. In Acts 19: 1-6, these men also received the gift of the Baptism of the Holy Ghost. Paul asked them if they had received the Holy Ghost since they had believed. These men were already saved, but they had something in addition to salvation that they were about to receive. They answered, “We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.” In verse 6 the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues and prophesied.

I think of myself when I read their answer to Paul, “We have not so much as heard

whether there be a Holy Ghost.” I hadn’t heard, but God found me anyway. How do you receive the gift of the Holy Ghost?

I was blessed to find a church that believed this way. The congregation laid hands on me and prayed for me in the same way that Paul laid hands on the men in Acts 19:6. But I still didn’t receive it that night that they prayed. Several nights later, when I was by myself, the Holy Ghost fell on me and I was filled. I prayed in tongues for the first time that night.

You can receive it through the prayers of others, or you can receive it through your own prayers. It is a gift of God that He has given us to empower us against the battle of satan. It is a gift that gives us boldness in our witness, like it did those on that first day. It is for you.

I have heard many people argue against the Baptism of the Holy Ghost being real. They argue that it is not for us today. When I hear this, I know several things about those people. I know that they are ignorant of God’s Word. In Acts 2:38-39 we read, “Then Peter said unto them, repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. 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.” I would say that means us too.

I also know when I hear people argue that the Baptism is not for us today, that these people do not know God. I know that He wants the best for His children. He wants us to overcome and be victorious. I also know that we live in the last days, which has to be one of the hardest times to live on the earth. Why would God give a gift to help the early disciples, tell us about it, and then deny us the right to have it or make it so that it is not available to us who need it the most? That is not the God I know.

I think that one of the things that hinders people in receiving the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is that it comes along with the gift of speaking in tongues. For many, that is a stumbling block. This is because the devil wants to scare people away from our being able to pray in the Spirit, or pray in tongues.

What it means when we pray in tongues is that the Spirit of God prays through us in His own language. He is praying directly through us using our vocal chords. We may not understand what He is saying, though sometimes He will allow us or others to interpret. Whether or not we understand, the devil knows when we start praying that something is being done to bind him and to loose the power of God on the scene. No wonder he works overtime to confuse people about this powerful gift.

Have you ever wanted so badly to pray for someone but didn't know how to pray? All you could do was to say a general half way prayer, when you know you needed to do more. The Holy Ghost knows exactly how to pray in God's perfect will. When He prays through you that is a powerful prayer that will get the job done.

Also, when we pray in the Holy Ghost it strengthens the God part of us, the Spirit of God in us. (Jude 20, "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost." When we are filled with the Spirit of God, and we allow Him to pray in us, we are submitted to His Spirit in a way that nothing else can do. We strengthen His Spirit in us. We submit our flesh and our flesh man takes second place in our life. With all that going on our flesh doesn't stand a chance. God's Spirit rises strong in us.

If you have the Baptism of the Holy Ghost, but the Holy Ghost is still not allowed to control your life, then flesh will. That is why it is important to allow the Holy Ghost to move in you. Pray in the Holy Ghost daily. Don't hinder the Spirit of God when He starts to move in or through you, whether it be in church or at home. Allow God's Spirit to control. Then He will be there when you need Him.

One of the greatest stories I have ever heard about the power in the prayer of the Holy

Ghost is this. The Holy Ghost moved on a man and began praying in tongues through him. The man had no idea what was going on, but he obeyed and yielded to let the Holy Ghost pray.

The Lord spoke to him to take note at what time this had happened. The next day he heard about a close friend who had been stabbed. That had happened at exactly the time that the man had prayed. The other man's life had been miraculously spared.

I heard about a man on a plane who had interceded through the Holy Ghost. After they landed, they were told of a mechanical failure that had nearly caused them to crash, but miraculously the failure had corrected itself. The man who had prayed had no idea, but God knew.

Thousands of times I have heard stories about how the Holy Ghost had interceded by speaking in tongues through those who had the Baptism of the Holy Ghost. The situation was corrected, the life was saved, the soul was saved, the person was delivered, or whatever need there was, it was met.

There is no prayer that is more powerful than the prayer of the Holy Ghost Himself. If you do not have the gift of the Baptism of the Holy Ghost, ask God for this. Seek it. The Bible says that when we seek God, or His gifts, we will find them. Who says so? Jesus. Luke 11:9, "And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be

given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” Read this section of scripture through verse 13. In verse 13 we read, “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?”

If you haven’t received the Baptism, ask for it. It is a gift, and God would love for you to have it. If you have received it, realize that just receiving the Holy Ghost doesn’t mean that you have arrived. We still have to day-to-day walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh. We have to let the Holy Ghost rule and reign in our life daily. We have to walk in the Spirit to find the victory that God has promised us. It will give us power to find a salvation that sticks.

Chapter 10. The Dog You Feed The Most

A man had two little pups. Someone asked him, "How can you tell which one will grow up to be the biggest?" The man answered, "The one that I feed the most." Makes sense. We have two natures in us. We have the flesh that is born to be trouble. Romans 8:5-10 and verse 14 talks about this. "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death: but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, He is none of His. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

The flesh is definitely bad. When we yield to the flesh, we even become an enemy with God. We may not mean to be. No matter. We still are. Our flesh at its best is not enough. That is why it is so important to be filled with the Holy Ghost and walk in the Spirit. We then let Jesus rise up to be Lord inside of us, and in our lives. When we are saved, we have a New Man in us, Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Ghost. Then if we receive the gift of the Baptism of the Holy Ghost, we strengthen the Spirit Man in us, the God part of us. Which one will rule in our lives determines whether or not our salvation will stick. Which one will rule? The one that we feed the most. Let me give you some examples.

I know someone who is a Christian. This is his daily diet. He seldom reads His Bible. He seldom prays. He is seldom around Christian people. He works constantly with non-Christians. He never listens to gospel music. Instead he has a steady diet of country music. He listens to it to the place that those words of those songs stick in his mind instead of words of Gospel songs.

He constantly plays video games that are a bad influence whether we like to admit it or not. They fill our minds with junk. He doesn't mind watching movies or TV shows that have all sorts of junk in them. He has done this so long that it no longer bothers him.

God would try to convict Him about doing certain things. Conviction is the feeling that we are doing wrong. It is a feeling that God gives us to keep us from doing things that can eventually destroy us. He used to feel conviction, but he has ignored this for so long, that he no longer feels God's conviction. He did at one time but he was so determined to do these things anyway that he ignored it. Now he doesn't feel it.

It doesn't bother him to be this way because it is his routine. It is the rut that he is in. He is bound to these things and doesn't realize that the enemy has gotten him in this rut. This is his Spiritual diet. Can you guess what kind of victory that he has in his life? Is he being submissive to God's will? Is he yielded to God's Spirit? There is still a part of him that wants to be, but he is unwilling to change his diet. The pup you feed the most will grow the most. So how do we make sure that the Spirit pup gets fed the most in our lives?

One of the keys to a good spiritual diet is prayer. Prayer is so important. It is more than just asking God for things. It is our relationship with God. What is the evidence of your relationship with someone? How is a relationship carried out? By communicating. How do you reach out to those you love? By talking to them. How do you reach out to God? By talking to Him. By prayer.

But just like in any relationship listening is important too. Too often our prayers are filled with "give-me's" and no thank yous. With wants and not praises. What kind of a relationship is that? Do you know that you can minister to the Lord? Let's look up the verses in the Bible that have the word "minister" in them. There are books called concordances that have every word that is in the Bible in them and it tells all the verse in the Bible that have that word. For example in this case we want to look up verses that have the word "minister". They also have concordances online which works really good. One of my favorite ones is www.kingjamesbibleonline.org. Go there and try this and see how it works. You just type in the word, click the search button, and all the verses that have that word in it will come up.

Most of those verses that are come up when you search the word "minister" refer to people who ministered to the Lord. Most of those are about the priests who were to minister to the Lord. These were certain people in Israel who were born to work in the temple and serve God. With that in mind lets read First Peter 2:9, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people: that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

We are so busy wanting the Lord to minister to us that we never realize that the Lord wants us to minister to Him as well. He delights in your praise. Hebrews 13:15 tells us, “By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.” The Lord delights in the love and fellowship of His people. He delights in fellowshiping with you as much as He did with Adam and Eve when He walked in the garden with them in Genesis 3:8.

Nothing gets God’s attention quicker than our love and our praise. Sometimes though, like spoiled children, all we give Him are our wants. Praise Him for Who He is. Praise Him for His wonderful grace. Praise Him for His power and His righteousness. Praise Him for being your heavenly Father. Praise Him for caring for you. God doesn’t have to pay attention to us. He doesn’t even have to be mindful of us. He doesn’t even have to notice that we are down here on this puny little planet. Yet He not only notices us, He notices you specifically. He notices you to the point that every hair on your head is numbered. He knows where you are in life and what you need even before you ask.

He loves you. Respect and honor Him. Love Him for that precious love He has for you. There is an old song that says “He didn’t have to do it but He did”. He didn’t have to send His

son to die for us, but He did. He didn't have to love us but He did. He didn't have to bless us, but He did.

Jesus didn't have to die on Calvary, but He chose to. Why? To show us His love and the love of the Father. So that we could walk with them in that same love that they have for us and for one another. We humanly can't even understand God's love. Our love is so selfish and self-centered. It is not self-sacrificing. Our flesh binds it. We can't understand God's perfect love because we are just flesh if He isn't in us.

God is love. Our love compared to His is like a man with a glass of water standing in front of the ocean. We only have a little, but we still need to give Him all we have. Why? Because He deserves it. He has earned it. He has given and now it is our turn. God wants your fellowship. Nothing feeds the Spirit side of us more than prayer and praise. We'll talk more about the importance of prayer in a chapter coming up. It deserves a whole chapter to itself.

The Word of God, the Bible, also strengthens God's Spirit in us. Deuteronomy 8:3 tells us, (I am quoting the second half of the verse) "That He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live." In Job 23:12, Job talks

about one of the ways that he overcame the temptation of the devil in his life, “Neither have I gone back from the commandment of His lips: I have esteemed the Words of His mouth more than my necessary food.” Job held onto God’s promises in His Word and eventually saw God’s blessings.

The Word of God will strengthen us. The Word of God will feed our faith. It will guide our steps. It will strengthen us. It will be our sword in battle. Where is your Bible? When is the last time that you buried yourself in its pages letting God's Spirit reveal it to your heart? Are you hungry for God’s Word? Or are you too busy packing into your spirit all the world’s junk food to have time to feast on the wholesome goodness of His Word?

We need to make it a priority to read God’s Word. Being filled with the Holy Ghost, daily walking in the Spirit as we’ve discussed in chapters before this, definitely feeds the right pup. It gives us power to overcome. We will talk more in a chapter coming up about the power of God’s Word. It too deserves a whole chapter.

Another way to feed the Spirit Inner Man is fellowship with God’s people. There is a reason why God established the church and commands us in the Word to attend. Hebrews 10:25 tells us, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is;

but exhorting one another: and so much the more as ye see the day approaching.”

Now if our church is so full of this world that the Spirit of God is not there, then it won't strengthen your Spirit man. If flesh rules in the hearts of the people, then flesh will be strengthened in you. That is why it is so important to go to a church where the truth is preached, the Spirit anoints, and the people walk in the Spirit.

Most of you work in sinner environments. A few of us are blessed to work around all Christians, but that is a rare thing. You spend 5 days a week, or more, subjected to all kinds of filth that comes out of their mouths. Their talk is all flesh. Their advice to you is flesh. Their way of thinking is warped when compared to the Word of God. Isn't it like a breath of fresh air when you are able to change that for that crowd at the church?

Don't be the last one in the door at the church and first one out. Good Christian fellowship feeds the right pup. One of the devil's tactics is to cause us to miss out on this. He'll create circumstances to make it look like someone at the church is offending us. Or someone is talking or thinking bad about us. By doing that, he can isolate us from our family of God. You need them. They need you. Don't get separated. Fellowship with God's people will strengthen you in the Spirit.

So does good old Gospel music. Bishop Goad, the founder and head of our ministry, has preached this message several times. He makes this statement. "We need to have a radio check. We need to go out in the parking lot this morning and check and see how many cars have their radio dials tuned into Gospel stations."

Then he says, "You show me a Christian that has country or rock playing on their car radio and I'll show you a person who lacks the victory in their lives. You can't fill your mind with all the world's garbage and have victory with God. You don't feed the flesh that junk and be strong in the Spirit of God. If you are listening to that stuff and the Lord isn't convicting you then something is also wrong with your salvation experience. You are silencing the voice of God.

If you are listening to anything other than Gospel, then you aren't listening to the voice of God." He will then make the statement, "If we did a radio check in the vehicles of most of the cars sitting in most church parking lots you'd find them tuned into something besides Gospel music." I am afraid he is right.

Well, lets go back to the beginning of this chapter where I mentioned my friend and his diet (the stuff that he regularly takes in to his spirit). He recently went through a terrible battle. Everything went wrong. He just about

gave up on God entirely. He became depressed and couldn't find hope. One day he was driving down the road and got behind someone with God Is Love John 3:16 on their bumper sticker. Thank the Lord for Christian bumper stickers. You never know what they do.

He went home and picked up his wife's Bible for the first time in many, many months. It fell open to the page with John 3:16. He knew that the Lord was trying to get his attention. This time he listened. He later told me that he had lost hope because he had forgotten God's love. He had grown up in church but his worldly diet had choked out his knowledge of God's love and the things of God out of his spirit. He is starting to look up now. He is on his way back home.

The first step he'll have to make is to change his spiritual diet. He will have to decide that he doesn't want all those things in his life any longer. He will have to set his priorities. Now, though, he realizes that those things that he thought were so important at one time aren't as important as his eternal soul. The pup that you feed the most will grow the most. Which pup are you feeding?

One important way to be sure that we feed the right pup will be when we decide that we need to let ourselves go. If old number one is determined to be the center in our life, then God and His Spirit in us will not be in control.

Self has to go. Flesh wants to rule and have its way. How can we come to the place where we allow Jesus to be Lord? Read on.

Chapter 11. Let Your Self Go

A key to finding victory in your life is being able to let your self go. I don't mean that you get rid of all your inhibitions, and let your self go. I don't mean that you let yourself go wild, letting your hair down so to speak. I mean that you let go of old "Mr. Flesh", old "Mr. Self-will".

If you want to be victorious in Jesus, then Jesus has to be Lord of your life. If you are a spoiled person in a way, if you are someone who has to have it his way, it is a given fact that you aren't obeying God completely and totally. It is a given fact that you aren't walking in the Spirit. It is a given fact that you aren't letting God clean your house. That you are feeding your flesh more than your spirit.

Admit it. It is human nature to want to do your own thing. We have a streak of that. Some more than others. If all these things are true though in our lives, and we haven't allowed God to change this, then we will lack victory in our salvation.

We may think that we know what is best for our life. We may think that certainly our own will is important. After all, if we don't control our life, someone else will, right? You are right. That One Who will control our life is the One Who paid a dear price for you on

Calvary. He paid the price to be able to control your will. He doesn't want to take it away from you. He wants you to yield it to Him. He wants to lead you into all the promises in His Word. He wants to change you, shape you, and mold you into someone who can make a difference in your world. He wants to bring you to the place where you have peace and joy in Him.

You will never find real victory in Jesus, until you let Him have your will. It isn't human nature to want to yield. Flesh wants to be in control of every situation you are in. That is the battle. Only when we yield our self-will do we let the will of God work in our lives. Being in control only hinders God from being able to work in us, through us, and for us.

Until we let go of a failure, God can't work to change it to a victory. Until we let go of a problem, God can't move in the solution. Until we let go of a bad situation, God can't work that miracle. Until we let go of flesh, God can't move by His Spirit. The key to letting God move in your life in a supernatural way is letting go. Give it up and give it all to God. God doesn't move when we can, He moves when we can't and when we get out of the way so that He can. There is a victory in this that will change your life if you can just get hold of this. Yield. Yield. Let God have His way in your life. You can't obey God until you do.

People who aren't yielded always come

up with some reason why they have to go over this way or that way instead of where the Spirit is going. They can't do what everyone else is doing, those that are going with the flow. They have to be over here to the side doing their own thing. If what they are doing doesn't get as much attention as something else, they either stop that and move on to where they can get in the limelight, or they cause a situation where they can get noticed. Even though they don't mean to, they often become more of a hindrance than help.

Picture the will of God like it is a river. The current is swiftly pulling you along in God's direction, leading you to a victorious life. Everyone else is flowing in the same current, working together for the Lord. Picture someone flowing gently in that stream, God's will carrying them. Now picture someone who is determined not to yield to God's will. They are continually swimming against the current. Or they are busy swimming across the current. There is no peace for them, only a struggle. No rest for them. If something doesn't change, they will eventually give up the fight. Or they will drown.

What is their only hope? To give up their struggle and turn and flow with the current. To stay in God's will for their life. To yield their way to God's way. Do you know anyone who has been a Christian for many

years who suddenly turned their back on God and went back to the world and to sin? Why? They got too tired of fighting the current? They wanted their way and God's way too. They struggled upstream in their Christian walk until they just couldn't struggle any more.

I am here to tell you that you don't have to struggle any more. God will be your strength if you will just let go of your own strength. God will be your love if you will just let Him. God will help you to overcome those things that you are struggling through if you will just let Him. Most of the time when we go through a hard time, people say, "Don't give up. Stand your ground." This time though we have to say instead "Give it up. Give it to Jesus. " When you do, you'll find a victory greater than you could even imagined. Your struggle will be over.

How do we know that we are truly the Sons of God? This comes when we are doing His will instead of our own. You can know that you are hidden in God's love and in His care. You can know that you are His child and that He will bless you and keep you. You can know that your struggle can end there in His love. You just have to let go and let God be in control.

This should be our prayer found in Psalm 143:10, "Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God; thy spirit is good; lead me into the

land of uprightness.” God can lead you into that land of uprightness if you will just follow Him.

Why are there so many weird doctrines and beliefs? Because so many people don’t give up their will to do it God’s way. They start a little doctrine or a way of thinking that allows them to do it their way. Instead of flowing downstream, they paddle to the side and build a little dam to sit on. Problem with this is when the waves and storm come, it washes them away. Anytime we do that we will always be in the wrong place at the wrong time because flesh instead of God is leading us.

Make sure that your the things that you believe are the whole truth and nothing but the truth. In John 8:31-32 Jesus told them, “...If ye continue in my Word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” If you obey the Lord and continue in His Word, then you will be free. If you have to constantly make excuses to God’s people or be on the defensive for how you believe, you may not be walking in the truth.

Now notice I said God’s People. Other Spirit led obedient folks. How do we know if we are in the truth? Get out God’s Word. Get on your knees. I mean to get on your knees in your heart. Give up self will. Get sin out of the way. Pray through, repent and get forgiveness.

Yield to God. Ask Him to show you His will for you, and obey it. You will find His truth. Psalm 40:8 tells us, “I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.”

When we accept God’s will, it is a lot easier to accept the wills of others around us. I am not meaning that we need to hear the will of those who are trying to get us to go against God’s will. I mean that we accept the guidance and help of those that we love. We can’t always have it our way. To find victory, have it God’s way. Let Him be number One.

We can truly begin to Lean on Jesus when we let Him be in control of our lives. Then we can find His peace. We’ll talk more about that coming up. When we yield to the Lord, we can take off the yokes and bondage that we have. Coming up next, how to take off the yokes.

Chapter 12. Taking the Yokes Off

We live in a world where fear is literally controlling people. The fear of failure, the fear of the unknown, the fear of what is going on in the world even though it has nothing directly to do with you, all are very real fears. Stress and fear cause not only those who don't know God to lose their victory, but it also binds a lot of God's people.

God doesn't want us to live in bondage, all tied up in things like fear and stress and all that mess. He doesn't want us to have yokes. Isaiah 58:6 says, "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?"

What is a yoke? This was a wooden harness strapped around beasts of burdens so that they could pull their load, their cart, or whatever things they had to do. The donkey, or ox would have to pull these wagons, or whatever load they had fastened to them by these yokes. The loads of some masters were cruel. They had to drag around unmerciful burdens, sometimes even carrying them to the grave. That yoke made them subject to their masters. As long as they had that yoke on, they couldn't be free. They were bound.

Picture this for a minute. Picture a huge ox. He has on a yoke. He is pulling a load much too heavy for him. His master works him literally until he is ready to drop dead. He can't be set free from the load or the master because of that yoke. Then the day's work is over. The yoke is taken off. Can you imagine how that old ox rolls around in the dirt and shakes himself? He is free. Free from the burden he carried. When his master comes back, he might not catch that old ox this time as easily as he did that day before. He'll catch him only if that big old ox submits to him enough to allow him to put that yoke on him and fasten another load to it.

We are a lot like that old ox. The devil convinces us that it is OK to have to wear many of the yokes that we wear. He sneaks in and puts it on us when we aren't looking. Then he tricks us into accepting the yoke and the load it is attached to. He knows that if we ever see them and decide to take them off, we will take them off. He puts on us yokes of fear, worry, anger, and bitterness. Then he attaches another load to that yoke. Loads like condemnation, separation from God's love, doubt.

We pull that heavy thing around until it wears down our spiritual energy and victory. We pull that old load around until we drop in our tracks. Every step we take the enemy puts another brick in our wagon. Our faith starts to

waver as we wonder, “God, why aren’t you helping me? Why have you put this load on me?” We look at the load until we can’t see around it and loose hope because it is way too big to carry. Then we just quit trying. We say to ourselves, “I knew there was nothing to that religious stuff anyway.” A lot of Christians start out wanting to serve God in victory but wind up quitting because of the yokes of the enemy. So what is the answer?

Jesus said, “Take my yoke on you.” Let’s read 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.” When we learn of Jesus and we cast our load on Him, our burden is light.

When we have His yoke, then there is no room for the one the devil has for us. When we have His yoke, He is there to help us to carry the load. His load is light. When we learn of Him, we know that we no longer have to carry the yokes of the enemy. Then the next time when the enemy comes against us with fear, we repeat a scripture. Like II Timothy 1:7, “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” When he tries to put on us the yoke of depression, we remind him, and ourselves, of

the scripture in Nehemiah 8:10, "...for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

When the world around us seems like it is falling apart and the devil tries to put on us the yoke of stress, we can say, My confidence is in the Lord. I will not be moved. Jeremiah 17:7-8, "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."

We don't have to accept the yokes of the enemy. We don't have to be bound and tied up, but we can be free from these things. Our part is to make up our mind that we are tired of certain yokes. We have to stop allowing the enemy to put yokes on us. You will be bound until you decide that you have had enough and you go to God and do something about it. Just like that old ox, if you don't stoop your head over to accept that yoke then the enemy can't put it on you. Refuse it. Shake yourself. Roll over and get out of there.

You have authority over the enemy. God has placed the devil under your heel, not around your neck. The Word of God doesn't give the devil victory. It gives the victory to the church. The promises of the Word of God give you victory. You are a winner. You have a God-

given right to be victorious. The devil has a God-given right to be a loser. When he tries to bind you down, slip that old yoke onto his shoulders for a change. That is where it is supposed to be. You have God's Word for that.

Matthew 16:19 tells us, "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." You have the right and authority given to you by Christ Himself not only to take that yoke off, but also to put it on satan's shoulders and bind him. We have this all backwards sometimes.

Sometimes fear becomes bondage because we don't realize it is there. So does stress. I am so bad myself to load up on things. I will start having physical problems. I will think to myself where is that coming from. I go to the Lord. He will show me all those little stressful things that I have rolled up like a ball. One by one, I cut them lose and give them to the Lord. My tension eases.

There is one requirement to this that is needed to make it all work. You have to take time to stop, listen, and obey. God can nudge you and let you know something is piling up on you. But if you don't take time enough to decide that you aren't carrying that around with you anymore, you'll be stuck with it from now on.

A lot of times we wear a yoke because we have never taken the time to deal with it and get it off. The devil is an expert at getting our eyes off the problem so that we won't fix it. He loads us up so that we can't see what is going on. Especially if our priorities are out of line, and our life is filled with all kinds of junk. He will have us on a treadmill running nowhere at break neck speed. That in itself is a yoke that will destroy our spiritual life. When we do that we aren't praying, or reading our Bible.

When we get our lives so full that Jesus stops being number one in our lives, He gets pushed out. The devil fills our wagon with useless rocks that are just dead weight. The rocks are disguised. They are really small looking. But put a zillion little small things in and you get one big problem. Then he gets us too busy to see what is going on. Then he slips in another yoke or another rock or two. We start to drag spiritually and wonder why.

When that happens, we need to get back to the place where Jesus is number one and we obey Him. Jesus will lead us beside those still, calm, peaceful waters, in those green fields. The devil will have his yoke on us driving us through the desert until our tongues hang out and we perish.

So what do we do when the Lord shows us there are yokes in our lives? There are two choices. Keep it on or get it off. God will

reveal the things that are getting us down. He will send us His Spirit to deliver us. He will move the mountains and make crooked places straight. He gives us strength to stand against the enemy and say no to that yoke. He will give you strength just like that old ox to be able to shake that thing off. It starts with recognizing the need. Then we have to realize it is not ours and we don't want it.

Then to get free of it, we have to obey God. Sometimes He will show us what to do to get out of bondage. We have to fill up with His Word. We have to praise Him. We have to let His Holy Spirit intercede through us to knock that yoke away. We may have to change some things in our life to get free from the yoke that's on us. It may be that we have to get our priorities in line. If we want it, and ask, He will set us free.

We sing a little chorus at our church, **Praise the Lord.** It goes like this:

Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord.
 Let all God's people praise the Lord.
 Shake off those heavy bands.
 Lift up those holy hands.
 Let all God's people praise the Lord.

That little song teaches a big lesson. Praise the Lord. Look to Him. Trust Him. Lift Him up in your life. Then shake off those heavy bands.

That yoke isn't yours. It wasn't made for you. That is not a load you have to carry. Give it to the Lord. He will replace it with joy, life, light, and victory in the Holy Ghost.

What happens though when you have a yoke and a load with you that is tied to it and you can't shake it loose? Seems like no matter how hard you try to get out from under that load, it always comes back. Maybe it is because you have some weeds that need pulling. May sound silly, but it is true. Keep on reading.

Chapter 13. Weeds You Need to Pull

We had a garden once that was at a low place in our yard. There was a steep bank that stopped at the corner of the garden. It was not a very good place for a garden. Water would run along the road, and off that bank. It would settle in our garden. It was often just a huge mud pie. Then the water would dry up in the summer sun, and the dirt would harden as hard as a rock. It would bake in the sun.

It was really hard to weed that garden. I would pull up the weeds and it seemed like right after that in the next day or two those same weeds were back. Why? When I pulled up the weeds, I wasn't pulling them up by their roots. The stem would break off, but the ground was so hard that the weed broke before I could pull up the root. It did no good at all for me to pull them up. I just made it worse. What does that have to do with our spiritual life?

Sometimes we can have a problem, or a battle, or a struggle with something. It may be a habit that we can't shake, or an attitude we can't get rid of. Maybe it is an addiction that we can't get lose from. Or bitterness, or rebellion, or just stinky thinking that defeats us. Maybe it is an oppression like anxiety, or depression, or any of those things. Whatever it is, it seems like we have a yoke that we just can't get off. We can't find victory over it. We think that we have

it licked and it crops up again. If we aren't careful the whole situation makes us doubt God and give up. Or we think we are a failure and we don't deserve God's love because we can't get the victory over this area in our lives.

It may be that thing has a deep root in our heart, mind, or life that we aren't pulling up. It may be that we are grubbing up the part that we can see, and leaving the part just under the surface that we can't see. To totally get the victory over this area in our lives, we have to dig down and get the root out.

I knew someone who had a major problem with bitterness. It had such a stronghold in their life that not only was it impossible to forgive that one who had caused them this hurt, it was impossible for them to forgive anyone. Sometimes when we refuse to forgive one person, it can open up a door for the a spirit of bitterness against us.

The enemy sees a weak place and uses it to his advantage. He sees a place where he can get a hook in our jaw that he can use to reel us in. Then he'll send other things to happen to us, to make us even more unforgiving. My friend even became bitter against God because of all the problems that he was having. If you want to have a bad problem, go there. There is no way to win when you get angry or bitter against God. The only way to win is realize it, and get His help to get out of it.

My friend had no idea what was going on. Often when we face something like this, we can't see all that is going on. We just know that we are going through a battle that is spiritually killing us. We may not even realize what that battle is from.

Why is bitterness such a bad problem? Not only can a root of bitterness mess up your life, but it can also mess up the lives of everyone around you. 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." Modern doctors have even linked bitterness to many physical conditions including hardening of the arteries, and cancer.

The person that I mentioned in the last paragraph tried to deal with fixing the problems he was having on the surface. But there was a root that had to be gotten out. The problems would leave for a while, but come back. They are still going through the same battle today. Why? Because they refuse to forgive. What is their hope? They need to get real with God and see the damage this is causing. They need to ask God what the problem is. They need to come to the place that they are willing to do anything to get this area of their life fixed.

Have you ever been there? If you have then you know that is a place where God can deal with your heart. Desperation is a good

fertile ground for God to sow in. Rebellion goes hand in hand with bitterness. I know that somewhere along the line God has dealt with this person about their bitterness. But they have hardened their face, and said, “No way, I won’t do it. I won’t fix it. I will stay angry.” That is rebellion. So now rebellion is added to the list, another weed springing up from that one little root.

Through God’s love we can forgive. We just have to come to the place that we are willing to. God will make a way for us to if we will come to that place. God’s love is sufficient. We have in us the Spirit of the One Who cried from the cross, “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.” When we forgive, we can receive God’s forgiveness and be restored to His love for us.

There are other roots that can cause problems. The root may be a little sin that can’t harm anyone, or so we think. A little closet that we refuse to clean out. The devil spots that area of our life and zooms in to make it worse. I am reminded of Saul in the books of Samuel. Saul went from being a person that God chose to be king of Israel to someone who God turned His back on because of what Saul had become.

These scriptures talk about the change. Read these and see if you can tell what happened. What was the difference between Saul in I Samuel 9:2 and Saul in I Samuel 31:4?

What happened between these two sections of scripture? I Samuel 9:2 says, “And he (Kish) had a son, whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people.” I Samuel 31:4 tells us, “Then said Saul unto his armourbearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through and abuse me. But his armour bearer would not; for he was sore afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon it.” What happened to him? His story started with such promise and such victory? What went on between those two accounts? Saul had some roots in his life that he refused to get rid of. One was his bitterness against David. We read about this root in I Samuel 18:29, “And Saul was yet the more afraid of David; and Saul became David’s enemy continually.”

His whole life became obsessed with trying to destroy David. Another root was his refusal to submit to God and do it His way. I Samuel 15:23 tells us, “For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the Word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king.” Saul didn’t just one day happen to disobey the Lord and the Lord jerked him out from being king because of it. How

many times did God deal with Saul before that day? How many times did He send others to talk to Saul's heart? We will never know. When you study his life between these two verses, you can catch glimpses of these roots.

How do we get those roots out? We let God convict us. We listen and obey. We repent. That will cause us to come to the place where we want to get real with God and get all those roots out. Jesus is coming for a church without spot, wrinkle, or blemish. Ephesians 5:27 tells us, "That He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Lets get rid of those roots. Let God clean up your closets. Then you can finally be free. When you do, that battle that you thought you could never get out of will be over. You will be free. Free indeed. Free at last.

Chapter 14. Prayer

Prayer is important. We all know that. Let's talk a little about what exactly prayer is and why it is so important. We touched on that in an earlier chapter but want to spend more time than that. I heard a preacher the other day talk about prayer as being a burst of positive energy that we focus on a problem, a person, or a circumstance.

I think that there is something definitely missing in that definition. Matter of fact, I'm a little suspicious of the roots of that definition. I think it probably has its roots in the New Age Movement or Eastern religions whose teaching has crept into many of the churches today. We hear these things, pick them up, repeat them, and live by them if we aren't careful. We have no idea where a lot of things that we have adopted as thinking for our lives come from, but they still become a part of how we think. Then if we aren't careful they become a part of our relationship with God, and how we act and react. That is why it is so important to focus on the Word of God, letting the Spirit of God open it to you.

Not everything coming from the pulpit is the Word of God. I am not saying this to scare you and make you doubt everyone running away from them in fear. I am just saying this so that you take that Bible off the shelf, dust it off,

and get on your face before God asking Him to show it to you. His Spirit can write its pages in your heart and change your life. It can give you a discernment to be able to tell when someone is not speaking the truth. I want to change your focus so that you and God are working out your salvation, not everyone else do it. In the last days, and we are in the last days, there will be more and more false teaching.

We have to learn to be aware. Revelations 22:18-19 warns us not to change God's Word. Since this scripture is written in the book of Revelations we can assume that the Lord is speaking about this book of Revelations. On the other hand, why would this particular book of the scriptures be more holy than the scripture as a whole. I think this applies to all God's Word. "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." That is pretty serious. When people change the Word of God to make it to be what they want it to be, they are on serious grounds. Don't worry. We'll get back to our discussion on prayer.

This preacher defined prayer as a burst of positive energy. Is that what prayer is? If it isn't, what makes it work? When we study out the prayers of people in the scripture, we see one common ingredient that helps us to define prayer. Let's look at some prayers.

Please read these sections of scripture, as I didn't write them out here. Here are just a few prayers that are recorded in the scriptures. I have given the first verse of the prayer in the reference but read on from there. In Genesis 18:23 we see Abraham's prayer for Sodom. Elijah prayed on Mt. Carmel in I Kings 18:36. In I Kings 8:22 we read Solomon's prayer as he dedicated the temple. Ezra's prayer for the sins of Israel is found in Ezra 9:6. The Lord's Prayer taught by Jesus is prayed in Luke 11:1.

When you read in the Bible about people who were praying, they do it in different ways. Some of them knelt when they prayed. Some had eyes open, some had eyes closed. Some were flat on their face before God. Some were bold. Some were not so bold. Some were prayers that changed the course of their whole nation.

What then is the common ingredient? Each one was talking to a God that they knew. It wasn't a rare thing for them to pray. They had prayed many times that day probably in their mind as they faced this situation. They

were speaking with their Father. They knew that He heard them because they often spoke to Him.

A huge prayer in the Bible was the one that Elijah prayed. This prayer is found in the Old Testament. The nations around Israel worshipped Baal which was a false god, an idol. They made a statute and worshiped it. Sad to say, to follow Baal, you had to sacrifice a child. What a mess. Believe it or not Israel would get turned around into Baal worship, or into worshipping some of the other idols worshiped in some of the other countries around.

Elijah was a prophet at a time when Israel had turned away from God. He challenged the prophets who followed Baal and the other gods. He told them before all the people that he was going to prove which was the true God.

He met with 850 prophets. He told them that the real God could would send fire down from heaven. They spent hours praying. Nothing happened. When they were praying, Elijah just mocked them. He told them that surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened. Nothing happened. He challenged the people of Israel to choose this day who they would serve.

Then it was Elijah's turn. When Elijah stood there ready to pray fire down from heaven

it wasn't the first time he had prayed. He knew God. He knew God was there with him. He knew he wasn't on that mountain alone. It was not a surprise to him that fire came. He knew it would, or he would never have dared to stand there in the first place. He often poured his heart out to God.

Study his story. Read the times when he went boo-hooing before God. Sometimes it was because he was filled with fear. He wasn't perfect. But even in his imperfection, he still sought God. Prayer was his relationship with God. He knew God was there to hear Him, because just earlier that day he had talked to Him and He was there. He knew that God wouldn't let Him down. He trusted in the One that he had dedicated his life to serve.

He was more than confident that day. That is faith. How could he be so bold in his prayer? He knew that their gods couldn't hear their prayers. They weren't real. He knew his God was real. He knew because he walked with Him. He already knew God would send the fire. He trusted Him to, and He did. Elijah had them soak with water an altar that was built out of rock. The fire fell down from heaven and it was so hot that it burned up the rocks, and even burned up the dirt under the altar.

Prayer starts with a relationship. Faith is trusting in that relationship with God. Faith is trusting in God and His Word. Faith is found as

we grow in that relationship with God. Faith grows as we grow in understanding God's Word. Faith grows as we put it to the test. When we pray and we receive an answer, our faith grows. The next time, it is easier to believe. What can weaken our faith and cause our prayers to be ineffective? Not knowing God personally. Not walking with Him everyday. Not putting our faith to the test. Not praying. Trusting only in the prayers of others.

How do you communicate with God in your relationship? Sometimes I have been guilty of just whining. Have you ever been there? As a teacher, I have had some whiny children. They grumble and complain about everything, demanding better, even when what they have is fine. I wasn't really in a hurry to hear those voices. Wonder if God is eager to hear us when we whine. Or complain.

Remember the children of Israel in the desert. They were constantly grumbling. If I'm not careful I will catch myself grumbling about this or that to God. Sometimes, too, if we aren't careful we'll see God as being a big loving Santa Claus like person, and all we do is present our huge list, calling it off demanding like. We want to sit on his lap and call off our list, then that is all we say to Him until the next time we have a list. Sometimes we need to grow up in our relationship with the Lord and learn to carry on a decent conversation.

When do we need to pray? Often prayer is something that we do at the end of the day before we go to sleep because that is what we are taught to do. Problem is, we often fall asleep right in the middle of our conversation. What if that was the only way that we talked to people we care about? What kind of a relationship would we have?

You might be thinking, but God knows I know He is there. I don't have to talk to Him all the time. If that is our philosophy in how we do those we love, what kind of a relationship would we have with them? Some of you may be thinking, "Oh, I know the best time to pray, it's in the morning. The Bible does say that we need to seek Him early.

I think though that there is another side to prayer that we are missing. We catch a glimpse of this side in I Chronicles 16:11, "Seek the Lord and His strength, seek His face continually." And in I Thessalonians 5:17, "Pray without ceasing". I used to think, how in the world could anyone pray without ceasing. I have to go to work. I have to do other things. I just can't be on my knees 24/7. What can these verses mean?

Then I grew in my relationship with God. It became a joy to spend time with Him. I hungered and thirsted to be with Him. Psalm 42:1-2, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.

My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" I long to be with the Lord. He is so cool. When I talk to Him, He understands me like no body else. When I need help, He is always there. His guidance is the best. His advise is what I long to hear. He can get me straightened out with just a word when I am getting attitudes. He is my brother, friend, Father, mother, all rolled into one.

I need Him. I need His companionship. I need His mercy. When should we seek the Lord? Why would you not want to seek Him continuously? If Elijah hadn't been continual in his relationship with the Lord and in his conversation with Him, would he have had the strength to stand at Mt. Carmel? Why was he bold? He knew God. That is the key to powerful prayer. That is faith. That is trust.

We need to be mindful of our relationship with God continually. He is real. We need to be real with Him. He is there as we wake up, watching over us through the day. He is there as you drive to work through that rush hour traffic. He is there as you face those blue Mondays, and not so great Tuesdays. He was there when you faced that crisis. When you faced that battle He strengthened you. He kept you through the night. He was there when you cried on His shoulder. He has never left you. Talk to Him. Pray continuously. Make your

relationship with Him a focus in your life. He is focused on you.

This is just something funny here thrown in. When I first came back to the Lord, it was at a time when I had to drive a lot. It was my favorite time to pray. Problem was I had grown up thinking that you had to bow your head and close your eyes to pray. Well, I had a major problem with that. That just didn't work well.

Another thing that threw me was that I thought that we had to talk all proper to God like a lot of the preachers I had grown up around. I didn't realize that I could just pour out my heart and talk to Him in the plain way that I talked to everyone else.

I also at one time thought that I had to be perfect and holy for God to hear my prayer. It didn't take long to figure out that if I was going to wait for that to happen, I would be waiting until I went to heaven. We can't be perfect. So we don't have to be perfect for God to hear our prayers.

Spend time in your relationship with God. Talk to Him. Pray for others around you. You will watch crooked places straighten and mountains move. You will watch gifts begin to operate in your life, like the gift of faith. Your faith will grow as you watch your prayers answered.

Now you can't find that prayer life if you are afraid to pray. I watch people a lot. I see

many that every time that they need God to move in their lives, they run to get somebody to pray for them. If they get sick, they run to the pastor. They face a financial problem. They run to a parent to pray. Their loved ones face a battle, they run to their brother or sister in the Lord to pray.

I was guilty of this at one time. Then I lost the people that I had run to all the time. That was the best thing that ever happened to my prayer life. I learned that I could have prayed all the time. I learned that my faith could be just as strong as the faith of those who had been praying for me. I learned that the reason their faith was strong because they had prayed so much for me.

Those people who you rely on to pray cannot get you to heaven. When you let them pray and fail to do so yourself, you are letting them have your relationship with God. Your house is built on the sand, not on the solid rock of Jesus Christ. When the storms of your life come, and they will, your house will not stand. God longs to have a walking talking relationship with you. You can be the one with the powerful prayer, if you'll just run to your Savior instead of to everyone else.

You might come to me and say, "But I did pray. I really believed once and it didn't happen. I don't trust in my prayers any more. Something was wrong with me. I didn't have

enough faith.” When we don’t have a prayer to be answered, that opens the door for the devil to slip in with condemnation. He can stop us from praying that way. The best thing to do when a prayer isn’t answered is to get back up and keep on praying.

Don’t let a rift come in your relationship with God. Go to Him and find out why it wasn’t answered. We’ll talk about in a few minutes how every prayer that we pray is answered. Read on. What about Elijah? Did he always get a positive answer to his prayers? Did he ever have any doubts? Read his whole story again. I Kings 17 through II Kings 2. One of the things that you will notice that he actually went through times of total despair.

The same Elijah that had called down fire from heaven was hiding in a cave in the next chapter afraid for his life. He could have sat there and said. “This is not working. God certainly didn’t answer that prayer like I thought He would. I am not sure if God hears me at all. Something must be wrong with my faith and me. I don’t have a right to talk to God.” But he didn’t. His story didn’t stop there. Yours doesn’t have to either. Your faith doesn’t have to stop because you think that a prayer wasn’t answered.

All my prayers that I have ever prayed have been answered. Wow, that is a bold statement. Am I saying that because I am a

perfect, oh most holy person. After all I must be, I write books. (Just a little side note here. Don't even think that I am something that you can't be, or aren't. I am what the Lord has made me. I am also what I have made me. That part is not perfect. But God is the only goodness that I have in me. I am just human, like you. I just trust more in Him in me than I do in my flesh. You can do the same. That is one key for having faith in your prayer life. Concentrate on God, not on yourself.) No I am not perfect, but still every prayer that I have ever prayed has been answered. I'll go a step further. Every prayer that you have ever prayed has been answered.

There are three ways that God answers prayer. Sometimes He just answers it by doing what we've asked and we are expecting Him to do. Those answers that came and you knew nobody but God could have worked that out. But what about those other times? Those times when God was silent and you had to struggle on. Or at least you had a struggle in your life until that perfect time when the answer came. Ask Mary and Martha.

Mary and Martha and Lazarus were good friends with Jesus. Lazarus got sick and they sent word to Jesus to come and pray for him. The messenger told Jesus that he was seriously sick, that He should go right away. Jesus didn't go. He waited several days to go. In the

meantime, Lazarus died. Everyone wondered why Jesus waited. When He finally got to their house, they were all mourning. They asked Him why He hadn't come sooner when He could have helped Lazarus. You see, their minds there was only way that Jesus could have taken care of it, and that was by coming before Lazarus died and healing him.

When He got there, Jesus did one thing. In those days in Israel, they buried people in tombs, cave like places in the rocks where they carved out rooms to lay the dead. He went to the tomb where Lazarus' body was laying. He cried out, "Lazarus, come forth." Lazarus got up from the dead. He had been dead for 3 days. He raised up from the dead.

Do you think that his sisters thought He was too late to help then? Was Jesus late that day when He came to Lazarus? The answer may not come when you think it should. Does that mean that God hasn't answered your prayer? When that sick one didn't rise up from their sick bed, does that mean that God failed to hear your prayer? Maybe the answer was that He had was a far better answer than the one you wanted to see. God did hear.

What about those times when you had that financial struggle daily praying for enough money to pay those bills. Any minute you were afraid that you would lose it all. You didn't get a big financial miracle. But did you lose it all?

Aren't you still hanging in there? Isn't that an answer to your prayer? Just not the answer you thought you'd have.

What about that battle that didn't go away, but just kept getting worse the more you prayed. Through it all, your faith grew. Your relationship with the Lord grew. You were quicker to obey because you knew that was the only way that you could make it. You grew to be more obedient because you knew if you weren't you wouldn't make it out of that valley. Your trust in the Lord grew because next time you faced something you knew that He had seen you through the last time. You knew He would see you through this as well.

What about those times when the mountain just got steeper the harder that you prayed. But you wound up jumping from cliff to cliff with the with hind's feet (hinds were the little wild goats that played in cliffs in Israel) because you learned how to climb in the rough places. Did God refuse to answer your prayer? Did He fail you? Or did He answer them in a greater way?

Then there is another answer. It is simply "NO". We don't like to hear that answer, but praise the Lord, God isn't afraid to give it to us anyway. He definitely isn't like a spoiling parent who gives His kids anything they want just because they want it. There have been many, many times in my life when I was totally

confident that this thing that I was asking for was exactly what I needed. Or I was convinced that this was the direction that I needed to go in. I was devastated when God didn't answer my prayer. Then on down the road, I'd see it work out so much better another way. Or I'd see the problems that I would have had if I had gone in that direction. My prayer had been answered, and it was the right answer. If we aren't careful we can get like spoiled children. We want it the way we want it when we want it. If God doesn't do it that way we doubt Him. It may be that our miracle is that God loves us enough to say no.

Then there is the story of the importune woman in Luke 11:5-13. What is importunity? That means she wouldn't shut up or give up or go away until she got that bread that she was asking her neighbor for. Sometimes we just have to keep on asking, keep on believing until that prayer is heard. Don't shut up, or give up, or go away until it is answered. That is faith. That is how God wants us to be when we pray. He wants us to come boldly before Him in faith. He wants us to hold onto that prayer until it is heard. I have had some prayers that I wouldn't give up on for years until God heard them. When He did, He moved mountains.

Answers to prayer may come in three different ways. 1. Yes. 2. No. 3. Wait. When it seems God hasn't heard your prayer, keep on

praying. How do you know the things that you can pray for? How do you know what things are yours to claim. God has given you a book of promises. We'll talk about that coming up.

Chapter 15. God's Word

God's Word is the most powerful force in the world. Much more powerful than any thing that man has. It comes with a guarantee that it will work perfectly. How long has that guarantee lasted and how long will it last in the future? Throughout all time, for eternity. Matthew 5:18 tells us, "For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." Every little tiny part of it will come to pass guaranteed.

We have talked a lot through this book about the Word of God. Can't close this book without giving it a whole chapter though. If it had not been for the Word of God, we would never have heard about salvation. The promises of God are found there. The map for how we are to live is there. Hope for eternity is found in its pages. No wonder I fuss so much about you getting it out and reading it. It is like a door that we go through to find out about all the things of God. Even the door we have to go through to get to know God Himself, Jesus, and the Holy Ghost.

We have talked about how important it is that we know the Word of God, not just knowing what other people tell us. The Word of God is the truth. It is the truth that will set us free. John 8:32 tells us, "And ye shall know the

truth and the truth shall make you free.” We need to know the Bible, not just what our preacher preaches and our Sunday school teacher teaches. It is good to read books about the Bible, but if we spend all our time reading them and never reading the Bible how will we know if what the author is saying is true?

We have talked about how the Word of God is the foundation of our faith. Romans 10:17 tells us, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” If you were going to build a building, wouldn’t the foundation be the most important part. Would you want to build a foundation blindly? Would you want to build it with no knowledge of the ground that you were building on except for what someone told you it was like? Would you let someone you didn’t even know choose your materials without even looking at them for yourself? Would you choose the place to lay your foundation without walking through the area yourself just because someone told you it was a good place to build? We wouldn’t do these things with a natural building, but often we do these same things with the foundation that holds up our eternal soul.

Let’s talk about how we know that God’s Word is true. The number one place to go to prove the validity of God’s Word is God’s Word. There are historic proofs as well. There are many proofs, historical and Biblical, that

illustrate that God Himself gave the prophecies in the Bible. How else could these have come to pass just as they were spoken if they weren't given by inspiration of the Spirit of God? There are historical proofs that demonstrate that the prophecies in the Bible were written before the prophecies were fulfilled.

There is no other book that has prophecies that are proven countless times over like the Bible. There are many prophecies, but the most remarkable are the prophecies about Jesus. There are historical proofs from sources outside the Bible to prove Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled these prophecies.

There is also historical proof from Jewish writings, the Jewish Talmud, that Jesus lived and fulfilled the prophecies regarding Him. Here are only a few of the prophecies found in the Bible. Isaiah 52:13-53:12 talks about several of the prophecies. This was written by the prophet Isaiah around 700 years before Jesus was even born. Please read this section of scripture. In it we see that Jesus would be beaten beyond recognition. That He would be beaten with stripes. In Psalm 22:14-19 David wrote around 1000 B.C. that they would pierce Jesus' hands and His feet. That they would divide His garments among them, and gamble for them. I am sure that the Roman soldiers who gambled for Jesus' robe that day

had not read the scriptures. They weren't doing this to obey the scriptures.

In other words, there are over 300 prophecies in the Bible that were written sometimes thousands of years before Jesus was born and they all came true in His lifetime. There are countless other prophecies that are recorded in the scriptures. Some of them prophesied the rise and fall of whole civilizations and countries. These were written sometimes hundreds of years before they came true. There are bunches of prophecies that were written hundreds, even thousands of years ago that are coming true in our lifetime. Always they happened to the detail of what God's prophets had written in the scriptures.

Jesus death and resurrection is the greatest proof of the Bible as being God's Word. What other religion claims to have a risen Savior? If the Buddhists could get by with claiming that Buddha raised from the dead, they would. Why haven't they? Because he didn't. It was irrefutably established in history by many, many eyewitness accounts that Jesus rose from the dead. If that wouldn't have been so, then we couldn't claim it today.

What are some other facts that prove the Bible is the Word of God. Think about this for a minute. The Bible was written for over a 1,500 year span for over 40 generations by over 40 authors from every walk of life. It was

written in many different places, and at many different times. It was written on three continents, Asia, Africa, and Europe. It was written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Its subject matter includes hundreds of subjects that people have different opinions of. Subjects that now can't be agreed on when mentioned or discussed. But all of the writers agree in what was written like one person had written it instead of bunches. That could only happen because God told them what to write. They agree as if one author had written what they wrote.

Another fact that proves the Bible is the Word of God is this. No other book has been attacked like the Bible, yet through time it has stood every test and still stands as the Word of God today. These are only a few of the reasons why we know that the Bible is God's Word.

Now that we have established that we know God's Word is true, let's read what God's Word has to say about itself. I am not writing these scriptures down here quoting them directly. I am doing this for a purpose. Please get out your Bible before you even start reading this section of scriptures. Read them for yourself.

Psalm 119:89 and Isaiah 40:8 tells us that God's Word is settled forever.

Matthew 5:18 tells us that ever little part of it will come to pass.

I Peter 1:25 tell us that it is how we hear the Gospel.

Deuteronomy 8:3 tell us that it is food for our soul.

Jeremiah 15:16 tells us that it is our rejoicing of our heart.

II Timothy 3:16 and II Peter 1:21 tell us that it wasn't just written by man.

Psalm 119:11 tells us that it will keep us from sin.

Romans 10:8 tells us that it is faith.

Psalm 119:105 tells us that it shows us the way to go.

Hebrews 4:12 tells us that it is our sword

Psalm 119:9 and John 15:3 tells us it cleanses us.

I John 5:13 tells us that in its pages we find eternal life.

Revelations 22:19 tells us to leave it like it is.

We could go on and on.

How important is it that you read God's Word every day? I am not one of the slimmest people in the world. I struggle with my weight. A lot of the reason is that we work so much, we don't have much time or energy left for physical activity. I daily struggle with trying to come home and walk on the treadmill. I try to get into

a routine of eating right too. I spend a lot of time and energy working on these two areas in my life. Even if it is just energy spent on worrying that I haven't done it today. How much more important is it to make sure our spirit man is in good condition? Has He been fed today? Good healthy food, or junk food? Have you exercised your prayer life? Exercised your faith?

If you neglect reading the scripture, the Spirit man (Jesus in you through the power of the Holy Ghost) will be weaker than your flesh. You won't have victory in your life. Neither will your family. Neither will your friends. Neither will your church. When you are filled up with the Word of God it will pour out on others around you making a difference to everyone around you.

I am not saying that you have to constantly preach the Word of God to them, hammering away at them. I have learned the hard way that never works. It means that you love them with God's love and you live His Word before them. It means that you carry God's Spirit and His Word to them. It will make a difference to them. They will see from the victory in your life that God's Word works. If you constantly preach God's Word to them, but they don't see victory in you, then it will only prove to them that God's Word won't work for them. After all it must not be working for you.

When you go through a battle, do those around you see God's Word at work in your life? When you have to walk by faith do they see victory in how you walk and talk? When the devil is trying to destroy you, do your loved ones see how to overcome by how you overcome? Is God's Word reflected from you? How are you teaching God's Word to those around you? If God's Word is the foundation for your life, they will see how strong that foundation is by how straight the building is standing. I am not saying here that you have to be perfect. Just show them the perfection of God.

We have to be careful that we aren't like the guy that the scripture talked about. The one who looked in the mirror and went away looking as bad as he was before he looked in the mirror. He saw he was a mess, but he didn't do anything to fix his mess, and walked away. What good would that do us? We have to read God's Word and do it. We have to obey. We can read it all day, even memorize huge sections, but if we don't put it to practice in our lives, it will do us no good. When we look into the mirror, we need to at least get out the washcloth and the comb and fix a few things. Don't just read the book and talk the talk. Stand up and walk the walk. After all, someone is watching you.

How strong is your foundation? How straight are your walls of your building? Are you the same at church as you are at home? Does your family see a different version of you than your pastor? Do you have to change how you dress, act, and talk when you see your pastor and your church friends? Do you have habits that you have to hide? Do the people at your work place see a different you than your church friends? Do they see a different you when they come up to you with their latest dirty joke? Are you a light to them reflecting God's Word? Are you a light to your family? What kind of a foundation are you helping your children to build? Can they see God's Word in your life? A lot of parents fall back on the old excuse, do as I say, not as I do. What kind of foundation is that helping them to build? They will walk in your footsteps further than they will walk in your words.

Are you carrying the light of God's Word to a lost and dying world? You can speak it but if you aren't living it, they won't believe it. I'm not saying that you have to be Mrs. Holy Righteous Perfect Person. I am not saying that you are to go around like that little children's rhyme, "Little Bunny Foooh Foooh" and go around picking up the field mice and everybody else and bopping them on the head with God's Word. God's Word is not something to bop people over the head with. It isn't a yardstick to

measure how holy you are compared to how everyone else measures short.

You ain't perfect. God's word is a light to a lost world. You can't fill yourself with God's Word without filling yourself with the love of God. You can't fill yourself with God's Word without filling yourself with God's Spirit. You can't fill yourself up with God's Spirit without filling yourself up with God's love. Lift up those around you in God's Word, His Spirit, and His love.

It is important though while you are loving and lifting up that you do not compromise. Too many people are trying to lead those around them to the Lord by just being one of the boys so to speak. If you compromise on God's Word and the standards there, then you are just a joke, not a light. If you don't stand for something then you will fall for anything and those people who you are trying to help will fall under you.

When I was first saved, I had the idea that I could still hang with my old friends, and be a light to them. I could just do a little bit of what they were doing, and still be a light. I could walk with them and walk with God too. I was a dingy light, not at all very bright. The Lord gave me a dream one night. In my dream I was hanging out in a bar with my friends. I wasn't drinking, but I was compromising in a lot of a ways. Just by being there I was

compromising on what I knew was right. In my dream, while I was there, the rapture took place. Because I was compromising, I was left behind.

My friends knew that the rapture had taken place when it did. They all had heard it would come, but like me they weren't living up to what they knew. They looked at me and all I could see was the hate they had for me. They knew that I had not stood up for what I had believed in, for the Word of God and its truth. If I had been a light, they might not have been left behind. My dream ended with them chasing me to kill me because they hated me. Think of that next time when you are tempted to compromise and just be one of the crowd.

I just want to add something in here that is a little off topic. I remember that when I was first saved I kept trying to hang around with my old friends. I wanted them to see the change in me and know they could change too. Problem was, they just pulled me down.

It was then that God gave me a dream. I know that He gave it to me because I can remember it just as strong today as it was 40+ years ago. I was standing on a dock beside the water. I had been pulled out, but I was still wet. I could see my friends were drowning. I tried to help save them, but I slipped in. Then we all drowned. If I had waited until I dried off, then I wouldn't have slipped in. Sometimes we have to wait until we get strong before we try to help

those people that we used to hang around with before we got to know the Lord. OK, back to topic.

God's Word is straight. His path is plain. It may not be a broad road, but it is well marked. If you get in His Word, read it, and live it, you won't get lost. You will know right from wrong if you read it. The world's church is filled with the doctrine, "What is right for me might not be right for you. What is wrong for me might not be wrong for you." Stack that one up beside God's Word. We have so twisted God's Word to excuse our sin that we no longer can see the truth. We have perverted it until it is a laughing stock to the world. Dare to be a lighthouse instead of a stumbling stone. Ask God to reveal His Word to your heart. Dare to live by it. Your world will never be the same.

The Word of God and faith go together. One builds the other. In the next chapter will talk more about faith.

Chapter 16. Faith

What is faith? The best definition that we can find is given in Hebrews 11:1, “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” In that chapter we read of the heroes of faith found in throughout the Bible. Their faith moved mountains, and changed their whole world. What made that faith possible? We read many names in this chapter. Some we recognize easily, but some we may not recognize.

Please read the rest of Hebrews chapter 11. In verses 33 and 34 it tell us that this is talking about people, “Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies...” That is pretty victorious.

But right in the midst of all that victory we read about some that seemingly didn’t have it so good. We read about them in verse 37-39. “They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.”

How could being sawn asunder be walking in faith? How could all the things that these people went through be considered faith? When we read the last verse of the chapter, we get the idea that we might not have what we have today had it not been for these people who were willing to face what they did.

Why were they willing to go through all this? Because they knew that on the other side of it all there was something far better. They had somewhere caught a glimpse of a Savior that loved them. They held onto that love trusting in that love to see them through. They had caught a glimpse of a love so wonderful that they were willing to go through whatever they had to go through for Him. That is faith.

They had caught a glimpse of that place that He had prepared for them. They knew that they didn't have to be troubled. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again, and receive you unto myself: that where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:1-3.

They looked beyond what they saw and endured. They put their hand in their Master's hands and trusted until they saw their promise. That is faith. We think that because we don't have everything perfect that we don't have

faith. We think that if we are going through a battle we don't have faith. We need to stop doing that. That isn't really faith. Faith is when we go through what we have to go through, enduring it all, trusting in the Lord. Stephen in Acts chapter 7 looked past the faces filled with hatred into the eyes of Jesus. That was faith. Faith knows that God will see you through.

I was blessed to be able to spend several months in Russia and Romania. Many of the people that I had met there had been beaten and persecuted for their faith severally. I remember one man that had been arrested while smuggling Bibles. He only had one regret, one thing that had been condemning him. He told me that he had regretted being afraid. He felt that he had failed God. He had been beaten for several days. Then he was set free. He said that he had been afraid for a few days and hadn't smuggled during that time. He had gone on to continue it and had done it for years afterwards.

I think that the enemy had used that brief time of fear to condemn him for years. His faith may have wavered, but it grew to the place where he was able to go back in. The devil had caused him to concentrate on that brief time of failure, instead of that time of victory that came after the failure. The devil is a master at trying to make us think that we don't have faith.

Everything in God is obtainable if we have faith. That is why he tries to destroy our

faith. If he can't, then like this man, he will condemn us to the place that we listen to him and think that we have no faith. Some of us don't know what kind of faith we have because we don't dare to put it to the test. If we were to, we might find that we would have the faith to get the job done. God can give us the faith we need.

It takes faith to know that God's Word is real when we first hear it. It takes faith to respond to it. We feel God's love and His Spirit drawing us. It takes faith to respond to that. We see that we can have a personal relationship with God. It takes faith to be able to do that. As we grow in our love for Him, we know that we need to obey Him. It takes faith to step out and obey God. As we go through battles and circumstances that try to destroy us, it takes faith to overcome these.

The devil comes with his lies and tricks. It takes faith to overcome him. Then the enemy comes and says to us, "You can't do that. You don't have the faith to do that." And we listen. What is the trouble with that? How can we not have faith? If we aren't careful, we just let him talk us out of our faith. We read the scriptures about God giving to everyone a measure of faith, and we excuse our doubt by saying, God must have just given me a little bit of a measure.

We have the faith to move mountains, if we will only try. A stronger faith comes when we focus on God and not on ourselves. A weak faith comes because we concentrate on our flesh and its weakness. Forget yourself. Trust in God. Believe Him. Then do what He tells you to do.

What is the key to having a strong faith? We know that the Word of God builds our faith. We've talked about that scripture. We know that praying in the Holy Ghost builds our faith. Jude 20 tells us, "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on our most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost." What else strengthens your faith? We have talked about how time in a relationship with the Lord builds your faith. You know that He can do because you have seen Him do. You know that He will keep you tomorrow because you watched what He did for you yesterday.

Trust comes into a relationship when the storms cause it to grow. Also, your faith grows from the testimonies of others. Always surround yourself with faith talking people, not negative people who destroy your faith. However, you need to remember that you can't build your own faith by totally relying on the faith of others. There is also another way that you can strengthen your faith.

I knew someone who had a powerful ministry praying for cancer victims to be

healed. Matter of fact, my own mother had lymph cancer. This lady prayed for her and she was healed. Has been healed for over 10 years.

Why did this person have such a gift and a faith to pray for cancer victims? Because one day she dared to step out on faith and pray. Her prayer was answered. Then there were those times when she prayed in faith and it seemed like God didn't hear her prayer. She didn't stop praying. She accepted God's answer, and kept on praying. She did this for many years. Her faith grew in this area as more and more prayers were answered. Through exercising her faith in this area her faith grew. That is one example of how we can grow our faith. If we never step out and dare to pray, our faith will never grow.

Faith has to be personal. To stand and walk in faith we have to have a relationship with God that will stand through the storms. When we know His love and we walk in that love, we know that we're precious in His sight. We know that He won't fail us. We know our trust is not in vain when we trust in Him.

Psalm 37:3, "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." Psalm 37:5, "Commit thy way unto the Lord: trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass." It is important that we not trust in man more than we trust in the Lord. Psalm 118:8, "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man".

It is also important that we not trust in people more than we do God. And it is important that we don't put more confidence in our own natural abilities than we do in God. That will just set us up to fail more often than not. Proverbs 3:5, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding."

We also have to beware that fear doesn't creep in to destroy our faith. Proverbs 29:25, "The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe." How can we guard against fear? By falling in love with Jesus, and trusting in His love. II Timothy 1:7 tells us, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." Put your trust in the Lord. Faith will come with that. Bury your doubt in God's Word. When you do have doubt, admit it. Go to God. Repent. Ask Him to help you with your doubt and strengthen your faith.

Know what the Lord is like, and then it is easier to trust Him and put faith in Him. It is hard to trust something blindly in the dark. In an old barn there may be a lot of ropes that are hanging down. Some may be more than a little rotten after hanging there for years. You don't want to trust one that you can't see. If you are going to swing out of the loft on one of them, you definitely want to turn the light on and take a good look at it before you swing. Check it

out. Check out God's credentials in his Word. Get to know Jesus. It will get easier and easier to trust and to have faith as you grow in your relationship with Him. Take time to read God's Word. It will turn the light on as well.

If reading this makes you want to have a greater faith, then that is a good thing. You can't have a chapter about faith without covering doubt. How many know that there will be times when you will doubt? What should you do when doubt comes, and it will? Number one, don't get condemned. Run to God with your doubt, not away from Him. Don't hide from your doubt, or try to hide it from God. He knows it anyway. Go to Him and talk to Him about it.

I remember one time in particular that I was going through a rough battle with my faith. We had gone through a terrible time in the ministry, and it had really shaken my faith. The battle had gotten hot. We were coming out with the victory, but it had been a rough season. I just couldn't seem to get it together after that. I asked God what was wrong with me. The Bible compares our faith to being a shield. He showed me my shield. It was all beaten and banged up by the battle. It was holding, but it was weak.

My faith was weak because of the stress of the battle. I spent time with the Lord and time in His Word. I prayed, especially praying in the Holy Ghost. I spent time around God's

faith filled people. I spent time praising the Lord. My faith began to strengthen.

What if instead of going to God with my doubt, I had run from Him? I might not have overcome that battle. Face what you are going through. Face your doubts. Don't push them down in and refuse to deal with them. That will cause problems later. Don't hide the questions, find the answers. This thing has stood the test of time and still continues to. I certainly won't crumble on you because you have questions. Just be sure that you go to the right source to find the answer. Start with God, His Spirit and His Word. He can certainly help you with the answer.

As our faith grows we learn to lean more and more on Jesus, and less on ourselves, and on others. We learn that we can expect the best and not settle for less. And we learn that we can have victory in our battles. These chapters are coming up.

Chapter 17. Learning to Lean

There is an old song “Learning to Lean”. Some of the words in it say, “Finding more power than I’ve ever dreamed. I’m Learning to Lean on Jesus”. There is a lot of truth in that little song. Let’s talk about what that means, learning to lean. To do that we have to define what it means to lean. If you are standing there leaning against something, then your whole weight is against that thing. If somebody comes along and knocks that prop out from under you, you are in trouble. You will fall. You are totally dependent on that thing to hold you up.

If we aren’t careful we find props in our life that can easily be knocked out from under us. What kinds of props can we have? One prop, or leaning post, that we can have is the people around us. It may be Mom or Dad. Their experience can’t get you into heaven. You have to find a salvation experience and relationship with the Lord all your own.

Preacher’s kids are some of the hardest kids to find true salvation. They grow up in their Mom or Dad’s experience. Then reality hits them like the waves of a storm and they find their house had been built on sand. Why? Because their life and their makeshift relationship with God collapses when put to the test.

I was much the same way. I got saved when I was in the fifth grade. I went to the altar because I was expected to. I remember when I told my aunt I had been saved. She was so happy. It was like my going to the altar was the most exciting thing that had ever happened to her. I didn't get it. It was OK. Not really that exciting. Why? Because my salvation there that day was a salvation leaning on other people's expectations. Nothing really happened between God and me.

Much later on in my life when storms came, my house fell quick. Then I got back up, or rather God picked me up. This time flat on my back looking up, knowing no one could help me but God, I found salvation for real. I found a relationship with God. One of the first people that I ran to tell was my precious aunt. This time I was more excited than she was and she was pretty excited. Something had happened. I had learned to lean on Jesus.

One leaning post that we might have might be family, or it might be other people in our church, or our pastor. We have talked about earlier in this book the dangers of letting our pastor or the others in our church be our leaning post. One of the dangers in this is that so often people will lean totally on others. Then the people that they have put such confidence in fall short. They lose their relationship with God because of the imperfection of the person that

they were leaning on in place of the Lord. We need to be sure that God's Spirit leads the people we listen to.

Let's get off the subject a little bit here. Do you think the Spirit leads most doctors? Highly unlikely. Yet we go by their advice and put our lives in their hands. I've known people to go by their doctor's advice and ignore Holy Ghost filled advice and the voice of God. They died.

Let us learn to lean on Jesus. If you need direction, go to the One who knows your future as well as He knows your past. If you need strength, lean on the One who can supply you with supernatural strength. If you need salvation, go to the One who died to give it to you. If you need hope, go to the One who can hold you. If you need truth to sustain you go to God's Word. Don't build your house on the sinking sand of other people. I have put here the words to a song that tells about that lesson so well. Until we look to the Lord, past everything else, we won't ever see Him.

Lord I Look To You

Verse 1

I looked for You Lord in the strength of a man.
 I looked for You from a loved ones hand.
 I looked for You through who I am.
 I could not find You Lord, till I looked to You.

Chorus

When I looked to You Lord
 Left all the rest behind.
 You filled my heart with Your joy,
 Your peace filled my mind.
 There's no other place, no other one,
 Lord can I find.
 Nothing else will do.
 Lord I look to You.

Verse 2

I looked for You in the high mountain.
 I looked for You in the peace of the sea.
 I looked for You in a child's laughter
 I looked for You in this world's dreams.
 I'd look for You on the path that I'd choose.
 I looked for You where life led me to.
 I looked for You but I could not find You.
 Savior I found You, Jesus I found You, when I
 looked to You.

Another prop or leaning post that we can have is the world and everything it stands for, its ideas, thoughts, its ways. We can concentrate on keeping up with what everyone else is doing. Thinking what everyone else is thinking whether they are God's people or not. Or running to do what everyone else is doing. Then we find ourselves in trouble and our life in a wreck, priorities all out of line, and we

wonder how we got in the shape we are in. You can't hold onto the world and do it God's way at the same time. How do most of us that have financial problems get that way? By trying to buy what we think we ought to have to fit in with what everyone else has. By doing and being what we think we should be so that everyone notices how we fit in with everyone else in our financial bracket. If we would forget the world, and spend what the Lord says spend on what He leads us to spend it on, we would not only be financially successful, but at peace with ourselves as well.

Another prop or leaning post we can have is the arm of flesh. II Corinthians 1:9 tells us, "But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead." We can't trust ourselves. We are flesh. If we think we are smart enough to make all the decisions that we need to make, then we are fools.

We don't know what is best. Only God can see us through. We need God. How many times have you had those "I can take care of it myself" attitudes, and it turned out to be a disaster. We need God. If we depend on ourselves to get through, we may never even see first base of the ball game. You can't do it without God. You are walking in the flesh. We have already talked about how that turns out.

Most of us have experienced enough of

this type of situation so that we are ready to run to Jesus like His children should. Don't play God. If you aren't letting Jesus be Lord of your life, submitting to Him, following Him, then your house is on the sand. We can't live a Christian life by ourselves. We can't even be good and not sin by ourselves. We have to rely on the Spirit of God inside of us to carry us through and keep us. That is why God made a way for us to have Jesus in our hearts through the power of the Holy Ghost. He knew we couldn't do it on our own. Give it up and give it to God. He can do it so much better.

We have to get ourselves out of the way. We have to die to accept salvation. We have to let go of our will to be obedient. We have to die to self to let the Spirit of God control our life. If we don't let ourselves go, we'll never know what it means to trust in Jesus. Until you have nothing left but God you will never know what God can do. Until all the props and leaning posts are gone, you won't really know what God can do in your life.

When you are flat on your back and all you can do is look up, then you are in a position for God to take control. It is sad, but most of us never yield to God until we are in that kind of situation. We need to learn to give it up and yield to God 24 hours a day.

Do you know who it is that hinders God the most from being able to answer our prayers?

We ourselves. We ask God to work in a situation. Instead of waiting for his answer we butt in and start fixing it up, which just messes it up beyond repair. God is trying to work in the life of a loved one. We can't keep our mouth shut enough so that they can hear God's voice. We are praying for a miracle of healing in our body. Right before that miracle comes we run to the doctor who does irreparable damage. We are asking God for a direction in our life. He works to put circumstances together and is ready to lead us on the path He has constructed especially for us. Our neighbor tells us we should go in another direction and off we go. We take the carnal advise over God's Word in our hearts. We ask him to use us. We never yield enough to obey Him. Does any of this sound familiar? We need to learn to lean on Jesus.

Here is the words to a song that sums all this up. The name of the song is

I Give It Up

Chorus

I give it up, (I give it up) give it up to Jesus.
 I give it up, (I give it up) give it to the Lord.
 He will touch it with sweet restoration.
 When you give it up, (when you give it up)
 To the Lord.

Verse 1

I went through a battle where the sun didn't shine.

Struggled to make it seemed all of the time.

God said let it go, give it up, turn it over to me.

That's when I found His sweet victory.

Verse 2

Shackles and bondages, chains of defeat

Child of God they weren't made for you, you see.

Let go of the battle trust in His love.

Find that release and that peace from up above.

We have got to give it up to Jesus. You can find victory when you give up the battle to the Lord. You can find the answer, when you give Him the question. You can find that release and that sweet peace that comes from God's throne if you give it up to the Lord. Lean on Jesus. Lean on Jesus. It is hard to lean on Jesus until you come to that place where you trust Him. When we trust Him we find out that we have a right to expect only the best. That chapter is coming up.

Chapter 18. Expecting the Best

Faith comes from hearing God's Word. Faith comes from all those times that we have leaned on the Lord, and He came through just in time. All of these things take place in our lives when we learn what to expect. We have to learn to expect the best. Sometimes we have to refuse to expect, or accept, anything else. Let me illustrate what I am talking about here.

My husband and I went to Virginia Beach a while back. We hadn't been there before and we didn't know anything about which motels cost what, and where they were. It was off-season. We rode around searching for the cheapest motels. We didn't stop at any high rises. We were just looking at all the economy packages. You know how it goes. You look for the ones that you will hope will stand in high winds. The ones that you hope cockroaches won't carry off the luggage. You hope security won't either.

We stopped at all the economy looking motels and there were no vacancies, or they weren't open for the off-season. The rest of the time we spent riding around totally lost. God started dealing with my heart. He told me that we are His children, and that we deserved the best. He actually fussed at me for only looking for the cheap ones.

When I made up my mind that I was going to expect the best, we turned the corner and there was this wonderful motel. God said to go in. After all that prior talking to, I didn't dare say or think, but God we can't afford this. We stayed at that motel for less than a fourth of what it normally cost. When did their reduced rates start? That very night just an hour before we walked through the door. That brought home to me the lesson that as God's children we should expect the best.

This was a lesson that changed my life. I started living, not looking for the cheap but expecting God's best. What happened the next year I went to the beach? This is true. I stayed at one of the nicest motels there for a week. I ate at the best restaurants in town. I had the best time. My cost for the entire trip was only \$15.00 (thank God and thanks to a dear friend of mine who let God use her). How much did it cost her? Even less. I had learned my lesson of expecting the best. Oh, and something else. When I was there, I won a week's free vacation for me and my husband at one of the nicest motels there for the next year. God is good. Expect the best.

We are King's Kids. Let me rephrase that. We are THE KING'S Kids. We need to expect His best. Now I am not taking up for the name it and claim it churches (as we have nicknamed them, the grab and blab it churches).

You are Beloved and longed for. The Lord loves His children. We have talked about this over and over through this book. He wants to pour out His blessings on you. If you want God to prosper you Psalms 37:4 tells us how. “Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart.” That is the key. How do we get God to give us the desires of our heart? Read on.

You may be asking how did all this get in a chapter entitled “Expect the Best”. We need to expect the blessings of God. How do we get Him to bless us? Why did the Lord bless me on my vacation so much? Number one, because I had learned to expect it. Number 2, I delight in Him. When you delight yourself in Him, He will give you the desires of your heart. Psalm 37:4, “Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart”.

What should be the focus of your life? Sometimes we don’t try to make serving God a focus because we are so afraid to fail that we don’t even try. We are afraid to start so we never do. If we would just go ahead and do and expect His best, He would use us to do miraculous things. Not because the focus is on us, but because the focus is on Him. When God says we can, we can. I haven’t done all the things I have done because I am so wonderful. I do them because I have trusted God to use me.

I stepped out and obeyed even when I knew that I couldn't do what He was asking me to do. I learned that it didn't matter what I thought I could do. It just mattered that I was willing to start and leave the rest up to Him.

Dare to cry out. Dare to try to make a difference in this world. Think of the people around you who need to see God in you. Think of your family that doesn't know God. Picture them in hell. Think of your neighbors and friends who don't know God. Picture them in hell. Picture the people you are acquainted with who don't know God. Picture them in hell. We say that we know the Lord is coming soon. But what are we doing about it. Are we real with that thought? Lets act like we know it is true.

Dare to do it. Dare to expect the best. Dare to speak out and obey the Lord. If you do and they are saved, you will be blessed. If you do and they don't hear you, you have obeyed God, and you still will be blessed for your obedience. How can you lose?

When you obey God and love Him you can expect the best. Give Him your best. Can He expect the best from you or do you just give Him the leftovers of your life, what time is left after everything else. You may not work in a ministry. Your time may be divided between work and family. But do you leave the Lord out of your work and family? At work, do you pray while you do your job? Do you dwell on His

Word or on whatever you plan to do after work. Is your conversation about the Lord? Does your family know where you stand with Jesus? Do your children hear God's Word from you in your house?

One of the things I remember from growing up at my grandparents was the way they lived. I knew how my grandparents stood. Their testimony shaped my life, and my decisions, and my walk with the Lord even today. I praise God for Godly grandparents. They taught me what it means to come out from the world.

They lived on a farm up in a hollow in the hills of southwest Virginia. They lived a quiet life and a very peaceful one. They weren't caught up in the pride of life. They weren't caught up in the ideas and thinking of everyone else. They didn't even bother to find out what those ideas were. They weren't trying to be like everyone else, or have the things that everyone else had. They weren't trying to be popular. They were just serving the Lord with all their hearts. The things that they had were only the things that they needed.

My grandfather farmed and my grandmother was right by his side. They worked hard but at the same time they had plenty of time for fun and family. Their favorite pastime and recreation was going to church. They loved to go to church. They

traveled everywhere they could to be in services. One of their main activities of the day was prayer. I remember as a child that we would always without fail close our day with prayer and devotion time reading together and studying God's Word.

Now as a young person, I rolled my eyes at this but no matter. We were gathered in for devotions whether we liked it or not and we really knew better than to say a thing about it. My grandparents didn't own a TV set. It had gone out many years earlier. My grandparents didn't have it fixed for several years. When they did get it fixed they saw that the programs had started showing people drinking and smoking. They didn't like to watch that so they put the TV back up and never did get it back out.

The main source of entertainment was the big piano. We'd gather around and sing for hours. There was never anything played there or sung but Gospel music. They had a radio, but it always stayed tuned to Gospel stations. For more than 50 years, the only sounds that came from that house was the sound of good Gospel music, and the sound of prayer and praise, and singing to the Lord.

When I think about what it means to come out from the world and be a separate people, I catch a glimpse of my grandparents. It's a glimpse that guides me today in making

the choices of my life. It is a glimpse that causes me to focus on the world to come, and not on the bondages of this present world. Do your children see the Lord in you and in your life? No, I am not saying you have to be perfect. That is an excuse sometimes that people use. They say I can't be perfect, and then don't try. Fall in love with Jesus. Give Him your best. Expect His best. It will change the lives of your loved ones and yours forever.

One of the things that we can expect in life is victory over the battles. We'll talk about that in the next chapter.

Chapter 19. Winning the Battle

I guess by now you have figured out that being a Christian doesn't mean that things will always be perfect. That you'll not ever have a battle or go through a hard time. Matter of fact, when you get on God's side, you get an enemy. The devil is out to destroy all God's children. He hates you because he wants to stop God's Word so he tries to stop you. You gain an enemy, but you also gain a co-warrior. God is on your side. Because of this, you can expect the best in your battles.

As you learn more of God's Word, you find the power to overcome in its pages. We have talked about that. You also gain the power of the Holy Ghost inside of you. How can you lose? Then why do we see people that lose? Why do people turn their back on God and go back to the mess that they left behind?

Earlier in this book we talked about how if we don't let go of sin, it can be like a hook in our jaw. We've talked about how we have to line our lives up to God's Word. We talked about how we have a flesh and a Spirit man and who we feed the most will be the strongest. We talked about how the Baptism of the Holy Ghost will fill us up and give us power for victory. If we refuse to accept it we are weaker and more vulnerable. We talked about how we have to get priorities in line and commitments settled.

We've talked about how we need to be careful not to take our salvation for granted because the enemy is there to steal our very soul. That is why people lose what they have had. What we have obtained we need be careful to maintain. Yes we have a battle but oh how sweet is the victory.

Does having the victory mean that you never have a battle. A friend of mine said that she thought something was wrong with her relationship with God because she was going through a battle. Sometimes we think that if we aren't careful. Because you have a need, does that mean that you don't have faith? How can you have victory without going through a battle? You can't even do that. You can't win if you haven't fought.

Think just a minute of the people who have the strongest faith. Think of those who have a closewalk with God. Is it because they have never been through a battle? Or is it because they have faced things that if they hadn't had the Lord they surely would have been destroyed?

Where do we grow? In those mountaintops where everything is perfect? Or in those places where it seemed like there was no way but for the grace of God that we could overcome. But we did, and we do it again, and again and again. Where does our faith and trust grow the most? In those places where you have

to blindly trust God because you can see no other hope. What if we never faced a battle, how shallow would our faith be? Do you want to make the devil really mad? Thank him the next time that he throws you into a battle. Thank Him for how God is going to use this to work a miracle in your life, your faith, and in helping you grow to have a deeper walk with God. When you have that kind of an attitude how can you lose.

Thank God for the battle. Praise Him for how He is trying you in the fire. Throughout the scripture how does God purify? By fire. Zechariah 13:9 tells us, "And I (God) will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them; I will say, it is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God." Malachi 3:2-3 tells us, "But who may abide the day of His coming and Who shall stand when He appeared? For He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness."

We read in First Corinthians 3:13 says, "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every

man's work of what sort it is." I Peter 1:7, "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

There was a prophet called Jeremiah in the Old Testament. The book of Jeremiah was written about him. One day God told him to go to the potter's house where that guy there was making clay bowls, cups, and things like that. The potter would put a lump of old shapeless clay up on the potter's wheel. He would turn it, and while he was turning it, he would shape it into these things that he was making.

In Jeremiah's potters house (Jeremiah 18) the potter had the clay on the wheel. The vessel that the potter originally made was marred. So he beat it out until it became soft and malleable, to the place where he could mold it right. In the potter's hands it not only became useful, but a thing of beauty. Hard times can beat us to the place where we will yield to the master potter.

Sad to say, human nature is stiff and unyielding. We need to get beaten into shape often. When we do, God can use us. How do we learn to yield and obey? What changes our nature from unyielding to yielding? Those times when we failed to yield and by doing so it literally tore the hide off. Those times when we

did our own thing and then paid the price for it. Those times when we went through those battles when we could do nothing on our own but trust God. Those times we stumbled in the dark until we finally learned to do it His way.

Even the worst struggle can turn into a blessing if we will give it to God. Struggles and battles are really disguised blessings. They are potter wheels where we are shaped and molded and then put through the fire to come out purified and fit for the Master's use.

How can we lose? By getting a loser's attitude. What does that mean? If we get the gravel rash. A "poor me chin hanging in the gravels as we scoot along" attitude. An attitude that always looks for the bad instead of looking for victory. A pity me attitude which always looks more for sympathy than for victory. By having a life that is filled with fear instead of faith. A life where we go to a pill bottle because of our anxiety and worry instead of trusting in God. These things can all cause us to lose.

We don't have to fear the enemy or the battle. I used to be so afraid of the devil that I spent most of my time trying to run from him. Have you ever known people like that? They go around looking everywhere for devils to run from. They spend more time looking for devils than they do looking for the Spirit of God.

Believe me, they find them. Don't look for them. Just put your feet on his head.

You don't have to fear the devil. Just put him under your feet. He specializes in making you think that he is a lot bigger than he really is. God's a lot bigger. He made the devil. He can certainly stop him. Not only does He have authority over the devil but He has given the church the keys as well. You have authority over the enemy. Matthew 16:19 tells us, "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

I pray that through these chapters you have learned to identify the battle, and you learn how victorious you are. Ephesians 1:18-23, "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under His feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to

the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.” Amen Amen Amen Amen.

You have authority that doesn’t come from who you are. It comes because you know Who and what you know. It comes because of Who is inside of you, Jesus through the power of the Holy Ghost. It comes because of God’s Word. How do you win? How can you avoid a lot of battles that the enemy may send? Walk in that authority that God says is yours.

When we know that every battle only works for our good, how can we lose. Romans 8:28, “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.” When we know that with God all things are possible. Matthew 19:26 “...with God all things are possible.” When we know we serve a God Who is over all. Psalm 50:1, “The mighty God, even the Lord, hath spoken...” When we know where we stand as children of God. How can we lose?

Sure we will face battles. They will only cause us to grow and be stronger in Him. If we let them. I want to close this chapter with this scripture. I know we have had this verse before, but some things are important enough to repeat. We need to get them in our spirit. Ephesians 1:17-23, “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto

you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His might power, Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, But also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.” AMEN AMEN AMEN AMEN. If we could only see these things that are spoken about in this section of scripture as being a part of our right as a child of God, it will change our lives and our walk with God. It will change what we do for the Lord. It will change our victory.

One way to overcome is to look ahead. The Bible says that when people lack a vision they perish. That is so true. If we never see beyond today with its battles, it is a lot harder to overcome. When we put our eyes on a vision for tomorrow, we can find the strength to press on.

Chapter 20. Looking Ahead

I was blessed to be able to stay with my aunt who died with cancer. I can without a doubt say that was one of the worst times of my life. I can also say that during that time I received more from God, and grew more than at any time I have ever been through. I wouldn't trade that experience for anything in my life, even the best of times when everything was great.

Now you may be thinking that this was one of the best times in my life because God won the victory over cancer and she was healed. No, this may sound strange but hear me out, I really don't think that would have changed my life as much as what happened. We serve a mighty powerful God who has promised us that even our worst times can turn into miracles. (Romans 8:28, "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.") I know without a shadow of doubt that this verse is true. Why? Because I have been through the fire. I have been through fires that literally broke my flesh, so that I had nothing left but God. I have been in places where only God could fix the battle, and when He moved, I knew that it was Him and only Him. I have walked with Him, and I know what

He will do for me tomorrow, because yesterday, He was there with me.

In this very difficult time in my life, I again learned what this means. One of the blessings that came out of the fire with me was this. When my aunt lay dying, for days all she could do was swallow water dripped out of the end of straw. She had no strength left. She praised the Lord for each sip of water that she took. When all she had was strength to move her little hand that was just skin and bones up and wave it in praise, that was what she did. She did it until she went into the sleep when she died.

I learned something that changed my life forever. We serve a mighty big and wonderful God. We don't have to be afraid of anything the devil or this world has. When we as children of God can lay in the chains of cancer, dying, and still find the victory in God to praise Him, what in this world do we have to fear. What can defeat us, other than we ourselves.

I also learned that death is a precious thing. It is hard to watch someone grow helpless inch by inch and have their life slowly taken away. But through this I gained a life-changing glimpse, an understanding of what it means to surrender to God, and its importance. My aunt fought death in a tremendous battle that went on for weeks. Then I watched God deal with her to surrender. He was her strength

to be able to help her with this last and greatest surrender that she would have to make.

First she had to surrender and fix some things in her life that she needed to fix. I watched her go through a time when she had to let God's Spirit do its final conviction, when He groomed and made ready His bride. Then she went through a time when I knew she was interceding in her spirit for people that she had had burdens for in her life. How did I know that this was so? Because one by one, as she surrendered them to God, He worked miracles. I watched God answer those prayers.

Then I watched her surrender herself totally to the hands of God. One night she passed away. I was asleep myself when she died. The quickening power of the Holy Ghost woke me up from a sound sleep. The Holy Ghost was so strong in the room. I knew before anyone told me that her last surrender was done. I caught a glimpse that night of God's glory that waited for her on the other side.

How could this last section have anything to do with looking ahead? In a chapter like this you probably expected me to put in that the Lord had come and raised her up from the dead. You know. He did just that. Because of the power of resurrection, death lost its hold. Death lost its sting. Sure she went through physical pain. But the sting of death was gone. She lay in its hold praising God for the victory

that was hers. That is part of the resurrection power of Calvary.

She knew that she faced a new day with a new hope and a new body. She knew that just on the other side of this pain was an eternal victory. How did she know? Because like Lazarus and his family, like Mary and the disciples, she walked with the Jesus. That day when He stood there and called out “Lazarus come forth”, and he came up from the dead, Jesus told them, “I am the resurrection and the life.” That is one of the verses that people use most at funerals. Why? Because death isn’t final. Jesus raises us all up from the dead in just as real a way as He raised Lazarus. I will one day see my aunt again, and she won’t be sick any longer.

Death where is your sting? Not even death could withstand the power of God. Through Him, we are given life everlasting. Life in a perfect world without sin or a devil to cause us all those problems. The Bible doesn’t tell us much about heaven and what life after death holds. I think that it is because heaven is the best that a perfect God has to give His dearly beloved children.

God is so far above what we are that we can’t even comprehend Him. I really believe that heaven, the best that He has for us, is so far beyond what we can comprehend that human words can’t even describe it. That is why

heaven is only glimpsed through the scriptures in a few verses. The few glimpses that we have though have been enough to keep zillions of saints of God on track and going through whatever they had to go through to serve God. It has been enough to hold me on course.

No matter what the devil has thrown at you, here you are. Raise up your hands and praise the Lord. That same God and that same power of Calvary that has kept you so far will see you on through. Lay aside all weights. We have a race to win. Oh, what a glorious prize.

Death is not final. Death is not losing. Death is not defeat. Not the death of a child of God. We have things to look for that we can't even imagine. How long will that goodness last? Forever. Forever we'll walk with God in that perfect place like the one he first created for us. The Bible doesn't say much about heaven. What it does say is fine enough.

We know that Jesus prepared a place for us. The sum total of all the scriptures about heaven, though, is not very much. I think that it is because heaven will be so perfect that our human words can't talk about it. Our puny little human minds can't comprehend it. We couldn't see it if God told us everything. We probably couldn't even stand it, it is so wonderful. We wouldn't bother to stay here. We'd just want to move on. I heard about a mother who nearly died in childbirth. During that near death

experience she saw a glimpse of heaven and Jesus. It was so real and so wonderful that she longed for it. When she came back to this earth she had little desire for this world. Even when they showed her that new little one. What she had seen of heaven made her long to go.

You can see it in the faces of those children of God who have gone on. Peace and satisfaction. How can you find that in death? Find peace with God. Fall in love with Jesus. Know where you stand in your relationship with Him. Then when He comes for you, you will be satisfied.

We have a promise of eternity with God in that special place He has made for us. But we also have promises that will get us through each day until that day. How can we overcome the battle? By keeping our eyes on the promises that are ahead. By keeping your eyes on those promises of victory that are surely coming just around the corner.

There were many times I might have given up if I hadn't kept thinking, what if I give up now and victory is just ahead. I would go on no matter how long the battle lasted because I knew that one day I would win. How many times have you tied the knot on the end of the rope and hung on? How many times have you kept on keeping on because you knew the promise that God wouldn't put on you more than you could stand? Don't give up. When the

battle threatens to choke that life out of you, keep on. The end of it all is still ahead. We always have something to look forward to, whether the end of this battle or a glimpse of heaven to keep us until we stand at the gate. Hold on child of God. Victory is just in site.

Chapter 21.

And THE END

What is the rapture? The Bible talks about things that will happen in the end time. God is going to take His people out of the world by just catching them up to be with Him. Then there is going to come a terrible time on the earth for those left behind. There are many prophecies in the Bible that talk about when this will happen. Every day we see these prophecies being fulfilled, coming to pass. We know that it won't be long. I'll tell this to some people, and they will say, "They have been saying that for years. That isn't true." I am ready for it to happen. I have studied too much, and I have seen too much to take a chance on it not happening. I guess you could say I am convinced it will. I can say this, the smart people will get themselves ready.

I am writing this chapter after watching the movie *Left Behind*. In the movie, there were many people who knew where their loved ones had gone when they disappeared. They knew the truth. They knew that they had been left behind. Can you imagine the fear and horror that you would have if you realized one day that the Lord had come back, the church was raptured, and you were left behind. There will be people from all walks of life who will be in that position. Some may even be pastors,

Sunday School teachers, people who grew up in the church. How could that be so? They possessed this thing in their heads, but not in their hearts.

They did all the outward motions, but lacked a relationship with God. Matthew 7:21-23 talks about a group of people who were busy working for the Lord, but they didn't know Him. "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."

Wow. That section of scripture used to really bother me. To be frank, it used to scare the daylights out of me. I thought if those people who had enough going for them that they could prophesy and cast out devils, and they couldn't make it. Where would that leave me? I would wonder too how prophesying and casting out devils could make you to be a worker of iniquity like the scripture says. Then the Lord showed me this one little part of the scripture. The part that says, "I never knew you."

What is the most important thing to do to get ready for heaven so that you won't be cast

out as a worker of iniquity? What is the most important thing that you can do to get ready to be in the rapture? We know that it is by grace that either one of these things can take place. We know that there is no way that we could be good enough, or do anything to deserve this. So if we have never prophesied or cast out devils, we can still do this one thing that we have to do to make it. We have to know Jesus. We have to establish a relationship with Him. We have to get to know His love. We have to walk everyday with Him.

We can't really get to know Him and His love and have a relationship with Him and not spend every day with Him. It is hard when we are sitting at His feet to ignore Him. When we really know Him, like the hart pants after the brook, our heart longs for Him. Nothing else will do. Nobody else can take His place. We won't wait until the end of the day to seek Him. When we walk with Him, then He can keep us.

He can make us ready for that day when He comes, or that day when we go to meet Him by way of death. He can get us ready. He hides us in the palm of His hand. His love is faithful. We can trust in His love. He will present us wrinkle free and without blemish before His Father if we allow His Spirit to work in us, and we keep His Word.

We don't have to be afraid that we won't go to heaven when we walk with the Lord. We

don't have to be afraid that we will miss the rapture when we walk with the Lord. When we get to know the Savior, He knows us. He will stand before His Father and declare that we are His. John 17:24 and 26, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." How can we escape such a hand? How can we escape such a love? When we know the Lord, He will keep us.

So what about all those people who will miss out? Those who will get left behind even though they know the truth? If God has such a great love for us, then how will that happen? They didn't know Jesus. They didn't know His love. They had unrepented sin in their lives that they didn't fix. They didn't get their priorities in line to take care of their soul's business. They knew, but they did nothing with what they knew.

Jesus will return for those who walk in an obedient relationship with Him. For those who have let the Spirit get out their wrinkles. Who have let Him clean up their spots. Those who have been cleansed by His blood. Those who have not swept the sin under the rug. Those who have let His precious blood wash

away their sin. There will be a lot of people who know the truth but who did nothing with it. Those are the ones who will have to face whatever will come here after God's children are gone.

Is there a more timely message today than the coming again of Jesus? I can remember when I was younger every once in a while something would happen that would make me think that the Lord was coming soon. I would just ever so often see a sign of the times, as people would put it. Now, today, it seems that every day I see a sign of His coming. We turn on the news and hear things that point to His coming soon. The technology advances that are being made let us know that He is coming soon. The earthquakes, Tsunamis, and other fierce disasters point to His coming. The state of affairs in the world, and in people's hearts let us know that He is coming soon.

We expect any day to see the clouds open, to see Jesus step out, and to hear that trumpet that declares His coming. Jesus is coming soon. Sure there are churches who have started teaching that Jesus is not coming in that manner. Little do they know that in itself is just another proof that He is coming.

Let's be obedient. Keep your priorities in line. Love Jesus. Let Him love you. Hear the voice of your Shepherd. Nothing is as important as Jesus. He can't come second or

third in your life and still be the Lord of your life.

I hope that this book helps many people. It has enough of God's Word in it by itself to change lives. I hope that it will make a difference in your life. Take it to heart. Take God's Word to heart. Don't make excuses. Don't justify your failures. Don't excuse your sin. Don't put off doing the things that you need to do. Don't put off fixing the areas in your life that the Lord is dealing with you to fix. Don't silence God's voice. Don't shove away His conviction by saying, I'll do that another day. We are soon coming to a time when tomorrow will definitely be too late.

Closing

When the Lord started leading me to write this book, some people who were close to my heart were losing out on their relationship with God. They no longer made it a priority to live for Him. They were going backwards steadfastly instead of forward. I could see the devil creeping into their lives with all kinds of things to destroy them while they were weak. He kept their lives so full of things that they didn't have time to spend with God. One made a comment to me that he had forgotten God's love. It was scary to me to watch this happen. I started praying about why people lose their salvation.

I know there is a doctrine that says you can't lose your salvation. But we all know that there are people who do. This isn't because salvation fails, or God fails. It is because people choose to turn away from God. At a meeting our pastor was talking about this. He was talking about how some teach that we can't backslide. He asked the people to raise their hand who had backslid at some point in their lives. Nearly all of us raised their hands. So we know that you can turn your back on God.

In my 30+ years of serving God I have watched many who turned their backs on God. People who were dedicated at one time. You have seen it yourself. What happens? I've tried

to deal with that in these chapters. We have discussed what can go wrong and what can go right. We have talked about how to stand and what to stand on. We have talked about how to hear and obey God's voice so He can help us to stand. We have talked about how to feed the Spirit man inside of us and how to let Him keep the victory over flesh. We have talked about how we have to grub those things up by the roots that could grow up and choke the spiritual life out of us. We have talked about the power of God's Word and how to win the battle. We have talked about how we need to keep our eyes ahead for the victories that will come. As surely as that final victory that we'll face.

There is just one more thing to cover. That is this one question. What will you do now? Will you be like the man looking in the mirror changing nothing? Will you let the victory from God's Word that you've read fire you up and put a "go ye" and a determination that your salvation will stick? Sure, many have fallen, and more will fall. But you don't have to. When you have salvation that sticks, you know your destination. I may never get to meet you here on earth to talk to you to find out if this book helped you. But one day, look me up in heaven. We'll both be there celebrating the One Who saved us and kept us in the palm of His hand. Praise the Lord.

Contact Me

If you have enjoyed this book please let me know. You can call me at 276-730-0706 at the offices of New Life Ministries. Or email me at school@nlcm.net. God bless you.

